



## Procedure to delay, close college due to weather

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**Director of Marketing and Communications**

With the arrival of winter weather and the potential for delays or closures of the college, I thought it would be appropriate to recap how and when faculty and staff can get information on the college's open or closed status.

For each month, throughout the entire year, a "lead administrator" is appointed to make decisions about class cancellations and college closure. In the case of inclement weather during the overnight period, the lead administrator discusses the condition of the campus with facilities and grounds personnel and the President early in the morning. By 5:00 a.m., a decision is made to either open as scheduled, delay opening for a prescribed period of time, or to close the college completely for the day. If inclement weather occurs during daytime hours and has the potential to affect evening classes, the same lead administrator will, after review of weather forecasts and campus conditions, make a decision by 3:00 p.m. as to the status of evening classes.

While the decision to delay or close the college falls to the lead administrator, spreading the word about college status falls to the Marketing and Communications office. Our procedure is to contact every available media outlet that provides snow closing information, as early as possible. This is sometimes easier said than done – for example, local television stations prefer to list our status as either delayed or closed, and usually this is expressed in increments of one or more hours.

Their scrolling banners are often pre-programmed, making timely updates and changes very difficult to accomplish. This can be very confusing for those checking in – to see WKTV's scrolling announcements listing MVCC with a "2-hour delay" means little to the staff member who needs to know whether they should report at 8:30, or if a later start time is permissible. We do our best to ask stations to transmit clear information – such as "Classes will begin at 10:00 a.m. Faculty and staff report to campus at that time."

However, it is up to the individual station as to the length of message they will accommodate.

The same is true for radio stations – the length of the message about our status is really up to the station's discretion, as long as the basic intent of the message (open, closed, delayed) is there. In the name of clarification, here are three possible scenarios and what each means to you:



**OLD MAN WINTER IS UPON US** - The region experienced the first significant snowstorm of the winter this week, forcing MVCC to delay classes on Monday until 10:00 a.m. These two students bundled up against the temperatures that dipped into the teens.

1. The College is closed. This means you do not have to report to work.

2. The College opens at 10:00 a.m. This means that you report to work at 10:00 a.m. Unfortunately, sometimes the media outlets broadcast this message as: Classes are cancelled until 10:00 a.m. There will never be a delay where you will be required to report at the normal time.

3. The College is closing at 2:00 p.m. This means that you are able to leave work at 2:00 p.m.

One recommendation we have is if you have Internet access at home, to check the College's website. A banner announcement is placed directly on the home page, and in the case of a morning announcement, it is usually in place by 5:30 a.m. Finally, the college's telephone system has a temporary message informing callers of the College's status.

Now all this may seem like overkill, but it is done for a specific reason. If one outlet fails, many other options exist

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## MVCC Campus Events

### Wednesday, Dec. 5

D'Arcangelo Insurance Conference, IT 225, 8:00 p.m.  
Luncheons with Pizzazz, Rome Hospitality, 11:45 a.m.,  
Brown Bag Lunch Series, ACC 116, 12:00 p.m.  
Comedian, MV Commons, 12:00 p.m.  
Kids-N-Coaches Christmas Party, ACC 116, 4:00 p.m.  
MVCC Concert Band Practice, ACC 116, 7:00 p.m.  
Night Hawk Café, MV Commons, 7:00 p.m.  
Ice Hockey hosts Broome CC at Utica Aud., 7:00 p.m.

### Thursday, Dec. 6

D'Arcangelo Insurance Conference, IT 225, 8:00 p.m.  
Upward Bound Kick-off Celebration, ACC 116, 3:30 p.m.  
Keuka College Representative, IT 225, 5:00 p.m.  
Performance: "The Glass Menagerie," Theatre, 8:00 p.m.  
Women's Basketball at Schenectady CCC, 5:00 p.m.  
Men's Basketball at Schenectady CCC, 7:00 p.m.

