



Northern Essex  
Community College

# 2014-2017 Recruitment Plan

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## Introduction

This Recruitment Plan sets an explicit, data-informed goal for enrollment at Northern Essex Community College (NECC), recommends strategies to reach those goals, and provides timelines and resource needs. Although it is a flexible plan that can adapt to changing circumstances, it is meant to drive our recruitment efforts over the next three years. This document begins with an exploration of the enrollment context at Northern Essex (NECC) and then turns to goals, strategies, and action steps.

## The Enrollment Context

### Enrollment Trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Community college enrollments have grown over the last 15 years nationally. Northern Essex Community College has grown at a similar rate (1.7%) to the national average (1.8%) over that time, though more slowly than the 2.1 percent average for Massachusetts community colleges (NCES and Cognos). During the last 5 years we have seen positive growth with Northern Essex experiencing an overall 4.7% increase in student headcount. There are signs of change and uncertainty, however, as we move forward over the next several years.

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	1-Year Change	5-Year Change
<b>Student Headcount</b>	7,020	7,385	7,439	7,036	7,312	7,352	0.05%	4.7%
<b>Fulltime Equivalent (FTE)</b>	4,152	4,493	4,523	4,255	4,482	4,413	-1.5%	6.3%

College enrollments have dropped nationally in the last few years, according to two recent reports published by the National Center for Education Statistics and the US Department of Education and reported by the American Association of Community College (Juskiewicz). The charts below show where those losses have been.

**Table 1. Changes in Fall Enrollment at Public 4-Year and 2-Year Institutions**

	Total Fall Enrollment		4-Year Public Institutions		2-Year Public Institutions	
	IPEDS	NSC	IPEDS	NSC	IPEDS	NSC
<b>Change from Prior Year Fall 2011</b>	-0.1%	0.2%	1.6%	1.4%	-2.2%	-1.6%
<b>Change from Prior Year Fall 2012</b>	-1.9%	-1.8%	0.6%	-0.6%	-3.9%	-3.1%
<b>Change from Prior Year Fall 2013</b>		-1.5%		0.3%		-3.1%

**Table 2. Changes in Fall Enrollment at Public 2-Year Institutions by Gender, Age, and Enrollment Intensity**

	Percent Change from Prior Year 2-Year Public Institutions					
	Gender		Age		Enrollment Intensity	
	Men	Women	24 and under	Over 24	Full-time	Part-time
<b>Fall 2011</b>	-2.0%	-1.3%	-0.9%	-2.5%	-5.3%	1.2%
<b>Fall 2012</b>	-2.4%	-3.6%	-1.6%	-5.2%	-5.7%	-1.2%
<b>Fall 2013</b>	-1.9%	-4.0%	-1.2%	-6.0%	-2.9%	-3.3%

Bloomberg.com cited five reasons for the drop in enrollment nationally, including a decline in the 18—24 year old population, an improving economy, tighter federal guidelines related to financial aid, the cost of a college education, and a large pool of un/under employed college graduates.

Although reports have shown that current community college enrollments are in a decline, Inside Higher ed.com recently cited a report from the National Center for Education Statistics that indicates *overall* higher education will see enrollment increases over the next decade. “Nearly three million more people will be enrolled in American colleges and universities in 2022 than were enrolled in 2012 according to Education Department projections,” (Lederman). This is somewhat promising; however, the same report also notes that the 18-24 year old population is expected to decline over the next decade and the overall expected enrollment increase will not be at the same pace as in the past.

**NECC’s Region:** Regional trends seem to roughly match the national ones, and census data indicate:

- The Essex County population is projected to increase by 3% through 2020.
- The adult population (age 30-44) is projected to increase in Lawrence by 5.6% through 2020.
- The adult population (age 30-44) is projected to decrease in Haverhill by .9% through 2020.
- The population age 15-29 is projected to decrease in Lawrence by 2.7% through 2020.
- The population age 15-29 is projected to decrease in Haverhill by 7.3% through 2020.
- Public high school graduates in MA are projected to fall by nearly 9% between 2008 and 2020 but will be roughly level over the next three years.
- By 2020, Hispanics’ share of public high school graduates in MA is projected to rise by 5% to 16%.

The high school population in our area appears to be relatively stable though Lawrence high school students remain an attractive recruitment opportunity. In reviewing the high school and local census data it appears that we should pay attention to the adult population throughout our region, along with high school students, particularly in Lawrence to ensure that we are offering programming that caters to their educational and career goals.

**NECC Academic Program Trends:** During the 2013 fall semester, the six academic programs at the College with the greatest number of enrollments were (in descending order): 1) General Studies: Health Specialization 2) Business Management & Transfer, combined 3) General Studies 4) General Studies/ESL 5) Criminal Justice and 6) Liberal Arts. The table below indicates percentage of programmatic growth or decline over the past five and ten years. Of particular note:

- Separating Health Specialization students from the large pool of General Studies students made transparent a student preference for health careers.
- Business Transfer has increased by 22% over the past five years.
- ESL enrollments decreased by 15% over the past ten years and despite a 17% bounce back over the past five years, the numbers are likely to further decline given recent ESL curriculum changes.
- Criminal Justice enrollments increased by 132% over the past ten years but have decreased by 5% over the past five years.

- The decrease in Liberal Arts enrollments slowed to 22% over the past five years; they have fallen 32% over ten years.

