With Equity At Its Core

MIDDLESEX
Community College
BEDFORD · LOWELL

2022 - 2027
Strategic Plan

With Equity At Its Core: Middlesex Community College
2022 - 2027 Strategic Plan

Vision Statement 2022: Middlesex Community College is focused on equity to transform lives and shape futures.

Mission Statement 2022: Middlesex Community College values equity and inclusion as the foundation for excellence, innovation, and success. Through pathways, we educate, challenge, and support all students. MCC is central to the evolving educational, cultural, economic, and workforce needs of the local and global communities.

Planning During Transitions

Middlesex Community College's Strategic Plan reflects planning during periods of great transition, including welcoming a new College President and experiencing an unprecedented pandemic.

The College kicked off the planning process in the Summer and Fall of 2019; from the beginning, equity emerged as a defining theme of our mission. A strategic planning steering committee was formed and work began, resulting in three strategic directions, with equity, student success, and community the focus of our planning. At the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, MCC President James Mabry announced his intent to retire at the end of the school year; at the same time, the College found itself in the midst of a global pandemic, affecting our entire community on a deeply personal level.

In May 2021, Former Provost Philip J. Sisson was selected as MCC's 5th president and in the Summer 2021, Arlene Rodríguez was appointed as interim Provost/Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. The Fall of 2021 saw a reinvigorated MCC Strategic Planning team restarting the planning. With direction and input from the new leadership team, a fourth strategic direction was added to focus on MCC's fiscal sustainability, as team members agreed that efforts to grow the culture of equity, student support, and community would be compromised without also prioritizing fiscal responsibility and soundness, as well.

MCC's four strategic directions are:

01 Build a college-wide culture of equity-mindedness and Expansive Excellence

02 Strengthen pathways to student retention

03 Strengthen identity as a community-based hub for equity, centering student and community voice

04 Prioritize fiscal stewardship & sustainability

With this Plan, we propose a significant shift in our work: continued excellence with a focus on equity. During our time of resets, President Sisson began to implement strategies central to an integrative strategic plan: regular forums called *Critical Conversations* were scheduled throughout the 2021-2022 academic year to provide opportunities for conversations around some of those changes, specifically, actions we will need to

remain responsive and accountable to our communities. In addition to providing spaces for difficult conversations around facilities, academic offerings, class modalities, retention data among our students of color, these forums were available to revisit directions, goals, and objectives of our plan. The Spring 2022 Professional Day was dedicated to a review by MCC faculty and staff of the now-four strategic directions and related activities. *See* Appendix A for details on the full production timeline.

Middlesex Community College's new Vision and Mission statements reflect the continued commitment to our community, while prioritizing, more intentionally, our commitment to equity. For over 50 years, with campuses in Bedford and Lowell, MCC has been the starting point for residents of northeastern Massachusetts who want to transform their lives. With academically rigorous and industry relevant programs in credit and noncredit credentials, as well as culturally engaging student support systems, MCC provides pathways to economic stability for the families of Middlesex County, while addressing the ever-evolving educational and workforce needs of local industries. While the changes of the past two years have reshaped our world, they also allowed us a new perspective about the role and importance of the community college sector, MCC in particular. Conversations about and engagement with the Plan will continue, proving that this is not a plan that just sits on a shelf.

With Equity At Its Core: Middlesex Community College's Strategic Plan, 2022-2027 is our blueprint for the future, one in which we implement initiatives and plans through an equity lens, where the benefit is to all our students, employees, and the diverse communities the College serves. It is an equity-focused plan with measurable objectives; the Plan expresses MCC's intention to focus on equity with four strategic directions each defining critical principles and objectives, while also reinforcing each other. We offer this Strategic Plan as a representation of our intentions and goals for the next several years and trust that it will serve the College and its communities well.

Strategic Directions: Equity-Mindedness and Expansive Excellence, Pathways for Retention, Community Hub, Fiscal Responsibility.

Informed by surveys, conversations, and research, four goals—identified here as strategic directions—were chosen for this strategic plan. Related objectives and outcomes are also detailed, and a Glossary of Terms is provided as Appendix B.

As Tia Brown McNair, Estela Mara Bensimón, and Lindsey Malcolm-Piqueux note, equity work "requires high levels of and continuous accountability, assessment, and reflection for all."[1] More specifically, transforming MCC's practices, dialogues, and goals from those based on "general acceptance and tolerance of difference" to those that center themselves around racial equity, recognizing that "the richness of our culture is because of our diversity and a recognition of our common humanity"[2] moves the College closer towards engaged inclusivity and expansive excellence. With that move comes the understanding that racial equity is not one-and-done work. It is long-term work that evolves as needs of our students of color evolve.

MCC has long recognized that clarity in language, measures, and goals is vital to racially equitable practices and to promote culturally sustainable campus cultures in which all students can thrive and are regarded in the totality of their human dignity. While **Strategic Direction 2: Pathways to Retention** will focus on racial equity and student success, **Strategic Direction 1: To Build A College Culture of Equity-Mindedness and Expansive Excellence** will focus on college-wide efforts to create a sustainable, culturally engaging campus climate with an equity-centered culture.

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[1] McNair, Bensimón, Malcolm-Piqueux, *From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education,* Jossey-Bass, 2020.
[2] American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2019.

The first step to that goal has already taken place: In 2021, President Sisson appointed Darcy Orellana, Ed.D., as the MCC's first Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). In addition to leading the campus community through Strategic Direction 1, DEI-related work through Bridgewater State University's Racial Equity Justice Institute (formerly Leading for Change), and recommending adjustments towards more equitable practices and policies, Dr. Orellana will also lead MCC's Center for Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Center (CTRHT), funded by a grant from the American Association Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).[3]

> **Through this work, MCC will create and cultivate an inclusive environment to encourage the support and participation of relevant stakeholders, acknowledge the experience and knowledge of people of color, and seek to engage people of color in the pursuit of racial equity in meaningful ways, and incentivize the development and support the implementation of equity-minded, evidence-based solutions.**

The CTRHT will prepare MCC faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of all the communities we strive to serve, to dismantle long-held beliefs in the hierarchy of human value. The CTRHT was adapted from the practices of indigenous communities, and is a national model, community-based practice designed to engage citizens in racial healing and catalyze efforts to address current inequities grounded in notions of a racial hierarchy. Based on techniques such as racial healing circles, the CTRHT framework prioritizes relationship building and narrative change.

In addition, work in this strategic direction will be informed by two other significant frameworks: (1) the implementation of the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) survey, funded by the recently awarded DHE Higher Education Initiative Fund (HEIF) and (2) the National Association of Diversity Officers (NADOHE) Anti-Racism Framework which addresses priority areas for our College's anti-racism strategies. These efforts also align with the Board of Higher Education's vision statement of its Equity Agenda, its goals for racial equity, as well as our work through Achieving the Dream (ATD) that began in AY2021-2022. Discussed further in this document, ATD is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving retention. Percentages cited in our goals and outcomes represent 5-year projections.

Through this work, MCC will create and cultivate an inclusive environment to encourage the support and participation of relevant stakeholders, acknowledge the experience and knowledge of people of color, and seek to engage people of color in the pursuit of racial equity in meaningful ways, and incentivize the development and support the implementation of equity-minded, evidence-based solutions.

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[3] Formerly the Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Strategic Direction 1
To build a college culture of equity-mindedness and expansive excellence.

A culture of equity-mindedness addresses the ways the College serves and advances the institution's goal of expansive excellence. Middlesex Community College takes responsibility for creating equitable outcomes for all. MCC raises awareness of inequities as MCC works to eliminate them by intentionally removing barriers to success and closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

Goal 1	Actively engage the MCC community in dialogues around racial equity and diversity to increase fluency using an anti-racist framework.
Objective	Organize DEI dialogues and healing circles that actively engage the MCC community both internally and externally.
Baseline	Determine current status of community engagement in DEI dialogues.
Desired Outcomes	Engage in monthly (or as requested and needed) dialogues and healing circles with effectiveness "fluent" through surveys or interviews/focus groups. Develop, implement, and assessment of dialogue/healing circle action plans to implement in classrooms and workplace. Train faculty, staff, students, and community members on facilitating dialogues and implementing lessons learned in classrooms and workplace.

