



Students use the library at Monroe Community College. CARLOS ORTIZ/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

MCC HITS 50

School has become a doorway to a better life

James Goodman

Staff writer

When Anthony Joseph began teaching at Monroe Community College in 1967, his office was in "the dugout," cramped quarters — cluttered with faculty desks — at MCC's main campus on Alexander Street in Rochester.

Lacking equipment for teaching radiologic technology, Joseph had to depend on local hospitals letting him use some of theirs — freed up in the evenings — so that his students were properly trained.

Nowadays, Joseph continues as a professor of radiologic technology at MCC, though learning about X-rays has become one of a multitude of digital skills his students must master. And they can do so with the help of an Imaging Lab at MCC's main campus, located on about 300 acres in Brighton.

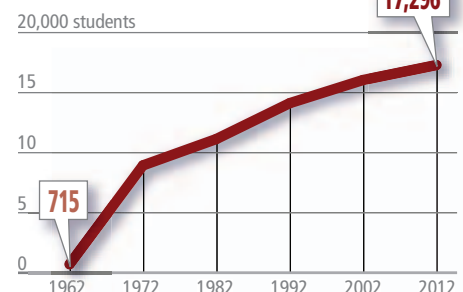
Such changes are part of MCC's evolution over the past half century as this

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MCC's growth over the years

As college has become more of a necessity, MCC's enrollment has grown, with local residents seeking skills to meet workforce needs.

MCC enrollment (1962 to 2012)



* For fall semester of years cited. Excludes enrollment in nondegree workforce development/contract training classes.

SOURCE: Monroe Community College

KEVIN M. SMITH/GRAPHICS EDITOR

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MCC

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community college marks its 50th anniversary since first taking in 715 students in 1962.

From the start, MCC has been a welcoming institution for those seeking higher education, reaching out to the community with programs responsive to the work-force needs.



Anthony Joseph



Alice Holloway Young

Alice Holloway Young, who has served on MCC's board of trustees since its first meeting, tells of the vision MCC's founders had in mind.

"This would be open access — accessible to anyone who wants to go to college," said Young, who after serving as board chair for many years took on emerita status and continues to attend trustee meetings.

As the price of some colleges has risen to the point of exceeding a family's income, a student can attend MCC paying \$3,140 a year for tuition.

MCC, Young noted, not only trains students so that they have "salable skills," but also serves as an academic transfer station, where students can earn a two-year associate's degree and transfer to a four-year college.

Over the past 50 years, MCC's enrollment in degree and certificate programs has grown to 17,296 students this fall. And the total is about twice that when the number of local residents who are not seeking a degree but take courses — often to upgrade work skills — is factored in.

MCC President Anne Kress has put a greater focus on connecting with business and industry — and formed a new division of economic development and innovative work force services, headed by Todd Oldham.



As it is, the MCC-educated work force adds about \$510 million a year to the local economy, according to a study by EM-SI, an economic modeling firm commissioned by MCC.

Kress has also put an emphasis on community collaboration.

"Partnership is critically important," Kress said. "One reason is because of the students that we serve. Frequently, they need services that are far beyond the scope of a community college. Can we provide partnerships that fill in those gaps for our students?"

Kress considers the proposed move of MCC's



Left, Eileen Doyle works with sophomores Justin Strub and Cheri Parkhouse on body positioning as part of a radiology technology class at MCC. CARLOS ORTIZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Damon City Campus from the Sibley Building in downtown Rochester to a cluster of buildings at Eastman Kodak's corporate headquarters as a relocation that would provide "the full college experience" to students. "That's what has been missing at our downtown campus. And we hear that consistently from our students," she said.

With college completion increasingly an issue with community colleges, Kress hopes to provide better support services for students. Plans call for a \$40 million interdisciplinary Learning Commons — featuring a new library with centers to help students with tutoring and collaborative projects on MCC's main campus.

About 25 percent of first-time, full-time MCC students graduate from the college within three years.

Creating access

Accessibility to a higher education remains a thread that runs throughout MCC's history and community colleges in general.

LeRoy V. Good, who served as MCC's first president, stressed the college's outreach in a pamphlet celebrating MCC's first decade — saying that "every high school graduate in Monroe County will have the opportunity to go to college."

Anyone with a high-school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) certificate can be admitted to a degree or certificate pro-

gram at MCC, while a person without such credentials can enroll in classes but can't be admitted to a degree or certificate program. In the past, students who showed an ability to benefit but didn't have a GED or high school benefit could be admitted as a degree-track student but that changed as a result of a federal law enacted last year.

