

Mountain Empire Community College Strategic Plan 2021-2027



Mountain Empire
Community College

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A Message from the President



Dear Friends of Mountain Empire Community College,

Our mission at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) is to provide our region with accessible, quality higher education, workforce training, and community programs to ensure an educated population and globally competitive workforce, and I am excited to reveal our 2021-2027 strategic plan to carry that mission forward. The Mountain Empire Community College Strategic Plan is a living document developed as the blueprint for equity, progress and sustainability of our college over the next five years. Building from the overarching Virginia Community College System's Opportunity 2027 Strategic Plan, MECC's central strategic goal addresses equity in access and success for students from every race, gender, and socioeconomic group. The plan is the result of over a year of inclusive planning, data collection, research, and stakeholder conversations and focuses heavily on strengthening and supporting our students and employees. MECC's Strategic Plan provides the foundation for all MECC planning activities and demonstrates a commitment to our Mission, Vision, and Values, setting a framework that will guide college operations and initiatives through 2027, guiding the decisions that will preserve MECC's strong reputation in our region, and ensuring future growth and advancement. Clear strategies and measurable goals are designed to direct MECC towards equitable student success, growth, and development while partnering effectively with the communities we serve. Together with our community and partners, we will achieve our vision of an educated, employed, and thriving community. We look forward to sharing the measurable results as well as celebrating our accomplishments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristen Westover". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a large, light gray stylized letter 'A' graphic that serves as a background element.

Dr. Kristen Westover
President

College Overview and Strategic Plan Focus

Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) is one of twenty-three community colleges operating under the jurisdiction of the Virginia State Board for Community Colleges. The College was founded in 1970, and classes began in 1972. MECC is a two-year, comprehensive public community college offering career studies, certificates, and associate degree programs with majors designed for both college transfer and technical education leading directly to employment. MECC has a Local College Board which is advisory to the State Board. The fifteen members are appointed by the jurisdictions comprising the College's Service Region. The mission of the college is to provide our region with accessible, quality higher education, workforce training, and community programs to ensure an educated population and a globally competitive workforce.

The College serves approximately 3,305 credit students (1,1518 FTE) and approximately 2,704 non-credit students each year in a service region that covers Dickenson, Scott, Lee, and Wise counties as well as the City of Norton in rural southwestern Virginia.

The increasing focus on Equity is foundational to this Plan, and it is an evident thread throughout all goals and strategies. The Virginia Community College System defines Equity as:

The existence of an environment in which policies, practices, and beliefs are grounded in the principle of fairness and that acknowledges structural racism, gender disparities, and systemic poverty, while honoring the diversity of humanity. This environment explicitly prioritizes the success of all students to ensure that they have the necessary resources to fulfil their College and career goals.

Through its program offerings and workforce training, MECC aims to prepare students from diverse backgrounds for a career and/or transfer to a four-year college or university. Cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusion is imperative.

Therefore, the overarching strategic goal of this plan is:

Mountain Empire Community College will achieve equity in access and success for students from every race, gender, and socioeconomic group.

The strategic goal will be achieved through strategies related to the below areas of focus:

- Equity and Communication
- Equity in the Classroom
- Student Supports to Foster Success
- Meaningful Credentials and the Future of Work
- Reimagining Funding and Finance



MECC's Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Mountain Empire Community College's mission is to provide our region with accessible, quality higher education, workforce training, and community programs to ensure an educated population and globally competitive workforce.