Goal 2	Through equity audits, the use of Estela Bensimón's *12 Equity-Minded Indicators* [4], infuse equity-minded systems and practices that support student and employee success.
Objective A	Design assessment process for faculty and staff on equity audit reviews of department policies and practices.
Baseline	Results of the HEIF grant-sponsored equity audit conducted among a consortium of MA community colleges.
Desired Outcome	Regular assessment of college-wide structural and systemic policies to ensure they align with anti-racism policies and practices.
Objective B	Assist Human Resources Department in the supporting of ALANA/BIPOC hires.
Baseline	Composition of the workforce and applicant pools.
Desired Outcomes	Hire, develop, and retain diverse talent to foster an inclusive workforce. Establish metrics to increase the diverse composition of talent pools and representation at all levels of the organization.

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[4] Developing A Practice of Equity Minded Indicators

Objective C	Assess campus culture on sense of belonging using both quantitative and qualitative methods.
Baseline	Data from the recent ATD Institutional Capacity Tool Survey (completed December 2021) and CCSSE results from Spring 2022.
Desired Outcomes	Cultivate a culture of belonging among all groups at MCC.

Goal 3	Use data to ensure equity-minded decision making and achieve organizational accountability.
Objective	Design a framework for equity-minded decision making, based on research practices.
Baseline	Established practices to include regular use of disaggregated data. Established dashboards with disaggregated data around student completion.
Desired Outcomes	Design and implement dashboards for divisions that measure their key equity goals. Establish a robust, sustainable practice of decision-making based on equity.

Strategic Direction 2
To strengthen pathways to student retention

Middlesex Community College provides clear pathways, leveraging students' unique lived experiences, strengths, and assets to achieve students' personal and professional goals efficiently and successfully. Middlesex Community College focuses college resources and enhances curricular and co-curricular experiences to create connected communities designed to reduce barriers to completion and allow students to progress towards their educational goals.

Strategic Direction 2 will augment MCC's seven academic pathways created in 2016. In addition to mapping out the curriculum requirements of students' certificate or degree, pathways are college-wide retention efforts that make preparation and planning for post-secondary education the mission of the entire college. These pathways recognize that each student is unique and so we begin by identifying their interests, talents, skills, and goals. Pathways at MCC include a plan for students to achieve degree completion, transfer, and relevant job training. Throughout the pathways, MCC focuses on equity and provides support for all types of learners through flexible scheduling, proactive advising, and mentoring.

Goal 1	Reduce disparities in access and affordability based on race, gender, and socio-economic status through programs that are essential to our community and provide clear and equitable paths to success for all students.
Objective A	**Expand flexible and affordable programs and schedule options to increase access and eliminate disparities.**
Baseline	Identify and inventory existing online, hybrid programs. Identify and inventory existing courses and programs with open educational resources (OER) and low-cost options.
Desired Outcomes	Increase flexible options to include mini-mesters, HyFlex and hybrid options, and additional OER/low or no cost courses and programs. Set up system to track and assess retention and persistence in flexible options. Identify and redesign three programs per year for increased access and affordability. *(Aligns with NUE Admissions/Enrollment/Transfer recommendations and aligns with NUE Curriculum Recommendations)*
Objective B	**Strengthen pathways from high school to improve student understanding of college processes, resources, and opportunity leading to better representation within programs.**
Baseline	Identify existing mentoring programs with concurrent high school instructors to determine best practices. Identify and catalog areas where MCC can be more strategic to assist students' knowledge of college, including use of MCC learning management system in course design and knowledge of college resources.
Desired Outcomes	Develop college-wide mentoring program with concurrent enrollment high school instructors. Improve alignment with high school pathways to strengthen students' understanding of college to promote informed decision making about future study. *(Aligns with NUE Admissions/Enrollment/Transfer recommendations and aligns with NUE Curriculum Recommendations)*
Objective C	**Strengthen transfer to baccalaureate programs to improve racial equity in careers.**
Baseline	Assess disaggregated transfer rates and career attainment in college programs.
Desired Outcomes	Create processes to better assess program transfer rates based on disaggregated data. Improve transfer to Bachelor programs and careers by three percent.

Goal 2	Keep students on the path to their educational goals through culturally relevant and engaging curricular and co-curricular high impact practices, measured through increased persistence, retention, completion of milestone courses, and reduction of excess graduation credits.
Objective A	**Ensure all students in associate degree programs experience a common set of foundational experiences to create forward momentum in the first year of study, beginning with student on-boarding.**
Baseline	Assess enrollment in Academic Pathways with data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender. Assess current college wide orientation.
Desired Outcomes	Increase student participation in and completion of college orientation. Increase flexible options to include mini-mesters, HyFlex, and hybrid options and additional OER/low 100% of undecided students are assigned to a meta-major (pathway) and transition to a major within one year of enrollment. Reduce average excess credits by 10% through implementation of first-year Personal Academic Plans. Increase retention by 5%. Increase graduation rates by 5%.
Objective B	**Decolonize the curriculum to promote equitable outcomes across all student populations.**
Baseline	Inventory programs and courses currently taught with inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogies. Assess existing Honors program to identify opportunities to improve recruitment of, access for, and support of racially minoritized students. *(Aligns with NUE HIP and Co-Curriculum Recommendations)*
Desired Outcomes	Expand courses taught using inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogies by 20% per year. Increase programs using inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogies 20% per year *(achieving 100% in 5 years).* Audit and revise Learning Outcomes (ISLO, PSLO) for racial justice, 20% of courses and programs per year. *(Aligns with NUE Curriculum Recommendations)* Develop five new interdisciplinary or capstone learning experiences addressing complex societal programs that are available to all students. *(Aligns with NUE Curriculum Recommendations, NUE HIP and Co-Curriculum Recommendations)* Audit access, success, and completion of honors courses since MCC instituted the removal of GPA requirement to access the courses. *(Aligns with NUE HIP and Co-Curriculum Recommendations)* Reach equitable representation in academic program enrollment reflective of community demographics.

Objective C	**Remove barriers in developmental education for incoming students.** *(Aligns with DHE dashboard - Student Success & Completion - First Year Progress and NUE, and NECHE 5 Year Letter)*
Baseline	Evaluate and assess ATD Data.
Desired Outcomes	Increase student completion of college-level English and math within the first 30 credits. Increase student completion of first year English and Math by 5%. *(Aligns with DHE dashboard - Student Success & Completion - First Year Progress and NUE, and NECHE 5 Year Letter)*
Objective D	**Improve access to and completion of a credential or degree through recognition of existing knowledge and prior learning assessment leading to award of credit.**
Baseline	Assess disaggregated data for students receiving credit from existing knowledge and prior learning assessment.
Desired Outcomes	Develop a database identifying MCC courses that students have and can receive college credit from non-traditional sources. Increase credit for prior learning (CPL) options for adult students to reduce the cost and time of credential or degree completion. Increase offering of stackable credentials and noncredit to credit articulations to improve navigation of academic to career pathways. **(Aligns with NUE Curriculum Recommendations)*
Objective E	**Revise all gatekeeper courses to include High Impact Practices and assessment to ensure learning.**
Baseline	Audit academic programs to identify gatekeeper courses. Identify High Impact Practices, especially those modeled for students of color.
Desired Outcomes	Ensure all academic programs provide equitable access to identified gatekeeper courses: 20% per year *(achieving 100% of programs in 5 years).*
Objective F	**Ensure all students in associate degree programs experience work-based experiential learning opportunities that count toward degree completion.** *(Aligns with NUE HIP Recommendations)*
Baseline	Assess and evaluate data from *Learn & Earn.* Identify and inventory existing internship experiences. Assess disaggregated data of students who complete internships within existing academic pathways.
Desired Outcomes	Create a common core preparation experience to ensure students are prepared for work-based experiential learning opportunities. Ensure each academic pathway includes relevant and significant experiential learning that includes salaried positions while a student completes their credential.

Objective G	Implement new or expand existing student engagement programs to support students through program completion.
Baseline	Audit engagement programs to determine access for targeted student populations.
Desired Outcomes	Provide 10 co-curricular programs per year aimed at engaging targeted student populations.
	Create anti-racist, civic engagement opportunities for students across general education and degree programs. *(Aligns with NUE HIP & Co-Curriculum Recommendations)*

Goal 3	Reduce barriers to completion to enable all students to achieve their educational goals through a community of support.
Objective A	Expand proactive advising, coaching, and mentoring to provide more equitable support across student populations
Baseline	Establish mentoring and engagement programs for students of color.
	Assess participation and success of students of color in the Equity in Transfer grant program.
Desired Outcomes	Engage 550 of students of color in Success Scholars Program.
	Create visible networks of faculty and staff who are first-generation and/ or people of color, such as campus-wide affinity groups or multicultural centers. *(Aligns with NUE Recommendation Holistic Student Support)*
Objective B	Increase College's awareness of students' essential needs and provide students with better visibility and access to both College and community resources.
Baseline	Identify student needs and service gaps.
	Review services provided by college and community.
Desired Outcomes	Strengthen restorative and educational approaches to meet students' essential needs. *(Aligns with NUE Recommendation Holistic Student Support)*

Strategic Direction 3
Strengthen our identity as a community-based hub for equity, centering student and community voice

Middlesex Community College is committed to engaging with our surrounding communities to contribute to positive social transformation and a stronger region. We respond nimbly to the needs of our community and the economy. We recognize our place-based responsibility to support our workforce, economic, and educational communities in a rapidly changing 21st century. Middlesex Community College partners with regional organizations to meet the educational needs of all learners and align education programs with workforce needs.

