



Blue River | Business & Technology | Longview | Maple Woods | Penn Valley

Dear Members of the Higher Learning Commission Review Team:

Welcome to Metropolitan Community College of Kansas City (MCC). We are looking forward to your visit and are eager to share with you all the good things happening on the five campuses of MCC. But first, I would like to share a bit of the rich 100-year history of our institution and its significance to the communities of Greater Kansas City.

Metropolitan Community College is the oldest and largest public institution of higher education in the Kansas City, Missouri area and the fourth largest in the state of Missouri. MCC was founded in 1915 as the Kansas City Polytechnic Institute and has since built upon an extraordinary academic foundation laid by the faculty who taught that inaugural class of 234 students. In 1919, the college became the Junior College of Kansas City and distinguished itself as being one of the first colleges in the nation to award the associate degree.

A century later, in April 2015, MCC hosted a Centennial Celebration with nearly 1,000 civic and business leaders, alumni, employees and students gathering to honor the history and service of the institution and to pay tribute to notable alumni who credited their success to their MCC education. Though too many to list, these MCC alumni include corporate CEO's, state and local political leaders, chiefs of public safety agencies, professional athletes, U.S. Olympians, educators, engineers, nurses and other successful graduates numbering in the hundreds of thousands who call Greater Kansas City home.

Over the years, MCC evolved into a complex community college system of five campuses — MCC-Blue River, MCC-Business & Technology, MCC-Longview, MCC-Maple Woods, and MCC-Penn Valley — strategically positioned throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. The college sits on nearly 550 combined acres and currently serves about 33,000 students a year in more than 47 buildings.

With over 400 articulation agreements with colleges and universities throughout the nation, MCC is highly sought out for academic collaborations and transfer agreements. Our quality academic programs combined with the work of the MCC Institute for Workforce Innovation (IWI) — which works with businesses to deliver customized workforce certificate programs — make MCC a recognized regional academic and economic engine focused on our mission of “Preparing Students, Serving Communities, Creating Opportunities.”

Like most publicly funded colleges, MCC faced many financial challenges fomented by the great economic recession of 2008-09. State appropriations for MCC were reduced a cumulative 17 percent over a three-year span. In 2010, analysis reflected that MCC's cash reserves would be depleted by FY 2015, if significant changes in longstanding policies and practices were not made. Recognizing the changing dynamics and urgency of the matter, we embarked upon a steady course of proactively re-engineering the institution in pursuit of a new strategic plan. This plan focuses on quality improvement, nimbleness, relevance, and redirecting resources to our top priority of helping students achieve success in their academic and career goals.

In 2011, MCC began implementation of a strategic plan focused on student success comprised of five priorities: Completion, Student Learning, Enrollment Management, Climate, and Resource Prioritization ([www.mcckc.edu/explore/whatdrivesus/plan/overview.asp](http://www.mcckc.edu/explore/whatdrivesus/plan/overview.asp)). Each priority included strategic objectives and key performance indicators by which to measure progress and effectiveness. In pursuit of being a recognized “best practice” institution, MCC launched a number of quality improvement initiatives, most notably:

- Being selected in the second cohort of HLC Pathways, participating in the Assessment Academy, and completing the HLC Pathways Quality Initiative thus creating, expanding, and sustaining a culture of assessment at MCC.
- Gaining recognition as the only college in the country awarded three U.S. Department of Education Title III grants totaling \$12 million within weeks of one another. These grants are being used to identify and implement transformational changes in the delivery of best-practice developmental education at MCC in an initiative we call Fundamentals for Outcomes, Completion, Understanding and Success (FOCUS).
- Establishing a faculty-led task force that revamped the MCC Associate of Arts degree, reducing completion obstacles for students and ensuring curricular alignment with the seven most-utilized four-year transfer universities awarding baccalaureate degrees in the region.
- Partnering with universities, local school districts, and industries to create two unique early-college programs: the Missouri Innovation Campus (MIC) and the Northland Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS). These innovations resulted in a visit from President Obama to draw attention to this innovative instructional delivery model and MCC being selected as a top-10 national finalist for the Bellwether Award for innovation in higher education.
- Creating the Institute for Workforce Innovation (IWI) to develop customized workforce training programs and delivery of industry-recognized “stackable” credentials serving the needs of area businesses and industries as well as the career goals of students.
- Implementing a centralized student enrollment and call center to serve all five campuses, gain efficiencies, and improve consistency of face-to-face service on the campuses.
- Implementing military veteran support services on all five campuses, resulting in MCC being recognized in the top 15 percent of colleges and universities and awarded the distinction of being a “Military Friendly School.” Creating the position of executive director of diversity and inclusion as a direct report to the chancellor to advance the many diversity programs and initiatives begun since 2011, especially the campus Presidents’ Commissions on Diversity and Inclusion.
- Launching MCC’s first major-gifts campaign based on community priorities of creating a Workforce Transformation Center to better serve the region’s workforce, economic development, and entrepreneurial needs; establishing Student Success Centers on the five campuses to help students reach their academic goals; and increasing scholarship funds.

In preparation for the next century of service to our community, MCC embarked on a new strategic planning process in Spring 2015 involving employees, students, and representatives from the community. Five priorities — Climate and Culture, Targeted Degrees, Closing the Achievement Gap for Students, Process Improvement, and Developing a Strategic Budgeting Model — have been identified in this grassroots effort as the core of this new strategic plan.

In response to the “Climate and Culture” priority identified in the new strategic planning effort, MCC conducted a shared governance workshop in September 2015. “Shared Governance in Times of Change”

was led by Dr. Stephen Bahls, a recommended facilitator of the Association of Governing Boards. MCC's Board of Trustees, administration, and governance group leaders all participated as equals in this unprecedented conversation with a shared goal of developing a common vision for shared governance that is universally recognized, understood, and practiced by all parties. This renewed unity of effort will pave the way to even greater accomplishments by MCC in preparing students, serving communities, and creating opportunities into the next 100 years.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Mark S. James  
Chancellor