Bridging to the Future

Three Rivers Community College
Strategic Plan
2013-2016

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Strategic Planning Team

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Three Rivers Community College  
*Bridging to the Future*  

**Executive Summary**

The findings and priorities presented in the Three Rivers Community College 2013-2016 Strategic Plan are the result of a comprehensive examination of forces and factors that will influence the development of the College in the foreseeable future. Multiple sources of information were used to frame priorities, including published documents and reports describing regional trends; interviews with senior administrators; and a series of listening sessions with internal campus groups (faculty, professional staff, and classified staff) and external constituencies between September and November 2012 to gauge stakeholder perceptions and expectations of the College. External listening sessions were conducted with seven groups involving more than 80 individuals representing business and industry employers, K-12 school district superintendents, K-12 counselors, the TRCC Foundation and Regional Advisory Council, 4-year college and university academic and admissions personnel, hospital and health organizations and alumni. Approximately 120 individuals attended thirteen internal listening sessions organized for TRCC faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Multiple source data were synthesized by the consultants and shared with College faculty, staff, and administrators in two reports—a Capacity Analysis and Opportunity Analysis. These reports and a portfolio of supporting information served as the resource platform for formulation of College-wide priorities by TRCC’s Strategic Planning Team in December 2012.

**Background and Strengths**

Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) was created in 1992 through legislation enacted by the Connecticut General Assembly which merged community and technical colleges in five geographic regions in Connecticut. Named in recognition of three rivers in the region—the Shetucket, the Yantic, and the Thames—Three Rivers Community College was formed from the merger of Mohegan Community College and Thames Valley State Technical College. The College operated on geographically separate campuses on opposite sides of Norwich until 2009 when new construction and renovation at the Thames Valley campus, supported by a $75 million appropriation from Connecticut State Legislature in 2003, enabled consolidation. In addition to the main campus on New London Turnpike, TRCC also has off-campus instructional centers located at the Naval Submarine Base and Ella Grasso Technical School in Groton.

By all accounts, TRCC is a valued resource in its service region as:

- a visible and respected community asset that makes a significant contribution to the community, including involvement and interaction with regional and local boards and for-profit and non-profit organizations;

- a hub for regional and community development—an intellectual, cultural and physical resource for the community;
• a “gateway to opportunity” that offers a valuable and affordable postsecondary alternative and a rich learning experience through an array of programs that prepare students for transfer to 4-year institutions or for entry into the workforce;

• an important provider of affordable training and retraining for regional business and industry;

• an institution offering recognized signature and magnet programs in nursing, sciences, nuclear engineering and engineering technology.

College employees take great pride in TRCC’s strengths and capabilities which they characterize as:

• making a difference in the lives of those touched by the College
• strongly supporting student success
• having dedicated faculty, staff, and instructional resources that contribute to TRCC’s effectiveness as an organization
• being an important community resource
• providing unparalleled educational resources
• having outstanding facilities and technology resources

Challenges and Opportunities

Like all institutions, Three Rivers Community College is not without challenges. While having made important contributions to the service region it has yet to achieve its full potential for outreach and collaboration. Among the opportunities on its horizon are bridge building and partnerships with K-12 school districts and business and industry employers. School districts are eager to partner with TRCC in dual enrollment, curriculum laddering and staff development toward the goal of enhancing student success. Employers recognize TRCC’s strength and potential as a resource for job training and retraining and express a need for strengthened linkages in course and curriculum development, skill training and retraining, needs assessment, and school to work transition through internships and school-to- work partnerships.

TRCC has established excellent transfer relationships with regional 4-year colleges and universities, but there is significant potential for improved collaboration in areas of mutual benefit such as reverse transfer, two-way reporting systems, curriculum development and articulation and teaching methods. Opportunities were also indentified in the area of community development in the form of linkages with organizations involved in the regional economic and workforce development with TRCC serving as a hub for regional collaboration.

The strategic planning process has provided TRCC with a foundation for the pursuit of opportunity through a rich portfolio of information describing current and projected needs of the service region. The priorities articulated in Bridging to the Future will both continue the College’s tradition of excellence and put it on track toward establishing a brand as a premier institution of postsecondary education and training in Southeastern Connecticut.
Priorities

Priorities for college development were identified through an extensive planning process that included internal and external listening sessions and analysis of published documents and reports describing regional trends and economic, demographic and occupational projections. The Strategic Planning team identified six priorities through intensive analysis and collective action that build on the strengths of the College and that optimally use its resources. Each is integral to the TRCC’s continuing development and success, therefore the priorities listed below are not presented in order of importance.

1. FACILITATE AND SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will provide:

- a seamless transition to 4-year colleges and universities
- clear educational and career pathways
- programs that connect students to careers through internships, credentialing and certification
- resources to develop college-level academic skills including support for tutoring, distance learning, advising and computer and information literacy
- a simplified and streamlined enrollment process
- systems and processes that are easily navigated by students
- opportunities for civic engagement and personal development
- outreach services that prepare students for collegiate study before they arrive on campus
- academic rigor in all programs, courses and curricula culminating in transfer and workplace success
- multiple delivery options to students (on-ground/traditional, on-line and hybrid) programs and courses

Performance Indicators:

✓ Semester-to-semester retention
✓ Achievement of student learning goals
✓ Graduation rate
✓ Credits completed
✓ Transfer rate
✓ Attainment of job related to curriculum
✓ Attainment of advanced educational degrees
2. ENSURE RESPONSIVENESS AND RELEVANCE OF CURRICULA, SERVICES AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS TO CONSTITUENCY NEEDS

