Middlesex Community College

Envisioning Our Future

Strategic Plan
2011-2016

April, 2011

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The Strategic Plan Steering Committee, on behalf of the entire MxCC community, wishes to acknowledge and thank our consultants for their exemplary guidance, facilitation and insight throughout this entire process.

Consultants

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Executive Summary

The findings and priorities presented in this plan are the result of a comprehensive study of campus and community factors that will influence the development of Middlesex Community College (MxCC) in the foreseeable future. Multiple sources of information were used to frame priorities including published documents and reports, a series of external and internal conversations between November and January to document regional trends and acquire information about stakeholder perceptions of the College, and interviews with selected individuals. Over 85 individuals attended eight external focus group meetings involving employers, influential citizens, K-12 schools, elected officials, social service providers, and colleges and universities. Approximately 120 individuals attended 11 sessions organized for MxCC faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Multiple source data were synthesized by consultants and shared with College faculty and staff in a formative report issued in December, 2010. This report and a portfolio of supporting data served as the resource platform for development of College-wide priorities by MxCC's Strategic Plan Steering Committee in January and February.

Strategic Context for MxCC

Middlesex has obvious strengths embodied in its mission and purpose, the quality and commitment of its faculty and staff, its culture, and its location and ambiance. Like all colleges, it is not without challenges—the most obvious of which is a lack of visibility and drawing power in its service region. This is evident in numbers revealing a depressed growth rate relative to sister colleges, a low percentage of primary service region citizens enrolling in MxCC and a significant outflow of MxCC service area residents to out-of-district community colleges. Middlesex Community College is one of the best kept secrets in the Connecticut Valley—a factor that accounts for lower than expected enrollment growth, foregone opportunities for partnering and collaboration, and a less than optimal position in the quest for operating and capital resources.

Growth is certainly not the ultimate objective in a System hit hard by record enrollments and flat funding. On the one hand, it is a basis for resource allocation in states with enrollment-driven funding formulae. It is also a basis for determining a college's position in the queue for capital projects and funding. On the other hand, it is a hollow achievement in the absence of academic currency and quality. What a college does to anticipate and meet community needs through relevant and timely educational programs and services—its *currency*—and the outcomes it generates with learners--its *quality*--are pillars of success for any postsecondary education institution. The priorities developed by MxCC represent an effort to achieve this balance as part of a carefully developed

strategic plan designed to help the College emerge from the recession a stronger and more strategically ready institution.

Priorities

Student success is our foremost priority at Middlesex Community College. We are committed to partnering with our students to help them achieve their individual objectives. We are dedicated to providing an environment centered on personal, academic, and career growth. Whether pursuing a degree or certificate, transferring to a baccalaureate program, preparing for employment, developing new workplace skills or pursuing personal enrichment, students will find experienced faculty, staff and administrators committed to offering individual attention and support. It is our goal to provide an engaging environment conducive to lifelong learning and the development of citizenship and broad interests amongst our community. The priorities of this Strategic Plan have been established to support this commitment.

I.   FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

We will continuously strive for excellence in all that we do to support and promote student success.

II.   PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE VITALITY

We will assume a leadership role in economic and workforce vitality in the communities we serve.

III.   INCREASE VISIBILITY IN OUR SERVICE REGION

We will be recognized in our service region as a vibrant and responsive educational institution that provides high quality and inclusive learning opportunities in a student-centered environment.

IV.   INCREASE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We will actively collaborate and develop partnerships with organizations in our service region to anticipate and respond to community needs.

V.   OPTIMIZE CURRICULUM

We will develop and strengthen credit and non-credit programs that anticipate and meet the needs of individuals, businesses and communities with customized delivery systems.

VI.   GROW ENROLLMENT

MxCC will achieve enrollment growth and improved student retention.

VII.   CREATE AND MAINTAIN A VIBRANT COLLEGIATE ENVIRONMENT

We will create and maintain a vibrant learning environment.

VIII.   PROMOTE LEADERSHIP

We will create an environment in which all members of the college community have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership.

IX.   ENHANCE AND SUPPORT DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

We will be recognized within the educational community as an institution that provides comprehensive academic and educational support to students entering the College in need of developmental education.

X.   SECURE ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES

We will identify and cultivate funding resources to enhance student success.

XI.   COMMIT TO AND ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

We will work to achieve more sustainable practices as an institution, encourage sustainable initiatives at the College and in the community, and provide increased opportunities in sustainability education while encouraging good citizenship and global awareness by all.