Goal 1	Partner with regional organizations to create new credit and noncredit credentials to meet the educational needs of all learners to align education programs with workforce needs.
Objective A	**Through an equity lens, identify community organizations in our region.**
Baseline	Develop community map of organizations.
Desired Outcomes	Regular reporting and communication of partnerships and collaborations that support student success, with and through existing college structures, such as FSA and FSA committees. Develop processes to inform students of partnerships and collaborations. *(Aligns with NUE Recommendation Holistic Student Support)*
Objective B	**Strengthen community partnerships and collaborations to meet workforce needs through creation of educational opportunities.**
Baseline	Determine existing partnerships and collaborations.
Desired Outcomes	Enhance presence in the community and with community organizations, with partners such as MassHire. Create five new noncredit courses. Create five new credit credentials.

Goal 2	Increase grants that align with evolving and emerging workforce trends.
Objective	**Identify funding opportunities, industry partners, and non-profit agencies that will serve as grant partners.**
Baseline	Determine existing grant partners.
Desired Outcomes	Increase the College's impact in meeting the needs of learners and the regional workforce of through grant funded initiatives and partnerships that align with our strategic goals.

Strategic Direction 4
Fiscal Stewardship: Design for an Economically Sustainable Institution

Middlesex Community College recognizes the success for all the strategic directions is based upon a foundation of fiscal sustainability. The College directs its resources to achieving its strategic outcomes and fulfilling its commitment to equity. The College deepens its position in the community through dedicating human, physical, and financial resources to achieve equitable outcomes.

Organizations such as the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and the New England Consortium of Higher Education (NECHE), the regional accrediting agency for colleges and universities, set fiscal benchmarks and guidelines that pinpoint the fiscal health of an institution. Financial instability has been key in the recent closings of colleges and universities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 100 for-profit colleges closed between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years alone, while 20 nonprofit colleges in New England closed during that period.[5]

MCC has always abided by these fiscal markers, often finding itself in the mid-range or exceeding satisfactory standards. Looking ahead, the key to MCC's fiscal sustainability is to sustain and exceed these standards.

This Plan envisions that our future will require improvements to our physical campuses that foresee the future of both student life and work, with the financial support necessary to enhance in person learning, work, community, and sustainable remote options.

Key aspects of our Plan to support this work includes strengthening our advocacy at DCAMM, the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, to increase capital funding to address deferred maintenance and to target an increase in DCAMM funding to support the growth of academic programs linked with capital projects, as well as an updated Facilities & Campus Master Plan and a new Technology Master Plan, which together will provide the technology and infrastructure necessary to support students and employees alike. Strategic planning is integrated with academic program assessment and the budget to support growth of academic priorities based on industry need. Sustainability will be achieved through financial support for energy-efficient, innovative facilities and operations.

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[5] How many colleges and universities have closed since 2016?

Strategic Direction 4
Design for an Economically Sustainable Institution

Middlesex Community College recognizes economic sustainability is the foundation of success for all the strategic directions and ongoing fiscal viability of the institution. Moreover, our commitment to equity and student success must be reflected in how the College prioritizes its work and its funding of that work. Economic sustainability at MCC ensures the continuation of our equity work. The College commits to trying its limited resources directly to achieving strategic outcomes and its primary commitment to equity. The College reimagines and redefines itself and its position in the community through intentional allocation of human, physical, and financial resources dedicated to achieving equitable outcomes in support of the College's mission.

Goal 1	Improve Economic Stability for our Institution.
Objective A	**Ensure periodic review, evaluation, and communication of key NACUBO and NECHE financial and economic metrics targeted for achieving continued economic sustainability.**
Baseline	Assess Composite Financial Index. Assess student credit hour enrollment. Assess contribution return on revenue to fund balance. Assess Economic Sustainability Rubric. Assess days cash on hand to cover operating expenses. Assess working capital current ratio.
Desired Outcomes	Sustain or exceed NACUBO benchmark in the range of 4 – 8 CFI Index. Increase student credit hours to pre-COVID enrollment baseline. Sustain operating contribution to fund balance by 1% - 5% per year. Align student fees and operating expenses to ensure equity for all students. Sustain cash on hand to cover 90 - 120 days. Sustain working capital ratio of 2 to 1.
Objective B	**Integrate Strategic Planning, academic program assessment, and the annual budget.**
Baseline	Assess current program credit hours and enrollment. Evaluate resource allocation-based program assessment.

Desired Outcomes	Align Strategic Plan with NECHE Standard 2 for Planning and Evaluation.
	MCC is recognized in accreditation reports by NECHE.
	Fund the budget to support growth of academic priorities based on industry need.
	Strengthen the link between program assessment and program review with budget priorities and industry needs.
	Improve the connection between program assessment and program credit hour growth, graduation, transfer, and employment.
	Connect regularly with workforce partner through the MCC Workforce Council and program advisory boards on current needs for industry credentials and assistance in designing them.

Objective C	**Prioritize the inclusion of economic sustainability as a core principle in decision-making.**
Baseline	Assess current use of economic stability in planning.
	Assess current Massachusetts state community college funding commitment as compared to national averages.
Desired Outcomes	Strengthen advocacy at the state level for increased support to keep tuition and fees affordable.
	Track annual state funding for community colleges to target 80% student full time enrollment funding benchmark and national benchmarks.

Goal 2	**Align campus facilities and technology with program and community needs.**
Objective A	**Develop Campus/ Facilities Master Plan that aligns with the College's strategic priorities, focused on alignment of academic programs, beautification of the campuses, and the future of work, based upon the core principles of financial and environmental sustainability to enhance infrastructure and continuously addressing deferred maintenance.**
Baseline	Evaluate and assess existing master plan in current campus configuration.
	Evaluate existing deferred maintenance liability.
Desired Outcomes	Align building priorities with academic program needs.
	Reduce deferred maintenance liability through targeted capital projects.
	Strengthen advocacy at DCAMM to increase capital funding to address deferred maintenance.
	Increase DCAMM and other grants that support academic programs linked with capital projects.
	Strengthen MCC Advancement efforts to assist in campus transformation.
	Sustain campus facility expenses within the target range of less than 10% of annual budget.

Objective B	**Develop Technology Master Plan to support MCC, both on campus and remote learning and working, with a focus on facilitation of learning, innovation, and initiatives to sustain future success, stability, and resilience.**
Baseline	Assess existing website and campus technology. Track annual spending for campus technology expenses and percentage of annual budget.
Desired Outcomes	Redesign MCC website. Ensure technology updates align with student and employee needs. Improve digitization of student services. Enhance cyber security monitoring, disaster recovery, and back up. Sustain campus technology expenses in a target range of less than 10% of annual budget.

Goal 3	**Enhance Environmental Stewardship to Support Sustainability.**
Objective A	**Promote of an ethic of resource conservation, sustainability, and social justice on our campuses.**
Baseline	Determine status of community engagement in dialogues regarding resource conservation, sustainability, and social justice.
Desired Outcomes	Expand student involvement with high-impact, co-curricular experiences that integrate academic experiences with sustainability. Strengthen regular campus dialogues on resources conservation and sustainability. Improved communication of sustainability initiatives and improved professional development to support sustainability efforts.
Objective B	**Achieve sustainability through efficient, innovative facilities and operations that educate the campus community and improve quality of life.**
Baseline	Assess existing efficiency of facilities.
Desired Outcomes	Optimize building energy usage through retro-commissioning, continuous commissioning, and occupant education. Reduce energy consumption with a targeted 3-year goal of 5% usage reduction from the 3-year history baseline.

Informing the Plan: Environmental Scans, Surveys, and Data

The College drafted strategic directions with intentionality, based on real world data and our lived experiences.

