

Report to Faculty, Administrators, Trustees, Students
of

Monroe Community College
Rochester, NY 14623

Prepared following analysis of the institution's
Periodic Review Report

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**Evaluation of the Periodic Review Report of
Monroe Community College**

I. Introduction

Founded in 1961, Monroe Community College (MCC) is a dynamic and comprehensive post secondary institution located in Rochester, New York. The College, a vital resource for the community, serves the educational and workforce development needs of a region in transition. The College offers over 90 transfer, career, and certificate programs at four instructional sites and two extension sites.

In fall 2010, almost 19,000 students attended the College, many of whom represented first-generation and low-income learners, 33% were aged 25 or older and 32% were minority students; 27% of all area high school graduates begin their college education at MCC. Currently, 70% are enrolled in transfer programs, 22% are enrolled in career programs and 8% are undecided. The 2009 graduates transferred to 149 four-year institutions and 90% of the career graduates are employed full-time in the Greater Rochester area.

Resources in support of MCC's operations in 2010-2011 included: \$59,843,000 from tuition and fees, \$1,974,000 from other sponsored programs, \$38,389,939 from SUNY allocation, \$16,680,000 from Monroe County, \$2,013,000 from charges to other counties, \$3,376,061 from allocations from the fund balance, and \$1,504,000 from other sources.

There have been significant changes at MCC since the 2006 MSCHE team visit including the arrival of Dr. Anne M. Kress, MCC's fifth president in 2009.

II. Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Decennial Evaluation

This section summarizes the College's responses to the recommendations made in the 2006 decennial report. Key areas include: governance, faculty, general education, and assessment of student learning.

Standard 4: Governance

Recommendation: While the Board of Trustees was involved in the development of the College's Strategic Plan and is updated on the progress made by the College in implementing its goals and objectives, it does not have a formal procedure in place for periodically and objectively assessing its effectiveness. Accordingly, to meet Middle States Standards, the team recommends that such a procedure be developed and implemented.

Dr. Kress adopted a dashboard approach in order to more fully engage the Board of Trustees. The Board receives an update each month, a process that will continue as the College begins to develop its next strategic plan. The PRR reports that this process has improved communication with the Board of Trustees and provided them with clearer and more frequent opportunities to monitor and to shape College progress.

*The readers **recommend** that the College document the Board of Trustees involvement in reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of the current strategic plan and development of the next strategic plan.*

Standard 10: Faculty

Recommendation: The College has made a concerted effort to recruit and hire more staff from underrepresented populations and the results are beginning to show. To achieve goals of diversifying the faculty to mirror the demographics of the student body, the team recommends the good work in this area to be continued.

Following the team visit, the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan firmly asserted that the College must reflect the population that it serves. The plan identified two broad strategies: continual effort at improving recruitment protocols to yield a more diverse faculty and staff and the firm support for the role of the Diversity Council formed in 2003. President Kress has encouraged and challenged the 21 academic departments to embrace the goals of a diverse faculty for the College. Since the MSCHE recommendation, the number of minority faculty members rose from 33 to 44.

*The readers **suggest** that the College continue its efforts to recruit and hire more staff from underrepresented populations. The readers **commend** the institution for implementing the Dr. Alice H. Young Teaching Internship program to allow underrepresented persons the opportunity to gain teaching experience.*

Standard 12: General Education

Recommendation: A fundamental element of Standard 12 is evidence of a general education program “of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth.” MCC designed such a program but now needs to work toward making all programs come into compliance with the general education requirements as defined by MCC and SUNY.

Recommendation: As stated in the *Characteristics of Excellence*, “an accredited institution is characterized by a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives...information literacy, which includes critical analysis and reasoning” is a fundamental element of Standard 12. MCC should develop an accountability system to make sure that information literacy; critical analysis and reasoning; and the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives are incorporated into each student’s general education program.

Upon receipt of the MSCHE Visiting Team’s report, the College reinitiated a program-by-program review to determine which departments needed to revise their degree program curricula in order to comply with MCC’s general education requirements. Over the course of the four years since the MSCHE team visit, program faculty have successfully redesigned curricula so that all programs at the College now fulfill the MCC general education requirements.

Two successive ad hoc committees examined MCC’s general education curriculum to identify specifically how the College’s course offerings provide students with an awareness of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. The Curriculum Committee concluded in May 2008 that the findings of these two committees constituted significant evidence that values,

ethics, and diverse perspectives were “infused competencies,” present throughout the general education curriculum.