### Friday, Dec. 7

D'Arcangelo Insurance Conference, IT 225, 8:00 a.m.  
Student Congress, ACC 212, 1:00 p.m.  
Ballroom Dancing, ACC 116, 7:00 p.m.  
Rotary - ARC Christmas Party, MV Commons, 5:00 p.m.  
Performance: "The Glass Menagerie," Theatre, 8:00 p.m.

### Saturday, Dec. 8

Women's Basketball hosts Genesee CC, 1:00 p.m.  
Men's Basketball hosts Genesee CC, 3:00 p.m.  
Ice Hockey at North Country CC, 1:00 p.m.  
Performance: "The Glass Menagerie," MVCC Theatre Program/Drama Club production, Theatre, 8:00 p.m.

### Sunday, December 9

Ice Hockey at North Country CC, 1:00 p.m.

### Monday, Dec. 10

Chess Club, ACC 114, 3:30 p.m.  
Movie: Akira Kurosawa's Dreams, Theatre, 7:00 p.m.  
Workshop: "Beauty & the Beast Storytellers," ACC 116,  
4:00 p.m.  
Performance: "Beauty & the Beast Storytellers," ACC 116,  
7:00 p.m.

### Tuesday, Dec. 11

Workshop: "Beauty & the Beast Storytellers,"  
Plumley Auditorium, 4:00 p.m.  
Performance: "Beauty & the Beast Storytellers,"  
Plumley Auditorium, 7:00 p.m.  
Women's Basketball hosts Jefferson CC, 6:00 p.m.  
Men's Basketball hosts Jefferson CC, 8:00 p.m.

### Wednesday, Dec. 12

Concert: Utica Symphony Orchestra, Theatre, 7:30 p.m.  
Ice Hockey hosts Monroe CC at Utica Aud., 7:00 p.m.

**To submit information  
for Communitas,  
e-mail Rich Haubert  
at [rhaubert@mvcc.edu](mailto:rhaubert@mvcc.edu)**

## Hawks hockey off and running

The College's ice hockey team is proving to be a powerhouse this season with a 5-1-1 record. The Hawks skated to a 1-1 tie against Hudson Valley Community College and it took SUNY Canton an overtime period to edge MVCC, 5-4.

Leading the Hawks against SUNY Canton was freshman forward Kevin McCready with two goals. Scoring for MVCC in the HVCC game was sophomore forward Nick Snyder with one goal while freshman goaltender Brian Frankel stopped 26 shots.



Snyder

**Women's Basketball:** The Lady Hawks flew home with a 109-31 victory over Adirondack Community College on the shoulders of freshman guard Gracie Plagainos. Plagainos paced MVCC with 18 points while sophomore guard Tonisha Kirby followed suit with 15 points.

Also hitting double-figures were sophomore point guard Shanai Norman with 12 points and nine assists and freshman forward Dorothy Hunte with 10 points and 16 rebounds. Freshman forward Melissa St. Louis added nine points while working for 13 rebounds.

**Men's Basketball:** The Hawks wrapped up November by winning three of their four games to improve to 4-5 on the young season. MVCC rolled past Adirondack CC, 82-62, after defeating Cayuga CC, 85-73, and Columbia-Greene CC, 96-64. The Hawks came up short against Fulton-Montgomery CC, 92-80, this past weekend.

Leading MVCC's offense this season has been freshman guard Pat Corbin with 17 points against FMCC and ACC while also pouring in 26 points against Cayuga and 23 points in the game with C-GCC.

Also hitting double-figures in the FMCC game was freshman guard Andrew Strittmatter with 16 points. Sophomore forward Joel Almeida scored 17 points against ACC.

**Athlete of the Week:** The MVCC Athlete of the Week for the week ending December 2, 2007, is Gracie Plagainos. She led the women's basketball team to two victories last week by averaging 16 points in wins over Herkimer CCC and Adirondack CC. She is a Liberal Arts major.

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to learn the status. From experience, we have found that the most up-to-the-minute information on the status of college operations is the MVCC website. If Internet access is unavailable, try checking the college's main switchboard message (792-5400).

