Muskegon Community College Magazine
For Alumni, Retirees & Friends of MCC
Summer 2019

50 YEARS
MCC’S FRAUENTHAL FINE ARTS CENTER
I often lead my presentations by saying “Muskegon Community College is on the move.” Given what we have accomplished recently, this phrase never gets old.

Earlier this year, we welcomed Michigan’s new governor, Gretchen Whitmer, to campus to visit our recently opened Health and Wellness Center and to share her proposals on the community college role in talent development in the State. Michigan Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist came to MCC to tour the Sturrus Technology Center and learn how we are providing pathways to employment in advanced manufacturing and entrepreneurship for traditional students and incumbent workers.

MCC Biology Instructor Darren Mattone led a group of students to Washington, D.C., to present their research nationally as part of the Community College Undergraduate Research Initiative (CCURI), the result of a National Science Foundation grant. Professor Mattone was a co-principal investigator of the original NSF grant and continues to ensure that MCC students have every opportunity to expand their capacities.

Our Nursing graduates led the nation once again with their 100% first time pass rates on the National Council Licensing Examination for RNs and the National Council Licensing Examination for PNs. The national pass rates for these examinations is 85%.

I am humbled to share that this February, the Grand Rapids Business Journal recognized me as the Newsmaker of the Year in the Education Category in West Michigan. While this is an individual honor, many individuals on and around campus contributed to the recognition. Not to be outdone, Dr. John Selmon, our Executive Vice President and Provost, was selected by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program to join the 2019-2020 class of the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence, a leadership program aimed at preparing the next generation of community college presidents. Congratulations, Dr. Selmon!

The College has purchased property in Grand Haven as the new home for our Ottawa Center beginning this fall. This permanent location will replace space leased by the college at the Grand Haven Community Center and will annually serve almost 400 students including Ottawa Early College Students.

Muskegon Community College’s momentum is palpable. Under the visionary guidance of Chair Diana Osborn and the MCC Board of Trustees, we are able to move our mission forward while building upon the work of those who came before us. All of you, our alums, retirees, and greater community make us proud to be Jayhawks!
Celebrating 50 years of MCC's Frauenthal Fine Arts Center

By Peter D. Koryzno
MCC Communications Manager

In early January, while noisy construction crews were busy transforming the old tech wing into the new Art and Music Building, across campus an important Muskegon County milestone passed. The Frauenthal Fine Arts Center, whose three floors include the Overbrook Theater, Overbrook Art Gallery, dance and music rooms, marked its 50th anniversary on January 5.

With the college’s music program set to vacate the center later this year for its improved space in the new building, a follow-up to the art program will also fulfill the promise of state-of-the-art facilities made a half century ago, it is important to once again celebrate this Frauenthal Fine Arts Center’s legacy as it begins a new chapter.

The Taco John's Loudon Engineering Corp. founder A. Harold Frauenthal and his wife, Grace, donated $325,000 to MCC for the building. The state provided $340,000, and the college $476,716 to make the dream a reality.

The Muskegon Chronicle, reporting on the opening gala, called the Frauenthal “generously.” She lashed out at the community because L.C. Walker gave Walker Space to the people. The new building’s director, and Harryman invite area high schools to perform their works on the Overbrook stage in front of the other students and receive professional feedback four times a year. The energy that fills the theater during those school performances represents one of the thousands of success stories that comprise the legacy of MCC’s Frauenthal Fine Arts Center.

Bloomquist, asked when she would say to the Frauenthal today if such an opportunity were possible, responded. Thank you for creating a space where different is OK. A place where imagination and creativity were encouraged. A place to learn about art and ourselves. A place where friendships took root and still grow.

In the end, Dr. Kirk’s prayer was answered.
Tracy Lyn Lamb

Tracy Lyn Lamb, the award-winning executive director of NEWS, an organization providing domestic violence and sexual abuse services in California’s Napa Valley, was honored as the 2019 Muskegon Community College Distinguished Alumni Award recipient.

A Muskegon native, Lamb attended MCC from 1979 to 1983, when she graduated with an associate’s degree.

“When I came to MCC I didn’t have a lot of confidence in my academic ability,” recounted Lamb. “In high school, no one said to me, Tracy, you are college material. I didn’t even consider applying to four-year institutions. I was the first in my family to attend college and Muskegon Community College felt like a safe place to start. It turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life.”