In addition, the release of Foundations IV to the college community brought a shift in general education assessment to more closely align MCC with MSCHE’s general education principles. Foundations for Student Success IV: Closing the Assessment Loop is a comprehensive review of where the College is with assessment and where it needs to go.

The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee established the College Assessment and Program Evaluation Committee (CAPE). Using a proactive and planned process, the College has effectively implemented a complete accountability system for all of its designated infused competencies. A thorough inventory of course objectives across the curriculum demonstrated that faculty were including values, ethics and diverse perspectives across the curriculum and the colleges assessment plans included the assessment of all infused competencies.

A review of data provided for the PRR review indicated that the first assessments of the revised general education competencies occurred in the 2008-2009 school year. While there is evidence of assessment activities are occurring, *the readers recommend that the College provide evidence of closing the loop, i.e., demonstrate how it uses assessment results to improve the teaching and learning of general education outcomes and evidence that the results are improving institutional effectiveness.*

The readers commend the institution in fully engaging the campus in discussion, review, development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for general education and its assessment.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Recommendation: Create a plan for outcomes assessment for on-line learning.

In fall semester 2009, the “Distance Learning Assessment Initiative (DLAI)” was launched as part of the ongoing responsibilities of the Office of Academic Assessment. The DLAI committee did conduct a thorough review and assessment of distance education; however, since distance education is across college departments, the committee did not believe they had the broad based authority to make recommendations about the direction of distance education at MCC. In February 2011 the committee developed the “Protocol for Assessing Distance Education” which serves as the primary guidelines for the assessment of distance learning. Additional college discussion is needed to institutionalize the assessment plan and provide Middle States with evidence of assessment results and use of these results to improve distance learning outcomes.

The readers recommend that the college complete the full implementation of the plan for outcomes assessment of on-line learning and report back its results to Middle States.

Recommendations from the Institutional Self Study

In its own self study, MCC made nearly 50 recommendations covering all the MSCHE standards. As part of the PRR documentation, MCC provided a status on every

recommendation in an activity report grid. It is clear that the self study recommendations have been addressed. Significant effort has been expended in the following areas: identification of additional external resources to support programs especially grant funding, expanding the representation from all divisions and campuses in the Strategic Planning process, aligning and updating the Facilities Master Plan and Technology Plan with the Strategic Plan, increasing minority enrollment at the institution and increasing the number of minority staff. The award of a 2010 FIPSE grant should assist the institution in improving the success rates of underprepared students in college level courses.

III. Major Challenges and Opportunities

The PRR discusses challenges and opportunities in 6 key areas:

A. Enrollment Challenges and Opportunities (Standards 1, 2, 3, and 8)

The PRR shows that the number of high school graduates in Monroe County has peaked and will decline by 20% in the next five years. The overwhelming majority of students are now first-generation, low income, and members of underrepresented populations. The College has already begun to explore a wide range of potential strategies to address this changing demographic through the development of new programs targeted to the changing community need, commitment to comprehensive college seminars to engage students at risk and recognition that current services must provide solutions to serve all student populations in faster and more focused ways.

B. The Fiscal Environment (Standards 2 and 3)

The current state of local and state-wide economies presents both challenges and opportunities. Although the College enjoys positive fiscal health, the continuing struggles of the regional and state economies and the potential enrollment declines present new challenges. This changing dynamic has prompted the College to respond by exploring a variety of initiatives such as:

1. **Institutional Partners:** New institutional partners such as the MCC Association, Inc. which is a not for profit organization that provides the necessary financial and management support for a variety of student services that enhance student life and the MCC Foundation which has transferred more than \$15,600,000 to the College and its students, since 2000. The MCC Foundation has proved to be a key partner in recent capital projects.
2. **Grant Initiatives:** On average, 60 proposals are funded annually by local, state, and federal sources. The well focused Grants Department obtained over \$5 million in the 08-09 fiscal year.
3. **Capital Investments:** The College continues to invest in physical plant, infrastructure improvements, technology advances and energy conservation

measures. In 2008, a SUNY study revealed that MCC significantly surpassed its sister colleges in terms of the general condition of facilities.

4. Budget Resource Committee: Established in November 2009, the Budget Resource Committee (BRC) is comprised of a cross section of college faculty, staff and administrators. The goals of the committee are to assist the College in prioritizing budget allocations, establishing linkages between Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness and to suggest cost savings strategies.

