

From Student Voice to Family Economic Mobility

ELEVATE Convening

Andrea Crowley | Felita Carr | Chrystal Seeley-Schreck | Rachel McDonnell

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark blue t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards a young child. The child, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is reaching out towards the woman. They are in a bright, indoor setting, possibly a living room, with a white cabinet and books visible in the background.

From student- ready to family-ready

What happens when states and colleges commit to honoring the experiences and perspectives of student parents?

Pair Share:

Where in the learner journey does your institution or system **ask too much** of learners with caregiving responsibilities?

Is it a:

Service gap (the support doesn't exist)?

Navigation gap (support is hard to find/access)?

Coordination gap?

Policy constraint?

Culture gap (perceptions of student parents)?

A combination?



State Spotlights



North Carolina



Wisconsin

Disrupt on Purpose

Changing work, technology, and economic expectations are disrupting how, when, and where people learn, work, and care for their families.



AI and
Automation



Evolving
Job Roles



Faster
Skill Cycles



Higher
Expectations
for Skills

So we must support the **whole family unit** in adapting to Future Work Ready (FWR) expectations.



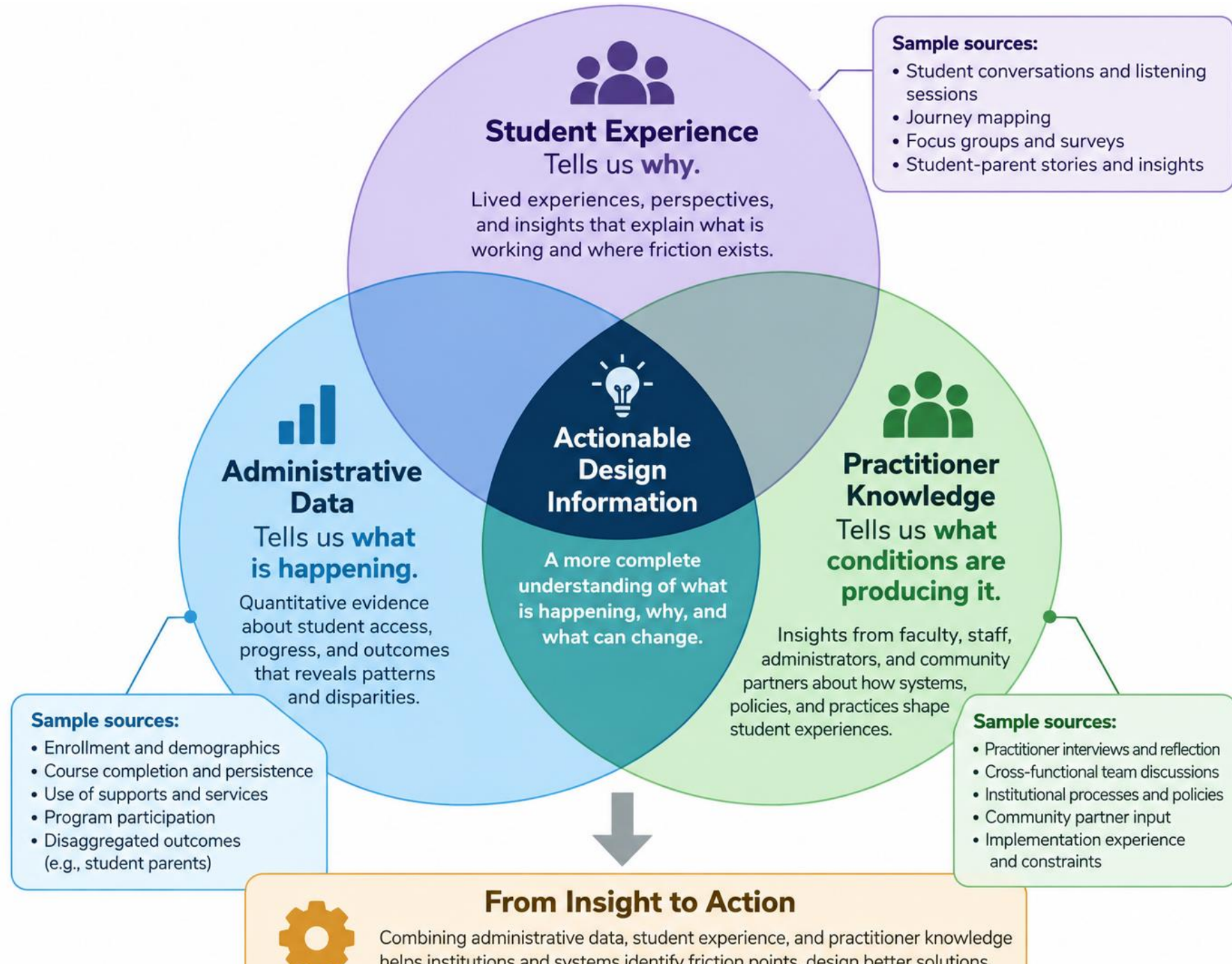
What becomes possible when students help us see the system differently?



