STRATEGIC
PLAN 2021

A NEW MERCER
IN A NEW WORLD

MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Reimaging Mercer County Community College

A New Mercer in a New World

Strategic Plan
2021-2026

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Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a re-examination of the conventional model for higher education. The role of community colleges in general, and Mercer County Community College in particular, in the post-pandemic economic recovery is of unique and paramount importance.

Mercer County Community College has conducted a process of strategic planning to reimagine itself in a new world to meet the challenges brought on by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The entire College community–the Board of Trustees, the President's Leadership Team, the Strategic Planning Task Force, and the faculty, staff, and students–have been engaged in a highly participatory process that began with the Board of Trustees' issuing five guiding principles to provide the College community with the future direction for the College. Through open forums and focused discussions, the College community has reaffirmed our three strategic goals from the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan and identified new and bold strategies to further advance these goals in the new environment.

Planning Assumptions
First, the three strategic goals set forth in the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan still reflect our commitment to our students and our communities:

1. Ensure Student Success
2. Expand Innovative Partnerships
3. Invest in Organizational and Professional Effectiveness

Second, returning to a pre-COVID-19 normal will be neither possible nor desirable.

Third, we must take bold steps and innovative actions.

Fourth, we must ensure our educational programs and services maximize opportunities for our students to succeed by minimizing and removing barriers to student success and by ensuing the quality, affordability, and accessibility of all of our educational services.

Fifth, we must continuously modernize our programs to meet the emerging workforce needs of our communities and industries.

Plan Structure

This strategic plan is comprised of guiding principles, strategies to achieve our goals, and success indicators and benchmarks to measure our progress and to hold ourselves accountable. At the beginning of the process, we conducted an environmental scan of the current educational landscape to provide a context for this plan. We are very proud that this plan is a call to action: In order to be relevant, competitive, and sustainable in the long term, we must be bold, innovative, and resolute. We must seize the moment to reimagine a new Mercer in a new world. This plan provides the direction and framework for the College to bring success to our students for the next five years and beyond.

Board of Trustees' Guiding Principles

After serious discussion and deliberation, the Board of Trustees issued the following five guiding principles at the beginning of the strategic planning process:

1. Be committed to the mission of providing high quality and affordable post-secondary education for all students.
2. Be bold in this new world to reimagine our future.
3. Be innovative, flexible, and equitable in delivering programs and services.
4. Be inclusive in recruitment, retention, and recognition of all employees.
5. Be courageous in making hard decisions that will enable the College to adequately meet the needs of our students, our community, and our regional economy.

The New Landscape

The landscape of education is changing. The pandemic is testing the conventional model of every higher educational institution. In order for Mercer County Community College (MCCC) to emerge as a leader for student success and a champion for communities and businesses, we must move forward with strategic urgency. Reimagining a new Mercer in a new world is essential to ensuring that our students and communities can rely on MCCC to deliver a high quality, accessible, and affordable education that enables everyone to achieve their highest potential, and for local businesses to be competitive in the new world.

2021-2026 Strategic Goals

We are committed to student success, innovative partnerships, and organizational and professional effectiveness. Now, more than ever, these overarching strategic goals are critical:

Goal #1: Ensure Student Success

Student success begins with a student's dream, a desire for a better future for themselves and their families. They seek to become something they've never been, to achieve more than they've ever imagined. It is in this pursuit that they come to Mercer County Community College. It is in this spirit that we must help them navigate the pathways to success.

The College offers a variety of forms of programming including:

- Academic programs that allow students to transfer to four-year colleges or universities to obtain bachelor's degrees.
- A wide array of certificate programs that allows students to earn the credentials that will enable them to enter the workforce.
- Varied professional development programs that enable businesses to have adequately trained workforce members.
- Rich personal development programs to ensure life-long learning for all residents.
- High quality arts and cultural events that enrich the life experiences of all residents.

Through a supportive, student-centered environment, Mercer County Community College will ensure that each year a larger percentage of students reach their goals of success. Specifically, the College will improve financial support such as the Pell Grant, the Community College Opportunity Grant, the Educational Opportunity Fund, and need- and merit-based scholarships, among others. To further reduce the financial burden of the cost of education, the College will expand the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to minimize textbook costs for students. To enhance student success, we will strengthen advising, tutoring, counseling, and collegiate activities. The dedicated faculty and staff at the College will continue to explore better ways to provide these programs and services to all students who need them.

Three strategies support this goal:
1. Strengthen guided pathways and advising.
2. Increase retention, completion, and graduation rates for all students.

3. Ensure affordability.

Goal #2: Expand Innovative Partnerships

In order for the College to effectively contribute to our regional economy and to be an engine for our local economic development, Mercer County Community College must sustain and expand innovative partnerships. We will endeavor to align our programs to better serve businesses and their growth.

Three strategies support this goal:
1. Ensure the relevance of academic programs in preparing 21st century workforce members.
2. Be innovative and creative in credentialing.
3. Expand experiential learning opportunities.

Goal #3: Invest in Organizational and Professional Effectiveness

In order to achieve student success and innovative partnerships, we must invest in our employees and in our organization. We must strive for organizational effectiveness and efficiency by ensuring a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment. These commitments are critical to the success of this plan.

Two strategies support this goal:
1. Unite behind operational efficiency and excellence.
2. Ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of the College's operations.

Implementation Strategies

Strategies for Goal #1: Ensuring Student Success

1. Provide guided pathways and advising.
- 1.1.a. Increase the use of the advisor software *Student Planning*® for all programs.
- 1.1.b. Increase the use of the advisor software *Advise CRM*®.
- 1.1.c. Create a peer mentoring program.
- 1.1.d. Increase the number of dual-enrollment programs and student participation with county secondary schools, especially for underserved districts.
- 1.1.e. Increase College Upward Bound connections.
- 1.1.f. Improve adult and noncredit connections.
- 1.1.g. Develop youth program connections.

2. Recalibrate and increase retention, completion, and graduation rates for all students.
- 1.2.a. Set student success targets based on identified gaps in student achievement by race and ethnicity, part-time attendance, full-time attendance, gender, age, and socioeconomic status.
- 1.2.b. Supplement existing indicators of student success with metrics from the American Association for Community College's Voluntary Framework for Accountability to better reflect students' community college experiences.

3. Ensure affordability.
- 1.3.a. Expand Open Education Resources to designated high cost and high-volume programs.
- 1.3.b. Train full-time and part-time faculty to adopt quality Open Education Resources.
- 1.3.c. Increase available financial aid and student participation in Pell Grant, Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG), scholarships, and all other forms of aid.
- 1.3.d. Reduce student accounts receivables by 5% annually.

Strategies for Goal #2: Expanding Innovative Partnerships

1. Offer relevant academic programs.
   2.1.a. Research, publish, and utilize annual data on employment demand in Mercer County, the surrounding region, and the state to align academic programs and career and technical programs with business and industry needs.
   2.1.b. Adjust existing programs and courses and develop new programs and courses to address industry and transfer needs.
   2.1.c. Increase student transfer rates for all matriculated students.

2. Engage in accelerated credentialing.
   2.2.a. Convert appropriate programs to competency-based learning models– particularly those with clear labor market connections–to enable accelerated learning and stackable credentialing.

3. Expand partnership opportunities.
   2.3.a. Expand cooperative education and internship opportunities with businesses and industries.
   2.3.b. Expand partnership opportunities with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned businesses and community-based organizations.

Strategies for Goal #3: Investing in Organizational and Professional Effectiveness

1. Improve operational efficiency and excellence.
   3.1.a. Measure annual performance metrics against peer benchmarks.
   3.1.b. Increase faculty and staff professional development outcomes.

2. Ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of the College's operations.
   3.2.a. Increase recruitment of a qualified and diverse faculty and staff.
   3.2.b. Train all students, staff, and faculty to identify barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion and how to overcome those barriers.
   3.2.c. Gather and share data from regularly administered climate surveys to better understand our culture and create actionable steps to focus on continuous improvement of our diversity, equity, and inclusion work.
   3.2.d. Facilitate intentional conversations among students, staff, and faculty to identify and overcome barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Comprehensive Implementation Plan

Effective implementation of this strategic plan requires a comprehensive implementation plan. This implementation plan allows the College faculty, staff and students to assess the progress we are making over the next five years. Although some may see these targets and metrics as ambitious, they are intentionally bold and innovative in order for Mercer County Community College to be competitive and future-ready.

