

Leading for Change – Diversity & Equity Plan July 16, 2019

Middlesex Community College is focused on addressing persistent opportunity and achievement gaps which result in inequities in educational outcomes for underserved student groups. The need for an educated workforce in Massachusetts coupled with changes in the racial and ethnic demographic composition of Massachusetts highlights the need for policy makers and institutions to become equity-minded. An equity-minded institution raises awareness of achievement disparities based on race and ethnicity, raises awareness of systems and structures that impede equitable outcomes, and enacts policies and practices that reduce inequities (Center for Urban Education, 2017).

As part of our strategic efforts, the College participates in [*Leading for Change*](#) (L4C), a higher education regional consortium initiated by Bridgewater State University. The consortium of 25 institutions is made up of public and private institutions, community colleges and universities. L4C is committed to “hopeful, data-driven strategies to close achievement and opportunity gaps in higher education”. Every year since 2013 a cross-functional and diverse team from the College has explored and studied current research and best practices, attended summits, presented our best practices externally and on campus, explored and shared our institutional equity data including achievement gaps and representational diversity in our student and employee populations.

L4C was the impetus for a year-long examination of our disaggregated student success data throughout the 2013-2014 academic year. This work involved increasing our fluency with the current research, discussing our data, and identifying best practices and practitioners. The work culminated in a college-wide professional day entitled “Our Inner Resources: Closing the Achievement Gap” designed to share our enrollment and achievement gap data story, provide

strategies to engage the entire college in addressing inequities and fostering an environment that was informed and engaged about equity matters. The L4C campus work continues to focus on promoting equitable outcomes for students of color, low income students and other underserved student groups, and is the compelling force for our continued engagement with L4C.

In 2018, the College committed to participate in L4C's *Racial Equity & Justice Institute* work. This L4C team sought to promote racial equity and justice and reduce achievement gaps for people of color by enhancing our climate, our programs and structures, and curricular development across the College with an overarching goal of student success. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the L4C team examined the purpose of this work, inventoried our practices, engaged with current research and experts regarding racial equity and justice. Four critical themes of focus were identified as 1) data sharing, 2) engaging the college community in dialogues, 3) enhancing cultural competency, and 4) inclusive pedagogies/practices. These themes served as the basis for next steps.

Also in 2018, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) proposed a state-wide, strategic framework focused on equity. The BHE's [equity framework](#) proposes engaging in an assessment of policies from an equity perspective in order to remove systemic barriers and to establish goals that are infused in the strategic plans, and therefore the practices of individual institutions. The BHE intends to focus the equity framework and goals on Black/African American, Latinx, and Pell Recipient students. Focused and sustained effort to adopt an equity perspective has the capacity to reduce achievement disparities and support educational and economic opportunities and success for our historically underserved student groups, and to improve educational outcomes for all student groups.

At the L4C team retreat in July 2019, a Diversity & Equity Plan was developed that includes four goals to intentionally engage the College in the work of becoming an equity-minded institution. An equity-minded perspective at MCC leverages an analysis of student success through an anti-deficit lens, is not blame focused, respects and values the cultural identities and lived histories of all our students. This plan aligns with the College's current vision, mission and values and the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. It will be an excellent resource for the next strategic plan moving forward. The following is the Diversity & Equity Plan that includes four goals intended to promote equitable outcomes for students:

- 1) **Focus on building an equity-minded culture to sustain inclusive excellence at MCC.**
 - a. Ensure the college's strategic plan aligns with the MA DHE equity framework and goals.
 - b. Engage the college community in regular dialogues around racial equity and diversity.
 - c. Identify and expand influencers and stakeholders to promote exemplary practices.
 - d. Examine and review existing policies, practices and structures for alignment.
 - e. Provide ongoing professional development resources and communities of practice.
 - i. Topics may include identity development, bias, intersectionality, belonging, inclusive pedagogy, cultural competency, etc.
 - f. Establish onboarding and offboarding programs and protocol.
 - g. Adopt a comprehensive outreach program that promotes successful strategies for equity and inclusion.
 - h. Include equity in the mission, vision and values of the institution.

- 2) **Rely on and widely communicate disaggregated data to make strategic, equity-based decisions.**
 - a. Develop a dissemination plan to share data as part of the college-wide planning processes.
 - b. Disaggregate CCSSE and other survey results.
 - c. Conduct student campus climate survey including qualitative methods.
 - d. Conduct employee campus climate survey including qualitative methods.
 - e. Provide ongoing professional development.
 - i. data literacy, data analytics, interventions, promising practices, etc.

- 3) **Align existing and commit new institutional resources to make changes to support equity.**
 - a. Prioritize data-informed, equity-based rationale in the college budgeting request process.
 - b. Integrate data for the purpose of allocating institutional resources (fiscal, physical and human resources) to promote equity.
 - c. Bring to scale successful interventions and identify new initiatives to promote equity.
 - d. Examine and revise organizational structures and practices to improve equity.

- 4) **Assess ongoing efforts and document progress to sustain momentum and ensure equitable outcomes for all students.**
 - a. Establish baseline, timelines and effectiveness for institutional equity goals 1, 2, 3.
 - b. Use new DHE PMRS as established baseline dashboards to set goals and specific annual increases for AA, Lx, and Pell recipients.
 - c. Leverage existing assessment structures to assess equity efforts and document progress.
 - i. Assessment day projects, program review, grant/minigrant projects, etc.