C. College Readiness and Completion (Standards 8, 9, 11, 13, and 14)

As other community colleges, MCC serves the nearly 60% of students that need some remediation. In late fall 2010, the College was awarded a fully-funded \$750,000 FIPSE grant to create a Community Center for Teaching Excellence that will address the full range of activities from college readiness completion to successful transfer or career transition.

D. Institutional Change (Standards 1, 2, 3, and 5)

The College has experienced a great deal of institutional change with a number of senior level retirements as well as a new college President. The new President has sought more representation at the table and has filled key roles to move the institution forward. The PRR cites that the campus is animated with a spirit of rebirth and innovation. Evidence in the PRR of changes made since the new President arrived supports this statement. Of particular note is the President's actions in numerous cases to broaden participation in decision making and planning. A change in leadership of this magnitude will provide the institution an opportunity for complete institutional reassessment.

E. A New Downtown Site (Standards 1, 2, 3, and 8)

In 2009, county leaders abandoned a joint County/College project. The College has since crafted a plan to guide site selection in the Downtown area for specific programs that would benefit from a downtown location.

F. Sustainability (Standards 2, 3, 11, and 13)

In 2008, the College joined the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) SEED Center. The College's efforts in sustainability have produced operational changes that resulted in \$200,000 in rebates for energy saving equipment and strategies. In addition, the College sees both service and outreach to communities as crucial components of their sustainability plan and as such promote service-learning initiatives to bridge the relationship between experiential and classroom-based learning. To affirm its commitment to sustainability, the College also

introduced a sustainability certificate program that focuses on the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

The PRR indicates that MCC has experienced an increase in credit FTE enrollment of nearly 50% in the last ten years and new historical highs in each of the previous three years. MCC reports that the dramatic increase has challenged the use of facilities (MCC is currently operating at 135% of SUNY recommended classroom capacity) and student support services, and has required careful planning and budgeting to recruit a more responsive and qualified faculty. However, enrollment is expected to level off or even decrease slightly in the near future because of shifting demographics and a decline in the number of high school graduates in Monroe County.

MCC reported that 98% of their FTEs are from NY State aidable credit courses. The other 2% of FTEs are in continuing education, non credit training. The primary focus of MCC enrollment management is for credit courses. Non credit and workforce training are now the focus of a newly created unit called the Economic Development and Innovative Workforce Services Division.

The PRR discussed past and future enrollment projections. Future projections use a time series average that recognizes future high school graduation trends, population changes, economic conditions, and workforce development trends. Review of financial data provides evidence the College has budgeted realistically for enrollment, tuition revenue and expenditures and indicates the College has the capacity to successfully carry out its current program as well as capacity to invest in new programs.

In conjunction with the College's Strategic Plan, the annual operating budget is the primary management tool for planning, expending, and assessing how College resources are both generated and used to support student success. MCC has consistently demonstrated greater efficiency in providing cost effective education than its SUNY peers. In 2010 the College educated its students at a cost of \$7,036 per student FTE nearly 20% lower than the average cost per student FTE of \$8,739 across all SUNY community colleges. For 2011, spending per FTE was budgeted at \$7,291 compared to a state average of \$9,084.

V. Organized and Sustained Processes to Assess Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning

MCC has a long history of articulating its goals, implementing strategies to achieve those goals, assessing the achievement of those goals, and using the results of those assessments to improve programs and services and to inform planning and resource allocation. The Institutional Effectiveness Model (IEM) was developed to illustrate the relationship among the college's major planning initiatives. The IEM incorporates elements of mission, strategic planning, academic assessment, the Facilities Master Plan, the Technology Plan, resource allocation, evaluation and closing the loop for continuous improvement. The PRR states that MCC has purposefully aligned the lifecycle of the strategic plan to follow the Middle States

review process to benefit from the extensive introspection that this process creates and to ensure that the College promptly addresses any recommendations. The College technology plan and facilities master plan are timed to end so that the next versions are informed by the results of the current strategic plan and support the efforts of the next strategic plan.

The Institutional Dashboard includes key performance indicators in four broad areas: access, success, quality and financial responsibility. Currently, the College is piloting a program that allows for the assessment of administrative units that will allow for a more comprehensive and robust process of evaluating institutional effectiveness.

*The readers **recommend** the College provide evidence of the implementation of assessment of institutional effectiveness and how the results improve institutional performance.*

Student Learning

The College has been involved in the process of outcomes assessment for over two decades. The institution's commitment to assessment began with development of the 1990-1995 Comprehensive Assessment Plan that focused upon four major categories: academic majors, basic skills, general education, and personal/social growth.