In Spring 2021, as the College collected information for an environmental scan that reflected the impact of the pandemic, the term "post-pandemic" entered our vocabulary and was used both tentatively and hopefully. The term post-pandemic is now used routinely and signals a sense of optimism as we emerge from a period that has challenged even the most basic assumptions about daily life. But what can we know about the post-pandemic world? Rarely in our lifetimes has there been a period of such upheaval and uncertainty.

While broad-based trend data is offered for various topics, the information from the past year does not connect seamlessly to previous years. Yet, in many cases, the 2020 data emphasizes strengths and inequities that already existed, such as economic sectors that have successfully adapted to the new normal and also the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.

Our environment continues to evolve in deep and unprecedented ways, so this information is offered is as a resource for informing measurable goals and objectives in a rapidly changing environment. It is intended to provide data and a context, as well as also benchmarks for aspirational action in the new Plan. Middlesex Community College's external environment is framed in terms of population, economic and workforce development, and impact of COVID-19 on our communities, as well as initiatives and goals identified by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) through both the newly revised New Undergraduate Student Experience (NUE) and the Equity Agenda.

> **"Over the past ten years, MCC's service area in Middlesex County saw the greatest growth numerically of any county in Massachusetts with an additional 108,566 individuals— approximately the entire population of the city of Lowell—making the county home."**
> Source: *Summary of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 County-Level Population and Component Estimates for Massachusetts*

National Population: Overall Trends

Nationally, the first year of President Joseph Biden's administration has brought modest changes to immigration policies; however, the Biden Administration has worked to preserve and fortify the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), enabling first time and renewal requests for DACA.[6]

Despite the slower than desired progress to reverse immigration policies and practices, national projections of population from now through 2060 will see an overall aging of the population and greater diversity, as a result of natural factors (birth rates) and immigration.[7] By 2030, the aging of the Baby Boomers will mean not only an older population, but one that is growing more slowly than previous generations. Concurrently, increases in immigration will result in a more diverse U.S. population and be the primary source of population growth. Beginning in 2030, "net international migration is expected to overtake natural increase as the driver of population growth in the United States because of population aging."[8] In a report published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the top three fastest growing ethnic groups include individuals who identify as two or more races (based on natural factors), followed by Asians and Hispanics, through immigration.[9]

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[6] Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
[7] Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060 (issued March 2018, revised February 2020)
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

Regional Population: Overall Trends

Over the past ten years, MCC's service area in Middlesex County saw the greatest growth numerically of any county in Massachusetts with an additional 108,566 individuals—approximately the entire population of the city of Lowell—making the county home. For the period between April 2010 to July 2019 this was due to both natural factors, i.e., a result of more births than deaths, and international migration into the county. The chart below from the UMASS Donohue Institute lists the population changes for all the Commonwealth's counties. As noted, Middlesex County, the traditional and primary service area for Middlesex Community College, ranks first in the number of new residents who moved to the county within the nine-year period designated.

Cumulative Estimates of Resident Population Change and Rankings for Massachusetts Counties April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019						
Geography	Population Estimates		Change, 2010 to 2019		Rank Change	
	April 1, 2010	July 1, 2019	Number	Percent	By Number	By Percent
Massachusetts	**6,547,785**	**6,892,503**	**344,718**	**5.3%**	**(X)**	**(X)**
Barnstable	215,880	212,990	-2,890	-1.3%	13	12
Berkshire	131,274	124,944	-6,330	-4.8%	14	14
Bristol	548,242	565,217	16,975	3.1%	7	9
Dukes	16,535	17,332	797	4.8%	11	7
Essex	743,082	789,034	45,952	6.2%	3	4
Franklin	71,381	70,180	-1,201	-1.7%	12	13
Hampden	463,615	466,372	2,757	0.6%	9	11
Hampshire	158,063	160,830	2,767	1.8%	8	10
Middlesex	1,503,133	1,611,699	108,566	7.2%	1	3
Nantucket	10,172	11,399	1,227	12.1%	10	1
Norfolk	670,910	706,775	35,865	5.3%	4	5
Plymouth	494,932	521,202	26,270	5.3%	6	6
Suffolk	722,183	803,907	81,724	11.3%	2	2
Worcester	798,383	830,622	32,239	4.0%	5	8

Table 1 - Summary of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 County-Level Population and Component Estimates for Massachusetts
https://donahue.umass.edu/documents/UMDI_2019CountyPopSummary.pdf

Pre-pandemic population figures indicate that diversity in Boston and its surrounding region is growing rapidly with the overall non-White population of the Greater Boston increasing by 245% since 1990.10 The greatest increase in diversity over the past 20 years has been in the communities surrounding Boston, with ninety percent (90%) of this increase as the result of international immigration. Changing Faces of Greater Boston, a report by the UMASS Donahue Institute and the Boston Foundation released in 2019, looks at different ethnic groups' experience and patterns related to socio-economic indicators, educational attainment, and civic participation and representation. Like the Vespa, Medina, and Armstrong report, the Changing Faces reports that Latinos and Asians, and locally, African Americans, are the "engine" of the Commonwealth's non-White population growth: since 1990, "the state's Latino population grew from under 5 to nearly 12 percent, the Asian American population grew from just over 2 to 6.6 percent and the black population from 4.6 to 7 percent."

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[10] Changing Faces of Greater Boston and Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Growth Projections

Local Population: Overall Trends

In MCC's service area, projected enrollments in the top 10 "feeder" communities show a slight decline. The table below indicates the current populations of local municipalities and the projected population in 2025. The projections use what is known about long-term trends to predict future changes and so may not fully account for significant changes resulting during the past year from the pandemic and its economic impact. Given this, MCC will continue to assess the population projections, the needs in our communities through conversations identified in Strategic Direction 3, and monitor enrollment, specifically, the preferred modalities students indicate through registration. MCC will be prepared to pivot in a timely manner to address changes not yet forecasted.

Population and Projections of Top MCC Feeder Communities, 2020 to 2025				
Community	**2020**	**2025**	**N change, 2020 - 2025**	**% change 2020 - 2025**
Lowell	108,699	108,341	-358	-0.3%
Lawrence	83,789	85,229	1,440	1.7%
Bedford	14,548	15,189	641	4.2%
Billerica	42,664	42,544	-120	-0.3%
Burlington	27,164	27,846	682	2.4%
Chelmsford	34,394	34,047	-347	-1%
Dracut	31,859	32,185	326	1%
Waltham	67,690	70,928	3238	4.6%
Wilmington	23,707	24,026	319	1.3%
Tewksbury	29,980	29,723	-257	-0.9%
Woburn	42,873	45,022	2,149	4.8%

Table 2 - UMASS Donahue Institute, Population Estimates Program

"The greatest increase in diversity over the past 20 years has been in the communities surrounding Boston, with ninety percent (90%) of this increase as the result of international immigration."

Source: Changing Faces of Greater Boston and Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Growth Projections

In addition, as noted in the data below, while White residents continue to be the majority in MCC's overall service area, residents of color still comprise almost a quarter of the population.

Disaggregated Race and Ethnicity Data of Middlesex Community College's Service Area (2019)								
Community	African American		Asian - American		Hispanic/Latino		White	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lowell	10,438	8%	26,416	23.7%	20,132	18.%	70,321	63.2%
Burlington	1,494	5.4%	5,459	19.7%	845	3.1%	21,335	77.2%
Lawrence	6,109	7.6%	1,547	1.9%	64,463	80.6%	44,118	55.2%
Waltham	5,535	8.%	8,090	12.9%	8,536	13.6%	47,380	75.5%
Wilmington	975	4.2%	1630	7%	232	1%	20,800	89%
Woburn	2,981	7.4%	3,498	9.8%	1,839	4.6%	32,893	81.6%
Middlesex county	104,583	6.5%	213,865	13.4%	127,980	8%	1269,550	80.9%
MA	643,622	9.4%	516,599	7.5%	809,179	11.8%	5,543,840	80.9%

Table 3 - UMASS Donahue Institute, Population Estimates Program

High school populations in the MCC service region continue their decline in enrollments, which is not surprising, given the long-standing research on declining high school enrollments. In fact, seven (7) of the top eleven (11) MCC-sending high schools show a decline in their current enrollments from grades 10 through 12, suggesting a stagnant or reduced pool of traditional college-aged students in the region in the near future.

