MVCC is ahead of the curve on reaching its goals and values

After years of researching, planning, and implementation, the College is beginning to experience the fruits of its labor as the three-year completion rate has skyrocketed for demographic groups within the community.

MVCC President Randall VanWagoner, Ph.D., laid out the history and the current standing of the College during the opening remarks at the third annual data summit held in the Commons of the Alumni College Center on Thursday.

Back in 2014, the College interviewed 874 people from the community, student body, and MVCC employees to develop a set of goals for the Catalyst 2020. Out of these interviews and surveys came five strategic goals that stood out. They are: Increase Student Completion; Strengthen the Educational Pipeline; Advance Diversity and Inclusiveness; Expand Applied Learning; and Develop the Workforce and Community. At the same time these strategic goals were being developed, the Strategic Planning Council updated MVCC’s Core Values to Embrace Our Community; Model the Way; Inspire Confidence; and Encourage Excellence.

“Arthur Nielsen said it best when he wrote ‘The price of light is less than the cost of darkness.’ We have certainly experienced this at MVCC over the past few years,” said Dr. VanWagoner.

Nielsen’s meaning is it is not a question of whether the College can afford to invest in the data, it’s a question of whether it can afford not to. The point of data and analytics is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of decision making and to reduce the risk of failure. It also leads to better accountability, which is possibly why sometimes it’s not welcomed with open arms.

“Excellence comes from being vulnerable and that is what it takes to look at data, even pursue it,” said Dr. VanWagoner. “And how you respond to those brutal facts is essential. Human nature is to place blame and excuses. We need to shift our energies to exploring solutions that lead to improvement.”

MVCC’s Strengths Council identified the five most common themes among employees. They are Learner, Achiever, Empathy, Responsibility, and Input. These strengths mesh to create a strong foundation for MVCC to build upon.

The College is seeking to comply with the core values and strategic goals over a five-year span. In just its second year, MVCC is already seeing benefits in the completion rate. For first-time, full-time students, the three-year completion rate back in 2012 was 23 percent. This fell right in line with the SUNY average.

With a set goal of reaching a 28 percent completion rate after five years, the College has already surpassed that number. The spring 2016 completion rate rose to 31 percent, the highest in MVCC’s history. Hispanic students’ completion rate rose from 14 percent in 2012 to 26 percent last year. For students of color, the completion rate rose from eight percent to 18 percent.

“It is hard to know exactly which of the efforts we have been performing at the College made the biggest difference, and there is no such thing as a silver bullet,” said Dr. VanWagoner. “But there is silver buckshot.”

Some of the changes MVCC has made in the past 720 days include eliminating the graduation fee and late registration. There have been changes to placement testing, academic standards created for residence hall students, and software like Starfish and Degree Works were implemented to support students. MVCC introduced SOAR as part of student advising, and then launched the ASAP (Advise, Schedule, and Pay) campaign to raise awareness of the importance of following through. The College has added completion coaches and past students’ transcripts were reviewed to discover a cohort of former students who had enough credits to graduate.

“Confidence for me is a direct correlation to courage,” said Dr. VanWagoner. “It takes courage to admit you are not perfect or less than perfect. ‘Great organizations confront the brutal facts’ says Jim Collins in his book ‘Good to Great.’”

MVCC has made great progress in some areas but still has miles to go in others. An aggressive goal in the strategic plan is to line up the College’s employee profile with that of the students’ profile. In 2012, 7 percent of employees identified as minority while 16 percent of students identified as minorities. In 2016, the College increased that number to 10 percent for employees while the student body increased to 25 percent.
Honoring Employees for Years of Service

Every now and then there comes a person who naturally inspires, encourages, and leaves a positive impression while making a huge difference in someone’s life. At MVCC, Rosemary Mink is that person.

For more than 15 years, Mink has been a role model for her students with words of encouragement and inspiration. She has a deep understanding of literature and culture and shares this with her students through lively class discussions, deep critical analysis and writing, and her own well-developed lectures.

As an associate professor, she teaches a wide variety of courses. These include English as a Second Language 1: Beginning English Skills 1 (SL101), English as a Second Language 4: Advanced Composition (SL116), English 1: Composition (EN101), English 2: Ideas and Values in Literature (EN102), Film Appreciation (HU 188), Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities 2 (HU 290), and Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities 3 (HU 291).

