

Strategic Transformation Planning Overarching Summary

Tri-C Campus Listening Sessions at Metro, Eastern, Western, Westshore

February 17 - 20, 2025

The listening sessions held across Cuyahoga Community College's campuses revealed a critical need for the institution to become more agile, take bold actions, and embrace transformation in response to shifting educational landscapes. Faculty, staff, and students collectively expressed concerns about administrative inefficiencies, the evolving needs of the workforce, and the necessity of stronger engagement in student success. While Tri-C's affordability, flexibility, and commitment to accessibility remain strong assets, there is a growing demand for innovation in institutional governance, career-focused education, and student support systems.

A Call for Institutional Agility and Bold Decision-Making

Across faculty, staff, and students, there was a shared recognition that Tri-C must move away from slow-moving bureaucratic processes and embrace a more dynamic, student-centered approach. Faculty voiced frustration over a growing administrative structure that, in their view, prioritizes institutional control over educational quality. *"We need less bureaucracy and more focus on what happens in the classroom,"* one faculty member stated. Staff echoed this sentiment, calling for streamlined decision-making processes that allow for faster responses to student and institutional needs. *"Too often, decisions take months when they need to happen in weeks,"* a staff member observed. This call for a more responsive and decisive leadership structure suggests a need for Tri-C to reduce administrative redundancy and refocus its resources on educational outcomes.

Transforming Workforce Education and Career Pathways

A strong theme across all groups was the need for Tri-C to rethink and expand its workforce education programs to align with emerging industry trends. Faculty emphasized the importance of maintaining the integrity of academic programs while ensuring they remain relevant to employer needs. *"We have to strike a balance between providing a strong educational foundation and ensuring students are job-ready,"* one faculty member noted. Staff and managers pushed for greater employer engagement, with one stating, *"We need to invite businesses to co-design our programs, not just offer internships at the end."*

Students, meanwhile, were adamant that their education must directly connect to tangible career opportunities. *"I need to know that my degree will actually lead to a job,"* one student emphasized. Many called for stronger career services, expanded internship

opportunities, and clearer pathways from coursework to employment. Tri-C has an opportunity to take bold steps by forging deeper partnerships with industries, embedding work-based learning into curricula, and ensuring that every academic program has a clear career trajectory.

Empowering Faculty and Staff to Drive Change

Faculty and staff expressed a need for greater involvement in decision-making, emphasizing that those closest to students should have a stronger voice in shaping institutional priorities. Faculty were particularly concerned with the shift away from teaching in favor of administrative expansion. *“We need leadership to trust and empower educators instead of adding more layers of oversight,”* one faculty member asserted. There was also a strong call to invest in professional development, particularly in emerging fields like artificial intelligence, media literacy, and evolving workforce competencies.

Staff, meanwhile, pointed to a need for professional training in student advising and career counseling to ensure that they are equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs of students. *“Our students are navigating financial struggles, mental health challenges, and career uncertainties—we need better tools to help them,”* one staff member noted. By investing in faculty and staff development, Tri-C can cultivate a more knowledgeable, responsive, and student-focused institution.

Revolutionizing the Student Experience

Students consistently voiced concerns about engagement, communication, and access to resources. Many reported a lack of awareness of the support services available to them, with one student remarking, *“I only found out about tutoring and career counseling by accident—why aren’t these things more visible?”* Others called for a more vibrant on-campus experience, including expanded in-person course options, stronger extracurricular programming, and better integration of technology in both learning and student support services.

Mental health and well-being emerged as critical areas for investment, with students advocating for greater access to counseling, support groups, and wellness initiatives. *“College is stressful, and we need better ways to manage that stress,”* one student emphasized. Tri-C has an opportunity to transform its student engagement model by creating a more interactive, accessible, and supportive environment—one that actively connects students to the resources they need to succeed.

Breaking Down Barriers to Institutional Change

Throughout the listening sessions, there was a recurring theme of institutional inertia—an unwillingness or inability to move quickly in response to emerging challenges. Many participants voiced concerns that Tri-C's structure prevents necessary transformation, with one faculty member noting, "*We talk about change, but it takes years to implement even small improvements.*" Staff and students echoed this frustration, emphasizing the need for a culture of continuous innovation and risk-taking.

To truly thrive, Tri-C must break free from outdated systems and embrace bold experimentation. This means piloting new educational models, embracing cutting-edge technology, and streamlining policies that hinder progress. "*We have to be willing to fail fast, learn, and adjust,*" one administrator suggested. The future of Tri-C depends on its ability to be nimble, proactive, and fearless in the face of change.

Conclusion

The insights from these listening sessions make it clear that Tri-C stands at a pivotal moment. While its strengths in affordability and accessibility remain crucial, its long-term success will depend on its ability to act decisively, transform its workforce education strategies, empower faculty and staff, and create a more engaging and supportive student experience. The path forward requires bold leadership, institutional agility, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. By embracing a transformative vision, Tri-C can position itself as a leader in community college innovation and student success.