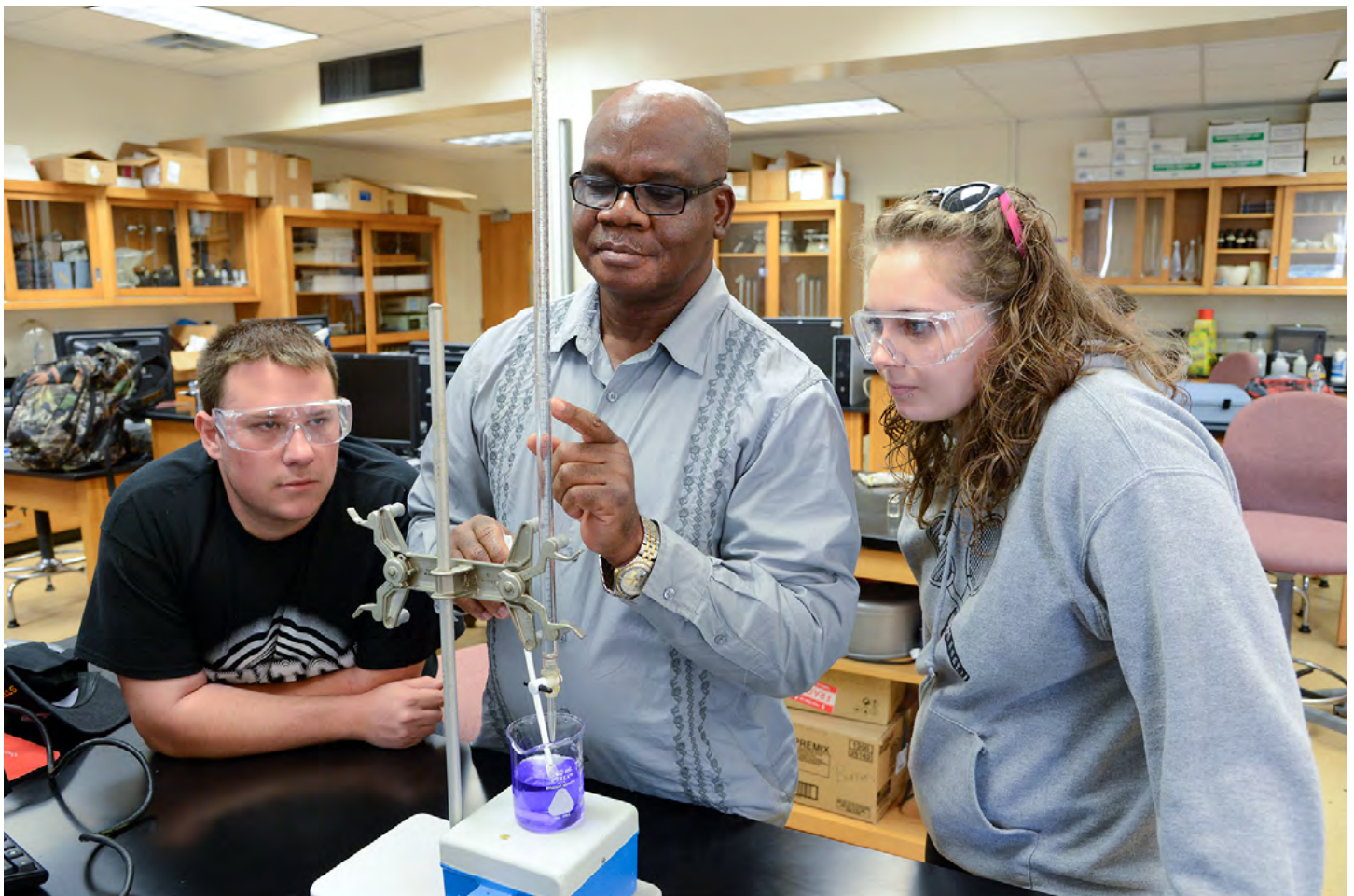
Vision

Mountain Empire Community College's vision is to be the leader in developing and educating our region's workforce.

Values

Mountain Empire Community College is committed to these values:

- Community and Cultural Preservation
- Creativity and Innovation
- Diversity and Equity
- Integrity and Trust
- Leadership and Service
- Student Success and Lifelong Learning
- Teamwork and Communication



Priority A: Equity and Communication

Guiding Principle: Ensure that MECC is equipped to deliver on the promise of the equity goal by ensuring that all internal and external constituencies understand the role of equity within our College and community.