A native of Bouckville where she graduated from Morrisville-Eaton Central Schools, Mink is very active both on and off the MVCC campus. She is currently serving on the Achieving the Dream Council, Institutional Effectiveness Council, and is part of the Middle States Self-Study. She played a major role in the Pathway to Graduation Project and has been a member of the Four-Runners Club since its inception. Mink is also a member of the Professional Association Political Outreach Committee.

Formerly, she was a member of the General Education Committee, College Wide Curriculum Committee, Academic Policy and Standards Council, Professional Association Community Outreach Committee, and was a Senator-at-Large.

She has also been recognized for her outstanding work ethic as the recipient of the Eye of the Hawk and the Heart of the Hawk awards.

UPTC will get needed space with renovations

The University Partners and Transfer Center is getting a new look this winter as construction on the expansion in the Alumni College Center moves to the next stage.

Funded by a SUNY grant designed for community colleges to help smooth out the transition into a baccalaureate program, the UPTC office will nearly double in size. This will provide much needed space for computer banks and work spaces. The space being renovated is just off of the Commons, which housed an old Sodexo cooler and facilities storage space. The renovations are being done by Beebe Construction Services and expected to be completed by the end of February.

Tickets for all Spring 2017 MVCC Cultural Series events, including Grammy-nominated rapper Wale (sponsored, in part, by MVCC’s Student Congress), are now on sale at mvcc.edu/tickets!

How and where can I get tickets?

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<th>Online:</th>
<th>24/7 at mvcc.edu/tickets</th>
<th>College Bookstore – Utica Campus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Telephone:</td>
<td>315.731.5721</td>
<td>Alumni College Center: Visit mvcc.edu/bookstore for hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>In person:</td>
<td>MVCC Box Office – Utica Campus Information Technology Building, Room 106</td>
<td>Student Services Center – Rome Campus, Plumley Complex 8:30 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday – Thursday</td>
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<td>10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Monday – Friday</td>
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Smajić selected to head Marketing & Communications

After an extensive search, MVCC appointed Alen Smajić as executive director of Marketing and Communications. His appointment was confirmed at the MVCC Board of Trustees’ Dec. 19 meeting.

As executive director, Smajić will be responsible for providing leadership for curating the College brand and developing effective marketing and communications programs for the College. To that end, he will direct and implement goals and strategies to further MVCC’s mission, vision, and Strategic Plan, serve as MVCC’s spokesperson and primary media contact, and work closely with other departments at the College to develop appropriate marketing strategies to support student enrollment and success.

Prior to joining MVCC, Smajić served as team lead and senior media analyst for BAE Systems, Inc. in Rome, N.Y., where he was responsible for developing, directing, implementing, and managing marketing and communication materials for several Air Force Research Lab Program Management Offices, supervising a full-time staff, and developing and maintaining computer-based training materials and interactive websites.

Smajić also previously held a position as director of media and technology at The Paige Group. In this role, he provided concepts and creative direction for web development, digital video production and editing, motion graphics, and digital animation. Smajić also produced advertising and marketing campaigns for both business and consumer clients, as well as visual and written elements of advertising campaigns over a variety of media.

Smajić holds a master of business administration degree in technology management/marketing and a bachelor’s degree in communication and information design both from SUNY Polytechnic University, and earned his associate of applied science degree in graphic design from MVCC. He lives with his wife and children in Utica.

ESL program flying high with Wings of the Hawk

The Wings of the Hawk is awarded each semester to recognize exceptional teamwork at MVCC. The award for the coming semester is made by the group, office, or department currently holding the title and is “passed forward.”

The libraries on the Utica and Rome campuses were the stewards of the award for the fall semester. It was determined during the library’s holiday party to whom the award would be passed. The library staff selected the exceptional work of the English as a Second Language Program to be the recipients for the spring semester.

“In the library, we regularly see ESL students and are impressed with their dedication, perseverance, and commitment,” said Director of Library Services Steve Frisbee. “This is a reflection of those faculty members that inspire them and support them in their studies. We have worked closely with ESL faculty members to incorporate basic library skills in their curriculum, and their classes regularly come in for instruction. Not only have the faculty been easy to work with, but my staff members have been able to make more connections with students in the program.”