Local radio stations (WIBX-AM in particular) are the most prompt in delivering messages to the public. The third most reliable would be the local television network – either WKTV in Utica or WTVH-5 in Syracuse.

Many of you were very helpful last year during the winter months, letting us know when and how you heard our closing announcements. Keep the feedback coming, as it helps us continue to refine how we get the word out to everyone.

Thank you!

# Issues behind students not being prepared for college course work

Article provided by Donna Sawyer-White  
Coordinator of Tutoring Services

Many professionals at the post secondary level have observed that students seem to be less well prepared for college work than in years past.

Dr. Cora M. Dzubak, Director of Learning Center and Instructor in Counselor Education at Penn State University's York Branch Campus, identified some of the issues that impact student preparedness for post secondary education in the February 2006 issue of Journal of the Association for the Tutoring Profession. In the same article, she offered practical solutions that can be implemented in the classroom.

The term "under prepared students" is used here to define students who are deficient in reading, math, or writing and who may also lack effective study and learning skills. The three primary variables contributing to this problem discussed below are:

- Gap between the skills and requirements need to graduate from high school and those needed for success in college courses.
- Current social and cultural changes that negatively impact educational process.
- Fast pace/instant gratification characteristic of life in the U.S.

## THE GAP BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

College curricula are generally developed on the assumption that students come to freshman course "college-ready." Yet many students arrive without the proper academic preparation for college-level course. Nationally, nearly 30 percent of first-time freshmen need to enroll in one or more remedial courses. This number is growing, causing many educators to ask for the reasons why.

Inflated grades, lowering of standards, parental pressure levied against teachers to give good grades and changing student attitudes and behavior are some of the factors that contribute to the lowering of skill levels of high school students.

Remedial courses can play a major role in getting students ready for college level courses. The merits of remedial courses are evident through research. Eighty eight percent of students who successfully complete remedial English and 82 percent of those completing remedial math, go on to successfully complete the college level counterpart.

The growing gap between high school and college preparation has caused some states to require exit exams for graduating high school seniors, although there is some evidence that even those scores are not always indicative of actual skills acquired. In addition, exit exams typically differ in content and rigor from state to state, making it difficult to compare scores, standards, or students.

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

Demographic data indicates changing trends in society, some of which negatively impact educational progress such as: number of children living in single parent homes, number of first-generation students attending college, increase in the number of low-income families, less emphasis on academic achievement in the home, grade inflation in the public schools, and lower academic standards.

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## Approaches & strategies

A team approach between faculty and staff in admissions, advising, and learning centers is most effective in dealing with the problem of student under preparedness. Effective strategies might include:

- Standardized assessments to measure incoming academic skill levels.
- Mandatory placement in remedial courses for students below standard.
- Identification of the skills and characteristics required for success in college to be used as goals for under-prepared students.
- Setting of academic stands for developmental courses that are predictive of college success.
- Tracking student progress during the first semester and providing early intervention for those who are struggling.
- Measure student achievement and outcomes at the completion of the first year.
- Teach problem-solving and critical thinking skills during the first semester.
- "Front load" academic support skills by teaching students how to "read to learn" as well as teaching effective study skills.
- Expect student engagement in the classroom and encourage faculty to use a multi-sensory approach to teaching.
- Foster a strong sense of belonging to the campus community via summer programs, mentoring, learning communities, tutoring and study groups, community service and volunteer activities, and participation in clubs and organizations.
- Promote and expect student self-advocacy, independence, and responsibility.
- Maintain high academic standards.

## Strategic Planning Committee: November 8 meeting minutes

The College's Strategic Planning Committee held its meeting on Thursday, November 8, with a teleconference for room 300 in Payne Hall and Room 209 of the Plumley Complex. The following are the minutes from that meeting.

1. Review/Approval of Agenda: Unanimously passed.
2. Public Comments: None
3. Review/Approval of the Minutes of the October 18, 2007 Meeting: The minutes of the October 18 meeting were approved as submitted.
4. Review of Draft Directions/Priorities/Initiatives: President Van-Wagoner noted that the committee has time to fully discuss the proposed new format for strategic planning. The Middle States will be informed of the evolution of MVCC's strategic plan, with the expectation that the new plan will be developed by the time the Middle States Team members complete their visit in April 2008.