The first community colleges — often called junior colleges — were launched more than a century ago as extensions of high schools. Kress tells how the concept of "community" college, which gradually replaced "junior," came from a commission established by President Harry Truman looking at higher education issues.

The impetus for establishing MCC was the need for more skilled health care workers and nurses. Carl Hallauer, who was president and chairman of the board of Bausch + Lomb, is credited with raising the possibility with County Manager Gordon Howe, after being impressed with the community college in Corning.

MCC was created by the Monroe County Board of Supervisors, the forerunner of the County Legislature. The college is one of 30 community colleges that are part of the State University of New York system.

In 1968, MCC moved its main campus from Alexander Street, near downtown Rochester, to the much larger Brighton site on East Henrietta Road, where a complex of connected buildings was con-

structed. MCC also took on a greater presence with its Applied Technologies Center on West Henrietta Road. And MCC's partnership with the city and county led to the establishment of the Public Safety Training Facility on Scottsville Road.

In 1992, MCC made a renewed commitment to the city, establishing the Damon City Center with the rental of two floors of the Sibley Building.

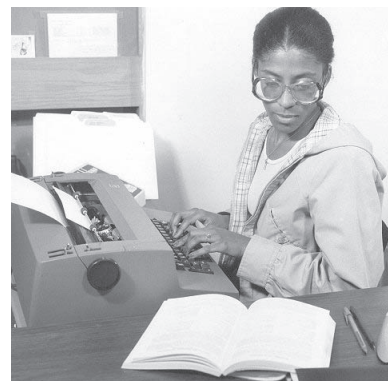
"It was creating another point of access. There were a significant number of prospective students who found traveling to the Brighton campus difficult. So, consequently, they did not pursue enrollment at MCC — and it meant really being shut out of higher ed in general," said Emeterio Oterio, executive dean of what is now called the Damon City Campus. He helped with opening of the downtown campus.

This fall's enrollment of 2,826 students at the downtown campus was almost three times the enrollment there two decades ago, though MCC's enrollment — both overall and at the downtown campus — has dipped in recent years.

A year ago, MCC's board of trustees recommended relocating the downtown campus to the Kodak site. County lawmakers are expected to vote on Tuesday whether to approve the county issuing \$28 million in bonds for a downtown campus.

Making connections

While the impetus for establishing MCC was the need for skilled health



A secretarial science student uses an electric typewriter at MCC in the 1970s. PROVIDED PHOTO



Students listen to records in the library at MCC's former Alexander Street campus in 1964. PROVIDED PHOTO

care workers and nurses, MCC soon offered many more programs in such specialties as data processing, mechanical, electrical and optical technology.

Charlotte Downing, a 1981 MCC graduate, returned to the college in 1987, after earning a bachelor's degree from The College at Brockport, to coordinate MCC's corporate services.

"As a community college, we are here to serve the needs of individuals and business and industry. They were looking to upgrade their skills so corporate services was the outreach to business and industry," said Downing, who is now dean of curriculum and program development at MCC.



Charlotte Downing

In the fall of 1991, a listing of MCC academic programs held off the main campus tells of 27 courses at various high schools, senior homes, hospitals and businesses. MCC, for example, started a lab to teach basic computer skills at the General Motors' AC Rochester plant on Lexington Avenue.

A push for stronger connections with four-year colleges came from Peter Spina, who served as MCC president from 1982 to 1999.

"We were considered, unfairly in my view, as a high school with ashtrays," Spina said.

Under "2+2" dual admission model that Spina established, students are

admitted to MCC and a partner four-year college. If they fulfill the necessary requirements and maintain the needed grade point, the students transfer to the four-year school after two years.

Students can also transfer without this prearranged agreement. Such programs help explain why 58.2 percent of MCC's 2,896 graduates in 2011 transferred to a 133 different colleges.

One of the challenges facing MCC and other community colleges is keeping tuition affordable.

With a budget of \$122.3 million this school year, MCC has seen state aid drop from 35.9 percent of its revenue in the mid-1990s to 30.3 percent this school year, while student tuition and fees now account for 47.1 percent of MCC's revenue compared with 40.8 percent back then.

But Kress warns against knee-jerk tuition increases.

"It would be easy to say that the state cuts us, let's just keep passing it along to students. But there could be a real consequence to us and to our students, in terms of access, if we do that," Kress said.

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