This implementation plan was constructed with these principles:

1. We must ensure student success by using all the tools that are at our disposal.
2. We must expand our partnerships externally while building partnerships within.
3. We must invest in our employees and our facilities and infrastructure in order to achieve operational effectiveness and excellence.

Strategy 1: Guided Pathways and Advising

Success Indicators	Individual(s) Responsible	Target Start Date	Target Completion Date	Budget (If Required)	Benchmark Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1.1.a. Increase the use of Student Planning* for programs.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		TBD % of students developing academic plans and finalizing registration in Student Planning*. Initial roll out by May 2021 and full implementation by May 2022.	20% increase in total students developing academic plans and finalizing registration. Assess retention outcomes for participants.	20% increase in total students developing academic plans and finalizing registration. Assess retention outcomes for participants.	20% increase in total students developing academic plans and finalizing registration. Assess retention outcomes for participants.	20% increase in total students developing academic plans and finalizing registration. Assess retention outcomes for participants.	20% increase in total students developing academic plans and finalizing registration. Assess retention outcomes for participants.
1.1.b. Increase the use of Advise CRM* to positively impact retention.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		TBD number of staff and faculty advisors using the system.	Build and implement Advise CRM*. Develop and implement an advising business process.	20% increase in staff and faculty advisors using the system over previous year.	20% increase in staff and faculty advisors using the system over previous year.	20% increase in staff and faculty advisors using the system over previous year.	20% increase in staff and faculty advisors using the system over previous year.
1.1.c. Create a peer mentoring program for at-risk students	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of full and part-time at-risk students offered mentoring each semester.	Identify and develop peer mentoring programs	50% of all students	75% of all students	100% of all students	100% of all students
1.1.d. Increase the number of dual enrollment programs and student participation with county secondary schools especially for programs in districts enrolling underserved students.	Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Experience	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% increase student and school district program participation.	Expand student and school district program participation by 25% over previous year	Expand student and school district program participation by 25% over previous year	Expand student and school district program participation by 25% over previous year	Expand student and school district program participation by 25% over previous year	Expand student and school district program participation by 25% over previous year
1.1.e. College Upward Bound (UB) Connections	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		70% of all current and prior year UB participants who graduated from high school during the school year with a regular secondary diploma will enroll in a program of postsecondary education by the fall term immediately following high school graduation.	5% increase annually	5% increase annually	5% increase annually	5% increase annually	5% increase annually
1.1.f. Adult and Non Credit Connections	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Increase the proportion of High School Equivalency (HSE) graduates entering MCCC.	20% increase annually	20% increase annually	20% increase annually	20% increase annually	20% increase annually
1.1.g. Youth Programs Connections	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		37% of participants completing MCCC's Youth Program will attain either an associate or bachelor's degree within six years following graduation from high school.	12% increase annually	12% increase annually	12% increase annually	12% increase annually	12% increase annually

Success Indicators	Individual(s) Responsible	Target Start Date	Target Completion Date	Budget (If Required)	Benchmark Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Strategy 2: Recalibrate and Act Upon Success Targets										
1.2.a Set student success targets based on identified gaps in student achievement by race/ethnicity, part-time/full-time attendance, gender, age, and socioeconomic status, and developmental education status	Dean of Institutional Effectiveness	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% improvement annually over the 2020-21 baseline for entering student cohorts disaggregated by race/ethnicity, part-time/full-time attendance, gender, age, and socioeconomic status for degree/certificate achievement, transfer, and personal learning goals	All cohorts will increase program completion rates by 10%	All cohorts will increase program completion rates by 10%	All cohorts will increase program completion rates by 10%	All cohorts will increase program completion rates by 10%	All cohorts will increase program completion rates by 10%
1.2.b. Supplement existing indicators of student success with metrics from the American Association for Community College's Voluntary Framework for Accountability to better reflect students' community college experiences.	Dean of Institutional Effectiveness	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Prepare analysis to incorporate VFA benchmarks for associate degrees and certificates, transfer (no award), persistence, and departures	Implement	Implement and adjust	Implement and adjust	Implement and adjust	Implement and adjust
Strategy 3: Affordability and Financial Aid										
1.3.a. Expand Open Education Resources (OER) to designated high cost and high volume programs.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of program courses utilizing OER (Gen Ed, academic, transfer, and CTE program courses)	Each Academic Division will identify and track at least 2 high volume and 2 high cost programs for implementation	Academic-Divisions will identify and track 3 additional high volume and 3 high cost programs for implementation	Academic-Divisions will identify and track 3 additional high volume and 3 high cost programs for implementation	Academic-Divisions will identify and track 3 additional high volume and 3 high cost programs for implementation	Academic-Divisions will identify and track 3 additional high volume and 3 high cost programs for implementation
1.3.b. Train full-time and part-time faculty to deploy quality Open Education Resources (OER).	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Number of faculty/staff trained in implementing and monitoring OER use annually	20% faculty/staff trained	40% faculty/staff trained	60% faculty staff trained	80% faculty/staff trained	100% faculty/staff trained
1.3.c. Increase available financial aid and student participation in Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG), scholarships, and all other forms of aid.	VP Finance and Adm./VP Advancement	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Increase eligible student participation in financial aid by 5% annually. Pay particular attention to increases in total CCOG awards and student participation.	Increase eligible students receiving any form of student financial aid by 5%	Increase eligible students receiving any form of student financial aid by 5%	Increase eligible students receiving any form of student financial aid by 5%	Increase eligible students receiving any form of student financial aid by 5%	Increase eligible students receiving any form of student financial aid by 5%
1.3.d. Reduce student accounts receivable by 5% annually.	VP Finance and Adm.	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Reduce student accounts receivable by 5% annually.	Decrease by 5% annually	Decrease by 5% annually	Decrease by 5% annually	Decrease by 5% annually	Decrease by 5% annually

Goal 2: Expand Innovative Partnerships

Success Indicators	Individual(s) Responsible	Target Start Date	Target End Date	Budget (If Required)	Benchmark Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Strategy 1: Relevant Academic Programs										
2.1.a. Research, publish, and utilize annual data on employment demand in Mercer County, region, and state to align academic programs and CTE programs with business and industry needs.	Dean of Institutional Effectiveness	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of Academic, career and technical programs that match labor market demand especially for high demand jobs.	Publish all Academic and CTE programs	Publish all Academic and CTE programs	Publish all Academic and CTE programs	Publish all Academic and CTE programs	Publish all Academic and CTE programs
2.1.b. Adjust existing programs and courses and develop new programs and courses to address industry and transfer needs.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of programs added and/or modified.	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year
2.1.c Increase student transfer rates for all students.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% Annual increase in the overall transfer rate.	20% previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year
Strategy 2: Accelerated Credentialing										
2.2.a Convert appropriate programs to competency-based learning models to enable development of short-term, accelerated, and industry-recognized courses and programs that lead directly to employment.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% increase in programs and course were appropriate incorporating competency based learning principles and strong practice.	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year	25% over previous year
Strategy 3: Expanded Partnership Opportunities										
2.3.a. Expand cooperative education and internship opportunities with businesses and industries.	VP Academic Affairs	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Number of students participating in apprenticeship and internship opportunities.	Calibrate the number of apprenticeship and internship based on a 10% future increase	Increase by 10% annually	Increase by 10% annually	Increase by 10% annually	Increase by 10% annually
2.3.b. Expand partnership opportunities to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) owned businesses and community based organizations.	VP Academic Affairs/VP Finance and Administration	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% increase in effective partnerships with BIPOC-owned businesses and community based organizations.	Identify BIPOC partnerships	Increase by 20% annually	Increase by 20% annually	Increase by 20% annually	Increase by 20% annually