Challenge of the Future for MxCC

 A carefully developed strategic plan will do much to put the College on a forward track. By itself, however, this plan will not be sufficient to bring MxCC to the standard of excellence it is capable of. The final answer rests in sustained effective leadership at the top and throughout the institution.

Strategic Context for MxCC

Established as an independent institution in the system of Connecticut Community Colleges in 1968, Middlesex Community College (MxCC) serves a scenic region in Central Connecticut encompassing eighteen towns the largest of which is Meriden. Its three locations enroll approximately 2,650 full- and part-time credit students and 1,700 continuing education students making it the eighth-largest of the twelve colleges in the Connecticut Community College System. MxCC offers more than 50 degree and certificate programs including several programs which are unique. Its main campus in Middleton includes four buildings housing classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, chemistry and biology laboratories, art studios, a learning laboratory for reading and writing, a broadcast communications center, an ophthalmic design and dispensing laboratory, a computer center, cafeteria, library, and bookstore. There is also an extensive day care facility. Credit and non-credit courses are also offered in two centers serving Meriden and the Shoreline.

Planning Objectives

Integral to the approach to strategic planning at MxCC was a methodology designed to: 1) empower MxCC faculty and staff through involvement in every phase of the planning process and 2) base decisions on multiple sources of information acquired from individuals, groups and organizations inside and outside of the College. Ten planning objectives were framed prior to project initiation pursued to formulate priorities that culminated in a 5-year strategic plan for MxCC. These objectives were:

1) **Context Assessment.** A comprehensive analysis of forces and conditions in the external environment through review of published documents and reports, acquisition of statistical information from regional organizations, and meetings conducted with representatives of regional for-profit and not-for profit organizations.

2) **Conversations with Stakeholders.** Identification of and intensive conversations with, stakeholders external to MxCC to gather information about their awareness of, and involvement with, MxCC, their current and future educational needs, their expectations of MxCC, and their perception of what MxCC does well and what it could do better.

3) **Analysis of Opportunity.** Identification of development opportunities that can be pursued by MxCC through new program development and innovative approaches to the design and delivery of programs and services through collaboration with organizations in central Connecticut.

4) **Capacity Analysis.** Determination of the capacity of MxCC to create and pursue opportunities through analysis of its strengths, competencies, capabilities, and resources.

5) **Analysis of Value.** Determination of: a) the current value delivered by MxCC to different stakeholders and b) the value it could potentially deliver when using its capabilities and resources to the fullest extent.

6) **Identification and Declaration of MxCC Strategic Position.** Determination of the optimal position MxCC could occupy in Central Connecticut and the Connecticut Community Colleges relative to operating and capital resources based on analysis of five factors: stakeholder needs and expectations, potential for growth, value delivered to stakeholders, capacity to pursue opportunity, and capacity to leverage performance.

7) **Identification of Priorities**. Identification of priorities that MxCC will need to pursue to enhance its strategic position:
   - enrollment
   - programs, curricula and services (new and modified)
   - educational delivery and technology
   - operating resource requirements
   - capital and facilities requirements
   - partnerships and collaboration
   - marketing and positioning strategies

8) **Formulation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).** Identification of performance indicators to measure progress toward the achievement of priorities. These indicators will be limited in number, easily understood and interpreted by faculty and staff, regularly reported and evaluated, and connected to the operating budget.

9) **Preparation of a Published Plan.** Development of a published plan including: an executive summary, comprehensive report, and data appendix.

10) **Communication Protocol and Monitoring System.** Development of an in-house system that can be used to organize and publish information related to key performance indicators.

Priorities

The following priorities constitute our Strategic Plan. They are not ranked by order of importance as we view each as significant.

I.   FOSTER STUDENT SUCCESS

We will continuously strive for excellence in all that we do to support and promote student success.

Key Action Steps:

1. Provide guidance and structure to transition students to a college environment.

2. Provide a safe and secure environment.

3. Ensure that teaching staff are skilled and vested in student success.

4. Maintain facilities that are modern and up to date.

5. Offer technology that is current and effective.

6. Deliver support services that are conducive to student success.

7. Strengthen a Learning Center that is supportive of students' needs.

Success Indicators:

1. Enrollment growth.

2. Improved retention.

3. Improvement in survey results of student satisfaction.

4. Increased opportunities for faculty and staff mentorship.

II.   PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE VITALITY

We will assume a leadership role in economic and workforce vitality in the communities we serve.