	# Enrolled Fall 2003	# Enrolled Fall 2008	# Enrolled Fall 2013	10 yr Change 2003-2013	5 yr Change 2008-2013
<b>General Studies: Health Specialization***</b>			1072	new	new
<b>Business Transfer</b>	77	303	369	379%	22%
<b>Business Management</b>	250	316	298	19%	-6%
<b>General Studies</b>	333	706	601	80%	-15%
<b>Gen Studies:Students Assessed into ESL coursework</b>	557	405	472	-15%	17%
<b>Criminal Justice</b>	178	433	413	132%	-5%
<b>Liberal Arts</b>	529	412	362	-32%	-12%
<b>Engineering</b>	71	163	248	249%	52%
<b>Unclassified High School**</b>	3	179	232	7633%	29%
<b>Early Childhood Ed</b>	72	222	214	197%	-4%
<b>LA: Psychology</b>	125	167	204	63%	22%
<b>CIS: Information Technology*</b>	71	171	162	128%	-5%
<b>LA: Biology</b>	35	94	156	345%	66%
<b>Accounting</b>	142	144	119	-16%	-17%

\*CIS not a program for Fall 03 used Fall 05

\*\*UNHS not noted for Fall 03 used Fall 06

\*\*\*Included in GS in years prior to 2013

Three more observations of program trends:

- Engineering has grown to be our seventh largest program with a 52% increase over the past five years.
- Unclassified High School Students have increased by 29% over five years. This includes the Early College program and high school contract courses.
- Smaller programs -- LA: Psychology and LA: Biology -- have increased by 22% and 66% over five years.

Within our current programs it appears the transfer programs are doing well and we should capitalize on that. Our competitors also appear to have made gains with similar programs and an increase of students from our territory.

A review of Labor Market information suggests that NECC's programs are aligned with the major sectors of the state and local economy. Across the state growth in technology has been strong. "Since the end of the recession in 2009 through 2012, the technology sector added 11,099 jobs (a three-year increase of 5.6%), outpacing California (4.9%) and the US (4.0%) tech sectors, and well above the 3.4% overall growth rate of the Massachusetts economy" (MassTLC). *The Boston Globe* recently reported that, "For Massachusetts to remain a technology powerhouse it needs to do more to attract skilled engineers and educate the next generation of programmers and software developers, according to the report from the

Mass Technology Leadership Council” (Farrell). Overall Technology and Engineering have been strong for the college and this is positive news.

### Imagining the Future: Scenarios for Growth and Decline in Enrollment

Although the past provides important context for understanding current enrollment challenges at Northern Essex, it does not predetermine our future. Our own ideas of what we wish to become as an institution will also strongly shape what comes next. What are our enrollment goals at NECC? What size institution do we want to be and what implications does that have for how students, employees, and the community experience the college? These are challenging questions. We already know what it is like to have roughly 7,000 students at Northern Essex each semester. But what if we had fewer students or significantly more? What would change and how would that affect our ideas about the institution we wish to become? This section looks at two scenarios to begin to answer these questions.

**Decline Scenario:** Suppose it is Fall 2013 but instead of having more than 7,300 students (head count), NECC has ten percent fewer: about 6,600. How would life change at the college? Assuming other factors remained constant—our facilities, the state funding formula—the following projections can be made about several important variables that influence life at the college (for full analysis see appendix):

*Budget:* A ten percent decline in enrollment would, perhaps surprisingly, not reduce the allocation of funds the college receives from the state based on the current formula. However, NECC would receive about \$2 million less in student tuition and fees, about a five percent loss to our approximately \$41 million budget in fiscal year 2014.

*Facilities:* Since we used less than a quarter of the capacity we have for teaching space in Fall 2013 to accommodate more than 7,300 students, a decline would mean even more available classrooms and labs, especially at peak morning and evening enrollment times. Similarly, competition would be reduced at peak times for parking; last fall only the Dimitry and Amesbury lots in Lawrence were regularly full and the Spurk lot was crowded but not full during the morning rush. Student services of various types—food service, bookstore, library, gym, etc.—would face less demand in this scenario.

*Academic Programs and Faculty:* If a ten percent enrollment drop hit all programs equally, it would have the greatest impact on those degree and certificate programs with fewer than forty students since they tend to already have more problems filling classes. All programs would likely run fewer sections. The Academic Affairs budget could lose almost \$1 million each year. This would mean fewer teaching opportunities for DCE instructors, and it is likely that some restructuring or even closing of some academic programs would occur with potential losses of full-time faculty and administration positions as well.

*Academic Advising and Enrollment Services:* A ten percent fall in enrollment would probably have a relatively minimal impact on the Academic Advising area. Assuming the ten professional academic advisors remain on staff, their current caseload of 550 students would be eased to some extent. This would allow them to provide even more holistic advising and also require less help from admissions staff who step in to advise at peak periods. The recruiters, in turn, could spend more time seeking new

students. Fewer students could also have a positive impact on the Student Success Center and its ability to work with additional students that it does not currently serve.

*Internal Support Resources and Staff (Information Technology/Facilities/Marketing Communications):* A ten percent drop in enrollment might lead to a slight decline in student demand for services in the IT area—Helpdesk calls, wireless access requests, computer lab usage—but both Marketing and Facilities would see little (if any) decline in the need for their support services. In fact, Marketing Communications would certainly be expected to increase advertising and promotional activities in an attempt to attract more prospects into the recruitment funnel. On a positive note, because these three areas all have fairly significant “operational” budgets, it would be possible to absorb cuts without having to negatively impact staff positions. However, budget cuts would obviously result in some level of cutback in services offered to both students and employees. IT might have to hold off on buying new equipment, software, and infrastructure and postpone new initiatives or cut back on consultant/project support services. Facilities might have to further defer needed maintenance, hold off on purchasing new equipment and furniture, and postpone new construction projects. Marketing Communications might have to cut back on advertising purchases, postpone new marketing initiatives, and cut back on consultant/project support services.

**Growth Scenario:** Now suppose it is Fall 2013 but student enrollment at the college is 30 percent higher than it actually was: over 9,500 students (head count)! How would life at NECC differ? Take a look at the projections for the same variables we examined above:

*Budget:* A thirty percent increase in enrollment would add just over \$333,000 to the college budget from the state’s funding formula, holding all other factors constant. The rise in tuition and fees from the additional students—over \$6 million—would dwarf the impact of the funding formula, however. Thus NECC could have a 15 percent higher budget than it actually did this fiscal year.