Success Indicators	Individual(s) Responsible	Target Start Date	Target End Date	Budget (If Required)	Benchmark Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
3.1.a. Research, publish, and utilize annually MCCC's performance against selected peer benchmarks.	Dean of Institutional Effectiveness	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Compare peer data in relevant categories using IPEDS and VFA datasets to benchmark MCCC's performance and performance improvement.	Assess selected peer characteristics to set appropriate targets.	Increase performance in selected characteristics.	Increase performance in selected characteristics.	Increase performance in selected characteristics.	Increase performance in selected characteristics.
3.1.b. Increase the number and breadth of teaching faculty and staff training opportunities as determined by college wide needs analyses. Training will include, for example, in effective use of college resources, improving teaching and learning, and effective use of technology to improve productivity and engagement.	VP Finance and Administration, VP Human Resources, and VP for Information Technology	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Increase number of employees trained and developed annually.	Increase number of employees trained by 20% annually	Increase number of employees trained by 20% annually	Increase number of employees trained by 20% annually	Increase number of employees trained by 20% annually	Increase number of employees trained by 20% annually
3.2.a. Increase recruitment of qualified, diverse faculty and staff.	VP Human Resources	1-Mar-21	ongoing		5% increase in faculty diversity; 5% increase in staff diversity	Increase faculty and staff diversity by 5% over the previous year	Increase faculty and staff diversity by 5% over the previous year	Increase faculty and staff diversity by 5% over the previous year	Increase faculty and staff diversity by 5% over the previous year	Increase faculty and staff diversity by 5% over the previous year
3.2.b. Train all students, staff, and teaching faculty to identify barriers to diversity and inclusion and steps required overcome those barriers.	VP Human Resources/VP Academic Affairs/Executive Dean of Student Services	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of faculty, staff and students participating and completing ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion training	25% faculty, staff and students trained	50% faculty, staff and students trained	75% faculty, staff and students trained	100% faculty, staff and students trained	100% faculty, staff and students trained
3.2.c. Gather and widely share data from routinely administered climate survey to better understand our culture and to create actionable steps focused continuous improvement of our equity work.	Dean of Institutional Effectiveness/PLT	1-Mar-21	ongoing		Administer biennial (every two years) Climate Survey. Identify and implement actionable steps to increase equity based on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan and survey results	Administer Climate Survey. Identify actionable steps to increase equity	Implement actionable steps (based on survey results) to increase equity	Administer Climate Survey. Identify actionable steps to increase equity	Implement actionable steps (based on survey results) to increase equity	Administer Climate Survey. Identify actionable steps to increase equity.
3.2.d. Facilitate intentional conversations among students, staff, and faculty to identify and overcome barriers to inclusive diversity.	PLT	1-Mar-21	ongoing		% of faculty, staff and students participating ins structured conversations about identifying and overcoming barriers to diversity	25% of faculty, staff and students participating over baseline year	25% of faculty, staff and students participating over baseline year	25% of faculty, staff and students participating over baseline year	25% of faculty, staff and students participating over baseline year	25% of faculty, staff and students participating over baseline year

Strategy 1: Efficiency and Excellence

Strategy 2: Diversity and Inclusion

Appendix A: Environmental Scan

Introduction
This environmental scan seeks to identify trends and developments in the environments that impact the College's success. The data in this scan were collected and analyzed in the spring of 2021.

Demographics
The racial and ethnic composition of the United States continues to evolve. Demographically, population increases of Whites and Hispanics grew at roughly the same pace (10 million) since 2010; Blacks and Asians also grew at the same number, proportionally (5 million).[i][ii][iii]

A recent Harris Poll found that two-thirds of 14- to 23-year-old students want a degree to provide financial security, ranking it above all else in terms of motivation for going to college. At the same time, fewer students are majoring in the Humanities, according to newly released government data[iv].

If past correlations between demographic characteristics and college attendance continue, the United States will experience more than a 10% reduction in college enrollments by the end of the 2020s, irrespective of the plunge caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the early part of this decade.[v]

Millennials (defined as ages 23 to 38) have surpassed Baby Boomers as the nation's largest living adult generation (72.1 million versus 71.6 million). Additionally, the Millennial generation continues to grow as young immigrants join its ranks.

Mercer County is more racially and ethnically diverse than the state of New Jersey. Less than half of the county's population is White (48%) compared with the statewide profile of 54%.[vi]

A 5% population growth is forecast for Mercer County between the years 2019 and 2029, resulting in 18,400 more county residents. Most of that increase (13,000) is predicted to be among Hispanics. Age range increases will include 25- to 34-year-olds. Age range decreases are predicted among 50- to 64-year-olds. The 15- to 19-year-old range growth is predicted to remain flat.[vii]

Employment and Workforce

More than 70% of all jobs in 2018 required some post-secondary education and training beyond high school, up from 59% in 2010. Millions of Americans could miss out on entering the middle class without a degree or certificate.[viii]

Changes in the unemployment rate trends in the past year are owing primarily, but not exclusively, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The most recent unemployment rates spiked in Mercer County in June 2020 (12.4%) and had dropped to 8.1% in September.[ix] The decreasing trend continues as the vaccine campaign speeds up.

Traditional blue-collar occupations have declined rapidly in the United States, especially those jobs that require little formal training or on-the-job training. Many of these were in the production or manufacturing area and have been absorbed overseas.[x]

Economics

In 2020-21, on average, first-time full-time students at public two-year colleges nationwide need to cover an estimated $8,860 in room and board expenses after grant aid, another $5,700 in books and supplies, transportation, and other personal expenses.[xi]

Led by the poverty rate in Trenton (28.4%), Mercer County's overall poverty rate (10.9%) is slightly more than New Jersey's overall rate (9.2%).[xii]

A college degree is considered to be the ticket to the middle class. In Trenton, 12% of the adult population possesses a baccalaureate degree, substantially below the New Jersey rate of 39% and Mercer County's rate of 42%.[xiii]

New Jersey recently repealed restrictions that barred undocumented immigrants from obtaining occupational and professional licenses in the state.[xiv]

Community colleges receive $8,800 less in education revenue per enrolled student than four-year institutions. That difference translates to a national gap of $78 billion between the two sectors. In New Jersey, the average four-year institution receives $14,000 more per student than the average two-year institution.[xv]

New Jersey recently codified the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) into law, making the state's experiment for a "free community college" a permanent part of the state's future. CCOG provides free tuition for qualifying students in households earning $65,000 or less.[xvi]

New Jersey's appropriations to higher education from academic year (AY) 2014-15 to AY2019-20 slightly exceed the increase in appropriations across all states (17% to 16%).[xvii]

India, China, and other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are making heavy investments in their higher education systems and will be the source of many new STEM graduates in the future. This will impact the global balance of trained workers, especially technicians and assistants.[xviii]

Community Colleges

Nationwide, 26% of community college students complete a degree or certificate within six years of enrollment.[xix] As a general rule, colleges that exceed this graduation rate are engaged in sustained efforts to focus on institutional transformation that centers on the success of their students.

The success rates (degree completion, certificates awarded, or successful transfers) for new students who are placed in developmental education three levels below college-level coursework using a single criterion (i.e., a high-stakes test) are in the single digits.[xx]

Most students whose parents have had high levels of post-secondary education attend community colleges for the purpose of transferring to a four-year college or university. In contrast, many first-generation community college students enroll to improve job skills and obtain an associate degree.[xxi]

The increase in educational attainment experienced over recent decades by the United States population means that an increasing number of young people have (or will have) one or more parents with a bachelor's degree.[xxii]

The enrollment picture became worse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Roughly one month into the 2020 fall term, overall undergraduate enrollment was calculated at 4% below last year's level. Most alarmingly, first-time students experienced the largest decline of any student group from last year (-16.1% nationwide and -22.7% at community colleges).[xxiii]

Fall enrollment at New Jersey's public community colleges over the past decade declined by 22%. Mercer County Community College experienced an identical rate of decline (22%).[xxiv]

Secondary Schools

In AY2017-18, the national graduation rate (the percentage of freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within four years of starting ninth grade) for public high school students was 85%, the highest it has been since the rate was first measured in AY2010-11. Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest graduation rate (92%), followed by White (89%), Hispanic (81%), Black (79%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (74%) students. In New Jersey, the overall rate was 91%. [xxv]

The average high school graduation rate for Mercer County public schools is 89%. The Area Vocational Technical Schools of Mercer County report a 100% graduation rate.[xxvi]

In AY2019-20, more than 17,500 students were enrolled in grades 9 though 12 in public schools in Mercer County. More than four thousand (4,142) were high school seniors.[xxvii]

Whites (30%) and Hispanics (30%) are proportionately equal in Mercer County public schools. Asians make up 20% of the total K through 12 population while Blacks make up 18%.[xxviii]

Technology and Learning Trends

Online learning in the United States was expanding even before the Covid-19 pandemic forced courses to be delivered remotely. From 2002 to 2012, both remote and overall enrollments grew annually; since 2012, remote students' enrollment continued its steady increase while overall higher education enrollments declined. [xxix]