After MCC, Lamb earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work from Western Michigan University.

She began her career as a crime victim advocate, then became a program manager and spent two years in Sonoma County (CA) District Attorney’s Office.

Lamb has been the executive director of NEWS since 2005. With its dedicated group of staff and volunteer domestic violence and sexual assault counselors, NEWS – an acronym standing for Nurturing Empowerment, Worth and Safety – provides direct client services and shelter 24/7 to approximately 1,300 annually. NEWS also offers preventative education and outreach programs.

This past year, Lamb has received the Excellence in Leadership Award from The Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Excellence in Leadership.

In partnership with On The Move, Lamb received a $50,000 grant from Raliance, an agency funded by the National Football League (NFL) and aimed at ending sexual violence in one generation. She used the funds to create a one-year youth leadership cohort for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Lamb was also instrumental in launching a primary prevention program called "NEWS About Sports," which involves school athletic directors, coaches and student athletes working to promote gender equity, bystander training, and positive, healthy relationships.

Lamb serves on the Board of Directors for the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the only professional organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of and supporting the work of rape crisis centers which operate independently throughout California.

She was successful in obtaining a $625,000 grant for NEWS Domestic Violence Housing First, which has helped domestic violence survivors move into apartments and prevented homelessness among others. She serves as co-chair of the Economic Self Sufficiency Committee focused on issues aimed at creating equity and quality of life. She is a member of the Napa County Child Abuse Prevention Council Steering Committee.

Established in 2017, the Alumni Achievement Award recipient is selected by the MCC Alumni Relations Committee. This is the third presentation of the award.

A native of Shelby, MI, Strait graduated from Shelby High School. He attended MCC from 1999 to 2003, when he earned an associate’s degree in nursing.

He went on to earn a Bachelor of Science Nursing from University of Detroit Mercy, a Master of Science in Nursing Administration at the University of Phoenix, and is a doctoral candidate in Nursing Administration at the University of Michigan.

“Muskegon Community College allowed me to get a high quality education without sacrificing time away from my friends and family,” said Strait. “Once I started down the path to becoming a nurse, and at every interval in between, my professors guided me to success.”

Nicholas Strait

Nicholas Strait ’03 was honored with the 2019 Alumni Achievement Award. This award recognizes extraordinary professional achievement by one of the institution’s graduates from the past 15 years. Nicholas is the director of Clinical Consolidation at Mercy Health in Muskegon.

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Nicholas Strait, from general education courses to specialty nursing courses, each instructor provided me with the resources I needed to thrive. With my nursing degree in hand, I was able to start working right away at Mercy Health without the crippling student loan debt many of my peers were saddled with.”

Strait continues his nursing career in Muskegon. An experienced director of nursing services, he has practiced nursing in many different roles, bedside nursing, unit management, department management, and currently as the Director of Clinical Consolidation at Mercy Health.

He serves as the process improvement facilitator for clinical groups in three hospital sites. He is the director, facilitator, problem solver and overall project manager for construction, finance and clinical teams to complete Mercy Health’s $271 million hospital consolidation project.

Strait has served as campaign co-chair of United Way and currently serves on the Muskegon Community College Foundation Board.

He and his wife, Sara, have four children – Jacob, Zachary, Evey and Andrew.

Nominate an Alumnus Today!

Help us continue these long-standing traditions and honor of the Muskegon Community College Alumni Awards. Nominations for the Distinguished Alumni Award or the Alumni Achievement Award are accepted year-round. Learn more on the website or contact Rachell Strait, Director of Community Relations at 231-759-3000 ext 3000 or at rachell.strait@muskegoncc.edu.
Health and Wellness Center

This new 52,000 square foot classroom and academic building located on the south side of the main Muskegon Community College campus now functions as the primary location for MCC’s Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) Department. Focused on the health and wellness of all students, the HPER Department offers classes that are required in most students’ core curriculum. In addition, the facility contains collaborative learning spaces; large and small classrooms; a state-of-the-art Health Simulation Lab for MCC students in nursing, respiratory therapy, and medical assistant programs; and the Mercy Health Partners Primary Care center. A collaboration between MCC and its Mercy Health and Grand Valley State University educational partners, the primary care center provides MCC nursing, respiratory therapy and medical assistant students with opportunities for required clinical hours.
The video launched a series of fundraisers on campus including cookie sales and donations at the bookstore. Students, staff, and faculty were encouraged to give their spare change in the bookstore in exchange for their name on a feather to be displayed at the store as well as a "Help Save Jay" pin to raise awareness. Many individuals and departments also donated $100 or more to be included in the "Blue Feather Club" with prominent displays in the book store as well. "We really have a giving community at MCC and it has been great to see. Our MCC Bookstore to showcase this generosity" mentioned Kim Oakes, Manager of the Muskegon Community College Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