High School Enrollment by Grades: Top 10 High Schools that MCC Serves			
High School	10th grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Lowell HS	689	768	799
Greater Lowell Voc Tech	584	560	538
Lawrence	923	804	807
Woburn	288	343	313
Dracut	214	227	229
Chelmsford	335	342	373
Shawsheen Valley Tech	307	329	315
Wilmington	192	201	194
Billerica	279	302	239
Burlington	218	229	241
Tewksbury	191	228	209
Totals	**4220**	**4333**	**4257**

Table 4 - Data from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Although declining in overall enrollment, MCC's area high schools are also some of the most diverse in the Commonwealth. In fact, in Paul Ciurczakour's report *The most diverse high school in Massachusetts is...,* four Lowell Public Schools are listed in the top 25 most diverse schools in Massachusetts, with Lowell High School ranked 15th. In his study, Ciurczakour uses the term "Diversity Index" to capture the rate of diversity at the school; he defines it as "the odds that two students chosen at random are of a different race."[11] Unfortunately, as Ciurczakour also notes, a high diversity index is also associated with a high poverty rate among these underserved students.

School Diversity in Massachusetts: Lowell Public School Rankings (Out of Top 25 in MA)		
Rank	School Name	Diversity index
11	Dr. Janie Adie Day School	75%
15	Lowell High School	74%
19	B.F. Butler Middle School	74%
21	Pawtucketville Memorial	73%

Table 5 - Boston Indicators The most diverse high school in Massachusetts is..., February 2020

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[11] Boston Indicators The most diverse high school in Massachusetts is..., February 2020

Mobility Rates in MCC Sending High Schools, 2020: What is it and why is it important?

Mobility rate indicates the frequency of students changing schools for reasons other than grade promotion. Often mobility is linked to residential mobility, and sometimes, by extension, financial instability of the family. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines mobility "as those students transferring into or out of public schools, districts or the state" and implements three measures to determine mobility: Intake (transfer-in) Rate which centers on enrollment rate in a district after the start of the school year; Churn Rate, which captures the number of students who transfer in/out of a school district throughout that year; and Stability Rate, which measures how many students stayed in a district during a given year.

> **MCC is committed to the communities it educates and through this Plan will strengthen partnerships, collaborations, and engagement with community groups to meet these needs.**

In the chart below, the mobility rates of the high schools in MCC's service area are noted:

Mobility Rates of High Schools in MCC's Service Area				
High School	**Intake %**	**Churn %**	**Stability %**	**Stability Enrollment**
Lowell HS	7.2%	12.6%	92.7%	14,684
Greater Lowell Voc Tech	1.3%	3.8%	96.3%	2,283
Lawrence	11.0%	18.7%	88.1%	13,964
Woburn	4.9%	8.1%	95.4%	4,496
Dracut	5.1%	7.8%	95.5%	3,705
Chelmsford	3.3%	5.2%	97.3%	5,034
Shawsheen Valley Tech	1.0%	2.3%	98.3%	1,267
Wilmington	2.5%	1.3%	98.5%	3,170
Billerica	5.2%	6.9%	95.7%	4,819
Burlington	4.0%	6.3%	96%	3,524
Tewksbury	2.6%	4.7%	96.9%	3,366

High student mobility, or "churn," is seen as an indication of barriers to academic progress and success. In our current context, mobility points to communities with existing vulnerabilities.

MCC is committed to the communities it educates and through this Plan will strengthen partnerships, collaborations, and engagement with community groups to meet these needs. This includes, but is not limited to, rigorous early college/dual enrollment programs that introduce these students, especially those caught in "high churn" schools, as early as the 9th grade to college-level work, allowing them the opportunity to graduate with up to 12 college-level credits. Additionally, with strategic support services, partnerships with regional community-based organizations (CBO) that also focus on these students, engagement with community groups such as the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI),

and the youth-based organization UTEC, MCC is well-prepared to continue its evolution as an equity-centered institution, confident that equity-based cultures and practices serve all.

For example, MCC is leading training workshops with staff at CTI and UTEC on how to apply to MCC and complete a FAFSA application. In conversations with leaders of both organizations, accessing key steps to accessing college admission was the information most requested. Students who stop out of high school will often seek help in these and similar CBOs. Training staff members, who are often fluent in the languages spoken by the diverse communities of MCC's service region prepares them to speak to the educational opportunities at the College. This training engages potential students in the admissions process at the time these individuals inquire, in a just-in-time "community advising" model.

> **The Adult Learner: Over 138,671 adults 25 years and older in Middlesex County have some college experience but have not completed their credentials.**
> *Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

Through these examples, MCC will continue and strengthen its place as the leader for education all residents in northeastern MA for the industries of the regional economy. MCC understands that going to college is often a desire that our resident aspire to; we also understand that as an institution, we must prepare the programing at the time they need it. This plan is geared to position MCC to continue to meet the needs of all our residents and clear that pathway to careers with family-sustainable wages. In short, MCC continues the promise of our American democracy.

Specialized Populations: Increase of the Adult Learner, Continued Decline in High School Enrollment

The trend of increasing diversity and the role that racially and ethnically diverse individuals have in that growth are expected to continue and will inform the educational landscape. Yet, the causal relationship between these demographic changes and increased enrollments at community colleges, specifically, will not be so direct, especially in New England where high-school enrollment has decreased significantly, according to Nathan Grawe. *In The Agile College: How Institutions Successfully Manage Demographic Changes*, Grawe reiterates, although less direly, the expected "enrollment cliff" for the northeast that he has predicted in his research.

In addition to declining high school enrollment, Grawe points out that traditional community college populations, such as Hispanic students, a majority of whom began their studies at a community college, are now choosing to start their credentials at a four-year school.[12] Strategic and targeted enrollment plans, intentional academic programming targeting the needs of non-high school aged residents, and consistent and relevant student support services are critical during this shift.

> **MCC is well-prepared to continue its evolution as an equity-centered institution, confident that equity-based cultures and practices serve all.**

A deeper dive into MCC's service area population, shows a population that MCC can target more intentionally as a part of the next 5 years: the adult learner.

According to the American Community Survey 2019 produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, over 138,671 adults 25 years and older in Middlesex County have some college experience but have not completed their credentials. The estimated educational attainment of these communities listed below show a clear need for

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[12] Grawe, Nathan. *The Agile College: How Institutions Successfully Navigate Demographic Changes*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 23.

MCC to dive deeper into serving these adult learners by preparing them for the changes in the region's workforce and advocating for more Hi-Set/GED exam preparation.

Adults Population with Some High School or Less, Some College and Non-Completion of Credential (2019)			
Community	High School diploma or less of adult population		Some college, non- completion – of adult population
Lowell	37,939	52.6%	12,393
Burlington	4,910	24.8%	2,285
Lawrence	32,042	64.5%	9,869
Waltham	11,639	27.2%	5,307
Wilmington	5,199	31.7%	2,645
Woburn	9,011	30.9%	4,594
Middlesex County	287,648	25.6%	138,671
Massachusetts	1,590,469	33.3%	738,484

Table 6 - American Community Survey, 2019 data release, 5 year demographic and housing estimates – "Race alone or in combination," resulting in duplicated counts in most categories

In addition, diving into the economic and workforce demands of our industry partners opens additional opportunities for MCC. Lastly, as a leader in dual enrollment and workforce education, MCC is primed to explore 2-Generation (or 2-Gen) approach models and frameworks to focus on how our programs address the needs of the entire family.[13]

Economy and Workforce: Local/Regional Employment

Foreseeing a need for change, MCC has already begun to pilot an apprentice-style program where biotechnology students are hired by local companies and paid for their work, while continuing their studies. Funded by the One8 Foundation, Learn & Earn will become, as one of objectives of this plan, the model for experiential work experience for our students.