*Facilities:* At first glance, it would appear that Northern Essex has more than enough teaching space to absorb 30 percent more students. Last fall we only used 23%<sup>1</sup> of our classroom capacity and that was before the new El Hefni Center and added space at 420 Common came online. However, because our teaching space is close to full many mornings—and in the evenings in places like the Dimitry Building in Lawrence—we could only serve a small number of the new students at those times. Besides fuller classrooms at the peak, the additional students would need to take courses in the afternoon and evenings, online, or the crowding at the peak times could be eased with the use of more hybrid courses. A 30 percent increase in enrollment would severely test parking capacity. In Haverhill, almost all lots would be full at peak times in the morning. Waiting times for a parking spot and traffic delays would increase. In Lawrence, the new students would overwhelm the space available in the Dimitry and Haffner Center lots and force many more cars into the Buckley garage. Although college facilities could probably handle a 30 percent increase in enrollment, it would be and feel much more crowded than it

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<sup>1</sup> 23% classroom capacity assumes 100% utilization of all rooms for times weekends and afternoons, etc.

does now, especially at peak times. Student services of various types—food service, bookstore, library, gym, etc.—would face much higher demand in this scenario and crowding and waits would increase.

*Academic Programs and Faculty:* A thirty percent rise in Fall 2013 enrollment would mean that over 9,500 students were attending Northern Essex. An increase of this size seems unlikely given current demographic and economic trends without some substantial action by the college, such as opening new academic programs, strongly increasing the number of distance education or international students at the college, or collaborating with an expanding industry that has significant educational needs. The impact on existing programs would depend on the overall cause of the enrollment increase. If it developed from either greater penetration into existing markets—Lawrence, southern New Hampshire—or a distance education or international expansion, many current programs would probably benefit. If it resulted from a specific change in the economy or new partnership with an industry sector—such as the building trades—it would have the most benefit for academic programs that serve the growing demand. Overall, 300 additional sections would be necessary each semester and as many as 20 new full-time faculty would be needed as well as many more DCE instructors. However, if the enrollment increase resulted from a conscious decision to create new academic programs or expand distance or international education, substantial upfront investment might be required. In such a case, the college might have to trim small or costly existing programs to create the working capital to pursue such strategies.

*Academic Advising and Enrollment Services:* With more than 2,000 new students to advise, 20 new full-time faculty would only absorb 360 of these. Currently, the professional Academic Advising staff is at capacity during peak times. It simply could not serve the additional 180 students per staffer this increase would involve. To keep their current student caseload, three new full-time academic advising staff would be required. If this many new advisors were not hired, the current time to work holistically with students would fall, potentially hurting retention and graduation rates. Admission/recruitment staff would have no choice but to help the advising staff during peak registration times, but their own work would also rise significantly with so many new students. Financial aid, registrar, and student life staffing would have to grow to meet the higher demand.

*Internal Support Resources and Staff (Information Technology/Facilities/Marketing Communications):* A thirty percent rise in enrollment would potentially increase IT, Facilities, and MarComm departmental budgets significantly, but the demand on these resources would also increase dramatically. It is also very likely that in order to achieve this kind of unprecedented growth, the college would have already had to allocate a much higher percentage of the current overall institutional budget to these three departments (for recruitment, customer service, and outreach activities, facility upgrades, etc.). With 2,200 more students and more faculty and staff as well, IT would probably have to provide more computer lab support, equipment, and space; hardware and software for employees; Helpdesk support and training services; and online learning and wireless access support and infrastructure. The Facilities Department would need additional security, cleaning, and maintenance staff and have to deal with increased wear and tear on space. Marketing Communication would need to provide more internal communication support services, more student engagement and retention-based communication support services, and more social media and online communication support services.

## Conclusions

What do the historical data and the projections for decline and growth suggest about what we should set for enrollment goals at NECC? Clearly, the scenario involving a ten percent decline in enrollment carries mainly negative consequences. Especially with our growing capacity of teaching space, we do not want to decline from current enrollment levels.

The thirty percent enrollment increase scenario features both positive and negative effects. Since current conditions in our external environment make this type of growth seem unlikely, it could only occur with significant, perhaps radical, changes in the college's approach to its programming. Our choice, therefore, seems to be the following:

1. Either seek significantly increased enrollments in the future by changing the college's approach to programming, including serving new populations, expanding distance or international education, or creating new types of academic degrees and credentials, or
2. Seek more modest growth through proactive, but perhaps not radical, steps like more effective recruiting and smaller revisions to current academic programming.

This is not a choice that the Recruitment Committee alone can make. It requires deep and sustained discussion within the college and external communities. If the leadership of the college wishes to pursue the first option, we recommend that it launch such a discussion in the new academic year. If and when such a discussion leads to a decision to seek substantial enrollment growth, it is likely a revision of this Recruitment Plan would be necessary.

Whether we eventually pursue the significant growth option or not, in the short term the college needs to at least maintain, and hopefully grow modestly, its enrollment. The rest of this report, therefore, focuses on recommendations aimed at such a strategy over the next three years.

## **Strategies for Enrollment Growth**

### Goals

Given current demographic and economic trends in our region, we recommend aiming for modest growth in our student body: a four percent increase in full-time equivalent enrollment over Fall 2013 by Fall 2017. An important next step for the Recruitment Committee and a larger team that will implement this plan is to set goals for more specific components of our overall enrollment, including projections for academic programs, for towns in our service area, and particular groups of students (considering age, gender, ethnicity, and other demographic factors).

## Short Term Actions

The following steps have been identified for the Admission & Recruitment Department and college to meet the proposed increase in enrollments and to improve current student recruitment outreach efforts. It will require institutional support in terms of budget, resources and a shared mission.