According to a recent national survey, more than half (52.8%) of all students who took at least one online course also took an on-campus course, and of those who took only online courses, 56.1% reside in the same state as the institution at which they are enrolled. Nearly all remote students are domestic; only 0.7% of remote students are located outside of the United States.[xxx]

One silver lining to the Covid-19 pandemic is the shift toward high quality online learning, resulting in an elevation of learning design. Learning experience design and learning engineering will continue to reshape how we approach teaching and learning in higher education.[xxxi]

Nearly 90% of Mercer County households had at least one computer between the years 2014 and 2018. This figure is identical to the statewide proportion. Trenton is the exception, however, with 79%. Similarly, the proportion of households with a broadband

internet subscription in Trenton was also lower than the county statistic (60% versus 82%).[xxxii]

New Jersey continues to make solid progress in connecting its K through 12 schools to the internet. 100% of all schools are meeting 100 kbps per student while 22% are meeting the 1 Mbps per student standard, in comparison to 24% nationally.[xxxiii]

There is a downward trend in student spending on course materials such as textbooks. These expenses decreased 14% in 2018. A separate study of internal prices of one textbook retailer found that prices had decreased 26% in the same span. Experts credit the rise of Open Education Resources (OER) in which faculty, librarians, and others work to link students to course materials that are devoid of purchasing, licensing, or royalty fees.[xxxiv] Faculty development in identifying and using OER will be critical to reducing student overall costs of attending community colleges.

The Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity for community colleges to rethink their degree pathways to accommodate changing student demographics and employment landscapes. Alternatives include micro-credentials, competency-based education, expanded online programs, and remote and hybrid instruction, as well as increased collaboration and partnerships with other institutions.[xxxv]

Google plans to implement three career certificates that students can complete in about six months. These certificates are mapped to competencies employers say they need and will be marketed as a pathway to employment in lieu of a four-year degree with these potential salaries: Project Manager, $93,000; Data Analyst, $66,000; and User Experience (UX) designer, $75,000.

Appendix B: Student and Institutional Alignment

A key issue central to this strategic plan is the extent to which Mercer County Community College is aligned with its current and prospective students. The diagram in Figure 1 serves as a framework to identify how current programming and services match student needs and expectations: The student is placed symbolically in the middle of all institutional interactions in order for the College to systematically examine a range of factors that impact adequate alignment. This requires the College to holistically identify, develop, refine, implement, and evaluate current and future programs and services that may impact students' experiences.
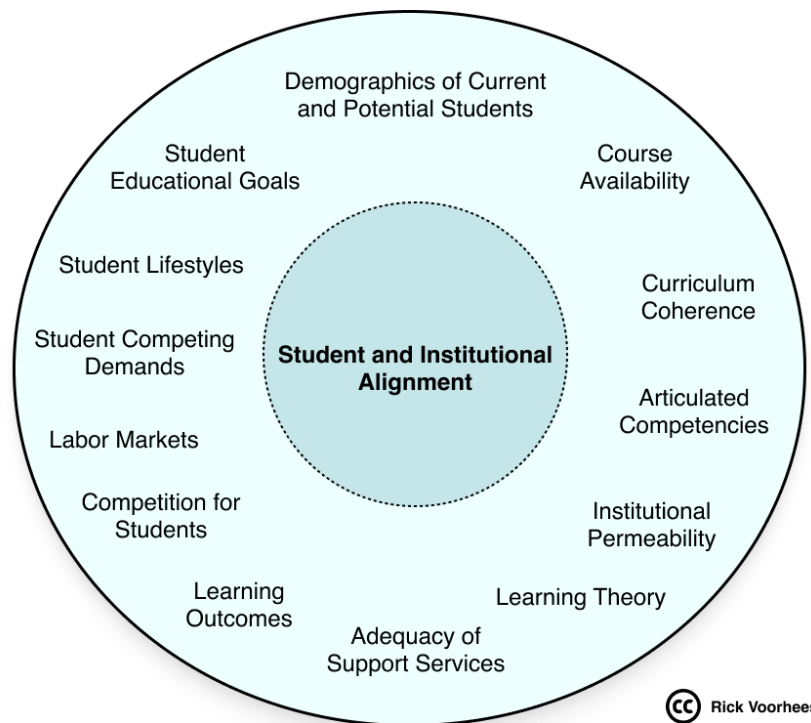
Student Objectives are the starting place for the College to plan and to align. What are the student's reasons for enrolling in the College, a course, or a particular program? Are those objectives short-term or long-term? Are they fixed or are they changing? Does the College only serve the objectives indicated by students on their applications? Should the College help students to clarify, modify, or add to their original objectives as they continue their journey at Mercer County Community College?

Understanding **Current and Potential Student Demographics** will help the College to meet current and future students' needs.
The match between **Curriculum Availability** and students' expectations is critical to

many decisions–especially those made by working adult students–about whether they will enroll in a given course or program. Availability applies to scheduling and instructional delivery format (face-to-face, online, or hybrid course delivery). Academic calendars that cross the traditional boundaries of academic terms are also a key factor that can expand curriculum availability.

Students will want to know and understand **Curriculum Coherence** to predict how their learning experiences will expand their competencies that lead to future opportunities. The College needs to make those competencies transparent so that students can make informed choices about personalized learning.

The College's ability to communicate **Articulated Competencies** through its curricula will help our curriculum evaluation as well as recruiting students and potential business and industry partners.

Institutional Permeability refers to the ease with which students can navigate the institutional bureaucracy to gain admission, apply for financial aid, access academic advising and all other support services, register for classes, and interact with faculty and staff. Institutional permeability also refers to the perceptions of the ease of interacting with the College held by the community, potential business and industry partners, and prospective students.

There is no single correct **Learning Theory** that colleges can use to align their programs. Rather, questions need to be raised about which combination of learning theories among the several dozen that have been applied to college-level learning are most appropriate for the students now served by the College and the objectives they bring with them.

What happens in the classroom is critical and so are **Support Services**. Colleges typically operate a variety of support services, for example, advising, tutoring, counseling, etc. The best way to fully utilize those services is to introduce students to those services early in their journey at the College and make all services accessible and user-friendly.

Competition for Students has never been stronger in higher education. Colleges compete for students from all backgrounds, mainly against other public community colleges and four-year institutions. Recently, industry sponsored credentialing such as Google University has also entered the competition. Time and money are two critical factors that influence our potential students' decisions.

Learning Outcomes have become critically important in assessing institutional quality. They indicate how a college serves its students. We must help our students understand what outcomes they will gain by attending Mercer County Community College in order to remain attractive and competitive.

Labor Markets provide an important rationale for an array of academic programs that can meet the industry needs as well as our students' needs, thus making academic programs relevant, attractive, and competitive. Without understanding the labor market and business and industry needs, our programs may not be attractive and meaningful to prospective students.

Understanding the influence and competing burdens of family, work, and other engagements is the essence of **Student Competing Demands**. These demands are especially pronounced for community college students. The College must design programs and services built upon these realities so that they facilitate and enhance the learning experience.

Similarly, understanding **Student Lifestyles** and their influence on learning outcomes can pay dividends. Which students are working part-time or full-time jobs while studying at the College? Which students are still living at home? Do our students have the basic needs of shelter and food met? Do they have time to participate in extracurricular activities? Understanding those characteristics of our students can help enhance their learning experience at the College.

Appendix C: Supporting Data

The figures presented here form one part of the foundation for the College's planning processes. In combination with the environmental scan, input from the Board of Trustees, the Presidential Leadership Team, the Strategic Planning Taskforce, and the College community, these data informed the planning process.