Key Action Steps:

1. Enhance the economic and workforce development efforts across our service region through collaborative relationships with other organizations.

2. Strengthen grassroots relationships with local businesses and organizations and identify their education and training needs.

3. Identify target markets and establish MxCC as the source of on-going and comprehensive assistance to regional employers.

4. Develop, customize, and market courses, programs, and curricula to meet the changing requirements of business and industry employers.

5. Establish bridges between the academic and non-credit areas to provide comprehensive options for individuals, businesses, and community-based organizations in achieving their education and/or training goals.

Success Indicators:

1. MxCC is acknowledged as a community leader in economic and workforce development.

2. New courses and programs are continually developed that respond to and anticipate the needs of regional employers.

3. Increased number of contracts that provide training for local business and industry as well as for community based organizations.

4. Collaborations between non-credit and credit programs increase.

III. INCREASE VISIBILITY IN OUR SERVICE REGION

We will be recognized in our primary service region as a vibrant and responsive educational institution that provides high quality and inclusive learning opportunities in a student-centered environment.

Key Action Steps:

1. Identify and promote the College's unique qualities and opportunities.

2. Involve current MxCC students*,* alumni*,* faculty*,* and staff as ambassadors of the College to the community.

3. Strengthen articulation agreements with secondary schools.

4. Work collaboratively with secondary schools to inform students and their parents about the options that community colleges have to offer.

5. Build strong pathways to public and private baccalaureate institutions.

6. Build strong pathways to the public and private sector in the service region.

7. Increase community presence on campus through special events.

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8. Actively participate in community organizations.

9. Strengthen the Regional Advisory Council and engage other advisory groups.

Success Indicators:

1. MxCC's image is clearly expressed and well known in the communities that it serves.

2. Secondary school students and their parents become more aware of what MxCC has to offer.

3. The College and the secondary schools in the service region become strong partners in providing information about MxCC as a viable option to students.

4. The number of articulation agreements with baccalaureate institutions and the number of participating students increase.

IV.   INCREASE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We will actively collaborate and develop partnerships with organizations in our service region to anticipate and respond to community needs.

Key Action Steps:

1. Actively participate with Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations.

2. Partner with civic and human service organizations and businesses.

3. Establish collaborative partnerships with pre-K-12 systems and baccalaureate colleges and universities.

Success Indicators:

1. The College is seen as an essential participant in and contributor to the community's viability, stability, growth and well being.

2. Partnerships with a wide range of organizations and institutions increase.

V.   OPTIMIZE CURRICULUM

We will develop and strengthen credit and non-credit programs that anticipate and meet the needs of individuals, businesses, and communities.

Key Action Steps:

1. Continuously monitor the demographic changes and workforce needs in our service region.

2. Assess and modify current courses and programs and develop new ones in response to changing needs.

3. Address the needs of developmental students through programs, courses, and support services.

4. Continuously identify programs which are unique and/or provide a "signature" for the College.

5. Offer more advanced and specialized courses.

6. Fully inform community groups about the programs and learning opportunities that the College can and does provide.

7. Enhance opportunities for service learning.

8. Engage advisory groups in reviewing programs.

9. Schedule courses in a student-centered manner with consideration of timing, sequencing, and frequency of offerings critical to certificate or degree completion.

Success Indicators:

1. Enrollment growth.

2. Current and new programs are responsive to the needs of the service region.

3. Signature programs are highly visible and well known.

4. Students obtain employment in their field.

VI. GROW ENROLLMENT

MxCC will achieve enrollment growth and improved student retention.

Key Action Steps:

1. Develop an enrollment plan that establishes potential one, three, and five year enrollment growth strategies, projections, and targets for MxCC.

2. Collect annual service area data and review enrollment targets, adjusting them as necessary.

3. Identify target markets and develop a college wide marketing plan to reach potential students.

4. Enhance the College's academic advising process and methods of delivery to students.

5. Create a culture of one-stop service.

6. Develop a retention plan that includes a transitional year program.

7. Provide for the processing of walk-in registrations to supplement scheduled registration days.

Success Indicators:

1. Increased student enrollment.

2. Increase in retention.

3. The number of students who transfer, seek degrees, and certificates or find job placement increases.

VII. CREATE AND MAINTAIN A VIBRANT COLLEGIATE ENVIRONMENT

We will create and maintain a vibrant learning environment.

