

Strategic Marketing Plan

Middlesex Community College (MCC) recognizes the importance of an effective and strategic marketing plan to promote the college, its brand, and its resources to the community.

The Office of Marketing Communications is responsible for managing the college's marketing, communications, and public relations efforts to promote and communicate the strategic mission of Middlesex Community College. We are charged with promoting student success as well as presenting a consistent look and message for the college, while maintaining a positive image to our students and the community.

Key Message/Motto

In Summer 2016, the college adopted a school motto or tagline:
Student Success Starts Here



Student Success Starts Here

2016 - 2018 Marketing Campaign Theme

The focus of the 2016-2018 Marketing Communications Brand for the college is *myMCC*

Market Niche

Student-centered academic degree and certificate programs that foster student success.

Situational Analysis

Middlesex Community College prides itself on academic excellence, responsive student services, advanced technology, and workforce and economic development, as well as strong community, industry and international partnerships. We serve a diverse student population and support an inclusive, open culture. Marketing efforts focus on recruitment, retention, transfer/career, graduate, alumni and donor, as well as building relationships with our local and global community. The development of a strategic marketing plan will help leverage greater awareness of the college, and support ongoing strategic efforts to increase enrollment.

Between F11 and F15, MCC enrollment declined by 8.3%. According to 2014 projections by the Department of Higher Education (DHE), enrollment would decrease 14% between F13 and F20. This is a common trend during times of economic recovery. Community colleges around the nation face similar challenges, along with the shrinking numbers of high school graduates, and state support of higher education decreasing by 6 percent nationally since 2008.

While the college adapts to decreased enrollment, marketing efforts will focus heavily on student recruitment and retention, as well as building relationships and partnerships with community, business, and governmental leaders. The Strategic Marketing plan aligns with the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Goals of the college, additionally it uses 2+ years of qualitative and quantitative data (including surveys, application data, information cards, narrative forms and interviews) that informed the 2016-18 campaign, target audiences, and key messages.

Goals

1. Increase outreach to populations as identified through institutional and census data

In 2015, the Enrollment Planning Committee used institutional data and the MCC Environmental Scan (2014) to inform its recommendations. Objective I of the plan contains activities that Marketing Communications is responsible for.

• Objective I: Increase outreach to populations as identified through institutional and census data.

- Intensify recruitment activities at area high schools.
- Targeted marketing to: adult students, veterans, young men, Asian, Hispanic, and African-American students.
- Continue to develop marketing strategies to support outreach.

2. Maximize retention and persistence

Developing marketing strategies to increase persistence and retention is a priority of the Office of Marketing Communications. This includes the development of campaigns such as:

- **15 to Finish:** a promotional campaign that encourages MCC students to take 15 credits per semester to graduate in two years
- **REGISTER EARLY:** a campaign targeting changing the culture of students who register for the next semester's courses at the last minute (i.e. closer to the start of the semester), which results in dissatisfaction across campus. Register early promotes student success.
- **DO THE MATH** a campaign aimed at educating students about the importance of taking math classes in the first semesters.

Additionally, Academic Maps have been created for all academic programs, and seven Pathways Maps have been developed to assist students in choosing a more targeted area of study.

3. Create strategic communications that deepen engagement and develop connections with our audience

Our students are our best ambassadors! The Office of Marketing Communications has launched a new college branding campaign for 2016-2018 that features some of our most outstanding students. Called **myMCC**, this campaign was created by using two years of qualitative and quantitative data (including surveys, application data, information cards, narrative forms, and interviews).

The goal of the myMCC campaign is to put a human face on each of our marketing personas. In order to connect with prospective students, we will feature actual MCC students who best represent our six identified personas. To further increase student engagement, we will continue utilizing social-media platforms with a strong emphasis on developing engaging content that generates conversations using the brand hashtag **#myMCC**.

4. Build community connections

- Continue to build partnerships with the local community by participating in and/or sponsoring strategic local events, as well as branding outreach opportunities;
- Increase alumni connections with students for strategic marketing opportunities and to build relationships with the college;
- Create awareness in the business community about MCC's degree and certificate programs, and encourage them to add the college as a Tuition Reimbursement Partner

5. Elevate the image of the community college

- Implement marketing strategies that will target key external audiences to increase awareness of the value and academic excellence of community colleges;
- Continue to transform the negative image of community colleges;
- Refocus the dialogue on education, prompting a reconsideration of the practical benefits of a community college education;
- Change the minds of parents and high school counselors by highlighting MCC graduates and their many successes.

