

# ADMISSION PROCESS

## HEALTH PROFESSIONS CRITERIA-BASED PROGRAMS



**NORTHERN ESSEX**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Haverhill • Lawrence



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## Team Members

**Jackie L. Long-Goding**  
*Dean, Health Professions*

Team Sponsor

**Julie A. Ward**  
*Director, Medical Support Specialty Programs*

Team Leader

**Rosalie Catalano**  
*Academic Advisor*

Team Member  
*Sept. '04 – Jan. '05*

**Linda A. Comeau**  
*Associate Director of Enrollment Services  
Lawrence Campus*

Team Member

**Angela Lawler**  
*Academic Advisor*

Team Member  
*Sept. '04 – Jan. '05*

**Michael J. Markham**  
*Director of Placement  
Career Development Center*

Team Member  
*Jan. '05 – May '05*

**Limari Rivera**  
*Academic Advisor*

Resource  
*Feb. '05 – May '05*

**Cecelia Sederman**  
*Adjunct Faculty – Medical Assistant Program*

Team Member  
*Jan. '05 – May '05*

**Anne Zabriskie**  
*Director, Nursing Program*

Team Member

## Project Statement

To improve the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs as measured by student satisfaction and success in the process, and by a decrease in the amount of staff and student time required.

## Project Background

*“In order for process management to work in the educational setting, four key elements exist for a successful implementation: 1. gain the support of everyone in the chain of supervision; 2. identify your customers; 3. focus on redefining the process; and 4. use Deming’s 14 Points as a guide and checklist during the implementation effort.”<sup>1</sup>*

Improving the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs was one of the projects chosen for process management in fall 2004. As the team progressed through the semester, we realized we needed more time. Due to the importance of our topic we asked for and received an extension from Dr. Stanley Jensen and the Steering Committee to report out in spring 2005. In January, two existing members resigned from the team because of workload. Consequently, we added and oriented two new team members and a resource person.

At Northern Essex Community College there are currently seven health professions programs that are criteria based. They include: Dental Assistant Certificate, Medical Assistant Certificate, Practical Nursing Certificate, Polysomnography Certificate, Nursing (ADN), Radiologic Technology and Respiratory Care. Each program has ‘selective criteria’ for acceptance. Three additional programs on campus also require selective criteria for acceptance (Paralegal Studies, Human Services and Deaf Studies). All other programs utilize an automatic acceptance policy. The concept of ‘selective criteria’ can be confusing for students to understand. Due to the need to measure if a student meets the selective criteria, a comprehensive process has evolved for criteria based programs. The purpose of this committee is to improve the specific admission process for the health professions programs.

<sup>1</sup>Green and Winn. *Applying Total Quality Management to the Educational Process*. Int. J. Engag. Ed. Vol. 14, No.1, p. 25-29, 1998.

## **Operational Definitions**

**Action Form/Change of Major** – A document a student uses to change his/her major if he/she is currently enrolled in a program, or has been within the past three years. To complete this form the student meets with an Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center or Career Planning & Advising Center (CPAC).

**Active Student** – A student who is currently enrolled in a program or has been enrolled within the past three years.

**Assessment/Placement Test** – The Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates that all students entering state colleges and universities take the Accuplacer. This assessment measures basic skills in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics.

**Career Night /Open House** – Events scheduled for prospective and currently enrolled students to visit the college and learn about specific careers, and the process to apply and enroll.

**Checklist Letters** – Applicants to the criteria based health professions programs receive a checklist letter once a month informing them of any unmet admissions criteria.

**Conditional Acceptance for Wait Listed Students** – Students who are on the wait list for a criteria-based program for the current year are offered ‘conditional acceptance’ for the following year. The conditional acceptance may require students to meet any new criteria adopted by the program for subsequent admission cycle.

**Criteria-based Program** – Criteria-based programs mandate applicants to meet selective admission requirements for acceptance to those programs.

**Criteria Packet** – An information packet mailed to applicants, which details admission criteria and the process for that admission cycle.

**General Studies: Criteria-based program** – An academic major code for students who are taking courses towards the criteria-based program of choice.

**Inactive Student** – A student not enrolled in a program of study within the past 3 years.

**Information Session** – A structured and scheduled meeting with a designated program representative during which detailed information is provided. Not all programs require information sessions.

**Wait List** – A list of applicants who have met the admissions criteria but for whom no seats are available.

## Findings: Current Process

### *Current Process for Admission into the Health Professions Programs 2005*

To improve the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs, the team needed to first identify the existing process. The admissions representative on the team developed a detailed flow chart. (Appendix 1)

The flow chart begins with an inquiry by a prospective student through one of the following methods: telephone call or message; walk-in; email; advising appointment or through a planned recruitment activity such as an off-campus visit or attendance at a Career Night/Open House or Small Group Health Professions appointment. A contact card is completed capturing basic information about the prospective student and his/her program of interest. This information is then entered into the recruit database in Banner.

If the prospective student has never attended NECC, a full packet (Mailing #1) is sent in response to the inquiry. This packet includes the program curriculum, an application to the college and some other general information. If the application is filled out and returned, the next steps in the enrollment process are orientation and the placement test. After taking the placement test the student will be directed to meet with an advisor to register for classes depending upon what time of year it is and when the next semester begins.

