



Community Colleges Must Be *Resilient by Design*

CAMPUS DISCUSSION TOOLKIT

Business as Usual No Longer Works. Plan for a Future of Change.



CAMPUS FACILITATOR GUIDE

It is likely that no college, no matter how healthy it currently may be, can continue to operate with business as usual; all will be pressured to adapt or risk becoming irrelevant or insolvent. Even further, these changes will take place at a faster pace than what colleges are used to, requiring rapid and ongoing adaptation.

This reality may seem daunting, but all of these factors also present an opportunity for community colleges to recommit themselves to rapid responsiveness in alignment with the public's ever-changing needs. In doing so, they can respond in a way that doubles down on the traditional mission of community colleges to propel economic mobility and growth for individuals and communities, and to help lay the foundation for civic society.



CONTENTS

Why Your College Is Planning for a Future of Change_____	3
Desired Outcomes_____	4
Your Role as a Facilitator: Encouraging Bold Thought_____	5
Planning: Start With College Leaders_____	6
Planning: Approach and Timing_____	7
Preparation: Gathering Data_____	8
Preparation: Benchmarking and Examples From Other Colleges_____	11
Preparation: Customizing and Using the PowerPoint_____	12
Facilitation Basics_____	13
Having the Discussion and Using the Discussion Guide_____	14
Strategies to Engage Participants_____	15
Follow-Up: After the Discussion_____	16
Feedback for AACC and Your State or System_____	17

Thank you for being a facilitator for *Resilient by Design* discussions. This facilitator guide and its accompanying PowerPoint will help you prepare for and conduct these sessions. If you have questions, email resilient@aacc.nche.edu.

Why Your College Is Planning for a Future of Change

The next decade will present pivotal moments for community colleges. While individual colleges and the field as a whole have made critical improvements, the accelerating pace of change — in the labor market, the economy, student demographics, and other forces — means that colleges will continually face both familiar and new challenges.

The report *Resilient by Design* identifies the forces that will shape higher education as the pace of change accelerates and the magnitude of change increases. It was prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) on behalf of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

As *Resilient by Design* explains, colleges must begin planning for a future that is quite different from the present and that will continue to evolve in new ways. More important, conditions will continue to evolve and present fresh challenges — even as expectations for accountability to both students and taxpayers rise.

This new future demands that colleges develop processes for evaluating, discussing, and rethinking their own policies, practices, priorities, and performance. It compels colleges to plan for change while ensuring a quality learning experience for all students. Most of all, it requires everyone at the college to think strategically about how to best use the college's resources — time, money, and talent — to meet its mission in a rapidly shifting future.

[Download](#) and read the *Resilient by Design* report.



Desired Outcomes

As the *Resilient by Design* report explains, colleges must become more informed so they can prepare for changes as they become clear, more nimble so they can react to new events, and more open to new ideas about how their college might operate. Thus *Resilient by Design* conversations should guide participants toward:

- ▶ Acknowledging that business as usual can no longer be effective and that the future environment will require change and reinvention.
- ▶ Understanding and preparing to act on the forces of change that already are affecting higher education and ultimately will have an impact on all colleges.
- ▶ Thinking strategically about how their college should prepare to be effective and sustainable as the future unfolds.

These discussions are not about tweaking practices or introducing a series of new initiatives. They are about rethinking the fundamental ways a college functions.

This discussion guide asks colleges to think boldly. Through these discussions, participants will ask themselves difficult questions, challenge the college's long-standing practices, and create new ways of working.



YOUR ROLE AS A FACILITATOR: ENCOURAGING BOLD THOUGHT

Many colleges are already transforming their business and educational models with practices such as partnering with employers to co-create and co-teach programs; changing their tuition pricing models; and repackaging the work of various staff and faculty roles into entirely new positions.

Maybe your college will adopt these practices; maybe you will invent new ones to meet your students' needs. Perhaps your team will reconsider the notion of what a classroom is or recommend other significant changes to your educational model. These specifics will vary from college to college. The common denominator is thinking broadly and strategically about how your colleges should evolve — while delivering a quality educational experience to all students — as the forces outlined in *Resilient by Design* unfold.

