

# NWTC Evolves Student Learning Approach to Close Equity Gap in Higher Education

GREEN BAY WISC. (November 17, 2021) – Northeast Wisconsin Technical College has been awarded a \$2 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education to strengthen student success and close equity gaps in higher education.

“It’s important that students see themselves with passion in the profession they have chosen,” said Dr. Jeff Rafn, president of NWTC. “This grant focuses on engagement, a critical component, and the next step we need to take on our continued path to ensuring student success.”

While NWTC is a nationally recognized institution for its outstanding commitment to equity-centered efforts, course incompleteness among students of color and low-income continues to exist at a local level and beyond.

The grant proposal, *Connect for Student Success*, is designed to move students towards degree completion by leveraging proven practices that drive student success inside and outside of the classroom.

“NWTC recognizes that closing these gaps will require a strategic cultural change and evolving our approach to student learning,” Dr. Kathryn Rogalski, vice president of learning at NWTC. “As part of our approach, we will shift to more active learning and culturally relevant high-impact practices that will promote students to fully engage in their coursework and ensure that students are learning.”

Institutional research shows that high-impact practices continue to be a successful method to student learning. This entails clinical coursework that applies learned skills from the classroom to real-life scenarios within the community. These high-impact practices allow students to reflect on the connections between theories and real-life experiences, resulting in deeper comprehension.

**ABOUT NWTC:** Established in 1912, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College is a two-year technical college with three campuses, five regional learning centers, and several specialty centers throughout a nine-county district. Serving over 24,000 students annually, the College offers flexible degrees, classes, and training in over 200 high demand career fields via in-person, online, and blended instruction. Ninety-one percent of NWTC graduates are employed within six months of graduation. Additionally, hundreds of alumni continue their education through NWTC’s transfer agreements with over 40 other colleges/universities. The College is nationally recognized for student success having earned the 2020 Achieving the Dream (ATD) Leader College of Distinction status, 2021 ATD Leah Meyer Austin Award, 2021 Bellwether consortium finalist recognition, and 2019 INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award. NWTC, home of the Eagles, believes everyone – no matter where they are in their personal and professional journeys – can soar higher.

For example, according to a study by Association of American Colleges and Universities, when African American students participated in high-impact practices, their perceived engagement in deep learning was 11% to 27% higher than that of African American students with zero participation in these practices.

NWTC serves more than 27,000 students living in northeast Wisconsin and beyond, and nearly half are first-generation college students. NWTC is on track to achieve its 2023 goal of 65% graduation rate, which is 17% higher than the statewide average of technical colleges according to [Wisconsin Public Radio](#).

“It’s important that we as educators continue to evaluate how to best prepare our current and future students as our community continues to grow in diversity,” said Dr. Rogalski. “This grant will help us provide the time and resources to make the transformational changes needed to close the equity gap. While we are on the right path, we are always focused on continuous improvement.”

The duration for the *Connect for Student Success* grant is five-years, projected to be completed by September of 2026.

Enrollment for NWTC’s spring 8-week session is open now. To learn more about the College’s student services and academic opportunities, visit [NWTC.edu](https://www.nwtc.edu)

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