



Inspiring every day.

Success at MCC: Removing Barriers

February 2018

For many students, MCC's affordability, proximity to home, and commitment to welcoming all students make it the most viable college option. However, the obstacles students face in completing a degree can prove challenging and even insurmountable. Committed to eliminating challenges that stand in the way of student success, MCC continues to develop programs and initiatives that create more equitable educational opportunities for all.

MCC Helps Hungry Students

When MCC participated in a fall 2016 survey* of food and housing insecurities among community colleges nationwide, the findings provided an alarming wake-up call. Fifty-one percent of MCC student respondents admitted they cut meal size or skipped a meal altogether because they didn't have enough money for food. Sixty-three percent said they couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.

Those findings led to the establishment of the Doing What Is Good and Healthy Together (DWIGHT) program. DWIGHT is a persona taken on by a mobile food wagon that travels the Brighton and Downtown campuses and the physical food pantries located on each campus. Each food item



in the wagon is tagged with the slogan, "Grab a Bite... Need More for Tonight?" and provides the food pantries' location where students can visit to pick up additional food.

According to Lloyd Holmes, vice president, Student Services,

DWIGHT reduces the food pantry stigma. "Students can ask for DWIGHT instead of 'the food pantry,'" Holmes said. "Our goal is to begin conversations with them—to make it easier to provide connections to additional resources on campus and in the community."

MCC is a member of FOODLINK which ensures DWIGHT will stay stocked with food items that are needed, healthy, and nutritious. In addition, food drives and donation opportunities are organized throughout the year by the MCC community.

**In fall 2016, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Association of Community College Trustees, with support from the Kresge Foundation, conducted a large-scale survey to better understand food and housing insecurities among community college students. Seventy institutions from 24 states participated.*

Dreamkeepers® Program Helps Students Do Exactly That

Nationwide, more than half of all students who drop out of college make the decision for financial reasons. Now, MCC students facing unforeseen financial emergencies related to food, housing, child care and medical expenses can apply to Scholarship America's Dreamkeepers® network for assistance. The grants awarded to students are up to \$500 and do not need to be paid back.



The first college in upstate New York to join Dreamkeepers®, MCC is working hard to ensure students overcome the obstacles that can sideline their educational dreams. A lead gift to the Monroe Community College Foundation from MCC alumni Timothy '80 and Robin '80 Wentworth has been followed up by MCC Foundation supporters to establish a \$1.5 million endowment that will support Dreamkeepers® at MCC in perpetuity.

Since the Dreamkeepers® program at MCC was implemented two years ago, 80.5 percent of student recipients completed the term and returned to MCC the next semester. "Students are grateful," says Lloyd Holmes, vice president, Student Services, "Often, they simply don't know where to turn and give up. Not only does Dreamkeepers® handle a minor setback, it shows students that we care about their progress—that their life goals really do matter."



Monroe Community College
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

MCC Student Finds Beauty in a Bus Pass

The first time Kimberly Statt walked into MCC she was just keeping her cousin company. “She was applying and I came along



for moral support,” said Kimberly, a single mother of five. That day, bored with waiting, she decided to fill out an application herself. However, it wasn’t until a first semester sociology class that something clicked. “I had so many reservations starting out,” said Kimberly, “but one day in class it suddenly dawned on me that I was actually doing this. I was fitting in; I was making it work.”

Kimberly admits there have been challenges. Because she doesn’t drive, public transportation is a necessity. Through MCC’s Single Stop program, she was able to apply for and obtain a free universal bus pass. Her “beautiful bus pass,” she called it. “I can take one of my kids to a doctor’s appointment, go back and forth from home to school and not be stressed out about where that \$50 or \$60 every month is coming from.”

Kimberly is also grateful for the assistance she received through MCC’s Dreamkeepers® initiative. “My work hours were cut and my utility bill was due,” she said. “By applying for assistance, I managed to keep my lights on.”

Juggling the responsibilities of adulthood with the academic rigors of college can be tough. Yet by accessing resources available through MCC, Kimberly is thriving.

In addition to being a peer leader, she is vice president of governance for the Student Events and Governance Association (SEGA). She is also the acting president of Edison High School’s Parent Teacher Organization. In June, she will graduate with an addictions counseling degree and transfer to SUNY Brockport. “In some ways, I’ve come far,” she said, “and in some ways I feel like I’m just getting started.”

Overcoming Obstacles with a Single Stop for Students



Imagine trying to concentrate in class when you haven’t

eaten since yesterday. Imagine trying to figure out how to keep your two kids warm and do your history homework when the heat’s been turned off.

Imagine. Since its 2016 inception, MCC’s SingleStop program has enabled 385 students to conquer these types of challenges so they can finally imagine their own educational success. Of those student recipients, 67.4 percent completed the term and returned the next semester. Students in need of assistance can be self-referred or referred by a faculty/staff member or a fellow student. After a quick needs assessment, students fill out a web-based application to determine their eligibility for a wide variety of internal and external resources.

Through a partnership between MCC and the Regional Transit Service, Inc. (RTS) a universal bus pass pilot was developed allowing 60 students to ride free during the academic year. In addition, Monroe County’s Department of Social Services, LawNY, and Health Navigator now offer services on campus. According to Peggy Harvey-Lee, director of MCC’s SingleStop program, giving students easy access to the resources they so desperately need has been life changing for many. “We’ve helped an international student get winter clothes. We’ve found a child care scholarship for another. We’ve arranged counsel for a young woman who’d been evicted,” she said. “Giving students the advantage of fast, free, confidential assistance and watching them keep moving forward – that’s been the reward.”

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