Part of your role as a facilitator is to push participants to be bold and to keep the conversation honest. In discussions, participants often default to what is most familiar. That approach will not take your college where it needs to go. The following tips can help you inspire bold, innovative, accurate thinking:

- Tell participants that you want bold, innovative thinking. Do not allow anyone to use “We’ve always done it that way” to justify any idea or recommendation.
- Help participants think through the ideas they raise and determine if these ideas will create real change. For example, ask, “If we implement this idea, what would the results be?” and discuss whether the initial idea would make an impact. Also ask, “What data might you need to see if the idea would make an impact?” and “What changes might make the idea more powerful?”
- Be conscious that a pretty significant shift in organizational culture likely will be needed, not just new policies and practices. Change management will be an ongoing requirement.
- Faculty and staff, like other human beings, often voice assumptions that are not backed up by data. Whenever possible, start the conversation with relevant data. (See Preparation: Gathering Data, page 8.) If a participant cites data or evidence without providing the source, ask, “How do you know this?”
- While you want participants to acknowledge concerns about your college’s practices or outcomes, do not let the conversation devolve into complaints. Keep the focus on solutions. And do not allow for musings along the lines of “If only we had more money.” The goal is to understand the reality and work to improve it.





Planning: Start With College Leaders

Before you begin, make a plan with the leaders of your college. After reading the *Resilient by Design* report and the Campus Discussion Guide, consider the following questions:

- ▶ What are your college's goals for the *Resilient by Design* discussions? The Campus Discussion Guide devotes one section to each of the report's central themes. As you decide which section(s) your college's discussions will focus on, consider these questions:
 - » Which of the issues raised in the report are most relevant to your students, your community, and your work?
 - » Which issues can you incorporate into your current work?
 - » Which issues should you consider for your next strategic plan?
 - » Which issues should you learn more about?
 - » How can you encourage participants to do the bold thinking required to develop innovative solutions?
- ▶ How does the strategic planning suggested by *Resilient by Design* fit with the planning you already are doing? Consider:
 - » Areas of content that dovetail with discussions that already are underway or that you already plan to have.
 - » How the report might challenge assumptions that undergird the way your college functions.
 - » Where you are in your strategic planning cycle. When does it make sense for each of your stakeholders — e.g., governing board, faculty, staff, and community partners — to get involved in this work?
- ▶ How will you approach this work with various campus audiences, including the governing board, faculty, and staff? (See Planning: Approach and Timing, page 7, for suggestions.)
- ▶ How will you engage community partners in this work? (The Community Partners Discussion Toolkit will guide you through this process.)
- ▶ What work do college leaders need to do before broadening the conversations to other campus audiences? Do college leaders need conversations about, for example, goals for the work, who should participate and when, and how much time should be invested in this planning?
- ▶ What data do you need as you begin these conversations? (See Preparation: Gathering Data, page 8, for suggestions.)
- ▶ What will you do with the results of these conversations? Who will review the notes that result from the discussions, and how will you decide what steps to take next?
- ▶ How do you plan to interact with your campus stakeholders over time and keep them engaged? (See Strategies to Engage Participants, page 15, for suggestions.)
- ▶ Will you provide suggestions to AACC for services, programs, or resources that can support work at the college level? If so, who will coordinate those suggestions? Will you communicate with your state agency or system? (See Feedback for AACC and Your State or System, page 17, for details about providing feedback to AACC.)



Planning: Approach and Timing

Resilient by Design is not about starting a lot of new initiatives. It is about planning strategically in the light of the forces that are reshaping higher education. Ideally, your college will have a series of conversations about the report's findings and how they affect your business model and your strategic planning.

These conversations should position the college to make a variety of changes, some of which may be challenging, some of which will be transformative. The work may not be easy, but ultimately, it should position your college to remain relevant — and to thrive — as it adapts to new expectations and demands.

That said, consider where your college is in its strategic planning cycle. How do the ideas raised in *Resilient by Design* fit within your current planning? Does introducing all faculty and staff to the *Resilient by Design* findings and then having detailed conversations over time make sense? Should you start with a smaller team and then expand to the full college? When should the governing board and other stakeholders get involved?

The demands for change presented in *Resilient by Design* may require multiple activities occurring over an extended timeframe. Decide how many conversations you will have with each audience, and plan a schedule of activities.