**Improve Infrastructure and recruitment processes:** During the process of developing the Recruitment Plan several areas were identified to improve prospect or returning student conversion:

- Develop a business process that captures data for the Recruit Module on prospective/new students who are not in Banner when they visit either of the One-Stop Student Services Centers. (Deadline May 31, 2014)
- In the months of March and April review students who stopped out at the end of Fall 2013, along with current students with outstanding balances, both of whom would be prevented from participating in advanced registration. Reach out to students who appear likely to succeed if they were allowed to register for the fall and develop a process to have them apply for retention scholarship money to pay their balance if they commit to participating in advance registration. (Outreach Complete by March 31, 2014; Awarding/Enrollment Completed by May 31, 2014; Initial Data Analysis Available July 2014 and Retention Data Available September 2014.)
- Enhance the current outreach to applicants to move them through next steps from applicant through enrollment. (Process Deadline: Mid May 2014; Ongoing outreach throughout the Academic Year)
- Engage more college staff and faculty in recruiting prospective students to include targeted outreach by program or interests. This will be piloted in spring 2014 with the Athletics Department. Develop a business process that will use technology to report and assist with the outreach. Suggested outreach includes postcards, email, letters, events and phone calls. (Develop a process and begin to pilot by June 30, 2014; Phased Role Out to all interest indicators by October 2014 and all Programs by February 2015)
- Develop documentation for the college faculty and program areas interested in doing recruitment that would provide best practices and ideas. (Deadline: December 2014)
- Develop a process to reach out to applicants from the last three years who did not matriculate but completed the Academic Placement Assessment with the goal of moving applicants to enrollment. (Deadline June 2014)
- Set and meet standards for follow up to new recruits which would include an electronic communication within 24 hours of inquiry and a personal contact within one week by phone or hand written note. (Deadline: April 30, 2014)
- Develop a college wide communication plan for new prospects that includes faculty, students, and extensive and timely follow-up efforts by mail, telephone, e-mail and personal contacts with prospective students by staff, current students and College faculty. (Deadline February 2015)
- Include a recruitment slant to social media presence for NECC. An example would be hashtags that allow participants to tweet about recruitment or college events. A plan will need to be developed to create a new and prospective student following and social media buzz during the Fall 2014 semester. (Deadline October 2014)

- Formalize the process to reach out to former NECC students who stopped out, were in good academic standing and encourage them to return to the college. (Develop/Document Process by April 30, 2014; Begin outreach to this group by June 2014)
- Fully utilize the Recruitment module in Banner and document an Admissions & Recruitment Business Process which will allow for a comprehensive territory and funnel management strategy, better communication and increased tracking and data analysis from Inquiry to Applicant by Spring 2015. (Deadline March 2015)
- Implement an online student registration form for tours/information sessions to be completed by Summer 2014. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Focus our outreach efforts to prospective students who complete the FAFSA before applying to the College by developing a weekly report of students who have listed NECC as a first or second choice for college by Summer 2014. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Create a calendar that outlines what is happening in the Merrimack Valley in the way of upcoming events and identify staff and faculty across campus to participate in support of the recruitment efforts of the College. Examples include Canobie Lake Education Days, sporting events, fairs and festivals. (Deadline June 20, 2014)

**Improve communication, marketing and outreach** with Prospective Students: The Noel Levitz Marketing and Student Recruitment Practices Benchmark Report lists the following as the top five modes of communication to students. Included are ways that we can improve our current communication processes to ensure we are using current best practices:

- *Text Messaging*: Leverage text messaging and include opt in/out features and expand beyond emergency notifications to include important enrollment announcements and campus events. Eighty-six percent of students prefer a text reminder for next task (Castleman). (Deadline: July 15, 2014)
- *Flash media embedded in the campus website*: Showcase engaged students having fun or sharing important helpful information about financial aid, how to choose a major or engaged in campus activities or class. (Deadline October 2014)
- *Publications*: A search piece/view book is currently under development and expected to be on hand in Spring 2014 for distribution at college fairs, high schools, events and open houses. Other publications aimed at specific program offerings are also needed. (Traditional Student Piece by April 2014; Non-traditional Student Piece by May 2014 *Recruiting pages on the website*: Develop a front facing web page that is truly focused on recruitment of new students. Although a website redesign would be a long term goal, short term changes need to occur on the Getting Started at NECC pages that simplify wording and add visual cues. (Simplify existing content and develop long term timeline by May 31, 2014)
- *Social media*: Expand current practices to include additional recruitment focused outreach and foster interaction between prospective/new students and current students and or faculty. Use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Engage prospects in NECC social media forums such as having a "Tweet with the Director of Aid". (Deadline: November 2014)

In addition to the communication means noted above, the following outreach and marketing activities will be implemented over the next year to increase the number of prospects needed to attain our goal and to improve yield and conversion of recruits to applicants and applicants to enrolled students:

- Expand current outreach in southern New Hampshire high schools, businesses, and community agencies. Admission and Recruitment staff currently visits 40 local Massachusetts and New Hampshire high schools. Expand this number to 44 to include Raymond, Nashua, Portsmouth and Exeter. (Begin in April 2014)
- Expand current outreach to GED recipients from our service area particularly in southern New Hampshire. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Develop and pilot an accepted student day in late May/early June with larger feeder high schools that results in registration before summer break. ( Explore feasibility of a small pilot by June 2014, Deadline May 2015)
- Offer NECC nights at local high schools that are tied to an interest, such as the drama club, academic area or sport and is led by students/or faculty and include an admission piece. (Deadline February 2015)
- Strengthen partnerships in key communities including businesses, agencies, and religious organizations to ensure that NECC is mentioned when an employee, client, or member seeks information or expresses an interest in college by having staff reach out to at least two organizations weekly. (Deadline February 2015)
- Offer Financial Aid nights at the local and southern New Hampshire area high schools for students and parents. NECC's Financial Aid Department would take the lead with assistance from Admission and Recruitment staff. The goal would be to conduct two to four Financial Aid nights by June 2014. (Visit all willing High Schools annually beginning October 2014)
- Expand the current outreach to high school dual enrollment and contract students who take classes at NECC to convert them to matriculated students by offering information sessions specifically for high school students that have already earned credit at NECC. (Begin by June 2014)
- Develop and expand marketing specific advertisements to prospective New Hampshire students to support additional outreach in Southern New Hampshire. An example might include developing a cost comparison piece that showcases NECC competitive pricing vs NH colleges. (Deadline September 13, 2014)
- Target noncredit adults for credit coursework through a direct marketing piece. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Introduce a direct marketing campaign aimed at promoting CIS, Liberal Arts and Business programs that can be now be completed in Lawrence starting this fall. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Develop large NECC posters that are not time sensitive to advertise NECC at local community agencies and schools. (Deadline June 30, 2014)
- Promote NECC pride by saturating new students with NECC SWAG or a QR code in the acceptance packet that brings the prospect to a video of the college President welcoming them and paired with student testimonials. Other ideas include having the QR code on an event marketing piece that directs the prospect to the prior year's event, such as College for a Day,