Online Education Enrollment

Figure 1 displays the proportion of all students enrolled in online education courses in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Figure 1

Online Education Enrollment

Exclusively Online Education 6%

Some but Not All Online Education 14%

No Online Education 80%

Source: IPEDS, FY 2018
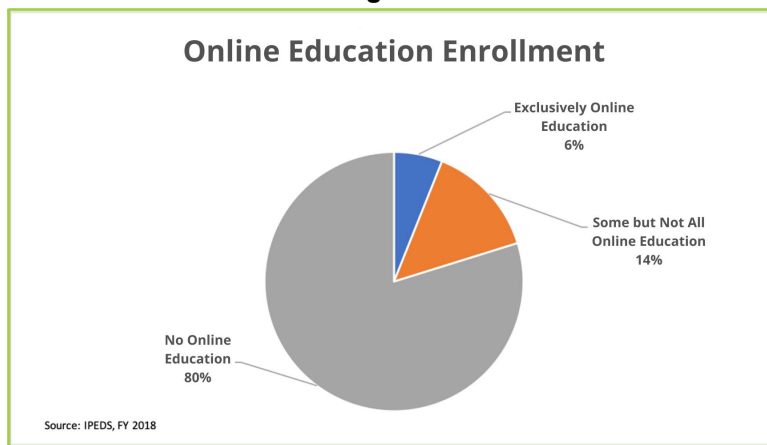
Age Range Enrollment Trends

Enrollment at the College was decreasing prior to the pandemic (Figure 2). While enrollment trends for senior citizens and pre-college students were stable from fall 2011 through 2019, the trends for traditionally-aged and working-aged students declined by 16% and 31%, respectively.
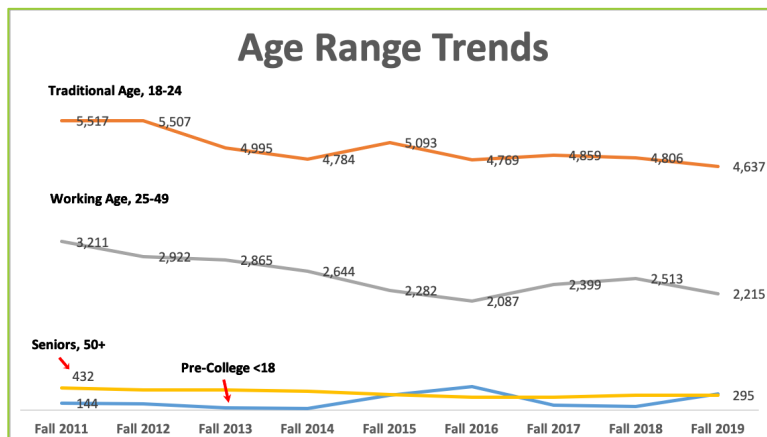
Figure 2

Part-time and Full-time Student Enrollment Trends

In tandem with Figure 2 above, Figure 3 shows declines both in part-time and full-time students since fall 2013 by 9% and 16%, respectively, as well as a general shift to part-time enrollment overall. Full-time students generate more credit hours per headcount and, accordingly, more reimbursable revenue from the state. It is also easier to develop academic schedules for full-time students since their attendance patterns may be somewhat more predictable. Part-time students require the same expenditures for advising, registration, and other student services as full-time students.

Figure 3
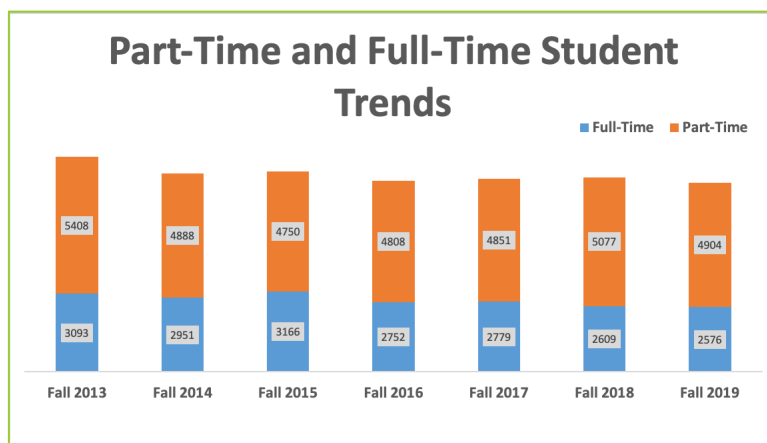
Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Enrollment Trends

An upward enrollment trend by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students is underway (Figure 4). BIPOC student enrollment increased to 64% of the College's total enrollment by fall 2019.

Figure 4

Increasing Share of BIPOC Students

Legend: BIPOC (blue), Non-BIPOC (orange)

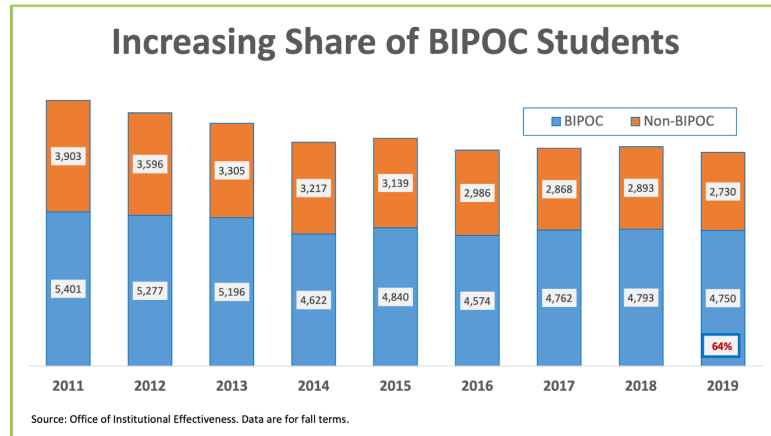| Year	Non-BIPOC	BIPOC
2011	3,903	5,401
2012	3,596	5,277
2013	3,305	5,196
2014	3,217	4,622
2015	3,139	4,840
2016	2,986	4,574
2017	2,868	4,762
2018	2,893	4,793
2019	2,730	4,750 (64%)

Source: Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Data are for fall terms.

Student Race and Ethnicity Trends

Shifts in racial and ethnic enrollments are notable. Hispanic students increased their share of enrollment in the past decade while Black enrollments decreased (Figure 5). Asian student enrollment has remained nearly flat from fall 2011 to fall 2019.

Figure 5

Shifting Student Race and Ethnicity

Legend: 2011 (blue), 2015 (orange), 2019 (gray)

Category	2011	2015	2019
Asian	581	574	594
Black	2,422	1,784	1,535
Hispanic	1,260	1,557	1,768
White	3,903	3,139	2,730
Two or More Races		173	207
Not Reported	1,091	718	622
American Indian/Pacific Islander	47	34	24

Source: Office of institutional Research, Fall Terms
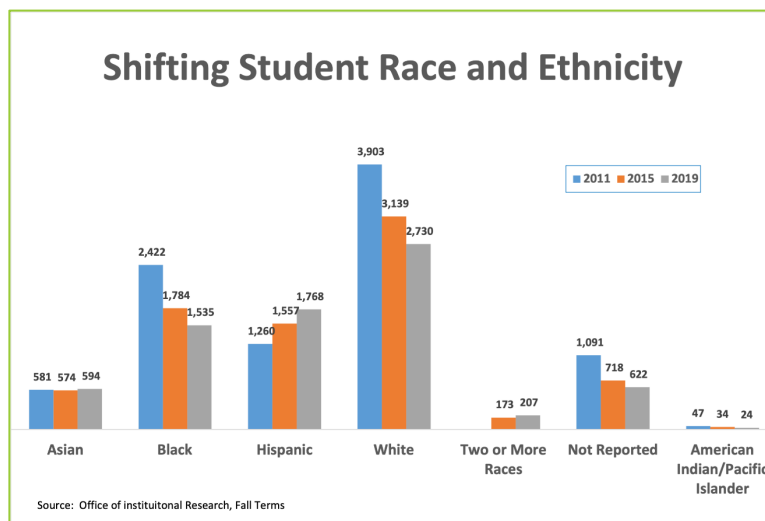
Financial Aid Award Trends

