

Middlesex Community College
FY03 Mission Priority Implementation Plan Final Report
Executive Summary
July 1, 2003

Despite extreme budget challenges and uncertainty regarding the future organization of public higher education in the state, Middlesex Community College made outstanding progress toward the accomplishment of its FY2003 Mission Priority Implementation Plan. As a college community, we are committed to identifying and responding to the diverse educational needs in our service area; providing the academic, enrollment and student development support services needed by our students, and contributing to the economic development of our region. We are especially proud to report that, throughout this difficult year, members of our college community identified and implemented creative, cost-effective solutions to difficult challenges thus allowing us to continue to meet the needs of a growing student population and to address evolving local workforce development needs in an era of diminishing fiscal and human resources. The college's excellent progress toward the accomplishment of its Board of Higher Education Mission Priorities is documented in the FY03 Mission Implementation Plan Final Report. This document lists the needs identified in our service area for each of the eight focus areas defined by the Board of Higher Education, the initiatives designed to address these needs, their related indicators, baseline data, target results and actual outcomes.

Notable Mission Priority Implementation Accomplishments

In 2002-03, Middlesex Community College successfully built on its past record of outstanding accomplishment, especially in the areas of teacher preparation, cost-effective use of resources, delivering accessible and affordable higher education, technology-enhanced courses, and supporting K-12 education, including new and continued MCAS support, successfully running 15 grant programs in collaboration with the Lowell Public Schools, and admitting special needs students to the Bridge Program, the Lowell Alternative Middle School managed by Middlesex Community College. The following synopsis of notable mission priority implementation accomplishments also includes highlights of some of the ways that technology has been effectively utilized to support our students and to achieve organizational goals.

Middlesex Community College continued its leadership role in teacher preparation. An Associate in Arts Program in Liberal Arts and Sciences with a Teacher Preparation concentration was designed in consultation with several faculty members from Massachusetts State College baccalaureate level teacher preparation programs. Four courses—science, mathematics, children's literature and English composition—were revised and piloted to model "best practices" instruction, provide opportunities for service-learning experiences in public school classrooms, and include content related to Massachusetts instructional frameworks and/or Massachusetts teacher competency testing.

Additionally, in response to student needs and workforce demands, the college expanded its capacity to educate nurses by implementing the National League for Nursing approved part-time evening/weekend nursing program, and has admitted its first class of students for the Fall 2003 semester. In its first year, the program attracted 143 applicants.

Middlesex Community College once again excelled in the area of cost-effective use of resources, most notably by saving \$130,151 with a lease purchase agreement for 680 computers. The college continued to provide students with high quality, cost-effective academic counseling services, streamlining and enhancing these services through the effective use of technology, which resulted in a

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savings of approximately \$76,000. The college implemented a fully functioning, on-line degree audit that is accessible to both faculty and students, made transfer resources available to MCC students on MiddleNet, our on-line enrollment services system, as well as designed and piloted five alternative academic advising/registration models. Under the new system, 3779 students received academic counseling services. The Fall course schedule lists 18 courses that use classroom space more effectively due to the alternative scheduling models that were piloted. And, as a result of a cost-benefit analysis of purchasing Schedule 25, the college took the lead in the development of an IT Investment Brief requesting funding for Schedule 25 for all 15 community colleges.

Delivering accessible and affordable higher education remains a priority for Middlesex Community College; and we remain committed to providing students access to our educational services despite the rising cost of attendance. To help assure this access, the college disbursed \$150,000 of institutional funds as Safety Net Scholarships, awarded 2081 students bookstore vouchers, disbursed \$25,000 of institutional funds to pay outstanding bookstore charges that were not covered through student financial aid, and reduced fees to 34 dual enrollment and/or 2 + 2 students. 1580 students received payment-counseling services by telephone, and 2573 students who were not yet financial aid applicants were reminded by postcard of the availability of, and encouraged to apply for, state, federal and institutional financial aid.

Middlesex Community College continued its efforts to incorporate the appropriate use of technology as a means of increasing access to higher education, and of addressing the variety of learning styles represented in both our workforce clients and our student population. Specifically, 4 trained faculty were identified to develop on-line, technology-enhanced, or hybrid courses for Business and Industry Programs; a set of learning products or different teaching modalities

to be offered to area companies by the Business and Industry Program was identified; 2 program managers were trained to promote courses for business and industry; a marketing plan to support and sustain the selling of courses using the set of products defined was designed; and 3 course prototypes were developed demonstrating the new teaching modalities.

In addition, the college created The Virtual Classroom, pilot testing 3 synchronous means of communication between on-line students and faculty, including a real time chalkboard, interactive office hours, as well as streaming video and streaming audio for on-line and technology-enhanced classes.

Middlesex Community College enhanced relations among Technology Programs, area high schools and other institutions of higher learning, which included entering into 6 new articulation agreements, sending 5 people to participate in the Boston Area Technology Education Consortium (BATEC) workshops to develop capacity to apply skill standards to technical programs, and piloting 3 technology courses incorporating specific workplace skills.