and gives the prospect a glimpse of the event. (\$7,000-\$10,000 would provide minimal materials that could be sent inside accept letters and/or distributed during the recruitment process, for example an NECC decal, lanyards and drawstring bags – timeline contingent on funding)

### Long Term Actions

Based on the population, labor, and enrollment trends noted earlier in this document, the following list includes academic program opportunities and suggestions that the College Wide Recruitment Committee would like to explore over the next few months with a goal of having concrete suggestions by September 2014.

- Increase outreach and marketing to the adult population which is projected to remain stable in Haverhill and grow in Lawrence. Publicize non-credit career offerings and convenience of distance education. Consider marketing General Studies as a vehicle for self-design/individualized preparation for careers.
- Explore options to expand business programs. One example may be to review the Accelerated Business Program which would include researching other successful programs such as the one offered at Southern New Hampshire University.
- Consider developing additional programs in CIS or Networking-Security and Database as it aligns with the labor market sector and builds on existing resources.
- Explore opportunities to reach populations of adult learners or those without transportation or easy access to public transportation by developing NECC Centers in strategic locations on the borders of Massachusetts and offer hybrid or online courses at a Mall type location for the customer service industry, perhaps in the Salisbury area.
- With the large interest in health programs—as seen in the General Studies Health Specialization and the growth in Liberal Arts Biology—the college should consider updating the Biology and Physical Sciences programs to Associates in Science rather than Associate in Arts followed by rigorous marketing encouraging student to begin your Pre-Med, Pre-Pharmacy, Pre-Dental, Environmental Science or Chemistry program at Northern Essex.
- Further develop advisory groups for career-focused programs. Strengthen community relations with employers while keeping curriculum current.
- Each academic program will set specific enrollment goals for the next three years during the 2014-2015 academic year.

In order to develop and execute the appropriate longer term recruitment strategies and marketing tactics, it is important that the institution conducts a comprehensive external scan to gather key data about ourselves, our prospects, and our marketplace. This external research should include: an academic program demand analysis, a baseline/customer analysis, a brand/image analysis, a competitive analysis, a market analysis, a customer needs analysis, and a performance analysis. The data we gather will be used to help all future outreach and communication activities. We recommend funding such a scan in fiscal year 2015 and the expected cost would be in the range of \$90,000.

Resources should be identified to allow for a greater focus on improving the college's inbound marketing strategy and approach. This will include (via a collaboration between Enrollment Services and

Marketing Communications) an overhaul of our SEO (search engine optimization) and online lead generation strategy, an upgrade of our recruitment-focused web presence, an upgrade of our prospect engagement and two-way communication strategy, and an implementation of a lead tracking and data analysis protocol. The goal is to develop a process that will result in an increased prospect conversion rate (turning a higher percentage of inquiries into enrolled students). The Marketing and Communications Department is seeking new positions in the FY15 budget to help support this work.

If we hope to move ahead with the new approaches outlined in this plan, the college is going to have to address the current “over loading” of internal resources. One way to accomplish this is to begin to say “no” to some of the non-essential initiatives and projects that continuously put a strain on precious manpower. Many of the marketing and recruitment ideas outlined in this document have been on the table for several years, but there simply hasn’t been enough available resources to implement them in a timely manner. In many instances, the idea is the easy part...having sufficient staff/time/money to execute them can be another story. Some of the types of time consuming work that are drawing resources away from mission critical initiatives are: internal communications with staff, projects without a direct connection to recruitment/retention/fundraising, event support/logistics, and projects supporting federal and state requirements (accessibility, translations, etc.). Of course, in a few cases we can’t afford to ignore some of these needs. However, in many other instances, the possibility exists to prioritize requests in a way that allows us to focus our resources in support of achieving our essential recruitment objectives.

#### Implementation and Accountability

The many action steps in this plan (and others that will be identified over time) will require coordinated implementation from multiple units in the college. Although many details remain to be determined, the basic organizational structure of the effort will be as follows:

The Recruitment Committee formed last fall and responsible for developing this plan will continue to exist as a body to ensure accountability and broad feedback on implementation of the plan. It will meet twice a semester and receive reports from those directly charged with implementing the plan on its progress.

Three senior managers at the college with overall responsibility for the units that will do most of the implementation of the Recruitment Plan will form a small steering group to establish priorities, support line managers with resources, and ensure progress on the plan. This steering group will meet weekly to hear progress reports from Academic Affairs, Enrollment Services, Marketing, and any other units involved in implementation.

Each of the action steps in the plan will be assigned to a specific team for implementation. Sometimes that team may consist of a single unit at the college that is positioned to carry out the action step. Whenever possible, however, the teams will include staff from multiple units to ensure collaboration and that the multifaceted strategy in the plan is implemented. These teams will be formed in May 2014 and work with the steering group on establishing priorities for action.