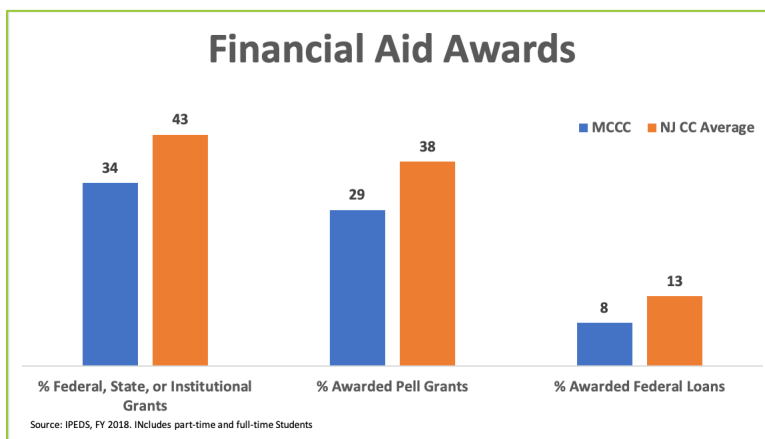Figure 6 indicates that the proportion of Mercer students receiving financial aid from federal, state, or institutional sources lags behind the New Jersey community college average, as do Pell Grants (grants based on student or family financial needs) and the students receiving federal loans. The College has embarked on an ambitious initiative to increase scholarship grant aid through its Foundation. The Foundation has created an ambitious strategic plan to award $1M in scholarships annually by 2022.
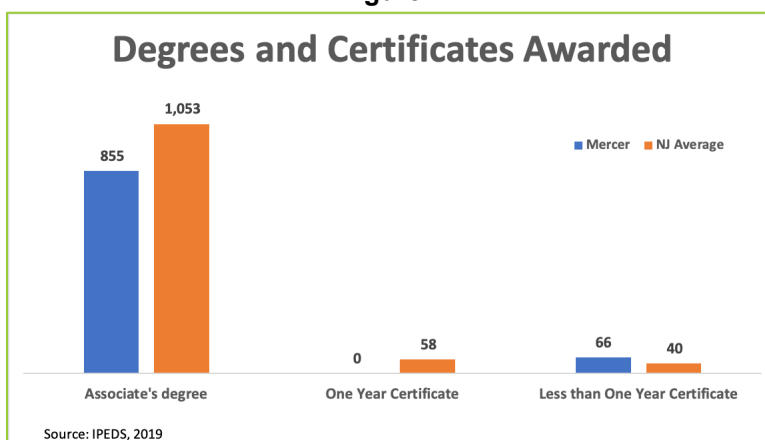
Figure 6

Financial Aid Awards

MCCC ■ NJ CC Average ■

- % Federal, State, or Institutional Grants: MCCC 34, NJ CC Average 43
- % Awarded Pell Grants: MCCC 29, NJ CC Average 38
- % Awarded Federal Loans: MCCC 8, NJ CC Average 13

Source: IPEDS, FY 2018. INcludes part-time and full-time Students

Degrees and Certificates Award Trends

Comparable to other New Jersey community colleges, Mercer County Community College awards a higher number of associate degrees than certificates (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Degrees and Certificates Awarded

Mercer ■ NJ Average ■

- Associate's degree: Mercer 855, NJ Average 1,053
- One Year Certificate: Mercer 0, NJ Average 58
- Less than One Year Certificate: Mercer 66, NJ Average 40

Source: IPEDS, 2019

Transfer Rate Trends

The transfer rate has declined over the past five years (Figure 8). The in-state colleges and universities' transfer rate also declined from fiscal year (FY) 2014 to FY2019, with the steepest declines in the past two years. The number of students transferring to out-of-state institutions is also declining.
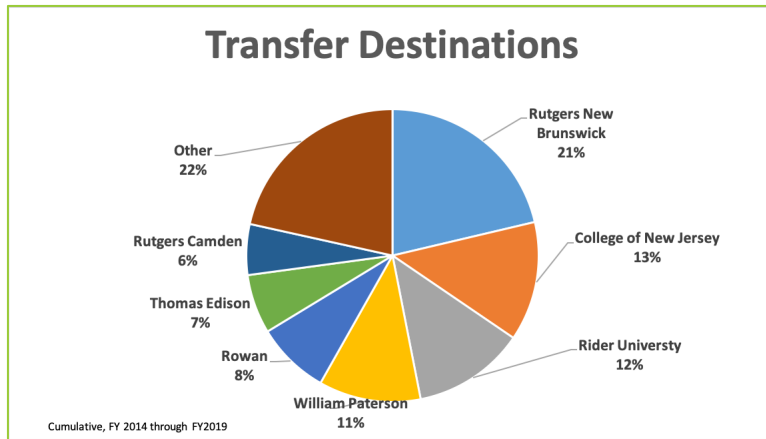
Figure 8

Transfers

- Graduates, 883
- 886
- 944
- 956
- 967
- 892

- Transfers, 443
- 463
- 516
- 489
- 469
- 366

- In-State Transfers, 318
- 324
- 381
- 393
- 362
- 290

FY2014 · FY2015 · FY2016 · FY2017 · FY2018 · FY2019

Transfer Destination Trends

Figure 9 shows the transfer destinations of MCCC students from FY2014 through FY2019. A majority of transfers occur within the surrounding region.
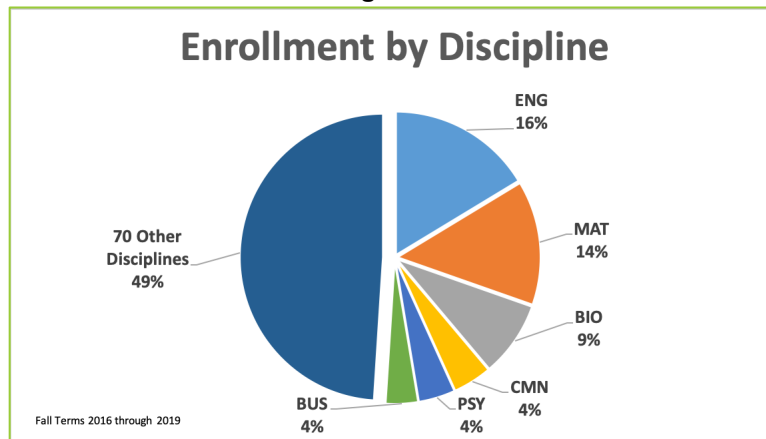
Figure 9

Transfer Destinations

- Rutgers New Brunswick 21%
- Other 22%
- Rutgers Camden 6%
- Thomas Edison 7%
- Rowan 8%
- William Paterson 11%
- College of New Jersey 13%
- Rider Universty 12%

Cumulative, FY 2014 through FY2019

Enrollment by Discipline

Figure 10 depicts enrollment by discipline (course prefix) across fall terms from 2014 through 2019. This analysis shows that six disciplines capture slightly more than half of the College's total enrollment. Five of these six top disciplines are in the general education area.
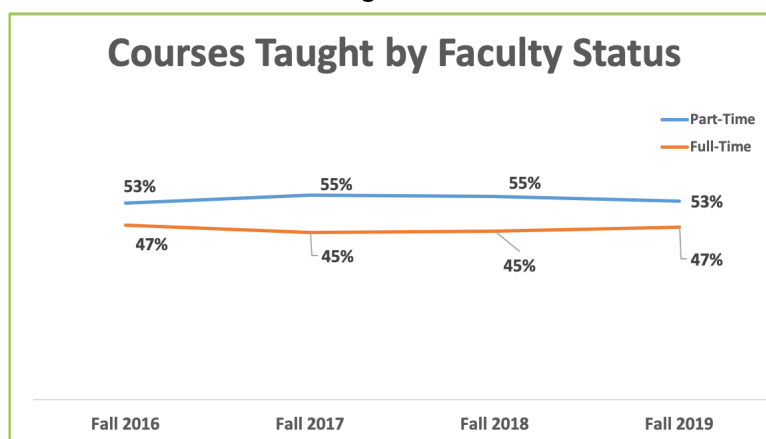
Figure 10

Enrollment by Discipline

- ENG 16%
- MAT 14%
- BIO 9%
- CMN 4%
- PSY 4%
- BUS 4%
- 70 Other Disciplines 49%

Fall Terms 2016 through 2019

Courses Taught by Faculty Status

The proportion of classes taught by full-time and part-time faculty have been nearly stable from fall 2016 through fall 2019 (Figure 11). The corresponding enrollment declines during this period and the general operating practice to decrease part-time faculty during lower enrollment period suggest that further analysis of faculty assignments and corresponding resource allocations merit attention.