Your college's goals for these discussions (see Planning: Start With College Leaders, page 6) will help you determine how to proceed. You might use one of the following approaches:

- ▶ Provide a summary of the findings at convocation or another all-staff gathering and then have smaller meetings over time to discuss how to apply the findings at your college.
- ▶ Use another large meeting to present findings and then have breakout groups discuss the one or two issues that are most relevant to your college right now.
- ▶ Provide a summary of the findings at a faculty senate meeting and discuss how to structure sustained engagement over time.
- ▶ Identify the one, two, or three sections of the discussion guide that are most important to your college right now. Assign each section you identify to a team of faculty and staff. Then bring the teams together to discuss their ideas.
- ▶ Gather smaller groups of faculty and staff. Have a general presentation about the findings and then discussions.
- ▶ Socialize the report's findings with your governing board to begin building their appetite for the necessary changes to current practices and priorities. Also consider when to use the Additional Questions for Governing Boards section of the Campus Discussion Guide.
- ▶ Use existing meetings as a starting point for introducing the highlights of *Resilient by Design* and then follow up over time.



Preparation: Gathering Data

Once you identify your college's goals for your discussions, including which sections of the guide you will focus on, gather data that you will share with participants before or during the discussions.

Share data that reflect the current student experience and outcomes at your college. You may also choose to compare some data from your college to national data. Following are examples of data to share, along with suggestions about where you can source data you do not already have.

For each topic, work with your college's institutional research office to answer the following questions:

- ▶ What data do we already have on these topics? Which of these data are most important? What important data are we missing?
- ▶ Who will gather the additional data we need (using the sources mentioned in this guide or other locally available sources)?

WORKFORCE AND OUTCOMES DATA

- ▶ What industries and occupations in your service area are most in demand or are experiencing the greatest gap in supply? What is the service area's economic development plan, and how might that plan affect demand for education and training?

Potential sources, in addition to your internal student data, include:

- » Employment statistics and projections by industry and occupation produced by your state government; and
- » Subscription-based labor market databases, such as Lightcast or JobsEQ.

- ▶ What happens to your students when they leave your college? What percentage graduate? What percentage transfer? What percentage are employed in living-wage jobs? What percentage are no longer enrolled, have not earned a credential, and have not transferred after six years?

Potential sources, in addition to your internal student data, include:

- » Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) outcomes measures;
- » National Student Clearinghouse [StudentTracker](#);
- » National Student Clearinghouse [Postsecondary Data Partnership](#) (if you are a member);
- » National Community College Benchmark Project (if you are a member);
- » U.S. Census Bureau's [Postsecondary Employment Outcomes](#) (if your state/system participates);
- » U.S. Department of Education's [College Scorecard](#);
- » Unemployment insurance data from your state; and
- » Perkins grant or other follow-up survey data, if response rates are high.

Preparation: Gathering Data

- ▶ How many students are enrolled in each of your programs, and what employment opportunities are available to students after completing each program? What percentage of students are on track to living-wage jobs?

Potential sources, in addition to your internal student data, include:

- » [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#); and
- » Sources cited in the previous section.

ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT NEEDS DATA

- ▶ What is your current enrollment? What proportion of students are dual enrollment students? Show the five-year trend line for enrollment. Also show the 10- or 20-year trend line.
- ▶ Are the demographics in your area changing? If so, how are they changing? How do the characteristics of your current students, in terms of age, income, and race/ethnicity, compare with the characteristics of the overall population of your service area? Will the characteristics of the people in your service area be different in the future?

Potential sources, in addition to your internal student data, include:

- » Regional population statistics and projections produced by your state government;
- » High school graduate numbers compiled by your state Department of Education;
- » [Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's projections of high school graduates](#); and
- » U.S. Census Bureau population data.

- ▶ Is the number of students in the student groups you typically serve growing or shrinking?
- ▶ What kinds of educational experiences do students (and potential students) in different student groups seek?

Potential sources, in addition to your internal student data, include:

- » Center for Community College Student Engagement surveys including the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement](#), the [Survey of Entering Student Engagement](#), and the [Dual Enrollment Survey of Student Engagement](#) (if your college participates in these surveys);
- » CollegeAPP data (if you subscribe); and
- » Other survey/focus group data.