Additionally, the Foundation for Muskegon Community College played a huge part in the campaign supporting the project with approval of a Special Needs Grant. These grants are approved by the Foundation Board of Directors to support projects that have a direct and measurable impact on student success and retention. Noted Am Breeze, Foundation Board President, "With Jay being such an iconic and recognizable image for the College, and with the demonstrated fundraising effort by students and staff already underway, the Foundation Board unanimously felt a need to lend a hand in making the new mascot possible. May Jay live a long and healthy life and with fresh energy continue to help promote our fabulous Muskegon Community College!"

With Foundation grant approval and continued on-campus fundraisers, the 2019 Commencement Ceremony concluded with a special surprise to the graduates and crowd with the reveal of the new and improved Jay!"It was so much fun to be able to reveal the new costume to the audience at the Commencement Ceremony! Jay was very well received by children, graduate and adults. We are looking forward to his appearances at more community events as well as the college’s athletic competitions and other student engagement activities," said James.

As the demand for appearances by Jay grows, there is still need to support the fundraising effort and establish a maintenance account so as to assure Jay’s long-term “health”. If you are interested in supporting the Jayhawk mascot project, please contact the Office of the Foundation for Muskegon Community College at muskegoncc.edu/foundation-for-mcc.

For almost 80 years the Jayhawk has been the mascot for Muskegon Community College. During that time there have been many changes to the look and even the color of this mystical bird, but nevertheless, “Jay” has grown as its own identity. The Jayhawk costume has been used at numerous athletic competitions and community events to promote the college and engage with students, faculty, staff and alumni. All of this use began to take a toll on the condition of the costume and it was time for an upgrade.

"This project really grew from a group of employees who saw the need for a new costume and thought the fundraising could be done in a creative way to respect the history of the old costume, but also get people excited about a new look!” said Ryan Bytwerk in the long jump.

Jayhawks Capture National, Regional Honors in 2018-19

Women’s Bowling
The talent-laden Jayhawks finished second in the nation at 2019 NJCAA National Championships in Buffalo, NY. Meagan Balka took second nationally in the all-events to become the fourth bowling All-American at MCC. She placed third in singles. Rachel Pierce and Jamie Perry took third in doubles nationally. Kendra Schultheis was the Regional XII champion. All four bowlers and Ashlyn Cross were All-Region selections.

Men’s Soccer
One of 12 teams in the nation to qualify for the 2018 NJCAA National Championships in Daytona Beach, FL, the Region XII Champion Jayhawks finished the 2018-19 season with a 12-4 record. Tommy TenCate, Daniel DuBois and Matt Udel were All-Region First Team.

Women’s Cross Country
The Jayhawks led all Michigan colleges with their 15th place in the nation at the 2018 NJCAA Championships in Garden City, Kansas. Maddy Windberg took 54th and Grace Sweet finished 60th among the 293 runners. The two Jayhawks, along with Adele Cory and Ellie Nausadis, were All-Region runners.

Volleyball
NJCAA Div. II Second Team All-American Julie Brown paced the Jayhawks to the NJCAA Region XII championship match. Brown and Jaren Smith earned Region XII All-Tournament Team honors. MCC finished with a 32-12 record and ranked 16th in the nation.

Men’s Cross Country
Mitch Johnson, who took 98th among the 289 runners, frontal the Jayhawks to place 21st in the nation at the 2018 NJCAA National Championships in Garden City, Kansas. Johnson, Kyle Benham, Michael Hyatt and Cameron Goen captured All-Region laurels.

Women’s Soccer
The Region XII co-champions advanced to the North Central Championship semifinals. First Team All-Region selections Emily Winicki, Viviana Mirtilis and Haley Rulier led the 8-7 Jayhawks.

Men’s Bowling
Vincent Birch and Tony Long placed seventh nationally in doubles competition at the 2019 NJCAA National Bowling Championships in Buffalo, NY. Birch also won All-Region honors.

