

# Strategic Transformation Planning Summary

## Student Listening Sessions

### Introduction

In Spring 2025, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) conducted comprehensive listening sessions with students as part of a pivotal initiative aimed at redefining its institutional mission, core values, and strategic direction. These sessions represent Tri-C's commitment not merely to incremental improvement but to transformative change. Students provided candid, thoughtful, and insightful reflections on how the institution can evolve to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. This dialogue underscores Tri-C's dedication to fostering a responsive, supportive educational environment that dynamically aligns with the evolving needs of students and the broader community.

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### Theme 1: Academic and Career Support Innovations

Students emphasized the critical importance of practical career preparation, noting that Tri-C must enhance direct linkages between academic programs and future employment. They highlighted the necessity for relevant training, particularly in emerging fields, trades, and specialized professions. Students want clearer guidance on career paths and more practical job-related experiences integrated within curricula. One student emphasized, “It is crucial for the college to prepare for the changing environment, especially the shifting needs for job skills and abilities.” Another shared a specific suggestion: “Tri-C must develop new infrastructure to handle new needs in chip manufacturing, AI, cybersecurity, and other emerging fields.”

Students repeatedly stressed the significance of quality teaching and academic resources. They expressed concern over inconsistent instructor engagement and the availability of tutoring services across different departments. For example, one student explained, “There needs to be more accessible tutors for specialized programs like radiology,” and another noted, “Teachers must be passionate about what they teach—not just there for a paycheck.” Further reinforcing this perspective, a student expressed the need for Tri-C to “value professors who engage with students and genuinely put effort into teaching.”

An underlying thread was the urgency of strengthening direct pathways to employment. A nursing student illustrated this by highlighting their program's rigor and reputation, saying, “36% of students graduate in four semesters, but 95% pass the national certification, showing a difficult yet high-quality program.” Another succinctly captured this sentiment: “I’m here specifically for job-related skills—education and certification in nursing.”

Students also called for Tri-C to expand offerings such as shadowing opportunities, internships, and externships, suggesting these experiences significantly bolster employability. One student remarked, “More programs like internships or shadowing are essential for practical learning and immediate job-readiness.” Another argued for innovative programming: “Certifications in AI, machine learning, and cybersecurity would make Tri-C graduates extremely competitive.”

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## Theme 2: Inclusivity, Diversity, and Student Support

Inclusivity and robust student support were consistent themes throughout student feedback. Participants emphasized the necessity of accommodating diverse student populations, including international students, students with disabilities, older students, and those balancing family obligations. As one student articulated, “We need more resources and financial assistance for international students, addressing their unique challenges.” Another underscored the importance of specific support: “Tri-C should implement more tutoring services tailored explicitly for students with disabilities.”

Students also called attention to the needs of older students and those with families, urging Tri-C to prioritize affordable and accessible daycare services. One participant passionately stated, “Parental support like affordable childcare should be universally accessible,” while another argued, “Single fathers should have the same childcare assistance provided to single mothers.”

Beyond resources, students advocated for greater diversity and cultural inclusivity. Suggestions included more diverse food offerings, cultural events, and resources explicitly targeted to underrepresented populations. One student explained, “Tri-C makes everyone feel comfortable; diversity here should continue expanding through more cultural events.” Additionally, the institution was encouraged to improve services for marginalized groups, with one respondent noting, “Policies prioritizing low-income and marginalized students will genuinely reflect our values.”

Mental health emerged prominently, with students stressing the need for expanded counseling resources. A student highlighted, “There is only one counselor available at

Eastern Campus—this must change," and another reinforced the urgency: "Prioritizing mental health isn't optional; it's crucial."

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### **Theme 3: Institutional Agility and Adaptive Change**

Students strongly resonated with the concept of institutional agility, recognizing that Tri-C must swiftly adapt to external changes, particularly declining enrollment and evolving job markets. Reflecting this sentiment, a student shared, "Adapt now or risk being left behind—this statement resonates deeply. Change is inevitable." Another stated plainly, "Being proactive rather than reactive is key to Tri-C's future success."

Participants acknowledged the need for strategic planning that actively involves students, emphasizing the power of student voice in guiding institutional directions. A respondent argued compellingly, "If we help guide the future, we need as much guidance as the institution can give," while another reinforced, "Strategic planning should involve input directly from students to truly meet our needs."

Further, students appreciated the administration's acknowledgment of declining enrollment, indicating a desire to address this proactively through unique and innovative solutions. One student remarked candidly, "I resonate with Tri-C's desire to genuinely differentiate itself, even if it feels uncomfortable initially." Students suggested specific strategies such as "high school transition programs," "increased virtual learning options," and "more night and weekend courses" to boost accessibility and enrollment.

Students also encouraged a culture that actively embraces adaptation. They called for an ethos of responsiveness that recognizes shifts in job market demands, advocating for Tri-C to regularly update curricula and programs accordingly. Echoing this point, a student highlighted, "Job requirements are continually evolving; Tri-C needs to anticipate these changes and quickly adapt its offerings."

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### **Theme 4: Enhanced Student Life and Community Engagement**

The vibrancy of campus life and meaningful community engagement were identified as essential components for a fulfilling college experience. Students stressed that creating more engaging extracurricular activities and robust campus communities was crucial. "Having a strong student body means giving students reasons beyond class to stay on campus," one student observed, emphasizing the importance of student engagement.

Students specifically called for more physical spaces designed for recreation and relaxation, such as gyms and student lounges, especially on campuses like Westshore. A respondent recommended practically, “Unused classrooms could become gyms or study areas—right now, there's nowhere to unwind.”

Engagement also extended to community connections. Students expressed strong support for volunteering opportunities, internships, and cultural events that connect students with broader community networks. “Volunteer experience should be very easy to access, connecting us directly with the community,” recommended one student. Another emphasized practical experience, noting, “More internship programs would significantly enhance real-world learning.”

To elevate the student experience further, feedback strongly advocated improving dining options and campus resources. A participant stated bluntly, “We need healthier, affordable food options available throughout the day—not just vending machines.” Another supported this by requesting, “The campus cafe needs extended hours for students with late classes.”

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## Conclusion

The candid and thoughtful insights offered by Tri-C students during these sessions illuminate clear pathways toward a more dynamic, responsive, and inclusive future. By deeply embedding career readiness into academic experiences, actively fostering inclusivity, rapidly adapting to societal and economic changes, and enriching campus life, Tri-C can position itself as not just a place of learning but a vibrant hub of transformation and opportunity.

These listening sessions are not merely forums of feedback but powerful reminders of the potential inherent within the Tri-C community. Students have articulated a clear, ambitious vision where institutional agility, inclusivity, practical education, and community engagement coalesce into an environment genuinely responsive to student needs and aspirations.

This moment invites boldness, innovation, and courage—qualities that Tri-C, propelled by student voices, can cultivate to reimagine its future. Ultimately, the insights shared offer more than a critique; they present a hopeful blueprint for Tri-C's evolution as a pioneering community college, wholly committed to empowering every student's journey toward meaningful success.

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For any questions regarding the listening sessions or this summary, please reach out to [Gregory Stoup](#), Vice President of Institutional Progress and Effectiveness.