The committee has had an opportunity to discuss the draft Directions/Priorities/Initiative document and indicated support for the overall concept. It was suggested an additional Level II statement regarding Workforce Development be included under the "Partnerships" Level I statement. The group agreed that this addition is appropriate. The committee also agreed to a change in the titles of the statements to more clearly indicate the scope of each statement. Level I statements, the broadest category, will be called "Priorities," Level II statements, more specific statements under each Level I statement, will be called "Directions," and the Level III statements, yet to be developed, will be called "Initiatives."

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In addition, there has been increased pressure for students to attend college, some of whom have not completed the necessary "college prep" courses while in high school. These variables all contribute substantially to the degree to which students are prepared for college.

#### **FAST PACE OF MODERN LIFE**

The pace at which today's society lives, and the strong desire for instant gratification have led to behavioral changes in adolescents which can significantly impact their engagement in the learning process. Some of these changes are:

- Increased preferences for visual and kinesthetic learning styles in contrast to oral/aural style used in many college classrooms.
- Visual preferences that do not extend to adequate competency in reading and comprehension, but are more geared toward multi-media reception.
- Low-level cognitive task preference such as processing facts and other data over more complex thinking and analytic skills.

The committee discussed how Initiative statements will be developed. These may be developed from the recommendations of the charter groups currently working on a number of specific areas. Others will be developed from departmental recommendations. Additional initiatives will be developed to address specific issues identified as work on the plan progresses. The plan also envisions that each Initiative will require the development of specific action steps, typically by departments or operating units.

It was noted that the new plan will need to be tied to assessment and that all activities relating to the plan must be documented.

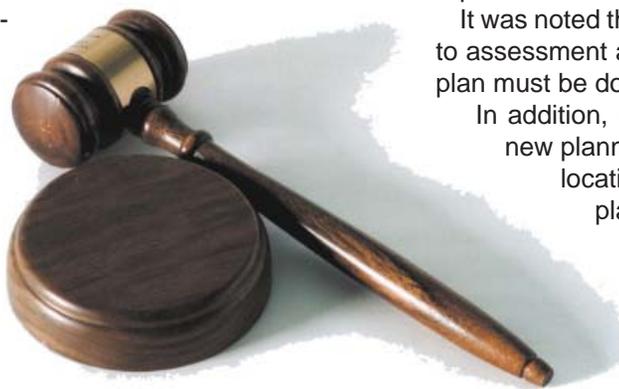
In addition, it is yet to be determined how the new planning format will be tied to budget allocation. The role of the SPC in linking planning to budget allocation is yet to be determined.

The committee discussed how the new plan will be presented to the college-wide community. The draft Priorities and Directions will be presented to Department Heads at their next meeting. Additional strategies need to be developed to insure that the proposal receives college-wide review. It was suggested that the document be circulated and comments be received prior to the SPC meeting at noon on Wednesday December 19. A copy of the draft to be circulated is attached.

5. Charge for the Strategic Planning Committee: This topic, along with SPC Bylaws and membership, will be discussed at the next regular meeting of the SPC.

6. The next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee is scheduled for Thursday, November 29, 2007 at 3:00 pm.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 4: 32 pm.



- Decrease in attention span; students may not be able to hold their concentration for an adequate period of time, preventing them from listening attentively and thinking critically about material being presented.

- Student expectations of classrooms that are active, interactive and visual; possible counter to what is found in college classrooms.

- Students more extrinsically motivated, requiring outside reinforcement to maintain interest in a project or task.

Maintaining high standards is necessary while building the academic skills needed for college success. As students experience academic success, their motivation and persistence will improve which will lead to a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

Article by Dzubak, C.M. entitled "What skill and whose standards: Why are students under-prepared," September 2007, *The Facilitating Newsletter*.