If the prospective student is either currently enrolled at NECC or has been within the past three years, a letter (Mailing #2) is sent inviting the student to come in to meet with an advisor. The advisor will discuss curriculum, the selective criteria and if appropriate, fill out a change of major for the student for the upcoming fall to indicate the program of choice. If the student is not ready for the program of choice, a change of major may be submitted placing that student into General Studies towards the health professions program of choice.

Students submit applications and change of majors throughout the year; and an acknowledgement card is sent out. Once the programs in the Division of Health Professions submit the selective criteria, applications/change of majors are entered into Banner.

Program coordinators typically review selective criteria for the next admission cycle in the early fall each year. This timing cycle has resulted in the selective criteria not being firmly established until the middle of the semester. Once the selective criteria are established, criteria packets are produced and mailed to applicants. This timing presented difficulties for students when there were changes in the selective criteria, or if this was the first time the students saw the criteria. For example, applicants to the nursing program had to have met selective criteria course work by the end of the fall semester to have their application file reviewed by the nursing program admissions committee at its meeting during early-to-mid February. The timing of the program review of selective criteria is one of the areas that the committee focused on for improvement.

The selective criteria packet for each specific health professions program currently consists of a checklist and additional information relevant to the existing program. The checklist provides a convenient listing of each program's selective criteria. (Appendix 2)

When a student's file is created, the records manager logs in those criteria that are met at that point in time. A checklist letter is sent once a month informing the student about any outstanding criteria. Program coordinators, and for some programs an admissions committee comprised of program faculty, review completed folders by the date each program establishes for file review.

Students to be admitted/wait listed to the program are identified during the application file review, and the program coordinator completes a Decision Form. The Office of Admissions mails the student a letter to offer acceptance or wait list status to the program. When program capacity has been reached, the remaining applicants are accepted into General Studies towards the health professions program of choice, and a letter is sent by the Office of Admissions to notify the student. This letter recommends that applicants meet with an advisor to plan future coursework or to discuss alternative educational programs that may have open seats remaining.

Students are required to respond to the offer of acceptance within two (2) weeks following the date of the letter. The Office of Admissions telephones those students who do not respond within this timeframe. If a student declines the offer of acceptance, or does not respond to the letter and telephone contact, the offer of acceptance is withdrawn. This action creates an open seat and a student currently on the wait list is offered the opportunity to enroll in the program. During the enrollment cycle, students who were initially accepted may find it necessary to withdraw from the program. In each case, a student on the wait list is offered the opportunity to fill the open seat. Once the semester begins in September, any students remaining on the wait list are offered conditional acceptance for the following year. The student then has an opportunity to meet any new criteria that have been developed and are being phased in, and if these criteria are met, the student is offered acceptance for the following fall before the general review of new applicant folders begins.

All students in General Studies towards their program of choice must meet with an advisor and complete a change of major to be considered for admission the following year. The advisor will help the student understand how he/she can strengthen his/her application for the following year. The process then begins again.

## ***Current Satisfaction Rates among Students and Staff***

### **Methods**

The team developed two surveys, one for students one for staff, to further assess the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs and to understand the current status of student satisfaction (Appendices 3 and 4). Each survey instrument incorporated questions to determine student and staff satisfaction related to the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs.

The team identified two subgroups for the student surveys: students currently enrolled in each health professions criteria-based program, and students enrolled in general studies towards a health professions based program. Each program coordinator administered surveys to students currently enrolled in the respective program. To access the general studies students, Professor Thomas White administered the surveys to students enrolled in his sections of Anatomy and Physiology II and Microbiology.

Linda Comeau, Rosalie Catalano and Angela Lawler administered the staff surveys to staff members working in admissions and the advising center.

### **Results**

#### ***Student Surveys***

Each program-specific student survey was analyzed. Results are as follows:

#### ***Dental Assistant (N=23) (Appendix 5)***

- ⇒ 74% of respondents answered yes to the question, “*Did you ever receive inaccurate information?*”
- ⇒ 61% of respondents answered yes to understanding the dental assistant admissions process.
- ⇒ While 57% of the responders did not rate the question, 26% of those who did respond rated career night/open house as excellent, and 17% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 44% of the responders did not rate the question, 39% of those who did respond rated the using the NECC website for information as excellent, 17% good.
- ⇒ While 61% did not rate the question, 13% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor to be excellent, 17% rated it as good and 8% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 65% did not rate the question, 66% of those who did respond rated meeting with an academic advisor as excellent (26%), good (30%), or poor (8%).
- ⇒ 91% of respondents rated the information session as either excellent (65%) or good (26%).
- ⇒ 70% of respondents rated the criteria packet to be excellent, 22% rated it as good, and 8% did not respond to the question.
- ⇒ While 21% of the responders did not rate the question, 57% of those who did respond rated their meeting with or speaking to a Dental Assistant faculty member as excellent, and 22% rated it as good.

- ⇒ While 65% did not rate the question, 22% of those who did respond rated meeting with or speaking to a Dental Assistant student as excellent and 13% rated it as good.