In 2002-03 the college continued its exemplary work with local school systems in their efforts to prepare students to be successful on MCAS tests. We designed and offered an after school program to all area school districts to help students who had failed MCAS tests. The college also applied for and received two grants, one in collaboration with The Career Place and one in collaboration with the Lowell Career Center, to design and offer programs for MCAS test preparation, job training and placement services. We also reviewed and revised curriculum at the Lowell Academy Charter School, with extraordinary results. To date 97% of the students at the Lowell Academy Charter School passed both the math and English sections of the MCAS test.

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The college is collaborating with the Lowell Public Schools on a School Dropout Prevention Program. Significant accomplishments resulted from an excellent initial year for the three-year grant entitled *Connections, a Dropout Prevention High School Re-entry Program*. Most notably 350 students at risk of dropping out had individual service plans and were linked to services and programs, and 30 families participated in bilingual family outreach programs.

Additionally, the college continued its commitment to K-12 education by adding a special needs component to BRIDGE, the alternative middle school operated by Middlesex Community College. A special needs teacher for the BRIDGE Program was added, 12 BRIDGE Program teachers and staff were trained to work with special needs students and 5 special needs students were admitted to the BRIDGE Program.

Targets to be Achieved:

Middlesex Community College has already achieved 107 of its 113 FY03 target outcome measures and made significant progress on all of its 24 mission priority initiatives. The 6 goals not yet achieved were impacted by downturns in the regional economy and decreased levels of state funding. The following is a summary of the target outcomes that have not yet been attained as well as an analysis of the progress made by the college on the accomplishment of the related initiative, the reasons for not meeting the target and the institution's action plan for the targets to be achieved.

Initiative: Direct Care Workers for the Developmentally Disabled

Target Outcomes Met: 87 Additional new Lifelinks direct care employees were certified in basic medical care, 81 Lifelinks direct care workers were re-certified in CPR, SOLVE, or Med-Admin, and 1 human services agency joined the Lifelinks/MCC partnership.

Target Outcome Not Yet Met: 4 Lifelinks direct care workers completed academic skill assessment—Target was 32 direct care workers.

Reason for Not Achieving Target: Lifelinks had to cancel all scheduled group assessments due to financial constraints.

Action Plan: Lifelinks will not schedule any more group assessments; they will send workers on an individual basis as an alternative.

Initiative: Training Adult Basic Education Practitioners to work with Individuals with Learning Disabilities

Target Outcomes Met: The 2 Reading Theory courses with 12 enrollments are scheduled to begin on July 21, 2003. The 8 tutors are scheduled on July 7, 2003. (The timing was changed for Reading Theory courses and tutors to accommodate qualified instructors.) 8 Adult Basic Education Practitioners were trained in “Visualizing and Verbalizing.”

Target Outcomes Not Yet Met: The Learning Disabilities and Strategies Workshop was cancelled. Target was 1.

Reason for Not Achieving Target: The six-part Learning Disabilities and Strategies Workshop was cancelled because of lay offs in the Department of Corrections workforce.

Action Plan: The six-part Learning Disabilities and Strategies Workshop will be run again in FY04.

Initiative: NOVA Biomedical—Collaborative Workplace ESOL

Target Outcomes Met: Recommendations for program improvements were identified and documented by the Planning and Evaluation Team. 100% of supervisors report satisfaction with the effectiveness of the contextualized curriculum.

Target Outcomes Not Yet Met: 15 Additional NOVA Biomedical employees participated in the ESOL program. Target was 18. 14 Additional NOVA Biomedical employees completed the ESOL program. Target was 15.

Reason for Not Achieving Target: Due to a downturn in Sales, NOVA Biomedical did not permit more employees to sign up, and one participant relocated to Virginia because of her husband's employment.

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Initiative: Federal Building.

Target Outcomes Met: Furnishings and equipment necessary to fully utilize the portions of the renovated Federal Building that are complete were identified and ordered. A schedule of Fall 2003 classes that utilizes the eight new classrooms and studio arts facility in the Federal Building was published.

Target Outcomes Not Yet Met: The Federal Building classrooms are planned to be ready for occupancy for the Fall semester. The library and some of the front rooms will be completed during the Fall semester.

Reason for Not Achieving Target: Due to a two month delay on the part of the contractor, we will occupy the Federal Building in several phases in 2004.

Action Plan: A work plan is in place for the contractor to complete all remaining areas during the Fall semester while the building is being used by the college.

Initiative: Performing Arts at MCC

Target Outcomes Met: A Performing Arts Department that includes Music, Dance and Theater courses was in place. A Performing Arts

Department Chair was appointed. A full-time drama faculty member was hired. Renovations to the Cyber Theater to provide more appropriate performance, audience and backstage space were complete. A plan to provide 2 student internships at the Merrimack Repertory Theater was documented and approved. The feasibility of using the Merrimack Repertory Theater for one student production a year was assessed and documented. 5 Dance classes were offered. The feasibility of building an outdoor stage on the Bedford Campus for Drama performances was assessed and documented.