**College Wide Recruitment Committee Members**

<b>Bill Heineman</b>	<b>David Gingerella</b>	<b>Michael Penta</b>
<b>Dina Brown</b>	<b>Emily Gonzalez</b>	<b>Joan Scionti</b>
<b>Laurie Dimitrov</b>	<b>Lindsay Graham</b>	<b>Chuck Phair</b>
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## Appendix: Imagining the Future: Scenarios for Growth and Decline in Enrollment

Although the past provides important context for understanding current enrollment challenges at Northern Essex, it does not predetermine our future. Our own ideas of what we wish to become as an institution will also strongly shape what comes next. What are our enrollment goals at NECC? What size institution do we want to be and what implications does that have for how students, employees, and the community experience the college? These are challenging questions. We already know what it is like to have roughly 7000 students at Northern Essex each semester. But what if we had fewer students or significantly more? What would change and how would that affect our ideas about the institution we wish to become? This section looks at two scenarios to try to start to answer these questions.

**Decline Scenario:** Suppose it is Fall 2013 but instead of having more than 7,300 students (head count), NECC has ten percent fewer: about 6,600. How would life change at the college? Assuming other factors remained constant—our facilities, the state funding formula—the following projections can be made about several important variables that influence life at the college:

*Budget:* A ten percent decline in enrollment would, perhaps surprisingly, not reduce the allocation of funds the college receives from the state based on the current formula. However, NECC would receive about \$2 million less in student tuition and fees, about a five percent loss to our approximately \$40 million budget in fiscal year 2014.

*Facilities:* If we measure the capacity of our teaching space at Northern Essex as completely full classrooms from early morning until late evening Monday through Saturday, we used less than 25 percent of that capacity in Fall 2013 to accommodate more than 7300 students. Of course, students tend to take classes at certain times, so mid-morning and early evenings featured a much higher percentage of usage last fall. If there were ten percent fewer students, those peak times would have been somewhat emptier. What about parking capacity? On the Haverhill campus, recent enrollment levels have not filled all the available space; only the Spurk lot approaches being full at peak times between 9:30 and 11:30 am. Parking is more limited in Lawrence, where the Dimitry Building lot is full most of each morning and early evening. A ten percent drop in enrollment, therefore, would probably provide more available parking in Lawrence, especially in the Dimitry lot, and also in Haverhill, which would ease some of the crowding in the Spurk lot at peak times. Student services of various types—food service, bookstore, library, gym, etc.—would likely have less demand in this scenario.

We currently have 29,539 USF (usable square feet) of office space in Lawrence and 67,230 USF in Haverhill. A usable square foot is defined as office space, storage space, conference space and other common areas. Northern Essex has 1048 full and part-time employees, which comes to about 92 square feet per person or an area around 9.5' by 9.5'. These numbers aren't entirely accurate as some part-time employees (no exact number) share workspaces. Federal guidelines sets optimum USF at 190 per person (or 13.8 ft<sup>2</sup>). Northern Essex's 92 USF per employee puts us around the 7th percentile. A ten percent drop in credit enrollment, to a headcount number of 6617, would likely not impact office space. Past employment history at NECC vs. FTE headcount does not have a correlation, even when accounting for an annual delay (i.e. a decrease in FTE one year results in layoffs the following year). If the drop in enrollment did result in proportional staff cuts, there would not be an appreciable effect at the College.

If we assume a direct correlation, employment would change from 1048 to 943 full- and part-time employees. This would only increase individual USF to 103.

*Academic Programs and Faculty:* A ten percent drop in enrollment in Fall 2013 could occur for many reasons but something of that size would probably be driven by broad trends in regional demographics and the economy. It could be that within those trends, enrollment in certain academic programs might be particularly badly hurt. For instance, a crash in the information technology sector could hurt our Computer Information Science programs. Without knowing the circumstances leading to this overall reduction in enrollment, however, it makes sense to assume that this reduction would hit all programs equally. For the programs with more than 40 students in them—almost half of the more than 70 degree and certificate programs NECC offers—the impact of this decline would be relatively minimal. Fewer sections of some courses might run. For the more than 50 percent of programs with fewer than 40 students, however, a ten percent drop in enrollment could be more problematic. Such programs tend to suffer chronic challenges because that small a number of students makes it hard to fill courses, maintain student schedules, and keep faculty. Quite a few of these programs, however, are options or certificates that tend to have courses also used in other programs. So the enrollment decline might not lead to severe consequences for them. For others that do not share as many courses with other programs, it could force course cancellations and ultimately restructuring or even elimination of programs.

The real impact on programs would probably result from the change in budget caused by this loss of enrollment. As already explained, an almost \$2 million revenue decrease from lower fees and tuition would occur. Academic Affairs has roughly 45 percent of the college's total budget and if it took a proportionate cut, it would lose \$900,000. Operating expenses are only about 5 percent of the roughly \$18 million Academic Affairs budget, which means they would be almost completely wiped out if this cut was concentrated there. In other words, personnel would have to take the majority of this cut. Given the assumption that the enrollment losses would hit each program equally, a significant part of these personnel cuts might come in the DCE budget as the number of sections of some courses drop. However, it is difficult to imagine achieving a \$900,000 cut without some program changes that could result in a reduction in full-time faculty and administrators. Needless to say, this would be painful.

What impact would these cuts have on faculty? If there is a 10% decrease in overall enrollments, the greatest impact would be on adjunct faculty. There would be a reduction of 70 sections and up to as many adjunct faculty. Unless even more day DCE sections were shifted to full-time faculty, there could be a loss of 34 Day sections, which translates to the workload of approximately 7 full-time faculty.

The impact of these changes would vary by discipline and academic program. For instance, if ten percent fewer sections were offered, two fewer Accounting sections would be available and likely lead to less demand for DCE faculty. A similar impact would occur in Criminal Justice. In Biology, seven fewer sections would run, which equals a full-time workload for a Day faculty member plus four fewer DCE sections. The same impact would be felt in English where the enrollment decline would mean nine fewer sections. For programs and disciplines with smaller numbers of students, the impact could be more profound. Closure of any programs—although probably quite limited with a ten percent enrollment decline—would likely result in loss of both full-time and DCE faculty jobs.