MCC, has since, shifted its approach to assessment from one that had been SUNY-centered to one that focused on MSCHE assessment standards and practices. This shift in assessment focus has led to a number of important changes in assessment:

- The institution and its faculty now place greater emphasis on curriculum and program design, and the analysis of information gleaned from the process.
- Assessment and program evaluation results have been more fully integrated into institutional decision-making.
- Assessment and program evaluation processes have been more fully integrated into the institution's curriculum process.
- Programs and departments are engaging in increased levels of follow-up activity in assessment "closing the loop."
- Faculty members have been encouraged as part of their assessment and program evaluation projects, to adjust the process as appropriate to ensure the usefulness of the exercise.
- In September 2010, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee approved the formation of a "permanent" College Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Committee as a subcommittee of the curriculum committee, thus replacing the series of ad hoc committees which had previously overseen assessment.

The leadership of the Academic Services division and the Faculty Senate maintain shared oversight of academic assessment. Results from assessment and program evaluation projects are widely distributed among the department faculties undertaking these projects, and likewise shared with staff and administrators supporting those departments.

MCC places great emphasis on its support of academic assessment by providing staff professionals to support faculty with their assessment projects, professional development funds and modest levels of release time.

Assessment of student learning takes place in four inter-related but distinct processes:

- The assessment of general education courses; revised in early 2010.
- The evaluation of degree and certificate programs; using a newly revised Program Review Process
- Special projects in academic assessment and evaluation, such as Writing Across the Curriculum and the Distance Learning Assessment Initiative and
- Follow-up actions and activities (“Closing the Loop”)

The College’s new updated assessment plan, appropriately titled: *Foundations of Student Learning IV: Closing the Loop*, documents MCC’s progress and goals of making assessment and evaluation projects relevant and useful to both faculty and administrator.

VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Processes

MCC is in its fifth strategic planning process. The strategic planning process is aligned with best practices and a commitment from College leadership to effectively manage growth and change. The College has adopted a four-stage approach to strategic planning: *Strategic Thinking, Direction & Goal Development, Implementation & Integration* and *Monitoring and Evaluation*. The process for developing the strategic plan has created an environment that encourages group interaction, collegiality, and authentic college-wide collaborations.

MCC’s concentrated efforts to secure appropriate resources and to ensure the efficient use of those resources has been a long standing practice. Resource allocation decisions are driven by institutional planning. Divisional goals are directly tied to specific strategic plan goals which lead to the alignment of budgets to support these goals. In short, the strategic plan prompts the creation of other, operational plans. These plans, such as the Facilities Master Plan, the Enrollment Management Plan, the Large Equipment Replacement Budget, the Academic Plan, and the Technology Plan, provide detailed frameworks for both implementation and evaluation. In addition to the divisional budgets, multiple funding strategies have been developed to address strategic planning projects, new initiatives, and innovation.

As operating budgets have tightened, the College continues to adopt more collaborative and integrative planning processes. In this regard, the President established the College’s first Budget Resource Committee (BRC) in November 2009. Composed of 35 members from across the College community, the BRC has three primary charges:

- to create a ‘big-table’ around which all stakeholders are represented and varied and sometimes divergent perspectives can be heard;
- to identify and communicate college-wide resource allocation priorities for consideration during the annual budget process;

- to more fully integrate the planning and budgeting processes.

By early February 2010, the BRC published a set of recommendations to guide and to prioritize the 2010-2011 budget.

VII. Conclusion

MCC is experiencing a time of institutional change brought about by senior staff retirements and a change in the Presidency. Combined with the College's history of innovation, quality, community leadership and extraordinary success in its use of fiscal resources, the rebirth under new leadership should position the College to become a national showcase for best practices and student success.

In summary, the readers' will now re-state our recommendations, which also appear earlier in this report:

1. *The readers **recommend** that the College document the Board of Trustees involvement in reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of the current strategic plan and development of the next strategic plan.*
2. *The readers **recommend** that the College provide evidence of closing the loop, i.e. demonstrate how it uses assessment results to improve the teaching and learning of general education outcomes and evidence that the results are improving institutional effectiveness.*
3. *The readers **recommend** that the college complete the full implementation of the plan for outcomes assessment of on-line learning and report back its results to Middle States.*
4. *The readers **recommend** the College provide evidence of the implementation of assessment of institutional effectiveness and how the results improve institutional performance.*