Goal 1: The College will initiate an intentional focus on equity for internal stakeholders.

- 1a. Deliver yearly professional development sessions on diversity and equity.
- 1b. Provide implicit bias training for all full-time employees.
- 1c. Provide training for all full-time employees on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- 1d. Begin providing mandatory diversity training during the onboarding and orientation process for new hires.
- 1e. The Diversity Committee will report out to the campus community each semester at in-service to stimulate a discussion of new issues and actions related to equity.
- 1f. Provide search advocate training for all staff/faculty engaged in the hiring process.
- 1g. Promote equity and inclusion in relation to gender identity.

Goal 2: The College will ensure representation of diverse populations to external stakeholders.

- 2a. Ensure representation of marginalized voices is prominently featured in high-profile events on campus.
- 2b. Ensure that College marketing materials are representative of the local population.
- 2c. Increase College outreach, dialogue, and involvement with leaders in our service region, as well as those in our underrepresented and marginalized communities to build meaningful relationships and partnerships.
- 2d. Establish and/or strengthen partnerships with organizations that provide services to underrepresented populations.



Priority B: Equity in the Classroom

Guiding Principle: MECC will provide all students with access to high-impact practices that support educational excellence and equity in student success through the development of a world-class cadre of diverse employees focused on equity-minded principles and practices.

Goal 3: All faculty will be supported and engaged in high impact strategies that focus on and incorporate the individual needs of our students and reflect research in the scholarship of teaching and learning, regardless of instructional delivery modality.

- 3a.** Create a faculty toolkit of strategies for addressing inequities in the classroom; this toolkit will include local, helpful resources and strategies for working with and assisting students of different races, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic groups.
- 3b.** Engage faculty discipline teams in an equity-driven review of curriculum content of cultural responsiveness and representation.
- 3c.** Create a component within the existing DEIT peer review rubric and within the full- and part-time faculty observation form relating to diversity and inclusion in course content, delivery, and teaching practices.
- 3d.** Review and revise the faculty evaluation process so that it incorporates measurable SMART Goals, encourages faculty ownership and accountability, inspires high performance, and includes feedback that supports faculty development and growth.
- 3e.** Evaluate effectiveness of 8-week terms, flexible hybrid course delivery, and online course delivery to respond to the changing needs of students; explore year-round scheduling to improve retention and persistence.

Goal 4: MECC will support a diverse faculty in providing students with culturally responsive learning experiences informed by evidence-based, discipline-appropriate high impact practices that positively impact essential academic and workplace skills such as critical thinking and communication.

- 4a.** Provide all students training and assessment in diversity and inclusion as a core component of the overall student learning experience.
- 4b.** MECC's Wampler Library will support diversity and inclusion by adding a collection of monograph and audiovisual materials to the Library's collections.



Goal 5: MECC will expand, renew, and revise academic and student services functions by making them more convenient, comprehensive, intrusive, and focused on improved student retention and success. The College's activities specifically create more flexible program pathways, incorporating a plan to provide all students with increasing Quantitative Literacy skills necessary for them to solve real world problems and become more productive citizens.

- 5a.** The College will hire four new full-time faculty members.
- 5b.** MECC will renovate several traditional classroom spaces, converting them into laboratories to be used in biology, anatomy, phlebotomy, and other Health Science courses.
- 5c.** The College will reduce the number of FTEs taught by adjunct faculty.
- 5d.** MECC graduates will improve their Quantitative Literacy skills.



Priority C: Student Supports to Foster Success

Guiding Principle: MECC will provide all students with a culture of care that responds to the needs of our diverse student population and will support and inspire their educational and career success..

Goal 6: MECC will provide all student with a culture of care that responds to the needs of our diverse student population.