### ***Medical Assistant (N=21) (Appendix 6)***

- ⇒ 29% of respondents answered yes to the question: “*Did you ever receive inaccurate information?*”
- ⇒ 76% of respondents answered yes to understanding the medical assistant admissions process.
- ⇒ Approximately 80% of respondents did not answer attending a career night/open house.
- ⇒ While 47% of the responders did not rate the question, 9% of those who responded rated the using the NECC website for information as excellent, and 43% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 33% of the responders did not rate the question, 24% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor as excellent, 24% rated it as good, and 19% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 9% of the responders did not rate the question, 38% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an academic advisor as excellent, 43% rated it as good, and 9% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 52% of the responders did not rate the question, 29% of those who did respond rated the Medical Assistant Information session as excellent, and 19% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 19% of those who responded did not rate the question, 76% of those who did respond rated their meeting with or speaking to a Medical Assistant faculty member as excellent, and 5% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 38% of the responders did not rate the question, 19% of those who did respond rated their meeting with or speaking to a Medical Assistant student or graduate as excellent, and 19% rated it as good.

### ***Nursing (ADN) (N=37) (Appendix 7)***

- ⇒ 50% of respondents answered yes to the question: “*Did you ever receive inaccurate information?*”
- ⇒ 70% of respondents answered yes to understanding the ADN admissions process, 27% answered no.
- ⇒ While 57% of the responders did not rate the question, 11% of those who did respond rated a career night/open house as excellent, and 32% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 41% of the responders did not rate the question, 11% of those who did respond rated using the NECC website for information as excellent, 43% rated it as good, and 5% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 41% of the responders did not rate the question, 11% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor as excellent, 43% rated it as good, and 5% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 26% of the responders did not rate the question, 11% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an academic advisor as excellent, 49% rated it as good, and 14% rated it as poor.

- ⇒ While 6% of the responders did not rate the question, 35% of those who did respond rated the nursing information sessions as excellent, 51% rated it as good, and 8% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 6% of the responders did not rate the question, 24% of those who did respond rated the criteria packet as excellent, and 70% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 73% of the responders did not rate the question, 16% of those who did respond rated meeting with or speaking to a Nursing faculty member as excellent, 8% rated it as good, and 3% rated it as poor.

### ***Radiologic Technology (N=25) (Appendix 8)***

- ⇒ 72% of respondents answered yes to the question: *“Did you ever receive inaccurate information?”*
- ⇒ 48% of respondents answered yes to understanding the radiologic technology admissions process, while 52% answered no.
- ⇒ While 4% of the responders did not rate the question, 8% of those who did respond rated career night/open house as excellent, 48% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 44% of the responders did not rate the question, 12% of those who did respond rated using the NECC website for information as excellent, 4% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 28% of the responders did not rate the question, 12% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor as excellent, 36% rated it as good, and 24% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 8% of the responders did not rate the question, 20% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an academic advisor as excellent, 44% rated it as good, and 28% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 4% did not rate the question, 40% of those who did respond rated the Radiologic Technology Information Sessions as excellent, 52% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ 24% of respondents rated the criteria packet as excellent, 72% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 16% of the responders did not rate the question, 24% of those who did respond rated meeting with or speaking to a Radiologic Technology faculty member as excellent, 56% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 24% of the responders did not rate the question, 16% of those who did respond rated their meeting with or speaking to a Medical Assistant student or graduate as excellent, 56% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor. .

### ***Respiratory Therapy (N=14) (Appendix 9)***

- ⇒ 14% of respondents answered yes to the question: *“Did you ever receive inaccurate information?”*
- ⇒ 86% of respondents answered yes to understanding the respiratory therapy admissions process, while 14% did not answer.
- ⇒ While 72% of the responders did not rate the question, 7% of those who did respond rated career night/open house as excellent and 21% rated it as good.

- ⇒ While 22% of the responders did not rate the question, 14% of those who did respond rated using the NECC website for information as excellent and 64% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 72% of the responders did not rate the question, 14% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor as excellent and 14% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 50% of the responders did not rate the question, 36% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an academic advisor as excellent and 14% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 14% of the responders did not rate the question, 43% of those who did respond rated the Respiratory Therapy Information Sessions as excellent and 43% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 29% of the responders did not rate the question, 22% of those who did respond rated the criteria packet as excellent and 50% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 14% of the responders did not rate the question, 50% of those who did respond rated meeting with or speaking to a Radiologic Technology faculty member as excellent and 36% rated it as good.
- ⇒ While 65% of the responders did not rate the question, 46% of those who did respond rated their meeting with or speaking to a Medical Assistant student or graduate as excellent and 21% rated it as good. .

### ***General Studies (N=26) (Appendix 10)***

The majority of the respondents were general studies towards nursing (N=23) and (N=3) towards radiologic technology. A total of 26 students completed the general studies survey.