> MCC will continue and strengthen its place as the leader for education all residents in northeastern MA for the industries of the regional economy

With a workforce of almost 57,000 people, the city of Lowell had an 8.9% unemployment rate as of the end of January 2021 compared to a statewide average of 7.8% for the same period. For the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Area, the three dominant industry sectors are Advanced Manufacturing; Health & Social Assistance; and Professional, Scientific, and Tech/IT. Although these sectors remain critical to the regional economy, the pandemic has changed the nature of work for everyone with unemployment increasing by 6% in manufacturing and 17% in healthcare.[14]

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[13] The 2Gen Approach
[14] Greater Lowell, Regional Labor Market Blueprint Update and Current Statistics for Greater Lowell Labor Market - December 2020, Greater Lowell regional labor force and unemployment rates, by municipality

MCC has a long-standing tradition of responding in a timely manner to the workforce needs of the region and preparing students for careers with livable salaries. Prior to the pandemic, MCC graduates in Management/Sales and Healthcare entered high demand occupations. The data show areas of growth in healthcare and IT. The chart below shows those degrees completed by MCC graduates and the high-demand areas that they served.
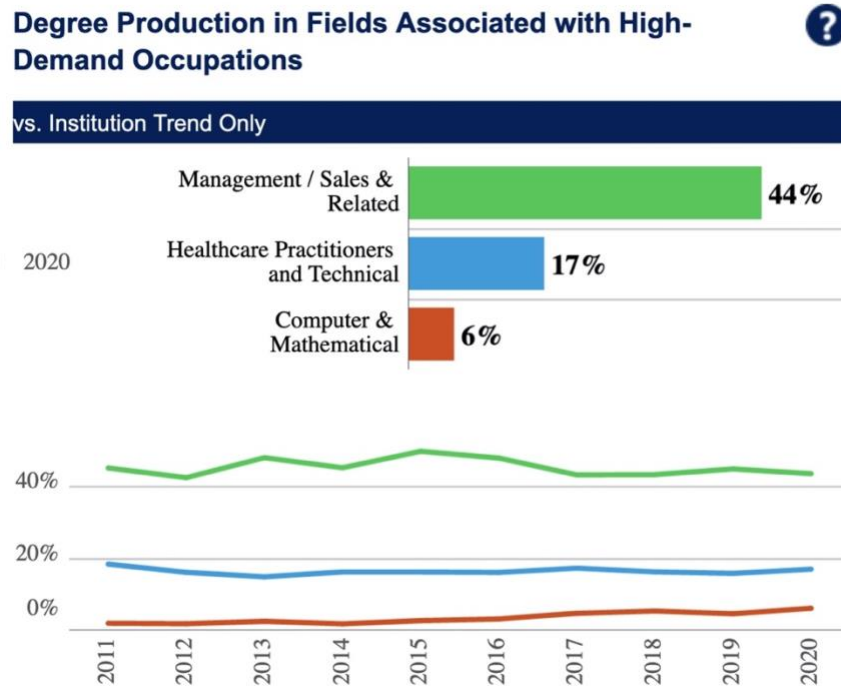

Figure 1 - Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Performance Measures Report System
https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/PMRS/middlesex.asp

With an equity lens, MCC understands that it is important to ask who is getting these jobs. The majority of people employed in advanced manufacturing are male (approximately 70%) while the majority of healthcare workers are women (80%). Nearly 80% of the workers in both these sectors are White. The Professional, Scientific, and Tech/IT sector includes computer systems design, legal, management and technical consulting, and accounting and bookkeeping services. Half of the employees in these fields have bachelor's degrees and the overwhelming majority are White (85%). These sectors are slowly becoming more diverse but given the preponderance of jobs in these sectors, supporting the development of new workers who are African American, Latinx, and Asian is critical. Related to the impact on the pandemic on Massachusetts workers, African American and Latinx populations suffered disproportionally throughout 2020. Similarly, those with lower educational attainment and lower paying jobs were more likely to lose their jobs.[15]

In terms of high demand fields, the technology sector's strength as an economic driver is broad-based across the state. Using "net tech jobs" as a measure of jobs created in technology as well as technology jobs across traditional, or non-tech, sectors, technology growth and job creation is on pace to result in an increase of nearly 100,000 jobs from 2010 to 2020. "[T]ech in Massachusetts underpins 35% of all jobs in the Commonwealth." Three elements will be critical to sustaining this growth: (1) improving participation among people of color and women, (2) the adaptation of the educational system and closer cooperation with

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[15]*A Profile of Unemployed Workers in Massachusetts*, October 2020.

business, as well as (3) the development and scaling of alternative credentialing[16] – all of which could impact the role of community colleges.

How will we adapt – as both the community college sector and Middlesex as an institution on the cusp of major change? As our Discovery Day keynote speaker, Dr. Scott Latham points out, "Industry leaders anticipate a rapidly emerging mismatch between the skills that workers currently have and the skills that they will need to thrive with disruptive technologies including robotics, blockchain, artificial intelligence, and other transformational factors. In this future, education itself must become increasingly adaptive."[17]

> With an equity lens, MCC understands that it is important to ask who is getting these jobs.

COVID-19 Impact on College and K-12 Education

The sudden shift to remote learning as well as the accompanying uncertainly of COVID-19's impact on their lives resulted in students at both the K-12 and college levels experiencing adverse effects, with both academic and personal challenges. For low-income students, limited access to technology meant even greater obstacles in addition to their limited familiarity with entirely remote learning formats. These students were also more likely to be affected by job losses, family illness, the lack of stable housing, and in many cases, food insecurity. Students at the K-12 and college levels reported heightened levels of stress and anxiety related to their learning situations. For college students, the impact can be seen in decreased enrollments, especially among first time students, with low-income and minoritized students showing the greatest losses.

Nationally, community college enrollments dropped 18.9% for first year students compared to 2019.[18] First year enrollment among all higher education sectors dropped 13% including disproportionate decreases of 19.9% among Hispanic/Latinx and 18.7% among African American for Fall 2020 versus Fall 2019. Low-income students were more likely to alter or delay their college plans, were less likely to apply for financial aid, and further exacerbate existing inequalities.

Furthermore, a survey of 14,000 students at 232 public and private colleges across the nation in spring 2021 revealed that more than 85% of respondents thought that the conditions in Fall 2020 negatively affected their academic performance.[19] Although to some degree students overcame the sense of shock and disruption in Fall 2020 that they experienced in Spring 2020, they expressed dissatisfaction related to academic challenges and mental health issues such as stress and anxiety.

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[16] *The State of the Massachusetts Tech Economy and* Presentation on State of the Technology Economy, *Feb 2020*

[17] Latham, Scott. "The Future of Work and the Reskilling Revolution: What Role Will Higher Education Play?" Mass Benchmarks, *The Journal of the Massachusetts Economy* (2019), Volume twenty-one, Issue two. pg. 17.
[18] *The Pandemic's Impact on College Enrollment*
[19] *Did college students perform worse during COVID-19?* eCampus News

As we look at the effects on younger students who will become college students in the near future, a Gallup survey describes students' own perceptions about their learning using interviews from 1,000 student ages 14 to 18 in Massachusetts schools. This information showed that lower income students were more likely to be learning entirely through remote formats while higher income student were more likely to have access to hybrid learning. Students from under-resourced communities also faced greater challenges due to technology access and the negative feelings they associated with learning entirely online such as increased anxiety and stress. The effect that COVID-19 has had on student achievement is also shown to exacerbate achievement gaps:

Analyses of testing data from fall 2020 indicate the transition to remote learning has resulted in significant learning loss, particularly among low-income and minority students. Using data from the online learning platform Zearn, economists at the Harvard Opportunity Insights project found large losses in math learning for low-income students, whereas students from affluent backgrounds saw gains.[20]

Not surprisingly, a 2020 working paper from the Annenberg Institute describes preliminary estimates of the consequences of the COVID-19 disruptions on learning and achievement in K-12 schools. The study relies on what is known through "summer loss" research as well as seasonal factors or other interruptions that affect student learning.[21]

> **The MCC student: Latinx women enroll at double the rate of their male counterparts; a significant number of students identify as two- or more races**
> *Source: IR research*

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[20] Distance and Disruption | Listening to Massachusetts Students During COVID-19. Gallup, Inc. with support from the Barr Foundation.
[21] Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, Beth Tarasawa, Angela Johnson, Erik Ruzek, and Jing Liu. (2020). *Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement.* (EdWorkingPaper: 20-226). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University.

MCC: Informed Planning

MCC has always been at the forefront of addressing student needs, especially housing and food insecurities. Its status as an AANAPISI college (Asian American and Native American and Pacific Islander Serving Institute) demonstrated MCC's willingness to establish and introduce to its community culturally relevant, high impact practices for students of color. This work has prepared MCC for this equity-centered strategic plan, and for its next role as a Hispanic Institute (HSI).

In June 2021, MCC joined Achieving the Dream (ATD), a non-profit network of scholars, researchers, coaches, and institutions focused on dismantling barriers that prevent students from completing their credentials through data-informed practices. In addition, a risk assessment was completed by Enterprise Risk Management Mitigation Strategies. Several of the high risk needs are identified in several of the Strategic Directions.

