



Inspiring every day.  
**Affordability**

February 2017

*While MCC's tuition is among the lowest in the SUNY system, the cost of college can still be a challenge for our students and their families. MCC is committed to remaining accessible and affordable to all students who wish to transform their lives by pursuing a quality higher education. Several new college-wide initiatives illustrate our determination to do more.*

## Affording the American Dream

When David DiPonzio was nearing graduation from Bishop Kearney High School, he made the decision to pursue college at MCC. According to David, his wasn't a hard choice. "I knew I wanted to stay local. I had a part-time job already and I didn't want to burden my family with more debt. MCC just made sense," he said.

After earning an A.A.S in Optical Systems Technology, David worked locally in the optics field for more than four years. He got married, bought a house and eventually decided to pursue a new career in law enforcement. Now a Monroe County corrections officer, David is back at MCC, earning a certificate in cybersecurity.

"Coming here fresh out of high school, I learned a lot about



David (far right), his wife Ariana (left) and sister Amanda (center) are all proud MCC alumni, living and working in the Rochester area.

responsibility. That was probably the most significant lesson," he said. "But I also learned that MCC is a place you can feel welcome whatever phase of life you're in. That made it easy to come back, start working on this certificate and, hopefully, get ahead in my career—and do it affordably."

## MCC President Kress on Governor Cuomo's Tuition-Free Plan

"Governor Cuomo's plan will ensure that New Yorkers will no longer see affordability as a barrier to accessing high quality higher education. Now, New York's next generation of doctors, scientists, educators and innovators will all have the opportunity to obtain the education they need to leave their mark and make New York stronger than ever before."

— **Anne M. Kress**  
President,  
Monroe Community College

## MCC Selected for Study to Reduce Student Loans, Increase Student Success

Loan counseling is required for students taking out a federally-subsidized loan for the first time or leaving college. However, there are few other opportunities for improving students' financial literacy beyond these mandatory entrance/exit counseling sessions. According to experts, to help students complete

college and avoid default, that needs to change.

MCC is one of only four New York colleges chosen to participate in a national study of 51 schools that will provide students with loan counseling designed to help them become better borrowers. "So many of our students struggle with the financial reality of college," said

Lloyd Holmes, MCC's vice president, student services. "We are excited to be able to strengthen our loan education and debt management counseling efforts to better ensure their success."

Results from the study will be used to implement a set of tools for all institutions that participate in the federal student loan program.



**Monroe Community College**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## Teaching Without Textbooks: The Affordability Argument

Elizabeth Johnston teaches English at MCC; Tori Matthews teaches biology. While the courses they teach are very different, Johnston and Matthews are passionate about the same subject: textbook cost.

College textbooks are expensive. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, textbook prices have risen more than 1000 percent—over three times the rate of inflation—in the last 40 years. Recent initiatives within SUNY and across the country are aimed at eliminating this financial weight by developing free replacements for textbooks.

Professors Johnston and Matthews are among a handful of committed MCC faculty leading the charge. They're using free or low-cost Open Educational Resources (OER), accessible, openly licensed, learning materials, to teach their courses – and students are responding.

"They routinely thank me for working to keep costs down," said Professor Johnston, "and I think that alone sets a tone of mutual respect." She also retains more students. "Because all students now have access to the readings, they're more likely to come to class."

Meanwhile, Professor Matthews is experiencing similar enthusiasm. "When they can take 'Anatomy and Physiology' and not have to pay hundreds for the book, they're thrilled," he said. "No one should have to be making the choice to buy a textbook or pay their utility bill. No one. If I can't teach students—if I can't lift them up without insisting they make an exorbitant financial sacrifice, then I'm not doing my job."

The national average of annual textbook costs, typically around \$1,300 for a full-time community college student, amount to about



a third of the cost of an associate's degree. Research shows this cost is a significant barrier to college completion. Students who don't complete college are over 50 percent more likely than those who graduated to cite textbook costs as a major financial barrier, according to a study by the research firm, Public Agenda.

"OER increases retention and is the more ethical choice given the enormous debts students are taking on," said Professor Johnston.

## New Program Connects Students to Community Resources

Life's challenges can derail a college education. MCC students can now find assistance in overcoming those challenges at Single Stop at MCC.

Launched in the Fall 2016 semester, MCC's Single Stop at MCC program connects students and their families to a range of free and low-cost community resources and wraparound services, including assistance with food benefits, transportation, child care subsidies,



medical care and tax preparation. As its name implies, Single Stop at MCC provides access to an array of social, financial and legal services through a single office, ensuring that students become aware of the many supportive resources available throughout Greater Rochester.

The MCC program aims to remove financial and personal barriers that may prevent students from staying in school and graduating from college.

One of two colleges in upstate New York to have this program, MCC launched this initiative in collaboration with Single Stop, a national nonprofit. Support from the Avangrid Foundation makes the program possible through 2020. To date, 105 students have benefited, several of whom had been homeless before accessing these services.

Contact MCC

[www.monroecc.edu](http://www.monroecc.edu)



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