- ▶ What percentage of your students have food or housing insecurity?

A potential source of data is the [Hope Center Student Basic Needs Survey](#) (if your institution participates).

FINANCIAL DATA

- ▶ What are the trends in your college's revenue? (Include data about trends in state and local funding as well as trends in tuition dollars.) How are revenues related to student enrollment characteristics (e.g., full-time or part-time enrollment, traditional-age students and adult learners, dual enrollment students, noncredit students, and students of employer-sponsored training) contract training)?
- ▶ What are the trends in your college's expenses? How are expenses related to student enrollment characteristics (e.g., full-time or part-time enrollment, traditional-age students and adult learners, dual enrollment students, noncredit students, and students of employer-sponsored training) and to program/service areas (e.g., student support services, general education, trades and technical fields)?



Preparation: Benchmarking and Examples From Other Colleges

In addition to understanding your community, your students, and your college's outcomes, comparing your college to other colleges can provide valuable insights. Recommended steps include:

1. Select a group of peer institutions. You can use IPEDS data to create this group. Peers should be similar to your institution in terms of size, student characteristics, and academic programs.
2. Compare your institution's outcomes (such as graduation and transfer rates and workforce outcomes) to this set of peers to identify strengths and areas for improvement as well as to help set targets for the future.
3. Consider contacting or visiting peer institutions with especially strong outcomes to learn about their practices.



Consider gathering examples of other colleges that have addressed issues that are similar to the ones you will be addressing. Many organizations and initiatives provide profiles of colleges and the work they are doing. You can find such examples in the following places:

- ▶ Winners and finalists of the [Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence](#);
- ▶ Examples cited in [Center for Community College Student Engagement](#) reports;
- ▶ College Spotlights featured in [Achieving the Dream's Strategy Hub](#); and
- ▶ [Breakthrough Moments](#) from the Rural Guided Pathways Project.

Preparation: Customizing and Using the PowerPoint

The accompanying PowerPoint presentation provides slides you can use for your discussion.

Use the sections of the PowerPoint that are relevant for your conversation, and add information that is specific to your college.

The PowerPoint deck includes:

- ▶ Slides you can use to start your discussion, including why your college is undertaking this work, an overview of the *Resilient by Design* report, and your approach to the conversation.
- ▶ Slides for each section of the report, including key points from the report and the discussion questions.
- ▶ Sample data slides you can use to create charts that show data for your college.
- ▶ Suggestions for customizing the presentation for your college.



FACILITATION BASICS

If you are new to facilitation, consider these suggestions:

- **Know your audience.**
- **Establish clear goals for the session.**
- **Vary your approach during the conversation.**
If the size of your group allows, have some full-group time and smaller breakout sessions.
- **Use activities to engage participants.** Use activities that allow people to provide input in different ways (e.g., writing and speaking), engage in some informal discussion, and process their thoughts. Activities that include physically moving around (e.g., to a different part of a room) also help people stay engaged and can inspire better thinking.
- **Be comfortable with silence.** Often people are hesitant to speak. But participants also become uncomfortable with long silences. Be patient and allow the silence to continue. If you wait, someone will speak. This approach also leaves breathing room for people who need time to gather their thoughts.
- **Make room for everyone to speak.** Do not let one or two people dominate the conversation. Give everyone the opportunity to speak, and do not hesitate to say, “Let’s hear from someone else.” Also, the goal is not to have everyone agree but to give everyone room to state their opinion.
- **Go where the conversation takes you.** Use the discussion questions as a guide and a starting point. (See *Having the Discussion and Using the Discussion Guide*, page 14, for information about questions that you should always use.) The goal is to have a productive discussion that generates useful ideas related to your goals for the session in the time allotted for the conversation.
- **Make a plan for next steps.** Leave time at the end of the discussion for next steps. Do you need to set a time for another meeting or identify who is responsible for specific tasks and when they will be completed? Should you identify others who need to be consulted or brought into the conversation before moving forward? Do not end the meeting with only a list of ideas. Make sure you have a plan to turn them into action.