Figure 11

Courses Taught by Faculty Status

- Part-Time
- Full-Time

	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Part-Time	53%	55%	55%	53%
Full-Time	47%	45%	45%	47%

Class Start Times

The decisions about course scheduling are another avenue for strategy. It is not uncommon for institutions to schedule classes with a preponderance in the morning to accommodate full-time students and again in the evening hours to accommodate part-time, working students. The pattern in fall 2019 suggests classroom capacity in the afternoon that might be influenced by block scheduling of students, including those in career pathways (Figure 12).
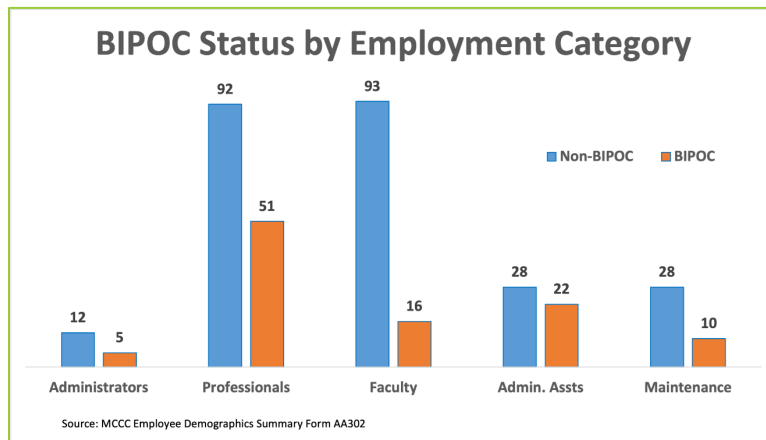
Figure 12

Class Start Times
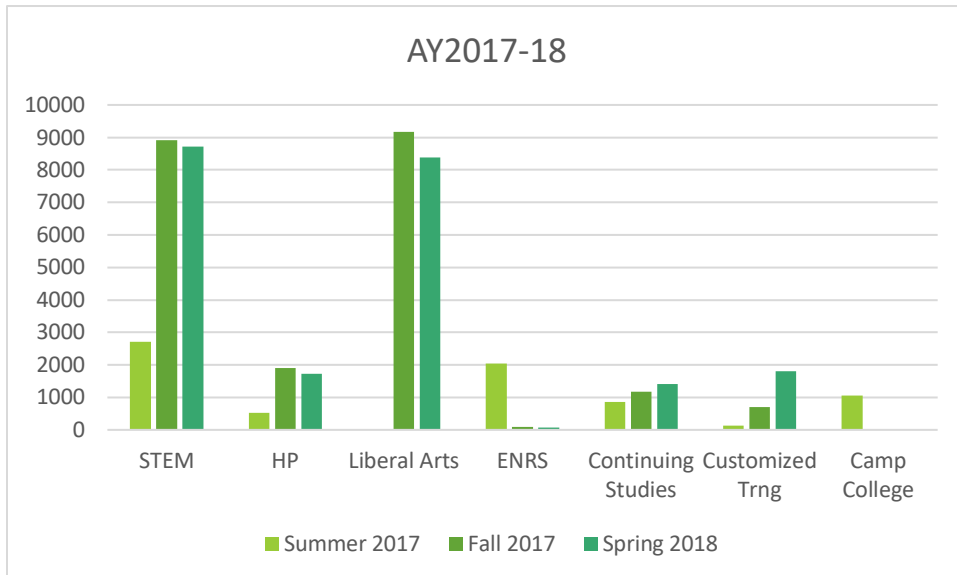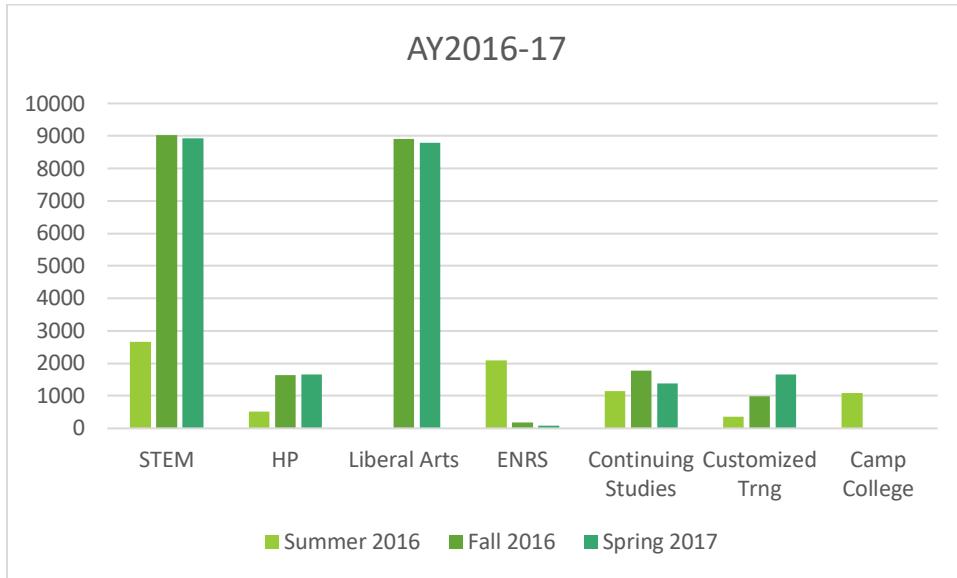
Traditional Classes, Fall 2019
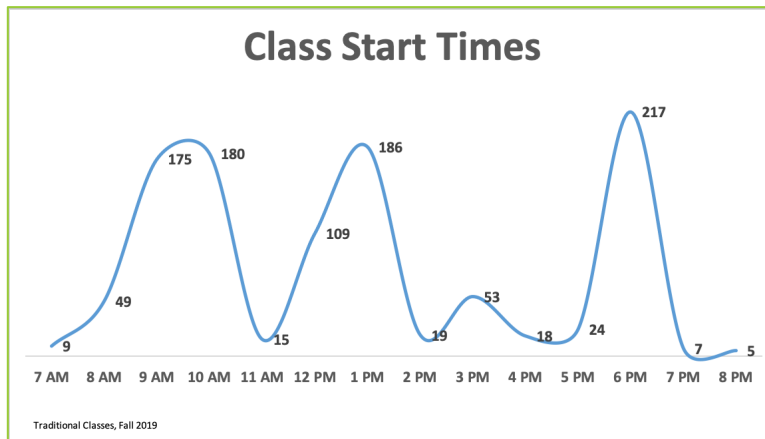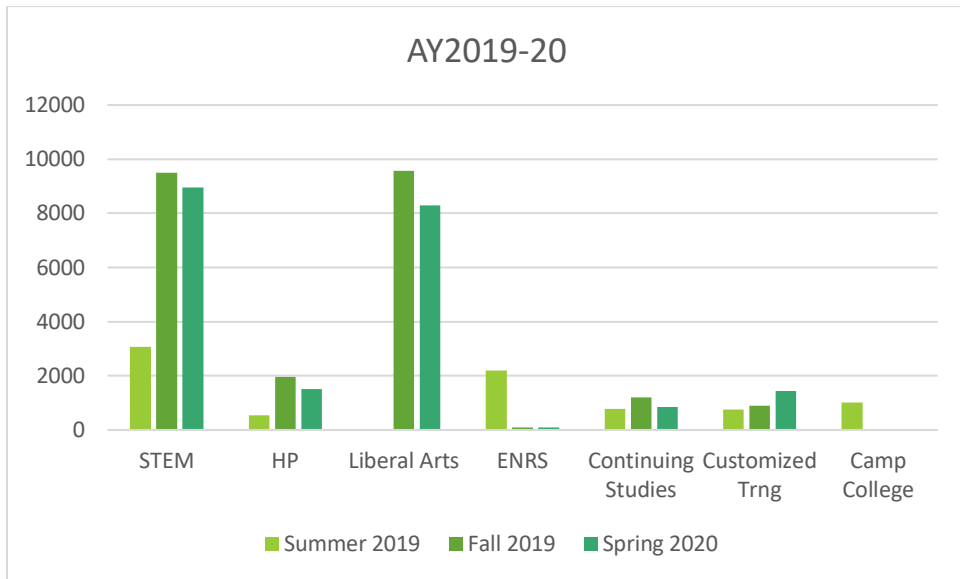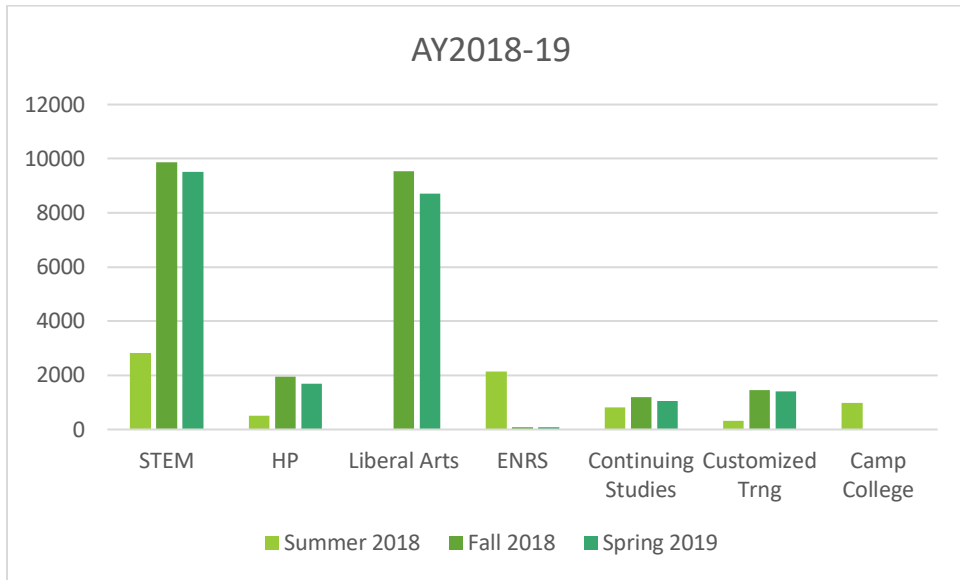
BIPOC Status by Employment Category

