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Transitions Dimension Report

McHenry County College

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other postsecondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students.

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CURRENT SITUATION:**Performance Indicator 5.1-Communications to Students****Academic expectations are communicated through multiple formats:**

- Catalog - including information on academic honesty
- Student Handbook
- College Website
- Course Description
- Syllabus
- Meetings with advisors counselors, recruiters, and department chairs
- Student orientation
- First Year Experience course, MCC 101

Out of class engagement opportunities are communicated through:

- Student Newspaper (The Tartan)
- Student newsletter (The Flush)
- Club fairs
- Activities boards
- Student life sponsored activities
- MCC 101 - students are required to participate in activities/seminars
- Faculty during classroom discussion

Entry requirements for specific academic programs/majors and prerequisites are communicated through:

- Paper and online versions of the catalog
- Schedule of courses
- Advisors, counselors, recruiters, and department chairs
- Honors program is the only program with entrance requirements

The college costs and financial aid information are communicated through:

- Offices of Recruitment and Admissions
- Outreach, enrollment, and application processes
- Website
- Catalog, schedule of courses, and brochures
- Financial aid office
- Student aid workshops
- Recruiter visits to high schools
- MCC published booklets of scholarship information

- MCC Foundation lists of scholarships
- MCC internal TV broadcasting system

Performance Indicator 5.2-Communication of the Student Experience**Web Site:**

MCC's web site is a valuable tool and an initial point of reference. Everything from application process to course schedules to extra-curricular activities to bookstore prices can be found on the site. Online New Student Orientation and other areas on the site communicate some of the following realities of the college experience at MCC: admission process; tuition and available financial aid; program and course selection; class attendance; responsibility for one's own learning; study time outside the classroom; advisor meetings; importance of planning ahead, reading the catalog, student handbook, Student Code of Conduct, and knowing what is expected; degree requirements; and credits to graduate.

While the web site contains a wealth of information, it is not a guided resource that students can easily navigate.

Admissions print materials:

A hugely diverse group of students attend MCC each year: newly graduated high school students, returning adults who have been away from school for years, and employed students with degrees seeking to update their skills. MCC publishes a variety of brochures to reach the diverse populations served. The most basic information that all students require - costs of attending, lab hours, etc. are included in our catalog and schedules.

Campus tours for prospective students:

Not all prospective students request or take campus tours. Our tours are short and targeted at pointing out the many wonderful services that are available on our campus. We highlight our tutoring center, library, advising & counseling center, and other student service offices to all students who tour campus.

Most of the tours we offer are for specific groups of students, i.e., Special Needs groups from the high schools, athletes, middle school and grade school career programs, and others with specific interests in McHenry County College. Because each group has different needs, we personalize tours so each is receiving information about realities of their upcoming college careers.

Performance Indicator 5.3 - Communication to Others**We communicate to Secondary School Personnel through:**

- Directors of Guidance Meetings (DOG's)
- Superintendents meetings (Board of Control)
- Be the 1st project
- Tech Prep
- Running Start

Currently we have a high school liaison who is very active and some of our occupational departments contact some high schools individually.

We communicate to Families of New Students through:

- MCC Night
- Department Chairs
- Advising office
- Web Site
- Tech Prep
- Running Start
- Kids and College
- Parent Orientation

We communicate to Other support Networks through:

- Business center visits
- Public library visits
- Church visits
- Chamber of Commerce
- Park districts
- Rotary clubs
- Advisory committees for occupational programs
- Internet

- Question board on Internet
- Student clubs
- Orientation

Our Financial Aid office and Office of Multicultural Programs and Student Leadership also team up and offer bi-lingual informational sessions regarding financial aid resources. These sessions are for prospective student parents.

Performance Indicator 5.4-Establishing Connections

New students can establish connections with instructors through:

- Field trips
- Club activities/faculty advisors
- Committees
- Office hours/academic advising
- Orientation
- Sporting events
- Black Box Theatre events
- Music (band, jazz and, chorus, orchestra, ensemble)
- Special events (Hispanic Heritage Month, Coming out Month, Native American Heritage Month, Women's History Month, International Night, Cinco de Mayo, etc.)
- Noontime cafeteria entertainment
- Movie series
- Angel
- MCC night
- Work-study
- Small class structure

New students can establish connections with other new students and with continuing students through many of the same activities. For new students, MCC offers a variety of orientations, each with a specific focus.