Thus, overall, a ten percent enrollment decline might leave most Academic Affairs programs intact, but almost all would probably feel some impact and a few would probably feel a much greater negative impact. Bottom line: this kind of enrollment decline would not be good news for Academic Affairs.

*Academic Advising and Enrollment Services:* A ten percent fall in enrollment would probably have a relatively minimal impact on the Academic Advising area. Currently there are 10 professional academic advisors and about 110 full-time faculty serving over 7300 students. That number of faculty can serve up to 2000 of the students under contractual requirements. CPAC in Haverhill and Lawrence must handle the rest and during peak times they are aided by admissions staff. The enrollment decrease probably would not affect faculty advising much except in programs that could close. In CPAC, the decline could have several potentially positive effects if staffing did not drop. While the Academic Advising staff would remain extremely busy at peak times, there would be a slight drop in the number of students potentially enabling admissions staff to focus on recruitment versus advising. Professional advisors would be able to advise and follow students in an even more holistic way--an approach that has been embraced by Enrollment Services and the college as a whole. This approach helps to increase retention and graduation rates. This could also have a positive impact on the Student Success Center and its ability to work with additional students that they do not currently serve.

*Internal Support Resources and Staff (Information Technology/Facilities/Marketing Communications):* A ten percent drop in credit enrollment would potentially result in a 5% budget decrease for the IT (\$180,000), Facilities (\$240,000), and MarComm (\$60,000) departments. However, the demand on these resources would likely remain fairly close to current levels. With approximately 700 fewer credit students to serve, there might be some slight drop off for the IT area with things like Helpdesk calls, wireless access requests, and computer lab usage, but both Marketing and Facilities would see little (if any) decline in the need for their support services. In fact, Marketing Communications would certainly be expected to increase advertising and promotional activities in attempt to attract more prospects into the recruitment funnel.

On a positive note, because these three areas all have fairly significant "operational" budgets, it would be possible to absorb cuts without having to negatively impact staff positions. However, budget cuts would obviously result in some level of cutback in services offered to both students and employees. IT might have to hold off on buying new, upgraded, or replacement equipment, software, and infrastructure and postpone one or more major new initiatives or cut back on consultant/project support services. Facilities might have to further defer needed maintenance, hold off on purchasing new or replacement equipment and furniture, and postpone one or more new construction projects. Marketing Communications might have to cut back on advertising purchases, postpone new marketing initiatives, and cut back on consultant/project support services.

As departments are forced to trim their operational expenditures, the natural next step would be to evaluate all project priorities and focus mainly on those that are deemed to be the most mission critical. Less money definitely means less services, so the question becomes strategic prioritization.

**Growth Scenario:** Now suppose it is Fall 2013 but student enrollment at the college is 30 percent higher than it actually was: over 9500 students (head count)! How would life at NECC differ? Take a look at the projections for the same variables we examined before:

*Budget:* A thirty percent increase in enrollment would add just over \$333,000 to the college budget from the state's funding formula, holding all other factors constant. The rise in tuition and fees from the additional students—over \$6 million—would dwarf the impact of the funding formula, however. Thus NECC could have a 15 percent higher budget than it actually did this fiscal year.

*Facilities:* At first glance, it would appear that Northern Essex has more than enough teaching space to absorb 30 percent more students. Last fall we only used 23% of our classroom capacity and that was before the new El Hefni Building and added space at 420 Common came online. However, because our teaching space is close to full many mornings—and in the evenings in places like the Dimitry Building in Lawrence—we could only serve a small number of the new students at those times. Besides fuller classrooms at the peak, the additional students would need to take courses in the afternoon and evenings, online, or the crowding at the peak times could be eased with the use of more hybrid courses. A 30 percent increase in enrollment would have severely tested parking capacity last fall, however. In Haverhill, almost all lots would be full at least at peak times in the morning. Waiting times for a parking spot and traffic delays would increase. In Lawrence, the new students would overwhelm the space available in the Dimitry and Haffner Center lots and force many more cars into the Buckley garage. Although in Spring 2014, NECC will gain new parking spots in the Lawrence Goudreaux lot, the added teaching space on that campus is likely to increase enrollments there and quickly absorb this new capacity. Although college facilities could probably handle a 30 percent increase in enrollment, it would be and feel much more crowded than it does now, especially at peak times. Student services of various types—food service, bookstore, library, gym, etc.—would face much higher demand in this scenario and crowding and waits would undoubtedly increase.

While there has been little correlation between change in FTEs and total employment at NECC, we can reasonably assume that a thirty percent increase in student enrollment (to 9,558) would put a significant strain on existing personnel resources while providing an influx of resources that can be put towards increasing employment. If we assume there was a corresponding increase in employees, total employment would increase to 1,362. Without an increase in office space, the per-person USF would drop to 71, or an area 8.4 ft<sup>2</sup>, which would drop us into the 3rd percentile. There are a number of possible solutions we could do to deal with overcrowded workspace, but each face problems. We could convert some classroom space, but that would be in high demand with the enrollment increase. We could purchase or build a new building, but that would be very expensive. Cheaper alternatives might include leasing modular buildings or expanding current facilities. We could also encourage even more space sharing and also telecommuting, which might make particular sense if the college was pushing distance education.

