

Manchester Community College Academic Plan

Being responsive to the diverse communities we serve, our mission at MCC is to be an accessible, student-centered, comprehensive community college that promotes and fosters the intellectual, cultural, and economic vibrancy of our region

2014 - 2016

Committee

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Introduction

Established in 1945 as the State Trade School at Manchester, what was New Hampshire's first community college along with the Trade School in Portsmouth is now known as Manchester Community College (MCC). Holding this unique place in the landscape of New Hampshire higher education, MCC has been the choice for thousands of students seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Founded to provide technical career training to returning World War II soldiers, sailors and airmen, now the second largest of the seven colleges in the Community College System of New Hampshire offers over 50 degrees and certificates and is truly a comprehensive community college.

MCC enrolls about 3,300 students per semester from more than 50 countries, preparing them to go directly into the workforce with the skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers or to transfer to four-year colleges for the completion of a Bachelor's degree. With a mission of access, this is a campus that boasts thousands of square feet of lab space for the wide variety of high quality, practical programs that employ equipment and materials consistent with the modern workplace. To complement such facilities, MCC has embraced active, engaged learning in the form of online educational opportunities as well as vibrant service learning avenues.

The College believes it is important that individuals establish a set of personal values which are able to be reflected in their own eyes and in the eyes of the community. These values increase through an educational program geared to the continual development of human potential.

As an academic institution, Manchester Community College espouses a philosophy in which students are not passive recipients of knowledge, but are active and vigorously involved in the creation of meaning, and this participation is essential. Knowledge is not merely acquired, nor is the notion of transformation a perfect description for the outcomes from an MCC education. Because teaching and learning are social endeavors, and with results which are not pre-determined, we know it is important for faculty to think about learning before they teach, and for students to think, write, reflect and "do" as they learn. Such explicit articulation of our values moves the focus of our Academic Plan from what is right, to what matters and why.

Purpose

The development of an Academic Plan is a specific goal delineated by the New England Associate of Schools and Colleges (NEASC):

"A priority for the new Vice President of Academic Affairs will be to develop an academic program plan that identifies new programs and necessary resources and enhances current programs to ensure the College is meeting the needs of the community it serves (p. 49)."

To place further emphasis on the need to focus on institutional effectiveness, NEASC issued a letter to the College in February that requires an update in the Fall of 2013 regarding implementation success and assessment results. Therefore, in September of 2013, the MCC Vice President of Academic Affairs established an Ad Hoc Academic Plan Committee requesting the following actions:

- Engage faculty and academic support staff in discussions, and seek input
- Link efforts to accreditation and ongoing MCC and CCSNH strategic planning
- Consider other institution examples, as well as MCC institutional data/practices
- Recognize themes shaping the College's academic future
- Explore partnership opportunities across the greater academic community (e.g. both high schools as well as 4-year institutions)

A key point of purpose for the planning process was to ensure faculty-focused conversations that dwelled less on specifics and academic minutiae which can quickly become outdated, and instead purposefully considered the academic direction and priorities of the institution over the next two years.

The Committee has held multiple meetings, has sought conversations with peers across departments, and held a preliminary conversation during an All-Faculty gathering.

Priorities

A. Teaching

The essence of a community college is the inherent ability to focus specifically on teaching and learning. This holds true at Manchester Community College, and the promotion and support of faculty professional development is an essential goal. A comprehensive system that invests in faculty and provides a consistent and reliable structure of support is essential. MCC will need to establish a set of guiding principles for the development of new programs, the addition of new full-time faculty positions, and consider the means to support the teaching needs of both. Data will help shape this conversation, as will engagement specifically with Department Chairs. Factors including individual program accreditation will be included, and faculty have spoken clearly: as we look to remain current with industry and workforce needs, MCC should support and invest in existing programs, and provide needed resources. Specific goals in the Priority Area of Teaching include:

- A.1. Develop and enhance dynamic online instruction/pedagogy

- A.2. Determine the strengths and needs of Adjunct faculty and develop strategies of support
- A.3. Prioritize new and/or additional full-time faculty positions based on the comprehensive assessment of program needs
- A.4. Implement a departmental organizational structure that is not only effective, but is based on leadership, program affiliation and opportunities to share resources
- A.5. Acknowledge and celebrate faculty commitments to students that extend beyond the classroom

B. Learning

Academic support for MCC students encompasses a multitude of services to aid not only learning, but also success, retention, and graduation. Faculty serve as primary academic advisors, and often enjoy reasonable advisee ratios, and MCC also offers resources through the Library and the Center for Academic Placement and Support (CAPS). Such services include information literacy, peer tutoring, math boot camp and other workshops, academic accommodations, and ESL/ESOL support and assessment. Specific goals in the Priority Area of Learning include:

- B.1. Given the strong need for “developmental” coursework, MCC will assess this curricula, success of these pathways, consider best practices and current research, and will make changes as needed.
- B.2. Work with CCSNH to provide additional support for online student orientation and help as well as online registration, navigation of web-resources and bolster these access opportunities
- B.3. Evaluate, assess, and develop as needed, student orientation specific to academics, and further efforts to clarify academic advising in the area of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- B.4. Continue investments in a College Academic Advising Center

C. Application

Since its inception, MCC has provided students with applied learning opportunities, and labs, internships, clinical, and co-op for example, remain a valued part of many academic programs. The student experience of application will continue, and the importance of this priority will be a mainstay of the MCC educational model. Shaping the future will be the leveraging of our vast lab square footage, but also the continuation of college-wide efforts to position students via service, co-curricular

efforts and community-based learning, so that they engage and contribute even before graduation. Specific goals in the Priority Area of Application include:

- C.1. Develop and strengthen relationships with high schools/career technical centers, employers and 4-year colleges and universities
- C.2. Invest in campus-based student support services for career exploration and employment as well as transfer preparedness. Linking the academic and student aspect of this work, including advising, will be critical.
- C.3. Continue to encourage student connection to their community through embedded learning opportunities within degree programs.

Summary and Next Steps

As an ongoing process, academic planning at MCC has been in full-swing, and many projects and initiatives in service of the three priority areas already underway. Starting in the Fall of 2012, these include a sustained period of degree and concentration development that marks one the most active in the recent history of the college. A redefining of the first year experience has entailed a great deal of conversation and planning, with faculty designing what will be known as the First Year Cornerstone (1-credit) starting in the Fall of 2014. The College has also begun the hard work of establishing a culture of assessment to include program review; evolved the view of “Gen Ed” to Core Learning Outcomes; and has moved to reposition Liberal Arts programming based on data and research.

While the Community College System of New Hampshire, and Manchester Community College specifically, can lay claim to providing the most affordable tuition in the state, the relationship between the cost of a college education and affordable access will continue to impact academic planning and priorities. As our efforts necessarily remain ongoing, we nevertheless recognize the value MCC offers as we set our sights on teaching, learning and application.

Looking ahead, 2017 marks the date of the next comprehensive accreditation visit and review from NEASC. As Manchester Community College contemplates not only the priorities shaping our academic future, this Academic Plan will also focus and help contribute toward the demonstration of our effectiveness as an institution.