- New student orientations (orientation for all students, special needs, returning adults, tech prep, athletics)
- Welcome Back activities
- Multicultural information sessions
- Returning adult socials
- Workshops - career, student leadership, etc.
- Student organization fair
- MCC 101
- Publications: Tartan Newspaper, Flush, Text on TV broadcasting
- Sporting and theatre events
- Athletic teams
- Clubs/organizations/committees
- Music (band, jazz and, chorus, orchestra, ensemble)
- Special events (Hispanic Heritage Month, Coming out Month, Native American Heritage Month, Women's History Month, International Night, Cinco de Mayo, etc.)
- Noontime cafeteria entertainment
- Movie series
- College Bowl
- Student Senate
- Dept. sponsored field trips

New students can establish connections with academic support services through:

- MCC101
- Orientations (new student, special needs, athletic, etc.)
- Web Page
- Special Needs services
- Adult student socials
- Advising Advising
- Counseling - personal counseling, workshops, at-risk students
- Library staff - research assistance and information literacy instruction
- Sage Learning Center - tutoring and study groups
- Placement testing
- Honors Program
- Student Code of Conduct
- MCC publications (Tartan, Flush, and TV system)

Performance Indicator 5.5 - Academic Advising

Academic advisors offer a mandatory orientation session for all full-time and/or degree seeking students, during which they explain how to select courses and to plan their schedules. Also during orientation, advisors describe specific student services available, including those for exploring life and career goals through counseling services. Orientation also can be completed in an on-line format for students not able to get to a session. Students are required to meet with an advisor prior to scheduling their first semester classes. The advisors are very knowledgeable about and offer many resources for transfer exploration. The courses offered by the counseling office are great for those students who choose to take them. Advising is offering many more seminars and workshops that target problem areas for our students.

The Coordinator for High School Recruitment and the department chairs for the occupational programs regularly visit the high schools to present information about general academic standards at MCC as well as program specific requirements.

Opportunities and Challenges:**Performance Indicator 5.1 - Communications to Students**

Our greatest challenges are training students to find the resources that will guide them toward the academic expectations of the college and helping them to understand the importance of using these resources. Many first year students are overwhelmed and don't know where to start.

Recruiters have shared information with high school counselors, but the counselors have not effectively passed the information on to students.

A potential opportunity suggested by the team is to create a student Intranet, possibly in conjunction with the student paper, the Tartan.

The following are additional challenges:

- How do we communicate extra-curricular and academic related opportunities to students?
- Are we using forms of communication that are used by our students? Do we need to change formats from newspapers and posters to electronic?
- How do we help our students cope with multiple responsibilities - school, children, jobs, etc.?

Regarding financial aid, one observation is that students are not adequately following through to maintain eligibility and often lose touch in the second year. We could do more to help students by offering seminars and training on how to maintain their scholarships and apply for new ones. We step back after they enroll. We need to strengthen our ongoing advising of enrolled students to help them keep their financial aid and to make sure they know requirements and deadlines. We are doing poorly in this area.

Performance Indicator 5.2 - Communication of the Student Experience

The challenge in this area is similar to other areas in that the many populations of students have varied student experiences to look forward to within their educational plans. With such diverse populations it is difficult to ensure that everyone is getting the information that they need to plan for their education.

The college has developed brochures that target some of the special populations. There is an Adult Student brochure, a Student Athlete brochure, a brochure for our multicultural students, and information designed for students with special needs. In addition, we have created specific FAQ's on the web site for some of these populations. There are more opportunities to specialize the information and to create transition programming that deals with issues affecting each student population. The Office of Recruiting and Student Life is currently looking into these opportunities.

Performance Indicator 5.3 - Communication to Others**Secondary School Personnel:**

MCC's challenge is to effectively spread the word about our diverse programs to appropriate high school personnel. As indicated on the faculty/staff survey, MCC's faculty are willing to reach out to area high schools. The committee suggested that the high school recruiter attend division meetings at least once a year to introduce herself and coordinate efforts between her outreach efforts and the divisions.

Families of New Students:

MCC offers orientations for parents of new students every semester. The Financial Aid office, in collaboration with Multicultural Programs and Student Leadership, offers a session on how to finance college education in both Spanish and English to parents of prospective students. Our challenge is to reach that delicate balance between

encouraging parental support, and student independence and responsibility.

Performance Indicator 5.4 - Establishing Connections

MCC is fortunate to have creative staff and faculty who are always searching for ways to engage new students and to make them feel connected and an integral part of the MCC community. Comments noted on the 2006 Faculty/Staff Survey indicate that the two groups are willing to work together to develop opportunities for new students. Comments also indicate that faculty are not clear what the institution's expectations are for their involvement with connecting to new students outside the classroom.