- ⇒ 56% of respondents answered yes to the question: *“Did you ever receive inaccurate information?”*
- ⇒ 58% of respondents answered yes to understanding the admissions process for the respective health professions program, while 42% answered no.
- ⇒ While 46% of the responders did not rate the question, 8% of those who did respond rated the career night/open house to be excellent, 38% rated it as good, and 8% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 38% of the responders did not rate the question, 12% of those who did respond rated the information on the NECC website to be excellent, 38% rated it as good, and 12% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 23% of the responders did not rate question, 8% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an admissions counselor to be excellent, 62% rated it as good, and 8% rated it as poor. .
- ⇒ While 8% of the responders did not rate the question, 31% of those who did respond rated their meeting with an academic advisor to be excellent, 38% rated it as good, and 23% rated it as poor.
- ⇒ While 54% of the responders did not rate the question, 19% of those who did respond rated the program specific criteria to be excellent, 38% rated it to be good, and 4% rated it to be poor.
- ⇒ While 65% of the responders did not rate the question, 15% of those who did respond rated their meeting with a program specific advisor/faculty to be excellent, 12% rated it as good, and 8% rated it as poor. .

⇒ While 65% of the responders did not rate the question, 35% of those who did respond rated their meeting with a program specific student or graduate to be excellent, 15% rated it as good, and 4% rated it as poor.

### ***Student Suggestions***

The following question was asked on the survey instrument: *What suggestions do you have in order to improve the admission process to the (program-specific) program?*

### **Admitted Student Responses**

*“Academic advisors should all be knowledgeable regarding each program offered and their process”*

*“Make sure all advisors know which courses can be taken before getting into the program and that students are taking them while waiting to get into a program”*

*“Every year to have a meeting with admissions and advising on both campuses to inform them of the new policies and admission requirements each year”*

*“Be able to sign all paperwork, including loan and financial aid at the Lawrence campus. Be able to do everything at the Lawrence campus”*

*“Make the process clearer as to the prerequisites needed when and where people are accepted and what must be done step by step to make that happen”*

*“The admissions staff needs to be on the same page and there needs to be a clear chain of command regarding gray area. Students are sick of being passed around for a clear answer”*

### **General Studies Student Responses**

*“Tell people exactly what they need to take and don’t go making up all these classes because you want to gain on us and because you can’t tell us that you have too many people to accommodate and you can’t fulfill their needs”*

*“Be precise about the requirements and not switch them in the middle of taking prerequisites”*

*“To keep a good track of students that is willing to wait to be admitted to the program. For example: meeting and activities to keep a positive attitude in those students. Also, add some knowledge to what the students may already experience once in the program”*

*“Have advisors that actually know about the nursing program. Many advisors are not accurate with the information they are giving students. I received clearer information from students who have already graduated or are in the program”*

### ***Staff Surveys***

A total of 15 staff members completed the survey. Results indicated the average length of time staff members worked in either admissions or the advising center was 3.23 years. (Appendix 11)

- ⇒ All 15 staff members responded that they spend more time with health professions criteria based students than other students
- ⇒ 75% of staff members responded that they were interested in attending an information session for health professions criteria based programs
- ⇒ 65% of staff members responded that the health professions criteria based packet were good

Staff members were asked: *What are the top three complaints you receive from students?*

1. Inconsistent or unclear criteria/requirements
2. Confusion about process
3. Time – waiting list

### **Discussion of Survey Results**

It is important to note the limitations of the surveys. Each survey did not include a question regarding the small group nursing appointments. The question regarding the website information did not specify what type of information. In addition, the respondents could have interpreted the term “academic advisor” in several ways. For example, a student could have spoken with an academic advisor in the academic advising center (Haverhill) or CPAC (Lawrence); with a faculty member who functions as an academic advisor in the academic advising center; or, a program faculty member who serves as an academic advisor as part of the workload as specified in the collective bargaining agreement. Despite these limitations, the responses of students and staff provide the college with important information and identify areas for improvement.

The team further analyzed the program-specific results and the staff results and identified three trends common to all surveys.

***Trend 1:*** There is a lack of accurate and consistent information given to applicants from both advising and admissions, as well as other areas of the college. (Approximately 75% of Dental Assistant and Radiological Technology students responded yes to question: “Did you ever receive inaccurate information”; 50% of Nursing (ADN) students and 56% of General Studies students responded yes to the same question)

***Trend 2:*** Participation in career nights and open houses are under utilized in all programs.

***Trend 3:*** More than half of the respondents report using the college’s website.

## Causes for Outcomes

To further analyze the causes for the trends noted in these surveys, the team used a Fishbone Diagram, research and comparison to other community colleges.

***Trend 1:*** There is a lack of accurate and consistent information given to applicants from both advising and admissions as well as other areas of the college. (Approximately 75% of Dental Assistant and Radiological Technology students responded yes to question: “Did you ever receive inaccurate information”; 50% of Nursing (ADN) students and 56% of General Studies students responded yes to the same question)

### **The Admission Process for Health Professions Criteria Based Programs Fall 2005 (Fishbone Diagram: Appendix 12)**

The team identified five causal areas: Resources, College Website, Various Sources of Information, General Studies towards a Health Professions Program and Selective Criteria.

**Resources:** The student surveys revealed an underutilization of resources such as Career Nights, Open Houses and Small Group Nursing Appointments. Survey results indicate however, that students utilize other resources such as the mandatory information sessions and the criteria packets. The team recognizes that all resources are excellent sources of information and will continue to promote these opportunities.