> **Our part time population: A majority of our students are part-time, but in many cases are only a course away from being full-time.**

In the 2021-2022 academic year, MCC set as goals a return to its pre-pandemic status for student enrollment and the number of credits sold in a year by 2026. These goals are not simply a desire to recreate the College into its pre-pandemic "normal." As the data in this section show, a return to these goals will represent the College's progress with the Strategic Directions identified for this strategic plan. Fostering an equity-based culture, targeted work with retention strategies, especially among students of color, informed by the DHE's New Undergraduate Student Experience, the College's work with ATD, and the DHE's Performance Measure Reporting System, and a commitment to fiscal accountability will lead to those goals.

Also informing our objectives is the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), last administered by MCC to nearly 500 students in the spring of 2019. The CCSSE is a well-recognized survey tool, used and normed nationally, that provides students the opportunity to directly express their experiences related to instruction, college services and support, as well as campus climate.[22]

That year, MCC elected to administer two optional question segments, one on Guided Pathways and one on Race & Ethnicity. Both areas are critical given the impact pathways have on retention and MCC's status as an AANAPISI and as an Emerging Hispanic Institute (EHSI). Three areas stood out as relevant to this plan: of the almost 500 students who responded to the statement "During the current academic year at this college, I feel like I belong" over 80% (aggregated) said that they strongly agree/agree. To the statement about the number of times their instructors included the course syllabus perspectives on race and ethnicity, less than a third answered very often/often, with most answering sometimes/never.

Although the College continues to provide professional development for faculty and student support staff on equity, this strategic plan will formally assess the work that has been done and will continue to be done. The college will continue to administer the CCSSE survey on a three-year cycle with the next survey scheduled for Spring 2022.

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[22] MCC Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), 2019

Focusing on curriculum and a sense a belonging is critical to sustaining enrollment at MCC. As the chart below shows, in the past five years, total enrollment at the College has declined by over 20%. While this decline aligns with the experiences of community colleges nationally, we believe that continued focused strategies that are informed by equity-based practices and data, as well as new initiatives tailored for the non-traditional/post-traditional student will re-build enrollment.

Race Ethnicity	Fall of					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
American Indian or Alaska Native	16	15	13	14	8	66
	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian	1,088	1,074	1,033	957	878	5,030
	12.6%	13.1%	12.8%	12.6%	12.8%	12.8%
Black or African American	643	659	610	628	583	3,123
	7.5%	8.0%	7.5%	8.3%	8.5%	7.9%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,604	1,399	1,423	1,381	1,132	6,939
	18.6%	17.0%	17.6%	18.2%	16.4%	17.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	5	5	5	3	22
	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Non-resident Alien	140	152	154	153	137	736
	1.6%	1.9%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%
Race and Ethnicity Unkown	36	74	58	32	95	295
	0.4%	0.9%	0.7%	0.4%	1.4%	0.7%
Two or more races	187	200	221	204	170	982
	2.2%	2.4%	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%	2.5%
White	4,899	4,628	4,572	4,194	3,878	22,171
	56.9%	56.4%	56.5%	55.4%	56.3%	56.3%
Grand Total	8,617	8,206	8,089	7,568	6,884	39,364
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 2 - Source: MCC Institutional Research Department

More recently, data collected to inform our ATD-based initiatives gave us a more in-depth, quantitative look into the experiences of our students of color. The chart below provides data for our Fall 2020 students, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender. Included is also data showing the average number of credits for the students enrolled. While several points in the chart prompted questions, several take-aways informed our plan: (1) a majority of our students are part-time, but in many cases are only a course away from being full-time; (2) Latinx women enroll at double the rate of their male counterparts; (3) a significant number of students identify as two-or more races.

More significantly, however, the completion data for that group for the Fall 2020 semester shows that a significant percentage—in some cases, over a quarter--of our students of color earned zero credits, with more males of color earning zero credits.

Our Fall 2020 Student @MCC: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Average Credits Enrollment						
Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Unknown	Total Students*	Average Credits Female	Average Credits Male
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	2		7	9	10
Asian	409	287	1	697	9	10
Black or African American	312	211	4	527	8	9
Hispanic or Latino	763	305	2	1070	9	10
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	2		3	13	7
Nonresident Alien	79	37		116	9	9
Two or more races	85	55		140	9	9
Unknown race and ethnicity	28	21	1	50	8	8
White	1855	1234	9	3098	9	9
				5708		
Column Total (Gender)	3537	2154	17			

Table 7 - Source: MCC Institutional Research Department

				# Females Earned No Credits	% Females Earned No Credits	Average Registered Credits Female	# Males Earned No Credits	% Males Earned No Credits	Average Registered Credits Male
Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total Students						
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	2	7	1	20%	9	0	0%	10
Asian	409	287	697	56	14%	9	49	17%	10
Black or African American	312	211	527	58	19%	8	53	25%	9
Hispanic or Latino	763	305	1070	160	21%	9	63	21%	10
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	2	3	0	0%	13	2	100%	7
Nonresident Alien	79	37	116	3	4%	9	5	14%	9
Two or more races	85	55	140	16	19%	9	15	27%	9
Unknown race and ethnicity	28	21	50	6	21%	8	3	14%	8
White	1855	1234	3098	214	12%	9	227	18%	9
			5708						
Column Total (Gender)	3537	2154		514	15%		417	19%	

The Fall 2020 Student @MCC: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Zero Credits Earned

Table 8 - Source: MCC Institutional Research Department

While the Performance Measurement Reporting System shows in the chart below that MCC is either just below or just above average for first year progress and identifies "On-Time Credit Completion" a medium priority, we see the above data and commit to making a top-priority, especially for our students of color.

First-Year Progress

Looking at recent entering cohorts, are Middlesex Community College students hitting early milestones associated with achieving college success?
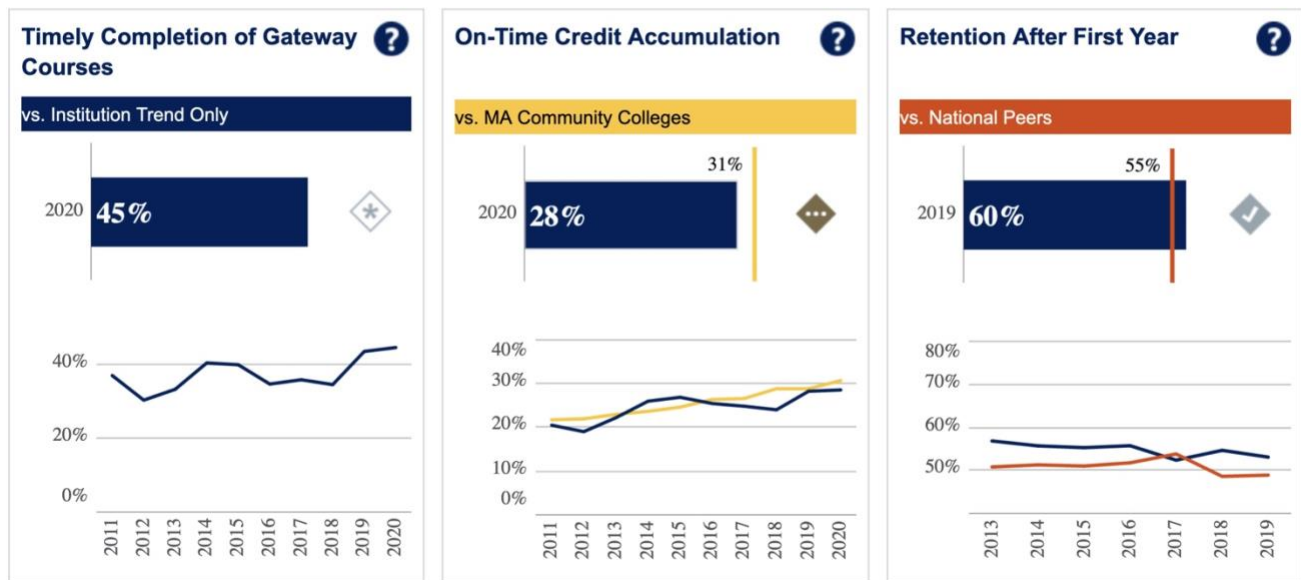

Timely Completion of Gateway Courses	On-Time Credit Accumulation	Retention After First Year
vs. Institution Trend Only	vs. MA Community Colleges	vs. National Peers
2020 **45%**	2020 **28%** (31%)	2019 **60%** (55%)

Figure 3 - MA Department of Higher Education Data Center

Overall, the various data scans point to student retention and progression as the priority for MCC; however, we know that to be authentic to the goals of student retention and progression, we must review how services are provided in all areas of the College. All four strategic directions are designed to do that review and implement best researched, high impact practices that will be assessed regularly.