As noted in the current situation, MCC has implemented many programs to help new students establish connections with MCC's community and resources; however, the 2006 Student Survey indicates MCC falls short of student expectations.

MCC's non-residential campus, diverse student population, and large pool of adjunct faculty make it challenging to establish connections. The majority of students work at least part-time and many have full-time employment and children. Time spent outside of the classroom with MCC related extra-curricular activities may be a luxury. Developing the right mix of programs and extra-curricular activities that will attract student participation is our challenge.

Performance Indicator 5.5 - Academic Advising:

Our challenge is to improve the orientation process to better communicate the correlation between course selection and career directions - to help students understand how the choices they make now will affect future career and transfer opportunities.

Another challenge is to provide a more systematic approach to advising outside of the advising office. A guidebook or checklist could be established so that students are getting the same information whether they talk to advising or their department chair.

Students in occupational areas should be encouraged to meet with their occupational department chairs when looking at what opportunities will be available to them after graduation. Since department chairs will do some advising, it is important to train them to provide the same accurate information that students would get from the advising department.

Sources of Evidence

Performance Indicator 5.1 - Communication to Students

Catalog, Academic Advising program review and surveys, figures on # of students who lose funding due to academic issues.

Performance Indicator 5.2 - Communication of Student Experience

Web site, admission materials, discussion with recruiters

Performance Indicator 5.3 - Communication to Others

The Coordinator of High School Recruitment has created a workshop designed for parents and students at the sophomore and junior level. This workshop provides these students with the steps to preparing for college search and the list of things that they need to think about while still in high school.

Performance Indicator 5.4 - Establishing Connections

CPI, student handbook, web site, events calendar, Assistant VP for Learning and Student Support Services, executive deans/dept. chairs, number of students attending events, admission materials, recruiters, college catalog, faculty/staff survey, student survey.

Performance Indicator 5.5 - Academic Advising

Information was gathered from a current AQIP project that is reviewing academic access for prospect students as well as policies, procedures, information flow, and student connect points through the student support areas.

The following were also used: monthly reports and program reviews from academic advising, academic advising quizzes from orientation, advising surveys, PowerPoint for orientation, and orientation CD about student support offices.

The team did not find the Faculty/Staff survey questions to be valuable. The survey questions that were related to the Transitions Dimension were not relevant in exploring our Performance Indicators.

Recommended Grade: C**Recommended Action Items:**

- Prospective Student Web-Based Pre-College Resources (*High priority*)

We recommend that the college evaluate the prospective student web pages on the MCC web site and add information for both parents and students on what high school should look like for students pursuing post-secondary education. Additionally, we feel there should be an introduction to the rigors of college life, strategies for success and the pre- and post-assessments (CAAP).

- Develop new student transition plans (*High priority*)

1. Develop concrete transition plans for connecting new students to groups within the MCC community, using meaningful collaboration between student and academic divisions. Following are a few examples of concrete plans that could be developed: individual plans for specific student populations (out-of-district, same career/major interests, evening, etc.); major-related information sessions conducted by faculty; intranet for MCC students; open house for all new students to introduce them to clubs, services, faculty, etc; mentoring program.

- Adopt an institutional first year philosophy statement (*Medium priority*)

2. Develop an institutional first year experience philosophy statement. In relation to the philosophy statement, departmental goals should be developed and expectations of faculty and staff clearly articulated. In light of the large adjunct faculty population, communicating expectations to this group cannot be forgotten. This recommendation is based on comments from the faculty/staff survey indicating there is a perception that MCC does not have a set of goals/policies/ expectations against which we can measure how effective we are, individually and as an institution, in connecting with new students. If goals exist, they are not being communicated. Without goals and expected outcomes, it is difficult to measure how well we are doing.

- INTRANET FOR STUDENTS (*Medium priority*)

In collaboration with Information Technology, research the feasibility of creating an INTRANET for MCC students to enhance effective communication beyond the first year students.

- Prospective Parent Information Session (Meet Your College Consultant) (*Medium priority*)

The college has already adopted a Parent Orientation for the parents of new students. In an effort to speak to this large decision making population we recommend that MCC offer information sessions to the parents of prospective students. This would add one more dimension to our communication and outreach processes and strengthen our relationships with families of students. These sessions would also provide important feedback on what the advising office should be focusing on when they hold the parent orientation sessions.