**College Website:** Student surveys revealed greater than 50% of the students utilized the college website. At the time the student survey was administered, limited information was available on the college’s website regarding the admission process and the admission criteria to the health professions programs. A Division of Health Professions webpage, <http://www.necc.mass.edu/healthprofessions/index.shtml>, in development phase at the time of data collection, has been completed and is now active.

**Various Sources of Information:** Student surveys indicated that there were issues with both the accuracy and consistency of health professions program information obtained from the advising center and the admissions office. The team identified the following existing sources of information: advising center, admissions office, one stop staff and the health resource person in the Lawrence Career Planning & Advising Center (CPAC), and program faculty. The team acknowledged all sources of information are required to be accurate and consistent. Therefore, this was a major focus of the team in developing short- term and long-term strategies as discussed further in this report.

### **General Studies towards a Health Professions Program:**

There are two reasons why students are coded as General Studies towards a program. The first reason involves Perkins funding that the college receives based on the type of program that the student is pursuing. The second reason provides the college with the student’s career goal and allows the admissions office to continue to communicate with the student.

General Studies towards a health professions program is a confusing concept. Students often think they are accepted to the health professions program of their choice and believe they are either completing prerequisite courses or completing the general education courses identified in the specific program's curriculum plan. Students often believe they will enroll in career courses as soon as the general education courses are completed, not realizing that they still will compete with the applicant pool at some future point. The team recognizes the limitations imposed by Perkins funding. However, one approach will be addressed in Short Term Strategies.

**Selective Criteria:** The team identified three areas that create difficulty for both staff and students: (1) the timeframe in which criteria are made available; (2) the frequency of changes in criteria in some programs; and (3) the usability of the criteria packet. Discussion by the team and review of student surveys identified significant areas of concern related to the frequency of annual changes to admission criteria for the health professions programs, and the timeframe in which such changes became available to applicants, the academic advising center, and admissions office. Applicants and advising personnel often did not receive revised criteria until it was too late for students to be advised appropriately and/or to meet the new criteria. Applicants often become frustrated and angered as they tried to keep up with this process.

***Trend 2:*** Participation in career nights and open houses are underutilized in all programs. (Appendix 12)

The career night/open house program is offered by the admissions office for both recruitment and information dispersion. It is for both enrolled and prospective students. Individuals who are not currently enrolled and who are in the college's recruit database are invited to attend in order to explore career opportunities offered at the college. Career night/open house activities are offered several times a year at both campuses. Both day and evening activities are offered. Information about the career night/open house is publicized on both campuses and within the general community. However, research with the admissions office discovered that students in general studies are no longer being mailed a flyer to attend the career nights.

***Trend 3:*** More than half of the student respondents report using the college's website.

Student surveys demonstrated that the college's website is a resource that is utilized. This encouraged the team to analyze the accessibility and content of the information presented on the website.

### **Analysis of the Accessibility of Northern Essex Community College's Health Professions Web Page**

In order to provide information on NECC healthcare programs, the college must present information in a consistent format. At the present time, as the following analysis

shows, the website links can lead a student on a virtual journey to separate healthcare web pages. Although these web pages contain pertinent information, they are confusing to the prospective student base on design of the pages and the fact there are two web pages for health professions programs (program specific and the curriculum plan that appears in the web-based catalog). The NECC web page has too many links to bring a student to the healthcare web page. The process needs to be streamlined.

### **Web page navigation from the NECC home page to the health professions web page**

This pathway begins at the NECC home page and after four clicks or links ends at the Health Profession Programs page where the prospective student clicks on the desired program. The progression follows as:

#### **Home Page**

Click on **Academics**

Click on **Academic Departments**

Click on **Healthcare Professions**

Click on **Healthcare Profession Program**

Click on one of the twelve Healthcare Programs found on the page

### **Web page navigation from the NECC home page to Associate Degrees or Certificate Program in Healthcare**

This pathway begins at NECC home page and continues to the Program of Study page where student must decide if he or she desires an associate or certificate program. For an associate program the click will lead to Nursing Day & Evening section, Radiologic Technology, or Respiratory Care. For certificate programs, the click will lead to Dental Assistant, Medical Assistant, Medical Billing, Medical Coding, Polysomnography and Practical Nursing. The progression follows as: **NECC Home Page**

Click on **Academics**

Click on **Program of Study**

Click on Associate Degree Programs or Certificate Programs

#### **Associate Degrees**

Click on Nursing Day & Evening Section

Click on Radiologic Technology

Click on Respiratory Care

#### **Certificate Programs**

Click on Dental Assistant

Click on Medical Assistant

Click on Medical Billing

Click on Medical Coding

Click on Polysomnography

Click on Practical Nursing

**Home Page**

Click on **Academic Catalog**

Click on **Program of Study**

Click on **Program Requirements**

Click on **Associate Degree or Certificate Programs**

Specific **Associate Degrees**

Specific **Certificate Programs**

**Comparison to a Competitor's Web Page**

One of our closest competitor's web pages brings the prospective student to healthcare careers through fewer links, for example:

**Home Page**

Click on **Associate Degrees**

Click on **Nurse Education**

**Analysis of the content of NECC's Health Professions web page compared to local community college competitors**

An analysis comparing the current college health professions website with other community college health program websites suggested a need for further development, for example, including the process for admission and the criteria packet. The Division of Health Professions has negotiated the ability to include this information, as well as other information determined through a separate process to be important for potential students, and is in the process of adding these components at the time of this writing.