Implications

As noted earlier, this Plan will not be archived on a shelf. The Faculty Staff Association (FSA) is committed to utilizing already-designated committees to support and assess the objectives of this plan. **Strategic Direction 2: To strengthen pathways for student opportunity and growth** includes most of those initiatives. To that end, a Retention Committee of the FSA may become a more inclusive Special Retention Taskforce to monitor key retention data points and promote action at those times.

To monitor the progress of this Plan, regular data reports at the FSA General Assembly and updates at the broader Critical Conversations are planned. The MCC Board of Trustees will also be give regular updates on the Plan, especially around enrollment and retention. In addition, all annual goals identified by areas and departments will be required to support the objectives listed in the Plan.

Monitoring a plan, however, also includes modifying it. The past two years have taught us that even the best plan must be changed for unexpected events, pandemic or otherwise. MCC's Plan will be modified to address changes in student demographics, industry needs, and any other events that require us to engage and expand those skills learned during the recent pandemic, while developing new ones.

Appendix A
Timeline for Developing *With Equity At Its Core*

In 2019, Middlesex launched a broad-based strategic planning process through a Steering Committee that represented individuals from across the College community. The planning process began with a retreat among Steering Committee and Cabinet members in July of 2019, to orient participants to the process and develop a structure for planning that prioritized collaboration. The Fall 2019 Convocation engaged the full College community in strategic planning through an equity-focused presentation by Tia Brown McNair, Ph.D., Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Student Success with the American Association College & Universities, followed by a visioning exercise during which participants shared aspirational views of our College's future. Later in the Fall 2019 semester, a Discovery Day was held for all faculty and staff to review environmental trends discussed later in this plan. Dr. Scott Latham, Professor of Business at the Manning School of Business, University of Massachusetts Lowell, offered the keynote address.

The Steering Committee met biweekly to develop the strategic directions and a new vision and mission. By January 2020, the new vision and mission statements, as well as three of the four strategic directions were presented to the College community through FSA and presented to the Board of Trustees. In the of Spring 2020, the Steering Committee recruited additional members to form three Goal Teams, each tasked with developing specific goals under each Direction. More than sixty MCC faculty, staff, and administrators engaged intensive planning.

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When the COVID-19 pandemic struck unexpectedly in March 2020, MCC was forced to suspend in-person classes with faculty and staff quickly pivoting to rapidly deploying remote, online instructional formats and supporting our students through an unprecedented pandemic. As we prioritized the health and wellbeing of our students during this time, strategic planning efforts continued, albeit at a slower pace. Working remotely, the Goal Teams continued to draft the Plan, capturing in real time how the pandemic highlighted the need for our planning efforts to focus on equity, student support, and community as the way to sustain and grow our institution.

In the Fall 2020 semester, as the College continued to operate in a mostly remote environment, the Steering Committee and Goal Teams resumed planning activities in this altered environment, drafting objectives for each of the three strategic directions. At that same time, President James Mabry announced his retirement after six years of leading the institution. Three of the four strategic directions identified in this plan were developed under his guidance. Throughout the remainder of the 2020-2021 academic year, strategic planning moved ahead, albeit at a slower pace to allow for the selection and appointment a new president, who would have the opportunity to inform the plan with their vision.

In May 2021, former provost Philip J. Sisson was selected as MCC's 5th president, and in the Summer 2021, Arlene Rodríguez was appointed as interim Provost/Vice President of Academic and Student Affair. The Fall of 2021 saw a reinvigorated MCC Strategic Planning team restarting the planning. With direction and input from the new leadership team, a fourth strategic direction was added to focus on MCC's fiscal sustainability. All team members agreed that efforts to grow the culture of equity, student support, and community would be compromised without also prioritizing fiscal responsibility and soundness, as well.

As the new academic year commenced, President Sisson began to implement strategies central to an integrative strategic plan: regular forums called *Critical Conversations* have been scheduled throughout the 2021-2022 academic year to provide opportunities for conversations around some of those changes, specifically, actions we will need to take to move ahead and remain responsive to our communities. In addition to providing spaces for difficult conversations around facilities, academic offerings, class modalities, retention data among our students of color, these forums are available to revisit directions, goals, and objectives of our plan. Lastly, the Spring 2022 Professional Day was dedicated to a full review by MCC faculty and staff of the now-four strategic directions and related activities.

In the Spring of 2022, the new draft Strategic Plan received the input from the Steering Committee, the Goal Teams and was presented to the BHE in April.

> **The MCC student:** Latinx women enroll at double the rate of their male counterparts; a significant number of students identify as two-or more races
> *Source: IR research*

Achieving the Dream (ATD): A national, non-profit organization with a broad network of higher education institution, focusing on equity, retention, and resources to expand the attainment of student success.

Adult Learners: Learners also referred to as nontraditional students; they are identified by the presence of one or more of the following seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attending part time, financially independent, working full time while enrolled, having dependents other than a spouse, is a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma. (National Center for Education Statistics). Effectively educating adult learners involves designing experiences that are self-directed, draw on their experience, and are more relevant and problem-solving oriented. (Malcom Knowles)

ALANA: African, Latinx, Asian and Native American

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color

Composite Financial Index (CFI): The overall financial measurement of an institution's health based on four core financial ratios, including Primary Reserve Ratio, Net Operating Revenues Ratio, Return on Net Position Ratio, and Viability Ratio. These four key measures of financial health are calculated into a single number which provides balanced view of the state of the institution's finances.

The CFI scale is from -1 to 10. A CFI score of less than three indicates a need for serious attention to the institution's financial condition. A score of greater than three indicates an opportunity for strategic investment of institutional resources to optimize the achievement of institutional mission.

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL): An award of academic credit for learning, knowledge, or proficiency that a student acquired from outside an institution.

Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE): A survey that examines the experiences and outcomes of diverse colleges students. It explains the ways in which campus environments shape the experiences and outcomes of diverse student populations in college.

CTRHT: Center for Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Center

DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion): Diversity includes but is not limited to race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, genetic information, and learning styles. Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Inclusion is building a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of those diverse individuals who are traditionally excluded and bringing everyone together in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources.

Dual Enrollment: High school students taking college courses on the MCC campus and/or online options. Concurrent Enrollment includes high school students taking college courses on their high school campus. Early College includes high school students attending a high school that has been awarded a state designation as an Early College High School.

Equity: "Guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups." (Equity in the Center, 2018)

Equity-minded: Being conscious of the ways that higher education has historically yielded unequal outcomes; and in response intentionally take responsibility to eliminate equity gaps and create equity for all students via race-conscious, institutionally focused, evidence based, systemically aware and action-oriented approaches including a critical examination of the educational environments in which students will engage (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimón, 2017).

Higher Education Incentive Fund (HEIF): State funding that supports competitive grants to campuses and consortia, as well as system side initiatives, to make progress on goals articulated by the MA Board of Higher Education.

High Impact Practices: The teaching and learning practices below have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds, especially historically underserved students, who often do not have equitable access to high-impact learning. These practices take many different forms, depending on learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts. (American Association of Colleges & Universities)

HyFlex: A course design model that includes components of hybrid learning in its structure. In a HyFlex course, students have the option of attending sessions in the classroom, participating online, or doing both.

Institutional Student Learning Outcome (ISLO): Like Essential Learning Outcomes, ISLOs "define the knowledge and skills gained from a liberal education, providing a framework to guide students' cumulative progress." (AAC&U). MCC has identified six ISLOs that are essential to students' learning and development: (1) Critical Thinking, (2) Written and Oral Communication; (3) Multicultural and Global Literacy, (4) Quantitative Literacy, (5) Social Responsibility, (6) and Personal and Professional Development.

Mini-mester: A course design model that provides course content in 7.5-8 week terms, as compared to the traditional 16-week semester.

NACUBO: National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) is a national organization that focuses on the best and sound practices for universities and higher education business and finance stakeholders on best and sound practices.

New Undergraduate Experience (NUE): An initiative let by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education that includes several recommendations that focus on students' undergraduate experience by "recognizing their cultural wealth, transforming teaching and learning, and aligning system and institutional efforts to create student-ready colleges and universities." (MA Department of Higher Education: https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity-project-updates.asp

Program Student Learning Outcome (PSLO): Like Institutional Student Learning Outcomes, Program Student Learning Outcomes are statements that specify what students will know, be able to do or be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in a Course or Program. PSLOs specify an action by the student that must be observable, measurable, and able to be demonstrated.