Dr. Felita Carr
Dr. Andrea J. Crowley
North Carolina Student Success Center
North Carolina Community College System

NC COMMUNITY
COLLEGES
CREATING SUCCESS

Design for the learner—and the family system around them.



THE SHIFT



We are shifting from a program for student parents to a more responsive college and system for all learners and families.



Creating Family Friendly Campuses & Supporting Parenting Students



- 2023 – Madison, Blackhawk, & Southwest participated in a JFF cohort focused on strategies around student parents
- 2024 – Ascend at the Aspen Institute hosted “Ascending in Wisconsin: Strengthening Outcomes for Families Using 2Gen Approaches”
- 2024 – WTCS Supporting Parenting Students CoP Started
- 2025 – JFF 2Gen Cohorts/Supporting Student Parents **Project Phase 1**
- 2026 - Supporting Student Parents Project **Phases 2 & 3**

Creating Family Friendly Campuses & Supporting Parenting Students



Phase 1

- 3 convenings
- Cross-functional stakeholders
- Created a strategy map

Phase 2

- Child care workgroup = landscape scan
- Data
- Build capacity = Mini Grants x Family Friendly College Toolkits

Phase 3

- Implementation & Community of Practice

Supporting Family Economic Mobility for Student Parents By Leveraging 2Gen Approaches Statewide

Affordable, High-Quality, Culturally-Relevant Childcare

- Identify existing sites to build a trusted networks of providers
- Stabilize and strengthen existing sites, including by diversifying funding sources beyond threatened federal streams
- Support peer-to-peer childcare arrangements

"Having my daughter at [ELC] here has been amazing...Having a discounted childcare rate is everything right now."

Data to Better Serve Student Parents

- Learn from states leading the way to improve data collection (e.g., CA, IL, NM, OR, TX, UT)
- Provide guidance for colleges and other partners on tracking student parents
- Pave the way for cross-organizational data partnerships that enable the state to better define & track parent, child, and overall family outcomes

"[We must] work out data collection practices, so that we can see and serve student parents."

A Culture of Support and Respect

- Provide training for faculty and staff on trauma-informed practices, reproductive justice, and other 2Gen-related topics
- Provide options for course scheduling that increases flexibility for family and work commitments
- Create family-friendly campus spaces and programming that increases a sense of belonging for student parents with different lived experiences

"I've been shamed for asking for resources. I don't want to seem like I am taking them for granted."

"How can we get all of those people at our department together at a table, including wonderful individuals with lived experience?"

Timely Support & Improved Student Experience

- Provide personalized, timely support from staff prepared to help
- Ensure navigators are available to serve students and connect them to available resources
- Provide preparatory academic experiences for student parents in a cohort model for college navigation and durable skills development

"There are resources for student parents that I didn't know about. If I'd have known, maybe I would've gone back to school sooner instead of stressing about how I was going to pay my bills."

Individual work time



1. Name the friction point:
What is the student parent experiencing?
What's driving the experience?



2. Choose your lever:
What would you change?
What is within your sphere of influence?



3. Check in with student voice:
What do you need to learn from student parents before acting?

Pairs/Small Groups

What feels promising?

What are the opportunities?

What are the potential pitfalls?

What else do you need to consider?



“

*To make my institution or system
more responsive to student parents
and families, one move I can make
is...*

—

Thank You!

Rachel McDonnell: rmcdonnell@jff.org

Andrea Crowley: crowleya@nccommunitycolleges.edu

Felita Carr: fccarr@johnstoncc.edu

Chrystal Seeley-Schreck: chrystal.seeleyschreck@wtcsystem.edu