## **Improvement Theory**

### **Short Term Strategies**

#### **1. Admission Criteria finalized annually by March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Aware of the need to stabilize criteria and to make it available in a timely manner, faculty and administration in the Division of Health Professions worked diligently this winter and spring to achieve this goal. On or about March 1, 2005 all selective criteria were submitted to the Dean of Health Professions for final approval and the appropriate college personnel were notified that no criteria changes were recommended for the fall 2006 admissions cycle. Each program in the Division of Health Professions has completed a critical review of the admission criteria, and now needs an opportunity to assess the appropriateness of these criteria. It is strongly recommended that program faculty allow the existing criteria to remain stable for at least two admissions cycles. Stabilizing the admissions criteria will allow college personnel to advise applicants correctly, and to minimize frustration and negativity.

The team recommends an annual goal of March 1 for submission of criteria.

#### **2. Resources: Inclusion of General Studies Students in Career Night Invitations**

The team recommends that General Studies students currently enrolled at the College be invited to attend Career Nights in an attempt to utilize all of the available resources.

#### **3. Health Professions Resource Person**

The team recommends that there be a Health Professions Resource person available in both campuses in the Career Planning & Advising Centers (CPAC). The CPAC in Lawrence has been established for two (2) years and has an informal Health Professions Resource person. The CPAC in Haverhill is scheduled to open in late spring 2005. The team supports the one-stop model of the CPAC centers and the designation of a Health Professions Resource person at each center. The team recommends the following functions for the Health Professions Resource person:

1. Meet with students, including those from the General Studies towards specific health professions programs to clarify the admission process;
2. Serve as a Health Professions Resource person to other CPAC members; and,
3. Serve as a liaison between CPAC and the Division of Health Professions.

It is suggested that the Lawrence Campus CPAC Health Professions Resource person train the Haverhill person in the near future. The team further recommends that the Health Professions Resource person meet with the Division of Health Professions on a regular basis for information sharing. In addition, an announcement will be made informing the college community of these resources.

## **Result of Short-Term Strategies**

As a result of the implementation of the short-term strategies, changes in the current admission process either have been or will be instituted. These changes have impacted four areas of the admission process. (Flowchart - Improved Process for Admission into the Health Professions Programs: Appendix 14)

The first area is at the initial stage of inquiry. The college website will provide the opportunity for prospective students at the inquiry stage to learn details about the programs and the selective criteria. This will eliminate some of the confusion.

The second area involves the next step of the flow chart. When Mailing #1 is sent as a follow up to the inquiry a copy of the selective criteria will be included in the mailing. Again this will help alleviate some of the confusion. Students will have a better opportunity to understand the overall process and the criteria by having that information available to them. By understanding the process sooner the student can then begin working on the selective criteria and follow through on the process.

The third area, which will be impacted, is once the application or change of majors is received they can be entered into Banner immediately and the next step can be communicated to the student. There will be no lag time from when the student applies to when they hear about what they need to do next in the process.

A fourth area that will be impacted involves the current checklist which is part of the criteria packet. It is being rewritten to improve readability and to reduce confusion.

## **Long Term Strategies**

### **1. Provide Admission Information on Website**

In the summer of 2004, the Division of Health Professions embarked on developing a NECC website. This website was launched in March 2005 and includes the nature of the work and salary for program graduates, program philosophy and objectives, accreditation status and the contact information for the appropriate accrediting/approval agency, and links to related websites. It has always been the intention of the division to expand the website to include admission criteria and a description of the admission process with links to the admission application. Student surveys support student use of such a website and review of other community college websites demonstrates such a model. This site will allow anyone interested in the health professions programs to gather appropriate and accurate information on their own and to then seek additional advice from advising and/or admissions personnel as necessary. The team acknowledges that the creation of such a website for each program will require significant resources and time. At present, an admission website template is being developed in conjunction with refinement of hard copy admission criteria materials. Three major components of the website would be a description of the admission process, an identification of the admission criteria, and a checklist/timeline for each step of the process. Appendix 13 represents a beginning website template.

In addition to the above mentioned benefits of establishing the Division of Health Professions website, the website will also provide immediate access to the specific criteria for admission to the health professions programs. This will allow inquiring students to have that information available to them as they look through our website and determine if they would like to pursue a health professions program at NECC. In the existing process the criteria was not shared with the student until they completed an application to a specific health professions program. Also, the website will have the ability to inform students of the current status of our programs, such as if a specific program is still open for the upcoming fall or if the program is full and when the program will be available. The website will also serve as a resource for all staff and faculty and provide access to the most up-to-date criteria and the status of the individual health programs. We believe this will improve the quality of the advising given to students.