Target Outcomes Not Yet Met: Recommendations for revisions to the Middlesex Community College Fine and Performing Arts program as a result of an analysis of local performing arts baccalaureate degree programs is not documented.

Reason for Not Achieving Target: As a result of decreases in FY 03 state funding levels, the position of Performing Arts Department Chair could not be funded to begin until the spring semester, and the college had hoped to have someone on board earlier..

Action Plan: The analysis of local performing arts baccalaureate degree programs is in progress and will be completed by September 2003.

Significant Institutional Challenges

We are very proud to report that, although Middlesex Community College was faced with a number of significant challenges, the college community accomplished 95% of its FY2003 Mission Priority Implementation Plan Goals. Examples of the challenges faced include multiple, drastic reductions in the college's state budget allocation, a hiring freeze, increased enrollments, and the highest unemployment rate in the local region in recent history.

- The Middlesex Community College state budget allocation was reduced from a high of \$19.2 million in FY01 to \$18.2 million at the beginning of FY03. During the year, these dollars were reduced twice, for a final total of \$17.8 million; and this number is projected to drop an additional 14% to approximately \$15.5 million for FY04.
- A greater demand for our services, peak enrollment numbers, and the uncertainty and instability of the budget numbers coupled with having fewer dollars to work with has made this a particularly challenging year.

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- The college underwent a hiring freeze in February 2003. The college met the challenge of continuing to provide outstanding coursework and services to students despite diminished fiscal and human resources.
- The unemployment rate increased from 4.7% in April 2002 to 6.2% in June 2003. In spite of the recurrent shedding of jobs by the region's employers, the college met the challenge of finding new jobs for displaced workers and other jobless clients.
- The fact that many area employers laid off significant numbers of workers coupled with shrinking training budgets severely affected the ability of employers to release employees for training programs.
- No funding was available from the Board of Higher Education to support Adult Basic Education.

**Strategic Decisions Made and Resource Utilization/Allocation Strategies Employed
To Allow MCC to Ensure its Continued Responsiveness to Regional Needs**

Middlesex Community College identifies current and future institutional and regional needs through college-wide strategic planning and program review processes that inform budget and resource allocation decisions. The college has recently completed its 2003-06 strategic plan, *A Focus on Student Achievement, Workforce Development and Civic Engagement*, and approximately 10 programs begin a program review annually. Resources to support the institutional priorities identified through these processes are identified through the efficient use of college human, fiscal and physical resources and an effective grants development program.

Middlesex Community College employs a decentralized approach to departmental budgets. Each Vice President and Dean has the capacity to shift funds between their departments and funding categories as necessary to meet their current priorities. A business plan approach is used to inform decisions about new programming that cannot be funded through the redeployment of divisional resources. Most recently, this process resulted in the decision to open an evening Nursing program and is routinely applied by our Business and Industry area to determine if specific programs are economically feasible for the college and the community.

The organizational structure of Middlesex Community College is fluid and changes to accommodate newly identified institutional and regional needs and budget realities. Position descriptions change as necessary to meet student and regional educational needs, departments are reconfigured to most cost-efficiently meet current demands and replacement positions are carefully reviewed in light of current and projected institutional priorities.

In addition, the college invests in technology and professional development to support the most effective use of institutional human, physical and fiscal resources. Even during difficult economic periods, funding targeted professional development activities for our faculty, staff and

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administrators is an institutional priority. It is essential to providing the innovative, cost-efficient academic, student support and administrative programs required to meet the needs of our students and region. The college also invests in technology to support institutional cost-efficiency. For example, in recent years the effective use of technology has resulted in significant reductions in utility bills, the costs associated with large college mailings, telephone student follow-up for enrollment purposes, and student billing, admission, registration, financial aid, and academic advising processes.

The college relies on the work of the Grants and Resource Development Office to secure funding to address many institutional priorities. Examples of grant-funded initiatives at the college this year include: (1) The developing of new teacher preparation courses and programs, (2) The development of new high school to college articulation agreements and the incorporation of skill standards in the curriculum in collaboration with the Boston Area Technical and Educational Consortium, (3) The purchase of equipment to support the development of The Virtual Classroom at MCC and (4) Multiple drop-out prevention and academic support programs with the Lowell Public School System. The college also seeks other funding sources to help meet regional needs. We operate The Career Place, a state funded, one-stop career center in Woburn; the state funded Lowell-Middlesex Academy Charter School and the BRIDGE program, an alternative middle school for behaviorally disruptive students funded by the Lowell Public School System.

As a final point, Middlesex Community College has a “can do” culture that encourages, applauds and rewards innovation and operating cost-effectively.

Summary

Middlesex Community College is pleased to submit its FY2003 Mission Priority Implementation Plan Final Report to the Board of Higher Education. The college’s mission priorities were the result of a careful planning process that focused on areas of interest to the BHE and areas in which the college was seeking to grow. A comparison of the original baseline data submitted and the results described in this report documents outstanding institutional development and growth during very difficult budget times. We are proud of the accomplishments of the college community and the institution’s enhanced capacity to meet the needs of our students and our communities as a result of the efforts of our talented faculty and staff.