Strategic Marketing Plan

Target Audience

By nature, a community college strives to serve the diverse set of audiences in its service area. Students and prospective students span the gamut from recent high school graduates to the working professional returning to complete a degree or change careers. Our audience also includes: alumni of all ages, community members that support the college's events/fundraisers, locals enjoying continuing-education courses, elected and appointed officials, potential employers, and even those with no clear connection to MCC who might identify with the college's vision and mission.

For that reason, it is challenging to narrowly identify a short list of target audiences/segments. However, prioritization is deeply important to appropriate allocation of the Office of Marketing Communication's limited resources. With this in mind, the Strategic Marketing Plan sets out to target the following segments as top priorities through 2020:

- Segment 1: Traditional Aged Credit Students
- Segment 2: Non-Traditional Aged Credit Students
- Segment 3: Workforce Training
- Segment 4: Guidance Counselors
- Segment 5: Leisure Seekers/Lifelong Learners
- Segment 6: Facility Users

Marketing Channels

Below is a listing of the college's current Marketing Channels

- Direct Mail (postcards, fliers, community-education semester schedules (3x year), PROFILES magazines)
- Radio (Jamn 94.5, WCAP, Pandora, I heart radio)
- TV Ads (Comcast: Lowell, Lexington, Nashua and Woburn zones)
- Magazine/Newspaper Ads:
 - Lowell Sun (print + online)
 - Bate Papo (print)
 - Boston Globe – North + West (print)
 - CNC (publications that fall within zone of college) (print + online)
 - Nashua Telegraph (print)
 - Lawrence Eagle Tribune (print + online)
 - Woburn Daily Chronicle (print)
 - Yankee Flyer / Hanscom Spouses Club (print)
 - Merrimack Valley Magazine (print)
 - Merrimack Valley Business Magazine (print)
 - Military Advanced Education
 - Howl Magazine (print + online)
 - Rumbo (Spanish language newspaper – print)
 - Khmer Post (Khmer language newspaper – print)
 - Action Unlimited (print + online)
- Mobile/Digital ads (Google ad words, Patch ads, online newspapers, Ad Taxi, Thumbvista, and bilingual digital ads via UNIVISION)
- Social Media (college social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest + LinkedIn)
- On-Campus (lightpost banners, table tents, posters, fliers, email/web graphics, monitor graphics, and large pull banners)
- OTHER: movie theater advertising, guidance counselor publications (MA + NH), local calendar ads (Bedford), mall signage

Conclusion

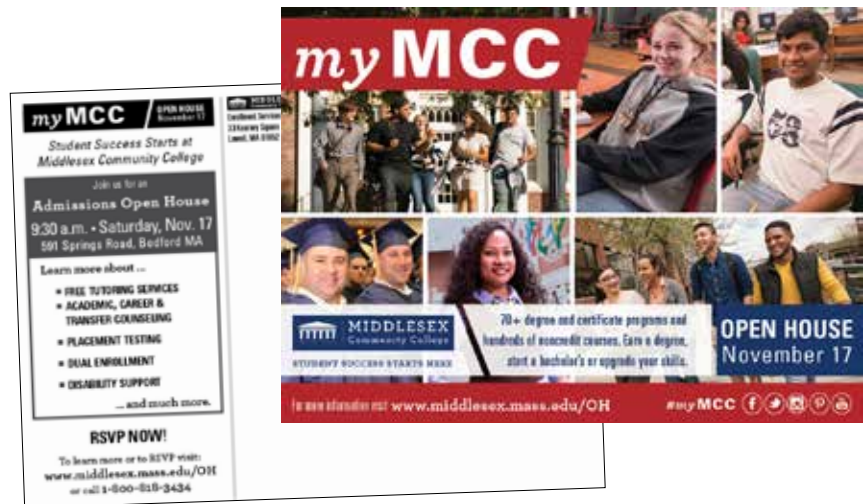
The purpose of the Middlesex Community College Strategic Marketing Plan is to support the college mission by enhancing public awareness and participation in the college's many programs, services and activities. The plan seeks to increase the overall visibility of the college, and reinforce its brand and reputation within the community.

The success of any marketing plan depends upon several factors, including effective advertising, public relations, and market research. Flexibility and innovation are also key factors to a plan's success. The Strategic Marketing Plan is informed by 2+ years of qualitative and quantitative data (including institutional research, surveys, application data, information cards, narrative forms and interviews) and is designed to adapt to the changing needs of the college and its audience.

At Middlesex Community College, Student Success Starts Here! By utilizing strategic marketing communications, we continue to build awareness about the college's important role within the community. We look to the future for opportunities to further promote student access and market student success at Middlesex, and we continue to focus on the goals of increasing enrollment, maximizing student retention, and creating strategic communications.



Light Post Banner



Open House Postcard



Online Tile Ad



Online Banner Ad



Student Success Starts Here

Office of Marketing Communications

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