Women’s Soccer
The 2019 Region XII champions for the Outdoor Track team which won the regional title.

Second Team All-American Julie Brown (right) helped MCC capture the regional title.

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David De Leeuw and his wife Emily Winicki helped lead MCC to the regional title.

Women’s Basketball
Ranked nationally throughout much of the season, the Jayhawks advanced to the NJCAA District Quarterfinals. All-Region players Elsia Mattos and Delaney Bolles led the Jayhawks to a 23-5 overall record and a 14-3 mark in the Western Conference.

Men’s Indoor Track
The Jayhawks placed third in the Region XII meet, High jumper Armand Gordon and long jumper Anthony Guagliardi captured regional titles.

Women’s Indoor Track
The Jayhawk women took fourth place in the Region XII meet.

Baseball
The Jayhawks posted a 31-18 overall record and finished fifth in the MCCAA Western Conference with a 15-13 league record.

Softball
The Jayhawks had a 14-32 overall record and took seventh in the Western Conference with a 10-24 league mark.

Women’s Outdoor Track
Grace Sweet won the 800 meters regional title to pace the Jayhawk women to a fourth place finish in the Region XII Championships.

Men’s Golf
Keaton Inglis tied for 18th in the nation to earn All-American honors at the NJCAA Div. II National Championships. Zach Lissam tied for 114th and Andrew McConnell tied for 120th nationally. The Jayhawks placed second in the MCCAA Western Conference Tournament.

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Room Renumbering

By Rachel Stewart, Alumni and Donor Relations Manager

The talent-laden 1963 and 1964 MCC men’s cross country teams, which won the first back-to-back national championships in Michigan community college athletics history, were formally inducted into the prestigious Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame during its 33rd annual ceremonies on June 1 at the Muskegon Country Club.

Ironically, the club’s grassy rolling hills served as the team’s home course, one they often traversed on bare feet.

“Running barefoot on the golf course here actually felt really good,” quipped Scott Barton, who spoke for the honorees at the banquet. “We just had to avoid the acorns.”

In 1964, many of the MCC team members competed without shoes for the first 10 miles of the inaugural Seaway Run, from Pere Marquette Park, before putting on their running shoes for the final stretch across city streets.

“Back then, there was no campus,” explained Barton, noting that the current MCC main campus would not open its doors for another few years. “Classes were held at the Hackley Building, Vanderlaan School and the Wilson Building. Cross country practice took place at Freetel School on Jackson Hill.”

“Why did we have the success we had? Of course it helps to have an elite runner like Roger Plont, but I think it’s even more important to have depth.”

Plont, who passed away in 2008, led all competitors while shattering the Erie County Technical Institute’s course record by 37 seconds despite the rain and fog at the 1963 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Championship in Buffalo, N.Y. He went on to help lead Eastern Michigan University’s cross country teams to NCAA national titles in 1964 and 1965 and is enshrined in WMU’s Hall of Fame.

“I think it’s safe to say that Roger was the greatest cross country runner in Muskegon Community College history,” added Barton.

“Roger was the most competitive runner I’ve ever known. Long distance runners don’t just train by running long distances. To maximize your conditioning, you must run sprints and other shorter runs. To motivate yourself to give 100 percent on 8 to 10 sprints or intermediate runs on a regular basis through a whole season is pretty much impossible, unless you are Roger Plont.”

“Other teams had elite runners but didn’t have the depth,” explained Barton. “Our third, fourth and fifth runners crushed their third through fifth runners. Our runners all worked hard to improve over the season. Our sixth and seventh runners pushed the fourth and fifth runners.”

At the 1963 national meet, Barton and Roger Hamel finished seventh and eighth, respectively, with Ken Merricks 21st, Bill Bringedahl 36th, Bill Kowalski 50th and Dave Hopkins 55th to round out the Jayhawk runners.

At the 1964 NJCAA Championship in Jackson, MI, Barton and Mike Gaunt took fifth and ninth, respectively, to lead the Jayhawks to a second consecutive national crown. David Bolduc placed 22nd, Tom Redenius 32nd, Mike Cassady 34th and Jon Dodson 42nd.

