

Community Newsletter – 2019 Legislative Edition

As we greet a new administration and begin a new legislative session, and as I take on my new role as interim CEO at Manchester Community College, it seems a good time to take stock in what the college has accomplished. In the coming days, I plan to reach out to each of you in the hopes that we can have a brief face-to-face conversation and get to know each other. Let's look ahead together at how we can continue to serve the needs of Connecticut.

Despite the state's ongoing economic situation, the college has remained accessible to our students and helped them transform their lives. With more than 80 certificate and degree programs, MCC's rigorous curriculum prepares students with 21st century skills for Connecticut's in-demand jobs. We also prepare them to transfer successfully to baccalaureate colleges and universities, both public and private. Many continue to study at senior institutions to obtain master's and doctoral degrees.

As a way to keep education affordable, MCC's offers a low-cost route to a bachelor's degree by enabling our students to choose a Transfer Ticket career pathway, complete an associate degree here and then seamlessly continue their education as a junior at Central, Eastern, Southern or Western State University, or Charter Oak State College, and earn a bachelor's degree. Students pursuing a Transfer Ticket associate degree are paired with an academic advisor at their intended institution. This helps them to know exactly which courses to take. The degrees can be attained without incurring extra expense or requiring extra credits.

Economic Impact

Connecticut reaps the benefits of MCC in two major ways. The greatest benefit is the economic impact of added income created in the state. Students earn more because of the skills they acquire while attending MCC.

As you saw in the recently presented CSCU economic impact study, public higher education is an investment for taxpayers. For our part, MCC contributes nearly \$500 million to our service region through annual income by our alumni and the college's operations spending. This money would not exist in your constituents' area without MCC.

Moreover, businesses also earn more because the students' enhanced skills make them more productive. In 2018, MCC has worked closely with our partners in the private sector to improve the skills of the workforce. This academic year, we continue to focus on our economic contribution to all of Connecticut.

Our Need for Support

With the help of MCC Foundation – which celebrated its 50th year in 2018 – and an outpouring of local philanthropy, our endowment has increased over the past several years to be one of the largest among community colleges in Connecticut. Our foundation has increased scholarship support and has helped fund equipment and student services. We recently introduced a program that provides retention grants to successful students to help them stay in school when they face unexpected financial challenges. We funded a scholarship that enables high schools to give out awards to seniors who enroll at MCC. We also piloted a new scholarship at UConn that has since been opened to students from all the community colleges.

We are truly dependent on this strong philanthropic support from foundations and individuals. Especially in light of CSCU's current potential shortfall of as much as \$57 million if the budget remains as expected, we would be in dire straits without this private funding to achieve our vision of providing affordable education.

I am proud of the fact that MCC serves a community that is representative of your constituents: 49 percent of our students identify as people of color and under-represented racial and ethnic groups; 54 percent are women. Our part-time as well as many of our full-time students attend classes while dealing with challenges related to family and work issues. A number of them are veterans, whom we help support through our Veterans OASIS and Veteran-II-Veteran Peer Mentorship program. We have earned recognition as a Top Military Friendly College by Victory Media every year since 2012.

Our goal is to enable all of these students to leave MCC with little to no student debt; however, in this challenging environment for public higher education, continuing legislative support is critical to our being able to meet the educational goals of students and the workforce needs of Connecticut. I look forward to discussing how we can continue our mission in a way that best serves the 21st century needs of Connecticut's residents.

Tanya C. Millner-Harlee, Ed.D.
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