The College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force recently published a collegewide plan to increase racial diversity, particularly among employees to match the emerging student demographics. Figure 13 depicts employee BIPOC status by employment category. The Administrative Assistant and Administrator categories have the smallest gaps across all categories. Specific strategies can be found in this strategic plan, as well as in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's Task Force report published in 2020.

Figure 13

BIPOC Status by Employment Category

Category	Non-BIPOC	BIPOC
Administrators	12	5
Professionals	92	51
Faculty	93	16
Admin. Assts	28	22
Maintenance	28	10

Source: MCCC Employee Demographics Summary Form AA302

Appendix D: Enrollment Trends by Program and Semester

AY2016-17

Legend: Summer 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017

Programs: STEM, HP, Liberal Arts, ENRS, Continuing Studies, Customized Trng, Camp College

AY2017-18

Legend: Summer 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018

Programs: STEM, HP, Liberal Arts, ENRS, Continuing Studies, Customized Trng, Camp College

AY2018-19

Summer 2018 ■ Fall 2018 ■ Spring 2019

AY2019-20

Summer 2019 ■ Fall 2019 ■ Spring 2020

Appendix E: Enrollment Trends by Program Prefix

Program Prefix	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2016	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2017	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2018	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2019	Change Fall 2016 to Fall 2019	% Change Fall 2016 to Fall 2019
ACC	311	319	316	258	-53	-17.00%
ADV	77	82	73	54	-23	-29.90%
AMT			4	13	13	NA
ANT	62	63	88	76	14	22.60%
ARC	43	45	51	70	27	62.80%
ART	377	368	380	314	-63	-16.70%
ASL	57	62	49	49	-8	-14.00%
AUT	64	60	77	71	7	10.90%
AVI	162	171	270	350	188	116.00%
BCT	20	15	21		NA	NA
BIO	1558	1472	1741	1605	47	3.00%
BUS	689	697	704	650	-39	-5.70%
CHE	336	303	438	330	-6	-1.80%
CHI	4				NA	NA
CIS	31	31	34	27	-4	-12.90%
CIV	65	53	60	63	-2	-3.10%
CMN	839	831	786	835	-4	-0.50%
COL	54				NA	NA
COS	215	211	210	199	-16	-7.40%
CRJ	399	385	475	455	56	14.00%
CSB				61	NA	NA
CSW	85	324	462	130	45	52.90%
DAN	56	37	25	36	-20	-35.70%
DMA	193	198	191	165	-28	-14.50%
DRA	73	69	68	33	-40	-54.80%
ECO	250	266	260	212	-38	-15.20%
EDU	114	104	120	93	-21	-18.40%
EET	74	63	62	66	-8	-10.80%
ENG	2970	3028	3256	3034	64	2.20%
ENT	18	17	18	17	-1	-5.60%
ERG	8	9			NA	NA
ESL	632	567	609	633	1	0.20%
ETT	17	10	11	12	-5	-29.40%
FAS	47	27	29	40	-7	-14.90%
FIR	33	35	31	33	0	0.00%
FRE	23	20	25	23	0	0.00%
FUN	258	200	231	205	-53	-20.50%
GAM	27	44	43	41	14	51.90%
GER	11	20	16	13	2	18.20%
HIS	649	672	667	587	-62	-9.60%
HOS	190	177	153	134	-56	-29.50%
HPE	696	729	508	441	-255	-36.60%

Program Prefix	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2016	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2017	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2018	Duplicated Course Enrollment Fall 2019	Change Fall 2016 to Fall 2019	% Change Fall 2016 to Fall 2019
HRA	3	4	5	3	0	0.00%
IST	443	439	474	493	50	11.30%
ITA	18	11	20	16	-2	-11.10%
JPN	23	14	18	23	0	0.00%
LAT				5	NA	NA
LEG	67	76	95	88	21	31.30%
MAT	2628	2667	2856	2395	-233	-8.90%
MET	6	8	10		NA	NA
MKT	64	54	83	68	4	6.30%
MOA			18	22	NA	NA
MUS	224	262	282	217	-7	-3.10%
NET	244	268	289	160	-84	-34.40%
NRS	197	256	251	207	10	5.10%
NSG	96	108	135	133	37	38.50%
OHT	34	39	65	80	46	135.30%
OST	33	55	21		NA	NA
PBH	6	6	9	10	4	66.70%
PHI	239	248	326	287	48	20.10%
PHO	89	85	91	76	-13	-14.60%
PHY	207	210	228	212	5	2.40%
POL	83	103	95	93	10	12.00%
PSY	766	732	786	832	66	8.60%
PTA	148	121	204	135	-13	-8.80%
RAD	106	95	110	96	-10	-9.40%
REL	17	19	20	16	-1	-5.90%
SOC	617	544	549	553	-64	-10.40%
SPA	227	266	245	214	-13	-5.70%
SST	9	7	11	2	-7	-77.80%
STA				7	NA	NA
STU	80	90	86	84	4	5.00%
SUS	5	5			NA	NA
THR	53	30	48	53	0	0.00%
VPA	10		8	11	1	10.00%
WGS	3	6	4		NA	NA
Total	**18532**	**18612**	**20011**	**18012**	**-520**	**-2.80%**

Appendix F: Internal Reports Reviewed

These internal reports and presentations were reviewed during the strategic planning process:

- Mercer County Community College Campus Climate Survey, Fall 2020
- Mercer County Community College Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2020-2023
- Mercer County Community College Education Master Plan 2017-2022
- Progress Report on the Strategic Plan Implementation and Middle States' Timeline, September 2020
- Mercer County Community College Voluntary Framework for Accountability Reports

Appendix G: Endnotes for the Environmental Scan

[i] U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-national-detail.html

[ii] Pew Research Center. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/

[iii] The new Census item format separating Hispanic ethnicity from race may result in counting some individuals in more than one group.

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[v] Econofact. Demographic Changes Pose Challenges for Higher Education. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from https://econofact.org/demographic-changes-pose-challenges-for-higher-education

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[vii] New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Retrieved August 20, 2020 from https://www.nj.gov/labor/lpa/dmograph/lfproj/lfproj_index.html

[viii] Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved August 26, 2020 at https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/the-edge/2020-01-22

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[xvii] Grapevine. Retrieved September 1, 2020 at https://education.illinoisstate.edu/grapevine/tables/

[xviii] Center for American Progress. Retrieved September 1, 2020 at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/report/2012/08/21/11983/the-competition-that-really-matters/

[xix] National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Educational Statistics. Retrieved September 1, 2020 at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_326.27.asp?current=yes

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[xxii] Educause. The Horizons Report. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from https://econofact.org/demographic-changes-pose-challenges-for-higher-education

[xxiii] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's Monthly Update on Higher Education Enrollment (September 24, 2020). Retrieved October 16, 2020 from https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/

[xxiv] New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. Retrieved September 1, 2020 from https://www.state.nj.us/highereducation/documents/pdf/statistics

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[xxxii] US Census Bureau. Retrieved September 1, 2020.

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