

Northeast Iowa Community College Uses 5Cast to Better Align Strategic and Financial Plans

THE SITUATION

NICC's mission is to serve the needs of the community with accessible, affordable, quality education and training. However, like many other community colleges located in rural parts of the nation, they had been experiencing declining enrollment since 2010. Non-reoccurring or reoccurring expenditures from restricted projects had future impact beyond the current year's budget. This made it difficult to maintain a long multi-year financial picture.

As the declining enrollment trend was causing great stress on the operational budget, the administration recognized this trend could not continue. The college needed to adopt a new philosophy and culture change to better align their strategic initiatives with their financial plan. The College was engaged in AQUIP, the national accreditation process used for continuous improvement.



ORGANIZATION TYPE
Community College

ENROLLMENT
6,540

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET
\$31,000,000

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) is a student-driven, community-focused, higher education institution servicing eight counties in northeast Iowa and the surrounding areas. This rural based institution offers more than 85 academic programs of study in addition to on-line and blended learning, customized business and industry training, short-term certification options and adult education and literacy programs.

THE SOLUTION

To support the creation and implementation of new strategic initiatives that maximized financial resources, Executive Director of Finance at NICC, Thomas M. Ridout turned to Forecast5. Ridout met Paul Kruse, a Forecast5 staff member, at a statewide conference in Ames, Iowa. Following discussion with Kruse, a demonstration of the 5Cast solution was conducted via an online webinar. Much interest continued and after a trip to the company's headquarters in Naperville, IL. Ridout made a recommendation to the College Administration to purchase 5Cast in July of 2016.

Ridout had considered other competitive products, but ultimately said "5Cast is so easy to use and understand. The support from the customer relationship team at Forecast5 has also been superior. The Forecast5 team has a strong vision to meet the future needs of financial planners in the public sector." As part of NICC's subscription to 5Cast, Tom also has access to 5Share which allows him to communicate and collaborate with Forecast5 and his peers around unique business ideas and best practices. Ridout adds, "5Share has been a great tool for collaboration efforts with other officers throughout the country."

THE RESULTS

Today, NICC is using the 5Cast product as their day-to-day operational toolbox. Such tasks that 5Cast is helping them with include:

- Projections for decision support to recommend annual tuition and fee increases
- As a training tool when educating budget officers to understand the accounting codes
- Developing projected year-end balances in all funds
- Data for President's cabinet and strategic planning decisions

Ridout says, "5Cast was the tool allowing administration and Trustees to implement some major strategic initiatives in 2016". With 5Cast as the budgeting and forecasting tool, it allows the administration to see the future financial projection of multiple years. Discussing the financial report from 5Cast allowed the administration to increase tuition and fees to cover expenditure patterns. Also, the college instituted an early retirement program reducing expenditures of the college by 2.1 million over a three-year period. Today, the financial position has improved by approximately \$3 million without any layoffs.

Since purchasing 5Cast, NICC has also purchased 5Sight and 5Maps as additional tools within the analytic suite. The team is excited to use these products to help with providing analytics and information for stakeholders quickly.