*Academic Programs and Faculty:* A thirty percent rise in Fall 2013 enrollment would mean that over 9500 students were attending Northern Essex. An increase of this size seems unlikely given current demographic and economic trends without some substantial action by the college. New groups of students would need to be targeted. That could happen in multiple ways, including opening new

academic programs, strongly increasing the number of distance education students at the college, or collaborating with an expanding industry that has significant educational needs. It would take multiple new academic programs to produce an increase of this size. Without some sort of economic change occurring to create strong demand for students in a particular field, the college would probably have to launch new programs in existing curriculum areas (like Health), and push into potentially promising new areas, such as green technology, banking, and trades (HVAC, machine tools, automotive, etc.). Many of these new programs would probably require new expertise, faculty, facilities, partnerships, and resources for the college. Southern New Hampshire University has already shown how investing in distance education can rapidly increase enrollments. In just a few years it created online enrollments that are ten times more than its traditional student base. This would require significant new technical infrastructure, online course development, marketing, additional faculty and staff, and the resources to seek authorization from most of the other states in the country to offer distance education courses to their residents. It is not clear at this time that there is a growing industry in the region that would have educational needs strong enough to trigger an enrollment increase of this kind. It is more likely that Northern Essex would have to tap into multiple sectors, again including industries and occupations that the college has paid less attention to in the past, such as the building trades.

The impact on existing programs would depend on the overall cause of the enrollment increase. If it developed from either greater penetration into existing markets—Lawrence, southern New Hampshire—or a distance education expansion, many current programs would probably benefit. If it resulted from a specific change in the economy or new partnership with an industry sector, it would have the most benefit for academic programs that serve the growing demand. For instance, a growing need for green technology workers would likely increase enrollments in engineering and science-related programs. Any program that grew in enrollments would obviously offer more sections and need new faculty (DCE and/or Day), and perhaps more support personnel, facilities, etc.

A 30 percent enrollment increase would lead to a \$6 million rise in revenues, or \$2.7 million more for the Academic Affairs budget. Much of this would be absorbed by the need for more faculty, staff, and facilities. Again, the impact on existing academic programs would likely depend on the cause of the enrollment increase. If it came from better marketing or the growth of some new regional economic sector, the financial benefits might flow to many programs. However, if the enrollment increase resulted from a conscious decision to create new academic programs or expand distance education, substantial upfront investment might be required. In such a case, the college might have to trim small or costly existing programs to create the working capital to pursue such strategies.

With a 30% increase in enrollments, the overall impact on faculty and classes would be huge. Again based on fall 2013 data, there would be an increase of 209 DCE sections. An increased DCE workload would likely require additional expenses for healthcare benefits. Adjunct faculty would need access to shared office space throughout the college. With such an increase, the college would need 20 additional FT faculty to cover an additional 102 day sections. The college would have to identify 10 faculty offices for their use. There would be an increased workload for Human Resources, administrators who oversee the contract and IT in particular.

The impact on particular faculty would depend on the impact of the enrollment increase on programs. Newly created programs would lead to demand for new full-time and DCE instructors. The same could be true in existing programs. It is possible that full timers would take on additional courses in lieu of reassigned time to meet greater student demand. An increase of seven Accounting sections could require a new full-time faculty member and two additional DCE sections. In Criminal Justice—where most sections are currently taught by Day faculty—the increase of five sections might be met totally with new DCE instructors. Twenty-two new Biology sections could lead to the hiring of as many as two new full-time faculty and the addition of 16 DCE taught courses! In English an 11 section rise could result in the hire of a Day faculty member and six new DCE sections.

Thus, overall, a thirty percent enrollment increase seems likely to affect individual academic programs differently. Although many would undoubtedly benefit from increased budget resources and new personnel, it is possible that some might not change much and others might actually decline or be cut. Academically speaking, it seems reasonably likely that the college might look quite different in this scenario. Since an enrollment increase of this size is not probable without an unexpected change in the environment or concerted action by the college, it is probable that significant changes in academic programs would be likely. This could include the addition of multiple new programs, different types of programs developing, or a greater reliance on distance education in the programs.

*Academic Advising and Enrollment Services:* With more than 2000 new students to advise, even 20 new full-time faculty would only absorb 360 of these. Currently, the professional Academic Advising staff is at capacity during peak times. They simply could not serve the additional 180 students per staffer this increase would involve. To keep their current average student caseload to 550, three new full-time academic advising staff would be required. Additional office space would also be needed for them, which would be particularly challenging even in the new Lawrence CPAC. If this many new advisors were not hired, the current time to work holistically with students would fall, potentially hurting retention and graduation rates. Admission/recruitment staff would have no choice but to help the advising staff during peak registration times, but their own work would also rise significantly with so many new students. Financial aid, registrar, and student life staffing would have to grow to meet the higher demand. This could cause an additional budget strain even though there would be a large increase in tuition and fee revenue.

*Internal Support Resources and Staff (Information Technology/Facilities/Marketing Communications):* A thirty percent rise in credit enrollment would potentially increase IT (\$540,000), Facilities (\$700,000), and MarComm (\$180,000) departmental budgets significantly, but the demand on these resources would also increase dramatically. It is also very likely that in order to achieve this kind of unprecedented growth, the college would have already had to allocate a much higher percentage of the current overall institutional budget to these three departments (for recruitment activities, for customer service activities, for outreach activities, for facility upgrades, etc.).

This additional money might indeed help fund some new growth/expansion/development initiatives, but a 30% increase in demand would also theoretically offset much of the potential budgetary gain. With 2200 more students and more faculty and staff as well, IT would probably have to provide more computer lab support, equipment, and space; computer hardware and software for employees;

Helpdesk support and training services; and online learning and wireless access support and infrastructure. The Facilities Department would need additional security, cleaning, and maintenance staff and have to deal with increased wear and tear on space. Marketing Communication would need to provide more internal communication support services, more student engagement and retention-based communication support services, and more social media and online communication support services.

Given the increased demand on infrastructure support services triggered by a 30% jump in enrollment, some (but not all) of the budget increases would be absorbed by purchasing more equipment, hiring more staff, and extending existing contracts. In spite of this required spending, there would certainly be additional funds to allocate towards new initiatives. The facilities area in particular, and to a slightly lesser degree the IT area, would likely have a significant amount of “new” money to target towards long overdue purchases, upgrades, and enhancements. Though a rise in enrollment would bring with it an increase in demand, the overall positive impact definitely outweighs any potential challenges.

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