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will:

- continually identify and respond to changing educational needs of the regional population
- align curricula with regional educational and workforce needs
- enhance communication with community constituencies regarding program and service offerings and college resources
- make expertise and educational resources available to the community
- systematically solicit information about employer educational and workforce needs through on-going contact with employers
- create and share memoranda of understanding outlining expectations, collaboration and delivery of services between TRCC and key constituencies

Performance Indicators:

✓ Evidence of curricular and program changes
✓ Employer satisfaction ratings
✓ Number of memoranda of understanding generated with employers
✓ Placement rate of students
✓ Relationship of job to program or curriculum field
✓ Ratings of employer satisfaction

3. ESTABLISH WORKING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION WITH SENDING AND RECEIVING ORGANIZATIONS

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will:

- work closely with K-12 schools to identify areas of mutual benefit (developmental skills preparation, professional development, college preparedness, retention to diploma/degree, etc.)
- improve articulation and communication with 4-year colleges and universities to ensure that courses, curricula and degree requirements lead to successful transfer
- partner with 4-year colleges and universities to offer programs, courses and curricula on TRCC’s campus
- establish mutual gain partnerships with employers
- serve as a catalyst for regional economic development by bringing together key community partners
Performance Indicators:

✓ Evidence of active partnerships with K-12 schools (programs, activities, agreements, etc.)
✓ Evidence of improved articulation with 4-year colleges (expression of satisfaction with articulation by 4-year college officials)
✓ Number of 4-year courses offered on-campus at TRCC
✓ Number of partnerships with employers
✓ Activities geared toward regional economic development initiated by TRCC

4. ESTABLISH AND AFFIRM A BRAND IDENTITY THAT DISTINGUISHES THE COLLEGE AS A FIRST CHOICE EDUCATIONAL PROVIDER IN THE SERVICE REGION

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will:

▪ engage members of the college community in brand development
▪ distinguish and augment elements of TRCC’s unique identity with key constituencies
▪ develop a comprehensive marketing plan
▪ create a synergy with partners in the community to foster brand recognition
▪ leverage resources using brand recognition to create working partnerships
▪ position TRCC effectively for resource acquisition and use through alignment with higher education partners in Connecticut

Performance Indicators:

✓ Clear statement of brand for TRCC
✓ Development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing plan
✓ Evidence of faculty/staff understanding and commitment to brand
✓ Evidence provided by external constituencies of TRCC becoming a “go to” first step for a baccalaureate degree
5. FOSTER A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVENESS, COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will:

- reaffirm and connect the college community to organizational core values
- promote a college culture that encourages risk taking, innovation and entrepreneurial pursuit
- promote a culture that values and acknowledges the contributions of individuals
- develop and institutionalize a process to encourage and promote new initiatives and innovation
- systematically provide opportunities for employee development and continuous improvement

Performance Indicators:

✓ Evidence of employee satisfaction
✓ Number and frequency of initiatives undertaken
✓ Frequency of, and value-added by, opportunities for professional and career growth and development for employees

6. EXERCISE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Key Action Steps:

TRCC will:

- systematically identify and evaluate the utilization of resources (people, facilities, energy, processes, funding and time)
- implement measures to improve the efficient use of resources
- identify all possible sources of revenue and generate alternative sources of revenue

Performance Indicators:

✓ Increase funding stream for operations by 1 percent over previous year
✓ Evidence of enhancement in annual report of metrics provided to governance bodies (human resource metrics, funding streams, student enrolment and graduation)
✓ Year-to-year cost savings
✓ Evidence of revenue enhancement through alternative sources
Strategic Intent

Three Rivers Community College aspires to the goal of becoming a premier provider of postsecondary education and training in southeastern Connecticut. Our 2013-2016 Strategic Plan, *Bridging to the Future*, is a step into the future in partnership with people and organizations in southeastern Connecticut and the State of Connecticut. Standing in the way of our aspiration are resources—both tangible and intangible—that must be leveraged in order to achieve our stated priorities. We are a strong and respected institution that makes a valuable contribution to learners and communities alike in our service region. Our resilience is evident in our ability to weather tidal waves of change that have occurred since our establishment as a unified institution in 1992: delivering education on geographically separate campuses for seventeen years; navigating contractual bargaining agreements with six different unions; enduring waves of budget reduction stemming from the national and state economic recession beginning in 2007; coping with a sudden and dramatic change in public higher education governance in 2011 that merged public 2-year and 4-year colleges (other than UConn) in one system; and undergoing intensive change in internal operating systems and procedures initiated by a new governing board and postsecondary education system.

Unquestionably, these challenges have created constraints to development. If viewed in broad perspective, however, they also open opportunity. As a learning community, we have the opportunity to come together to build on our rich intellectual and learning resources, our established base within the community, and our unparalleled physical and technological resources. More than ever before, we are at the cusp of an opportunity to establish a shared sense of community—the community that was in place at each of two geographically separate campuses that must now establish itself on a unified campus. There is no going back to the old—the only path for our College is one of going forward into the future as a united learning community. This path is one of collegiality, collaboration, teamwork and continuous improvement. The 2013-2016 strategic plan provides the building block for a process of change that must occur to enable us to achieve our aspiration and potential as a premium provider of postsecondary education in Southeastern Connecticut.