Having the Discussion and Using the Discussion Guide

Share the [Campus Discussion Guide](#) and full [Resilient by Design](#) report with participants, and tell them which section(s) of the guide you will be using for your conversation. Ask them to read the report before your conversation.

- ▶ Start the discussion with some background on *Resilient by Design* and why your college is holding these conversations. Explain the college's goals and the role of participants.
- ▶ As you discuss why this work is important, share relevant data from your college. Ask some questions about the data. Also invite questions about the data and discussion from the participants.
- ▶ Summarize the key points from *Resilient by Design* that apply to the section(s) of the report you are discussing.
- ▶ You may not have time for all of the questions, but always ask the questions with this arrow  symbol. Start your discussion with the first question that includes an arrow, and leave time at the end of the conversation for the final questions with arrows. Other than that, choose the questions that are most relevant to your college. You also can ask participants to identify the questions they most want to discuss.
- ▶ Designate a notetaker for your session.



STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS

If you are working with a very small group and your discussion is not too long, you may be able to simply have a conversation about the issues. However, if your group is larger or if participants will be together for more than an hour, you will want to use some strategies to keep participants engaged. Examples of such strategies include the following:



- **Polling.** For larger gatherings, conduct a poll to get people actively participating instead of just listening. You can use a tool such as [slido.com](https://www.slido.com) that allows participants to respond on their phones. Sometimes a show of hands can be effective.
- **Turn and talk.** Invite people to discuss a specific question with the person sitting next to them (or in groups of three). Allow a set amount of time for this conversation and then ask a few people to share key points with the full group.
- **Breakout sessions.** Break into smaller groups to discuss one or two key ideas. Then ask one or two groups to share key points with the full group. You also can have groups write their key ideas on flip chart paper in preparation for a gallery walk.
- **Gallery walks.** Use this strategy to give people a chance to learn about new ideas and indicate which ones they like best. After generating some ideas as a group — or asking small groups to generate them and write them on flip chart paper — invite participants to walk around and read the ideas. Give everyone a set number of dot stickers and ask them to add their stickers to the ideas they like best. Then discuss what people like and why as a group.
- **Four corners activity.** Post one of four different responses to a question — such as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree — in each corner of the room. Pose a question and ask people to physically move to the corner that corresponds to their response. Then conduct a facilitated discussion about the responses. Ask for a volunteer to explain their response. Invite someone from another corner to add their thoughts. As the conversation continues, invite people to move to a different corner if their opinion changes.

Follow-Up: After the Discussion

In the weeks and months following the discussion, keep participants engaged and show them how the college is using their ideas. Following up in this way can help the college get ongoing input.

Consistently engaging participants also will make rolling out new plans easier. People who are involved in designing changes are more likely to support them. They also can explain new ideas to people who were not involved in the discussions and become ambassadors for reform. If all participants do not agree, that is also okay. Hearing concerns as soon as people are ready to articulate them will serve the college well. You can:

- ▶ Summarize the group conversation in a follow-up email.
- ▶ Provide summaries of other *Resilient by Design* discussions.
- ▶ Provide updates — or ask for additional input — as discussions continue or the college's plans evolve.



Feedback for AACC and your State or System

Along with your work at the institution level, others may be able to take actions that support your work. For example, some efforts are best undertaken at the system (if your institution is governed by a system) or state level.

Also consider what problems might be best solved at the national level, with a centralized approach or tools that AACC might create.

AACC has created a [form](#) colleges can use to suggest the types of support it might provide. Please use the form to provide this feedback directly to AACC.

In addition, determine how you will communicate your college's plans to your state agency or system and discuss the support it can provide.

This chart provides an example of a college goal and actions that might be taken at the college level, at the system/state level, and by AACC.

COLLEGE GOAL	ACTION		
	By the College	By the System/State	How AACC Might Help
Ensure that every student who should have credit for prior learning (CPL) gets it by assessing prior learning for all incoming students.	Train advisers and anyone else who works with onboarding so every incoming student learns about CPL and any documentation they need to provide.	Work with the system/state to standardize CPL requirements.	Convene a task force of education and technology experts to create an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that streamlines assessment of prior learning. Because assessment of prior learning is labor intensive, an AI tool would make it possible to award CPL for all students who should have it.