- 6a. Create a baseline for the campus climate related to diversity and equity as a source for developing initiatives to improve institutional culture.
- 6b. Provide students with a safe space through focus group opportunities to deliver qualitative feedback discussing their perceptions of and experiences with diversity and inclusion in course content, delivery, and teaching practices.
- 6c. Provide students with a safe space to evaluate their coursework experiences with diversity and inclusion with an emphasis on course content, delivery, and teaching practices.
- 6d. Provide each student with an appointed care network. This network of diverse individuals commits to understanding the student's specific assets, challenges, and needs.
- 6e. Ensure that student support services are advertised equitably to students with varying level of campus and internet access.
- 6f. Coordinate with local Departments of Social Services via Single Stop to ensure students can be directed to appropriate non-MECC resources, such as childcare and housing opportunities.
- 6g. Create advisor toolkit of strategies for addressing inequities that affect learning outside of the classroom; this toolkit will include local mental health, food, housing, transportation, and emergency assistance resources and strategies for working with and assisting students of different races, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic groups.

Goal 7: MECC will support students' educational success.

- 7a. Ensure access to knowledgeable faculty and staff through the creation of a campus Communication Plan. This is to include the creation of the creation of a campus policy on communication turnaround time as well as a "Communication" section in all course syllabi.
- 7b. Create, implement, and require the completion of a new-hire course that will introduce new full-time faculty and staff to available student resources on campus, College policies and committees, and means of accessing important College information.
- 7c. Assess existing technology platforms to provide new tools needed by students, staff, and faculty to remove barriers to success.
- 7d. Ensure student access to needed technology.
- 7e. Identify specific barriers that lead to equity disparities in application and enrollment processes.
- 7f. Fully utilize Navigate to create/update program pathways that inform students of milestones in their progress, and encourage student usage of Navigate.
- 7g. Build academic schedules that prioritize the needs of students and expand access to all students, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status, to ensure they can get the courses they need when they get them.
- 7h. Provide a safe and secure educational environment for our students and the community.
- 7i. Provide for and continuously improve building maintenance, utility services, and skilled trades to meet the needs of the College.

Goal 8: MECC will support students' career success.

- 8a.** Utilize a career concierge approach that guides students to the right educational choices for their career goals and upon which students may continue to rely on over the course of their academic career.
- 8b.** Promote a culture of proactive advising.



Priority D: Meaningful Credentials and the Future of Work

Guiding Principle: MECC will provide all students with the knowledge, skills, credentials, and degrees that enable them to thrive in dynamic and emerging 21st century careers shaped by the future of work..

Goal 9: MECC will work with employers and Colleges both inside and outside of the service region to ensure usability of credits and degrees earned upon graduation.

- 9a.** Partner with at least two new local, state, and/or national business leaders and/or university partners to ensure that education, training, and credentials are relevant and responsive to the future of work.
- 9b.** Align curricular content with the expressed business needs of employers, including periodic review and updates by business advisory groups; develop methods and schedules to update all credentialing programs to ensure alignment with industry changes.
- 9c.** Implement all TransferVA changes to ensure student transferability of credits earned.

Goal 10: MECC will use employment data to inform program decisions and advising.

- 10a.** Guide every student to choose the right educational pathway to achieve his or her career goals by employing labor market information and career development strategies.



Priority E: Reimagining Funding and Finance

Guiding Principle: MECC will provide all students with access to affordable College educations that support their need for financial flexibility while also supporting the vitality and sustainability of our Colleges.

Goal 11: MECC will provide all students with access to affordable College educations that support their need for financial flexibility.

- 11a.** Publish “all inclusive” pricing that reflects full cost of education, including materials and certification exams.
- 11b.** Increase the number of programs and courses that are available fully Open Educational Resource (OER)/low cost; market these programs and courses.
- 11c.** Increase access to low cost Pell-eligible digital materials.
- 11d.** Increase the tuition funding available to dual enrollment students experiencing financial hardship.
- 11e.** Increase opportunities to second chance PELL participants through expanded access and programming.
- 11f.** Increase financial aid to students through various funding sources, packaged to students in a clear manner.
- 11g.** Increase access to possible financing plans for students.

Goal 12: MECC will support the vitality and sustainability of our College.

