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Together with community colleges across the U.S., MCC has pledged to increase student completion rates by 50 percent by 2020. Financial challenges often derail academic journeys; MCC has a growing array of financial supports that help students stay on track. Here are several other initiatives aimed at helping students achieve their higher education goals and raising completion rates.

Students Connect Earlier to Academic Outcomes, Employment Goals

THE SCHOOLS AT MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



An MCC student meets with School specialist Susan Warner.

Monroe Community College students are already benefiting from the launch of MCC Schools in September. The Schools put students on structured educational pathways so they more clearly connect to the college, their academic program and their chosen career.

In addition to academic resources, the Schools surround students with support

services and co-curricular opportunities so students connect with peers and faculty who share their interests. The result will be more students successfully navigating their college experience.

“Through MCC Schools, we are helping students identify and pursue their personal paths to success and see themselves in their desired job or career,” said MCC President Anne M. Kress.

“The Schools support structure inspires students to think through and beyond MCC, more intentionally aiming for their future careers.”

In September, representatives from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Community College Research Center visited MCC to share insights from the AACC’s Pathways Project and learn more about how our innovative Schools model is designed to positively impact student retention and completion rates. The model also impacts curriculum design and development so that students understand the potential outcomes associated with their selected academic program. www.monroec.edu/schools

Degree completion by students throughout the State University of New York system has increased by 3 percent, from 93,000 to nearly 96,000, since the launch of SUNY’s Completion Agenda in 2015.

Students Save Money with Open Educational Resources

Imagine starting at a community college. You’re working a part-time job, making payments on a 2004 Civic, helping your mom buy groceries and paying your cell phone bill. Despite the struggle, you’re excited—because you’re going to college.

But then you find out your physics textbook is going to cost \$150, your statistics text is \$130, your used English text is \$60 and you just don’t have the money. It happens all the time.

Monroe Community College is one of five SUNY community colleges chosen

to develop open educational resources (OER) to reduce costs to students and raise college completion rates.

MCC, Clinton Community College, Herkimer Community College, Mohawk Valley Community College and Tompkins-Cortland Community College have received a \$400,000 grant from a consortium of national investors to create new degree programs using high-quality open educational resources.

Led by MCC, SUNY campuses receiving the grants will be supported by the Open SUNY Textbook and SUNY OER Services



program based at SUNY Geneseo.

“This initiative speaks directly to our commitment to access,” said MCC President Anne M. Kress. “In one year, OER alternatives have already saved MCC students approximately \$300,000 in textbook

costs—and that’s in two courses. By partnering with other SUNY schools, this grant will allow us to expand our efforts through a system-wide, online learning experience while keeping student success at the core of our work.”



Monroe Community College
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Program Keeps Students On Path to Graduation, Financial Stability



In high school, Judy Nguyen couldn't wait to go to college. Raised by a single mom in Rochester, Judy knew she had to rely on financial aid and part-time work to pay for her education.

Her decision to attend MCC in fall 2015 was solidified when her boyfriend told her about the Save for Success program at MCC. Save for Success makes college education affordable for economically disadvantaged students.

With money she earned as a receptionist at a nursing facility, Judy put aside \$375 over six months in her first semester at MCC to qualify for the program. In turn, she received an 8-to-1 match on her savings to offset the cost of tuition, books and other educational essentials.

"If I wasn't able to have financial aid and have to pay out of my own pocket, I probably would stop going to school for a year to try to save money so I can come back to MCC," said Judy, 19.

Save for Success is making it possible for MCC students like Judy to stay in college and graduate. Latest data show that Save for Success participants

are more likely to stay in school than non-participants: 64 percent of Save for Success students in fall 2014 returned to MCC the following fall, compared with the retention rate of 44 percent of students who were not in the program.

Judy also attended financial literacy workshops offered through Save for Success to learn to better manage her spending and pay off her personal debt.

Now, she said, she can focus on earning an associate degree in dental hygiene or surgical technology then transferring to a four-year school to further her education. She will be the first in her family to graduate from college.

Changes in MCC's Transitional Studies Courses Help Propel Students Forward

Almost a third of all entering MCC students enroll in one or more Transitional Studies courses that prepare them for success in college classes. However, students who don't feel they're making significant progress in earning a college credential too often give up and drop out.

MCC has developed two interventions to put more students on paths to success.

A flexible pace math option allows students to move through their developmental mathematics course at a speed that's conducive to their learning. As Renee Dimino, interim dean of Academic Foundations, explains, "This option allows students to move through a series of modules at a slower or accelerated pace. Motivated

students can complete two developmental math courses in one semester."

Recent data have shown significant improvements in performance when students are enrolled in the flexible pace vs. traditional option.

Beginning this spring, students who need to hone their basic writing skills will be able to simultaneously tackle the transitional studies class, Integrated Reading and Writing, and English 101, a college-level college composition course. This course pairing will give students the necessary support to achieve academic success.



MCC student Syreeta Coleman, left, received tutoring in developmental reading, writing and math and later worked as a peer tutor in the Flexible Pace Math Lab and the Center for Academic Reading.

"Education has the power to transform lives by giving people an opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families," said Dimino. "We have an ethical responsibility to meet students where they are and help them achieve their potential."

Contact MCC

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Anne M. Kress, Ph.D.
President
(585) 292-2100

Andrea C. Wade, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President
of Academic Services
(585) 292-2170

Lloyd A. Holmes, Ph.D.
Vice President of
Student Services
(585) 292-2121

Clayton W. Jones
Acting Assistant to the President
for Government Relations
(585) 292-2192