

Community Engagement

Mountain Empire Community College
Big Stone Gap, VA



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Achieving the Dream

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Inside and outside voices must be heard.

Institutional change is best designed, carried out and sustained when it involves stakeholders from outside the institution as well as college administrators, faculty and staff. Community involvement is essential for political and financial support and long-term sustainability of college programs. Equally important are college-community partnerships that augment the college's programs and services.

Current Condition of Engagement



Community Relationships

- Board of Supervisors for 4 counties and 1 city in service region
 - Provide local funds
 - Appoint local advisory board members
 - President visits each Board twice a year
- Local Advisory Board
 - 15 members representing local jurisdictions
 - 6 meetings each year on campus
 - Attend college on-campus/off-campus events

Community Relationships

- Academic Program Advisory Committees
 - Local professionals
 - Approximately 250
 - Program development/improvement
- Adjunct Faculty Members
 - Local professionals
 - Approximately 150

Foundation Board

- Provide funding
 - Scholarships
 - Faculty & staff professional development
 - Cultural programs and events
 - Campus improvements
 - Support other educational programs and projects not funded through traditional sources
 - Americorps
 - 30 local professionals

Members of Local Groups

- Chambers of Commerce
- County Economic Development Agencies
- Service Groups
 - Kiwanis
 - Rotary
 - Lions

Community Service – An Expectation

- Service to the community
 - Part of each administrator and full-time faculty member's evaluation
 - Math instructor coordinates local high school scholastic competition each year and involves other faculty and administrators
- Student Clubs engage in service projects
 - Phi Theta Kappa and Relay for Life
 - Student Diplomats and Tools for Schools
 - Americorps and Habitat for Humanity

Local Schools

- President meets with Superintendents twice each year
- Coordinate Math Alliance
- Talent Search to support low-income students to prepare for college
- Dual Enrollment
- Tech Prep
- Financial Aid Workshops
- Career 'Coaching'
- Meet annually with guidance counselors

Communication

- Mass Media
 - Two newspaper dailies and six weeklies
 - TV and Radio
 - Billboards
 - Website
 - Information/Class Schedule mailed to all households three times per year
 - Targeted groups
 - High School Seniors
 - GED Students

Analysis of Engagement

- Dominated by professionals and/or political and economic leaders
- Conducted *Community Survey*
 - *209 personal interviews*

Nurse, electrician, coal miner, waitress, cook, mechanic, truck driver, tippie operator, teacher, hair stylist, sales clerk, pharmacy technician, dispatcher, social worker, prison guard, bank teller, car dealership, home health care, grocery, construction, secretary . . .

‘Community Voices’ Identified Barriers to College Success

- Costs associated with going to college
- Finding time for both college and their work or family responsibilities
- Lack of child care
- Lack of or unreliable transportation
- Lack of family support

Recommended Strategy

Work within existing groups and initiatives to increase access, address needs and engage in conversations

Recent Initiatives to Address Needs

- Dual Enrollment
 - Tuition covered for 80 -90% of cost to provide access to academically qualified, low-income students
- Aims Higher Scholarships
 - Full tuition coverage for high school graduates meeting academic, attendance and service criteria

Recent Initiatives to Address Needs

- Dreamkeepers \$150,000 Endowment
 - Student emergency funds
 - Foundation members and faculty/staff learned of student needs
 - Foundation members sold tickets to Gala
 - Faculty/staff designated contributions
 - Raised \$80,000 match to \$100,000 Lumina funds

Recent Initiatives to Address Needs

- Supporting “Concerned About Our Community” community group
 - Focused on at-risk students K-12
 - Goal is to construct community facility on MECC campus to promote wellness and offer childcare
- Partnering with local transportation group to provide bus service for students

Recent Initiatives to Address Needs

Create Culture of Education

Recent Initiatives to Address Needs

Summer Bridge Program

- Target high school low-income graduates entering developmental courses
- Link thematically upper-level Reading and Writing classes
- Extra-curricular activities to bond students
- Focus on counseling and tutoring needs

Internet Resources

- <http://www.mecc.edu>
- <http://www.mecc.edu/atd/index.html>
- <http://www.mecc.edu/atd/voices.htm>