- 12a.** The College will undertake a comprehensive, College-wide personnel and job-duty assessment that establishes a staffing model to support cross-functions, budget challenges, and the College’s ability to expand programs, curriculum, and operations that have shown to be successful in pilot testing.
- 12b.** In each year of the plan, the Presidential Leadership Series will be offered to 12-15 members of the MECC faculty, staff and administration.
- 12c.** Collaborate with at least 2 regional partners to eliminate student attendance barriers such as affordable childcare and transportation for non-traditional students.
- 12d.** Create a sustainable model for funding free community College to all populations within MECC’s service region.
- 12e.** Continue to allocate financial resources to meet the strategic needs of the College.
- 12f.** Continue to raise funds to reduce the gap between student’s expected cost of attendance and the available federal, state, and private scholarship funding.
- 12g.** Strategically seek grant and private foundation funding that will support program and infrastructure needs.
- 12h.** Support a robust community-wide 50th anniversary Home Craft Days celebration, and plan for College’s 50th anniversary fundraising.
- 12i.** Introduce at least three public events, such as fundraising, public art, and student and community engagement activities on campus.

Yearly Implementation and Planning Cycle

Year 1	Introduce the Strategic Plan to MECC Internal and External Stakeholders
	Meet with Units Responsible to ensure readiness for implementation
	Meet with Units Responsible at least once per semester to discuss status of implementation
Years 2-5	Link fiscal resources to strategic priorities for the upcoming year (each spring for upcoming year)
	Conduct annual assessment of implementation each June; if necessary, make adjustments to the strategic plan
	Provide an update on Strategic Plan progress at each semester's faculty and staff in-service (August and January)
	Provide updates to College and Foundation Advisory Boards at least once per semester
Year 6	Provide update on Strategic Plan progress at in-service for the final year
	Provide updates to the College and Foundation Advisory Board
	Prioritize needed strategies for final year
	Begin working on the next Strategic Plan: Collect data through focus groups and surveys, meet with diverse groups of stakeholders, revisit Mission, Vision, and Values Statements
	Complete final assessment of Strategic Plan goals and strategies



Memberships (2020-2021)

Planning and Implementation Committee

Bethany Arnold
 Harriette Arrington
 Lelia Bradshaw
 Tommy Clements
 Sally Crabtree
 Ritchie Deel
 Kim Dorton
 Jim Garland
 Peggy Gibson
 Jake Gilly
 Michael Gilley
 Lena Grace

Amy Greear
 Kristy Hall
 Dawn Harper
 Mitzi Jones
 Kevin Lee
 Melissa McKinney
 Vickie Ratliff
 Kyle Scanlan
 Ken Tucker
 Ron Vicars
 Kristen Westover
 Frank Wright

College Advisory Board

Mike Abbott
 Rodney Baker
 Betty Cornett
 Tim Cassell
 Gail Elliott
 Bonnie Elosser
 Mike Hatfield
 Adrienne Hood

Emily Kinser
 Roy Munsey
 Gary Perdue
 Elwanda Pillion
 Les Richie
 Freda Starnes
 Keith Wilson

Foundation Advisory Board

Mark Musick, Chair
 Dr. William Kanto, Vice-Chair
 Leton Harding, Treasurer
 Ron Vicars, Vice-Treasurer
 Dr. Amy Greear, Executive Director
 Dr. Kristen Westover, President of MECC
 William Bott
 Roger Daugherty
 Dr. Kathleen A. DePonte
 Kenneth Fogg
 Joseph Funk
 Lena Grace
 Karen K. Hall

Leton Harding, Jr.
 Wayne Herndon
 Bob Isaac
 Christopher Jones
 Virginia Meador
 Dr. Gary McCann
 Peter Raber
 Donnie Ratliff
 Dr. Jack Rhoton
 Doris Rife
 Keith Wilson
 W.C. "Buzzy" Witt, Jr.

For the most up to date information on the Strategic Plan,
please visit <https://www.mecc.edu/institutional-effectiveness/>





Mountain Empire Community College

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