Plont, Gaunt and Dodson were honored posthumously with Hall of Fame plaques. Barton reserved much of the praise and credit for the team’s success to their legendary coach Rudy Bartels. “I’ve never met anyone who didn’t like Rudy,” he noted. “He was a very easy going, pleasant gentleman. He proved you didn’t have to be a superstar to win.”

“To say we are surprised by this honor is an understatement,” concluded Barton.

“Stocked is probably more accurate. After 55 years, we never expected this. Cross country runners aren’t used to getting recognition like athletes in the major sports. To be in the company of Hall of Fame members like Earl Morrall, who played quarterback in two Super Bowls, is quite an honor.”

Strategic Plan, these changes are going to make it easier for our students and the public to navigate campus,” said Marty McDermott, Dean of Athletic Services and Athletic Director.

Every room in the main campus building, Science Center, Automotive Building, and Art and Music Building will be involved in the renumbering process which includes installation of 962 new signs! There will no longer be odd or even wings in the building. The 1000s will run sequentially across the main floor of the main campus, with the 2000s in the same sequence below on the second floor and the 1000s in the same order beneath on the third floor.

Further, the 1200s will be located in the new Art and Music Building. The 1300s, 2300s and the 3300s are on the Stevenson Center first, second and third floors, respectively. The
Athletic Shoe Entrepreneur Steps into the Spotlight with $10K NextGen Award

By Peter D. Koryno
MCC Communications Manager

MCC student Jake Goedert can trace his history for owning vintage sneakers to a trip to the Muskegon Mall, where, as an eighth grader, he relentlessly pleaded his mother to buy him a pair of Nike Flight 89s. "They originally came out in 1989, but Nike brought them back in 2012 and I wanted them so badly," recounts Jake, who, within a few years would land a job at the same shoe store. His knowledge and interest in the athletic footwear market coupled with his newfound employee discount sparked an idea for a business venture. "It was when the Jordan 11 Space Jams first came out in December 2016," recalls Jake, who purchased a $220 retail pair with his discount for $160 and then quickly sold them to a guy outside the Mall for about $330.

"Unfortunately, employees were limited to just one pair, but it was a moment of me realizing what I had just unlocked," says Jake, who at the same time was taking a business class at the Career Tech Center. Every Friday, MCC Entrepreneurial Studies Chair David Stadafel taught a Community Engagement course to the teenagers about starting one's own business.

"Dave kind of kicked it off for me," says Jake, an Oakeside High School graduate. "I knew I wanted to be my own boss and do my own thing."

"From the beginning, Jake was a standout because he was a very outgoing person," remembers Stadafel. "He was serious about the business and that caught my eye. He obviously enjoyed entrepreneurship enough to come to the college and take my entrepreneur training classes.

For his required business idea part of the course, Jake created Family and Friends Sneakers, naming his venture after a term used by the shoe companies when launching a new line. The companies will make a unique design twist to about 20 pairs of a new shoe line as a gift to the shoe’s namesake to share with his or her “Friends and Family.” Many of the recipients will put the shoes for sale on the open market.

"Take the Jordan 5 Retro Fresh Prince, the shoes that Will Smith wore on ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel Air’ TV show,' explains Jake. "The retail white and purple pair goes for about $150 to $200. The Friends and Family pair, which was all gold, sells for thousands of dollars."

This idea started with me trying to find the shoes that I actually liked," he continues. "I want to make my shoes. I am just changing so much to make these shoes? Then it realized it was really supply and demand. The products that I liked sold out everywhere. You couldn’t find them except to buy them off a Stock X app, but paying a couple of hundreds of dollars over the retail price because they’re very in-demand.’"

Soon, Jake started making contacts to buy the special sneakers himself and sell them for under the prices offered by larger, well-known ventures like Stock X and Go Flight Club.

"It’s a real personal level that I bring to the shoe, which is why I added the Friends and Family name," Jake says. "I treat my customers like they are friends and family. A lot of people would prefer to buy from a person rather than a big company.

As an MCC entrepreneurial studies student, Jake was eligible to submit his strategic plan in the competition for a $10,000 seed fund, an annual award created and funded by Nick and Ashley Sarnicola, the generous founders of NextGen, whose mission is to help young entrepreneurs realize their passions. Sarnicola and NextGen Executive Director Patrick Adams serve on the award selection committee.