## **2. Develop a Healthcare Career Ladder Model**

A healthcare career ladder provides prospective and enrolled students the opportunity to work towards the profession of choice. Healthcare is one of the fastest growing industries and projected growth is expected during the next two (2) decades. An increase in the senior population, as well as technological advances and the aging of the current healthcare workforce, assures employment for individuals interested in working in health care. The community the college serves reflects the national trend of increase need for qualified workers. Presently, the college offers seven (7) degree or certificate programs. Each of these programs requires a basic foundation in science, reading and math skills, computer literacy and the humanities. Students applying to these programs have varied academic preparation: GED, high school diploma, college credit, or a college degree in another field of study. In addition, many students have family and employment responsibilities, which place restrictions on time allotted to degree completion. This places the college in a unique position to develop a healthcare career ladder that would allow students to advance towards their career of choice at their own pace and academic ability. It would also give academic advisors and career counselors an additional tool in assisting students interested in entering the healthcare field.

Developing a healthcare career ladder is one of the long-term strategies identified by the team. It is recommended that a committee, which would include representation from each of the health professions programs be formed to study the feasibility of instituting a healthcare career ladder at NECC. The issues to be examined would include the following:

- ⇒ Basic academic skills for all programs
- ⇒ Core curriculum relevant to all programs
- ⇒ Specific advisement for students seeking advancement within the programs

The team recognizes that this concept is not new to the college and that discussions have occurred intermittently. The team suggests that a new process management team be established to examine the feasibility of developing a Healthcare Career Ladder.

### **3. Enhance the NECC website**

The team supports the efforts currently undertaken to redesign the NECC website. We particularly support the focus on ease of finding information, logical sequencing and promoting health professions programs.

## Evaluation of Improvement Theory

The Process Management Team will be conducting the student and staff surveys again in the future to see if the changes we have instituted have helped to improve the Admissions Process for the Health Professions Criteria Based Programs. One year from this month seems like an appropriate date to measure how the new changes will have impacted the overall satisfaction.

## Budget

The recommendations in this report are budget neutral. All recommendations can be completed through existing operational budgets.

## Conclusion

This process management team was assigned to work on improvement of the admission process for health professions criteria-based programs. In order to identify the problems associated with the admission process the team developed a detailed flow chart of the current process and conducted surveys of students and staff. Data analysis identified the following three trends:

1. Lack of consistent information given to students
2. Underutilization of career nights/open houses
3. Utilization of NECC website by more than half of respondents

The team developed a fishbone diagram to identify causal factors. The problems identified were discussed and analyzed in detail. The following recommendations were developed:

### Short-term Strategies

1. Stabilize selective criteria and make it available in a timely manner
2. Identify a Health Resource Person in each CPAC
3. Inclusion of General Studies towards Health Professions in Career Night/Open House invitations

### Long-term Strategies

1. Provide admission information/criteria on website
2. Establish new process management team to examine the feasibility of developing a Health Professions Career Ladder
3. Support the enhancement of the NECC website

The team realized an immediate dividend during this process in that there was an increase in communication between the academic division and the Office of Admissions. It is clear that process management has a role in increasing an understanding of the importance of cross division communications.

The team submits this report after extensive research and discussion. It is our goal that the steering committee will find both short and long-term strategies reasonable and will move to implement them.

## **Thank You**

Our team would like to thank the following persons for their efforts on this project:

For their effort in disseminating the student surveys we would like to thank:

Kerin Hamidiani – Department Chair, Dental Assistant Program

Nancy Garcia – Department Chair and Carol Wallace – Radiologic Technology Program

Christopher Rowse – Department Chair, Respiratory Care Program & Polysomnography

Kathleen Welch Hudson – Department Chair, Medical Assistant Program

Thomas White – Professor, Natural Sciences

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Stanley Jensen – Consultant, for your guidance and support throughout this process

## **Appendix 13: Website Template for Health Professions Admission Information**

### **Admission Information:**

Admission to the Nursing Program is competitive, as enrollments are limited. Below are listed the MINIMUM criteria used to .....(see current admission packet)

### **Academic Advising:**

Individuals interested in applying to the Nursing Program are strongly encouraged to speak to an academic advisor or admissions counselor at the start of the admission process to assist with questions and clarify the process. (insert specific names and contact info)

### **Important Dates:**

The following criteria must be met by November 1<sup>st</sup> for an applicant to be reviewed and accepted into the Nursing Program by December 31<sup>st</sup>, or by January 31<sup>st</sup> for review and acceptance by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Required Documents:**

NECC Admission Application or Change of Major form, official transcript showing evidence of high school graduation or the equivalent with passing GED scores and official college transcript (s) for transfer credit review.