Key Action Steps:

1. Develop and promote diverse, enriching cultural activities for our students and community that provide opportunities for student, staff, and faculty interaction.

2. Provide physical spaces that encourage and support a vibrant collegiate experience.

3. Establish access to support services that meet the needs of students.

4. Promote an environment of wellness.

5. Partner with other colleges and universities.

Success Indicators:

1. Increased student enrollment.

2. Students, faculty and staff are engaged in co-curricular activities.

3. Students have improved access to a broader range of services.

VIII.   PROMOTE LEADERSHIP

We will create an environment in which all members of the college community have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership.

Key Action Steps:

1. Work collaboratively to establish college-wide expectations and a common vision.

2. Establish the expectation that everyone will play a leadership role to the best of their ability.

3. Provide tools and professional development opportunities that encourage leadership and engagement across the College.

4. Encourage faculty, staff, and students across the college community to serve as ambassadors for the College and to effectively represent it in the community.

5. Establish mechanisms that support effective multi-directional communication.

6. Acknowledge individual leadership efforts.

7. Assess the College's governance structure and make changes as appropriate.

8. Establish internal mentorship programs to enhance new employee orientation.

9. Evaluate staff and faculty performance as prescribed including how leadership has been demonstrated in the achievement of the College's strategic priorities.

Success Indicators:

1. Increased civic engagement of faculty, staff, and students.

2. Formal recognition of those demonstrating leadership.

3. Improved campus climate due to increased participation in leadership opportunities.

IX.　ENHANCE AND SUPPORT DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

We will be recognized within the educational community as an institution that provides comprehensive academic and educational support to students entering the College who need developmental education.

Key Action Steps:

1. Review and study Accuplacer scoring and the placement of students to enhance student success.

2. Create mechanisms for improving cross-disciplinary communication to better meet the needs of developmental students.

3. Continuously explore alternative delivery options for students in developmental courses, and for transitioning successfully to credit courses.

4. Increase full time faculty involvement, college-wide, in developmental education by promoting courses in addition to English and Math for developmental students.

5. Establish an advising system that provides maximum student contact with advisors to improve student support services.

6. Create more mechanisms to train and collaborate with adjunct faculty who are teaching developmental courses.

7. Explore the feasibility of expanding the Learning Center to include Labs in all disciplines.

Success Indicators:

1. An adjunct mentoring and liaison program will be established.

2. Regular meetings of developmental education faculty will be held

3. Retention of and transition to college-level courses will improve among developmental students.

X.　SECURE ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES

We will identify and cultivate funding resources to enhance student success.

Key Action Steps:

1. Promote connections with legislators, members of the Executive Branch, local leaders, and other influential citizens and organizations.

2. Increase the College's data fundraising bases by identifying public and private potential donors.

3. Identify initiatives as a basis for seeking donations.

4. Strengthen relationships with the Foundation as a partner for identifying and securing alternate funding sources.

5. Improve and enhance the grant acquisition process.

6. Continually seek opportunities to create relationships that result in donations to the College.

7. Strengthen relationships with alumni, retired faculty, and staff.

Success Indicators:

1. Annual fundraising goals are established and met.

2. Increased revenues from donations.

3. Improved grant application success rate and revenue.

XI.   COMMIT TO AND ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

We will work to achieve more sustainable practices as an institution, encourage sustainable initiatives at the College and in the community, and provide increased opportunities in sustainability education while encouraging good citizenship and global awareness of all.

Key Action Steps:

1. Educate students, staff, and the community in the importance of sustainable practices.

2. Seek ways to maximize the efficient use of resources, personnel, and facilities on campus to minimize waste and lower costs.

3. Improve recycling and seek ways to reduce use of natural resources.

4. Work to reduce the College's carbon footprint.

5. Work with the community to promote improved transportation options.

6. Evaluate and explore the College's land use to achieve maximum benefit for educational, environmental, and community use.

7. Develop new courses, curricula, and training programs supporting sustainable principles and incorporate ideas into existing offerings where possible.

8. Engage state and community groups to partner in developing sustainable initiatives to benefit local communities.

Success Indicators:

1. Identification of additional ways to improve efficiency and reduce waste.

2. Reduction in the use of energy.

3. Number of new or revised sustainability-related courses and programs.

4. Increased awareness of sustainability issues.