On May 9, Sarnicola informed a speechless Jake that he had won the announcement. "He’s ready to launch his business. We are looking for young entrepreneurs that are ready, that have taken those first steps, and that are committed and dedicated. He has got what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur and we’re going to come alongside him and give him all the support he needs from a mentoring standpoint.

A grateful Jake plans to use some of the funds to attend upcoming Sneaker Convention held five or six times a year at various large U.S. cities for the thousands and thousands of athletic shoe buyers and sellers.

Does Jake think he can compete in this large international market? "Oh, I know I can," he responds, exhibiting the confidence that impressed Sarnicola. ‘I’ve been doing this for the last three years. I have made quite a name for myself. The last couple of years, I have been selling on Instagram and Facebook. You need to have knowledge, product knowledge. Anybody can go out to the Finish Line in Muskegon and be like, ‘Oh, I am going to buy that Jordan and sell it for more money.' Anybody can do that. The fact that anybody can, does not mean you should.”

"The biggest risk is buying multiple shoes figuring you can make money on them and then they’re brick, which means that they’re not worth anything. That’s happened to me once or twice, but fortunately I bought only one pair and I always find a way to just make my money back.

Jake has come a long way since the days when he and his father, James, started collecting and selling some 10,000 Hot Wheels over the years as a hobby. Even his mother, Karen, who was more than somewhat incredulous as her home started to fill with boxes of sneakers, has come around.

"My parents looked at me and they were praying for me and they said, ‘We hope that you win this.’" recounts Jake. "Because I know a lot of people look at you and what you do and they think it ain’t worth a damn. He’s talking about a business that is now worth thousands of dollars and it’s not going anywhere. ‘He’s buying and selling shoes, so what?’ The fact someone like Nick believed in me — I know that my parents believed in me — it just solidified my idea and it gives me the strength to really believe in myself to make this actually happen.”
Reflections Magazine

Student success forms the cornerstone of and universities. Degrees, or transfer to four-year colleges to semester, graduate with certificates or measures of student success -- the rates achievement over the past decade. The culture of positivity on the MCC of Student Success Patti D'Avignon.

"Students just started to take one and either keep it or give it to someone else who 's worth it!' before plucking the message handwritten by a student worker like "You're stronger than you think you are!" or "What's best for students in this situation?" PCC's people have always had a heart for students. What we lacked was orchestration -- shared vision and resources."

Embedding student success into the operations and attitudes of an entire institution takes time. MCC has pursued this goal with laser-like focus for nearly a decade, after the college fueled by its disappointing three-year 13% graduation rate replaced its emphasis on student success with one on student success, Data revealed that three out of four students attending MCC were seeking an associate's degree and/or to transfer to a four-year college or university as their goal.

"But there's still work to be done," she continues. "This is what new Muskegon Community College employees hear at their orientation to the college, and the message carries over into their work as they approach each decision with the refrain, 'What's best for students in this situation?' MCC's people have always had a heart for students. What we lacked was orchestration -- shared vision and resources."

The culture of positivity on the MCC campus reflects an actual utopia in student achievement over the past decade. The college has seen improvements in several measures of student success -- the rates at which students persist from semester to semester, graduate with certificates or degrees, or transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

Student success forms the cornerstone of Muskegon Community College's mission, vision, and its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. In recent years, the college has earned recognition as Michigan's Top-Ranked Community College and for its selection as an Achieving the Dream Leader College. The data support these well-deserved accolades:

• 49% of MCC students transfer to a four-year college (compared to a 34% national average)
• 40% of MCC students complete any degree within six years
• 94% fail-to-winter persistence rate (compared to 83% state and national)
• 22% drop-out rate (compared to 25% state and 26% national averages)

We care about students," affirms J.B. Klingenberg, an MCC English Instructor and Student Success Strategy Team member. "We want them to achieve their goals. We believe it is our moral and ethical responsibility to help them succeed. We have the systems and resources in place to make it happen.

Klingenberg and her colleagues share a collective pride in their accomplishments to date.

"The organization taught college leaders to ask questions," explains Klingenberg. "Why were so few students completing a degree? Why do some students succeed while others do not? What barriers keep students from achieving their goals?"

These questions led college leaders through an important process whose steps would be repeated many times during the next several years:

• identify an achievement gap;
• investigate the barriers that caused it;
• review national best practices or innovate to adopt a strategy designed to help students overcome the barrier;
• use student success data and student feedback to evaluate the usefulness of the strategy;
• make improvements based on the evaluation;
• allocate resources to accommodate scaling up;
• amend policies to make proven strategies inestimable for the students who need them most.