### **Required NECC Assessment Testing in reading, writing and mathematics:**

Assessment results must indicate that the applicant does not need to take any of the following courses: College Reading, Basic Writing, or Basic Algebra II. Applicants who place into one or more of these courses, must take the course (s) in order to meet admission criteria. (insert contact info and link)

### **Required Nursing Test:**

Attainment of scores of 40% or higher in each area of the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS). (website link)

### **Pre-requisite Course:**

CIS 101 Computers for Beginners or equivalent course; Students with prior computer knowledge may take a Challenge Exam through the Center for Adult and Alternative Studies. (list contact number)

**Additional Courses:**

Priority of acceptance will be given to applicants who have completed the following courses with a grade of C or better:

A minimum of 3 general education courses from this list:

\* ENG 101 (required)

AND

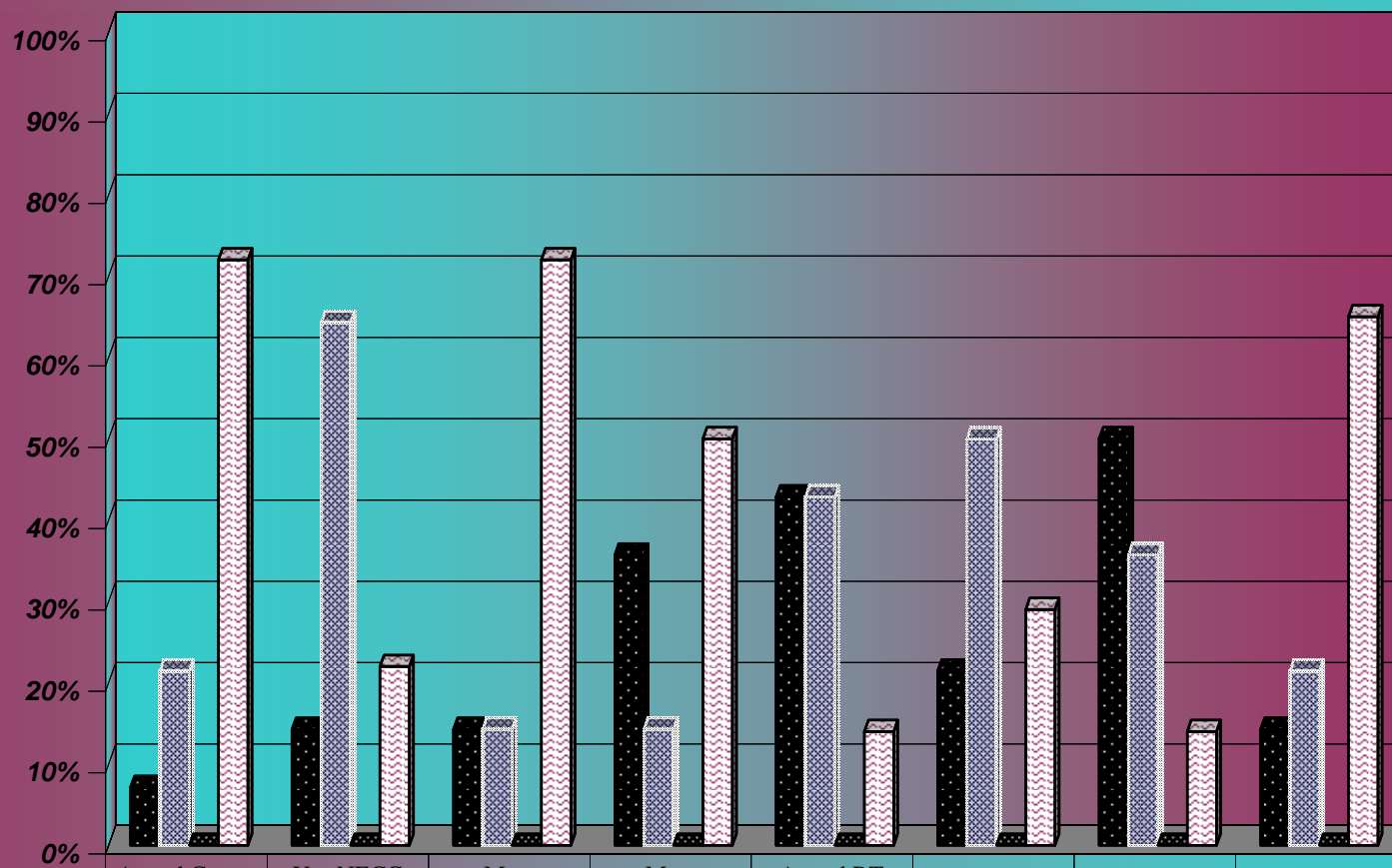
PSY 101, PSY 201, PSY 202, ENG 102, SOC 101 or humanities elective

One college level 4 credit lab science course, within the last 10 yrs prior to admission, from this list:

BIO 121, BIO 122, BIO 220, Chemistry (organic or inorganic) or Biology

**Admission Process****Admission Checklist**

## Appendix 9: Admitted Respiratory Therapy Student Survey Results (N=14)



	Attend Career Night/Open House	Use NECC website for information	Meet Admissions Counselor	Meet Academic Advisor	Attend RT Information Session	Is "Criteria Packet" helpful	Meet/speak RT faculty	Speak with RT student/grad
■ Excellent	0.071428571	0.142857143	0.142857143	0.357142857	0.428571429	0.214285714	0.5	0.142857143
▨ Good	0.214285714	0.642857143	0.142857143	0.142857143	0.428571429	0.5	0.357142857	0.214285714
▩ Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
□ N/A	0.72	0.22	0.72	0.5	0.14	0.29	0.14	0.65

N/A	0.72	0.22	0.72	0.5	0.14	0.29	0.14	0.65
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## Questions Asked

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