ESL students describe the faculty as patient, open-minded, and caring. The ESL faculty members are continuously looking for ways to better serve the ESL population, as evidenced by the recently piloted Intensive English Program.

“In the world, especially today with the globalization of business and the influx of immigrants to the United States, ESL education is essential in providing students whose first language is not English with opportunities to develop proficiency in English, whether it be preparing them to continue on for another certificate or degree, or function in an English-speaking workplace,” said Frisbee. “We are fortunate to have an amazing team here at the college working for them. The diversity and culture which this program brings to MVCC enhances and enriches our lives and our world.”

Send Your News To rhaubert@mvcc.edu
As the first technical and trade community college in New York State, the engineering, science and trade programs have been recognized for decades as some of the best in region.

It comes as no surprise that MVCC’s Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program received the 2017 Genesis Education Program Award. WISE’s mission is to educate, advance, and mentor women in the pursuit of STEM - (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) related fields, and has been active in this pursuit at MVCC since 2008.

The program’s vision is to encourage young girls and women to pursue STEM-related professions. This is accomplished by holding events for current students who are already STEM majors, and also reaching out to local schools to expose girls in grades K-12 to STEM majors and careers.

The faculty in WISE hosts an annual reception for MVCC students to create an atmosphere of community within the STEM field and to demonstrate to students there are female faculty they can talk to. WISE also brings in women speakers in various fields of science to provide both diversity programming and female role models for MVCC’s students.

These programs have included “Women Breaking Barriers,” a panel consisting of women working locally in STEM fields who talked about their experience in male-dominated career; the “You CAN Do It All” conversation with two local women with careers in technology, Linda Rockwood and Chris Ceely; and “Only the Longest Threads: Accounting for Flux, in Physics and Life,” a presentation by author Tasneem Zehra Husain, in which she discusses finding the “optimal” paths in her life and career as one of the few female Pakistani physicists.

WISE is also involved in outreach to local schools with visits in Utica, Ilion, and New Hartford for various events. These events included Engineering Week, STEM Days, and classroom demonstrations of science.

“We offered a teachers workshop at VVS to demonstrate interesting ideas for easy science experiments that could be done in the classroom and this past June, WISE hosted three fourth grade classes from New Hartford as a STEM field trip,” said Shahida Dar, Ph.D. “The fourth graders came to the Utica Campus of MVCC and were given hands-on experiences that involved working with the human skeleton, DNA, aquatic invertebrates, chromatography, and acid/base chemistry.”

Through CCED, WISE has sponsored a week-long summer camp entitled “Science: It’s a Girl Thing” for the last four years. These camps hosted 15-20 girls, each ages 8-14, allowing them to do hands-on science in the fields of biology, chemistry, physics and geology. The week ends with a Science Olympics of mini-competitions including building bridges out of gumdrops and toothpicks to see which can hold the most weight, making balloon-powered race cars to determine which can go the farthest, creating a parachute to safely and slowly lower a Lego mini figure, and creating an egg catch that would allow an egg to be dropped from the highest point and not break.

For the last two years, WISE has hosted the “Girls in STEM Expo,” a one-day Saturday event aimed at high school girls to give them hands-on experience in various STEM fields including biology, chemistry, physics, and engineering. The event culminates with an engineering challenge competition in which the young women get to practice their science skills hands on, and win prizes.

“The challenges have included building the tallest possible freestanding tower from only balloons and masking tape, and creating a zip line that would drop a penny in the middle of a target,” said Dr. Dar. “Our keynote speaker for the first expo was Ashley Waldron, who is currently a Water/Wastewater Engineer for Barton & Loguidice. Last year, Jill Reale, a local meteorologist from WKTV was the event’s keynote speaker.”

More than 100 girls from local high schools have attended this event and have been able to learn about science from women in the fields as well as have some fun doing science.

WISE has done groundbreaking work in engaging young women from MVCC, and K-12 students from throughout Oneida County in STEM fields. The program has been inspirational and life-changing for many young women who have been touched by this important work.

Submit your information for
Communitas to rhaubert@mvcc.edu