This process set up a rhythm of continuous improvement that the college views as its new normal.

"We don't just assume our student success strategies are perfect from the start or abandon them if they don't have the impact we expect," says J.B. Meeuwenberg, Chairperson of the College Success Center. "We try things, evaluate them, and tweak them. It's a process."

Providing support for student success was not a new concept for MCC. Some strategies, like New Student Orientation, College Success Seminar, and Tutoring, had been around for decades.

"But we took a Field of Dreams attitude: If we offer it, students will take advantage of it," recalls Klingenberg. "Unfortunately, students aren't often inclined to walk into a campus office and say, 'I need help.'"

MCC needed systemic support for student success strategies, the tools to identify and reach out to students who would benefit from them the most, the confidence to require them, the resources to provide a valuable experience, and the ability to track students' progress and measure the influence the practices had on their success.

"That's why MCC's first few years in Achieving the Dream were about strengthening behind-the-scenes systems and policies to accommodate a true student success agenda," adds Klingenberg.

New strategies resulted from collaboration with community colleges nationally. MCC participated in the statewide Michigan Transfer Pathways initiative to make transfer between itself and four-year colleges seamless. MCC also participates in the national Guided Pathways movement to help guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market. A transformation at MCC was happening. From 2014 to 2017, the overall college-level credit completion rate increased from 73% to 77%. Black students improved by over 11 percentage points and first-generation students by over 7 percentage points. Meanwhile, pass rates in gateway Math and English courses during a student's first year increased 4 percentage points.

In 2017, 88% of new students participated in New Student Orientation, 62% met with a counselor, and 41% enrolled in College Success Seminar in their first semester. Change was underway, yet not all strategies stemmed from collaboration.

"Sometimes innovation is the best option," says Klingenberg. "For example, MCC created a campus office which would allow instructors to identify students in need."

"In order for improvements to be meaningful and sustainable, they had to be slow and incremental," she continues. "After a time, MCC stopped referring to Achieving the Dream as something the college did and started referring to student success as how the campus did everything."

"It wasn't until we were able to look back over the span of nearly a decade to see how far we'd come that we truly felt like a Leader College," she adds. "When centering the college's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan on student success seemed like the most natural thing, not a battle or a gimmick, MCC knew it had arrived."

What effect does that have on today's MCC students?

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What effect does that have on today's MCC students?

Klingenberg replies, "MCC students can say, 'Someone notices when I'm struggling with something in the classroom or in my life. They talk to me and connect me with someone who can help, and then they keep track of me to make sure I'm doing okay.'"

"Sometimes, MCC students may even express an upbeat sentiment on a note to be shared with others."
**Message from Alumni and Donor Relations Manager**

Early this Spring I had the opportunity to participate in a global residency study abroad trip to Argentina and Chile. The experience was rich with culture and new experiences. There was one inconvenience being abroad that I did not anticipate and that was not being able to keep up on the final season of Game of Thrones or the new Marvel Avenger’s movie, Endgame! I know this may sound trivial, but fans of these shows know what a cultural phenomenon these stories have been to fans all over the world.

This experience was a great reminder to me about the power of storytelling which makes us human and there are so many amazing stories to tell about our Alumni from Muskegon Community College. I am humbled to serve in a role at the institution to help tell these experiences and I encourage our alumni and friends of the college to keep sharing them!

Our office is busy planning events and other opportunities to stay involved during the coming academic year, please be sure to watch your mail, emails and follow our social media!

Last, but not least, I would like to give a special welcome to our newest members of the MCC Alumni Association from the graduating class of 2019 reading this publication! Welcome to your new MCC Family!

**Rachel Stewart**
Alumni and Donor Relations Manager

Update your alumni information online at muskegoncc.edu/alumni-relations/

Did you see our billboard? In partnership with the Watch Muskegon Campaign, MCC Alumni Amy Helser was featured earlier this year to northwest traffic on US 131. Amy is the Director of Human Resources at Ascend, a community leader and philanthropist.
SAVE THE DATE!

Founder's Day Celebration

Saturday, September 28

Join us for an evening of theatrical mystery and celebration of the founding of Muskegon Community College!

muskegoncc.edu/foundation-for-mcc