

**Muskegon Community College**  
**Report on activities to protect open student expression and speech**  
**Fulfilling Section 226d Reporting Requirement**  
**Due February 1, 2022**

As per Section 226d of Michigan Public Act 165 of 2020, this report outlines activities related to strategic planning and internal assessment or reassessment to best provide for open and free expression and speech, while protecting students from hate-speech, violence, and discrimination. This report has been provided via email to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on community colleges, the Senate and House Fiscal Agencies, and the State Budget Director.

A commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression have long been a tradition at Muskegon Community College (MCC) and continue to be reflected in the College's activities, policies, and collective bargaining agreements. The Course Catalog communicates this commitment with the following statement. "Muskegon Community College continues to promote staff diversity and is an equal opportunity employer. MCC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, transgender status, political persuasion, disability, height, weight, veteran status, age or any other protected class in any of its educational programs, activities or employment. Minorities, women, veterans, and the physically challenged are encouraged to apply. Anyone with a disability will be reasonably accommodated by the College."

**Policies related to open and free expression**

Muskegon Community College (MCC) has policies in place that provide for open and free expression and speech, while protecting students from hate-speech, violence, and discrimination. Specifically, MCC has a Freedom of Expression policy designed to support freedom of expression while ensuring it does not interfere with college operations and the learning environment. In addition, MCC has a formal Student Code of Conduct that outlines the expectations of student conduct while protecting students from harmful conduct by other students.

These policies are available on the college website at the following location:

<https://www.muskegoncc.edu/compliance/>

**Activities supporting and assessing open and free expression**

- During new student orientation, students are provided information about the Student Code of Conduct and Title IX.
- Each semester, The Office of the Provost sends a welcome email to all students and that email contains the Student Code of Conduct.

- All syllabi at MCC have required content, which includes a statement on student behavior: “MCC has the duty to provide students with privileges, opportunities, and protections that best promote learning; and students have the right to a non-threatening learning environment”.
- The Statement of Professional Ethics and the Faculty Master Agreement also protect students’ academic freedom and freedom of expression in various ways. These documents stipulate, that “professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors” and “that no religious or political proselytizing shall be conducted in the classroom.”
- The Student Government Association provides students with the opportunity “for discussion, investigation and resolution of student problems, concerns and ideas.”
- The student newspaper “The Bay Window” provides another opportunity for open and free expression.
- MCC has a Behavioral Intervention Team whose responsibility is to identify and coordinate services or intervention strategies for a broad range of troubling student behaviors, including but not limited to substance abuse, mental illness, disruptive, aggressive, and threatening conduct. MCC administrators, faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to report any issues of concern to the BIT team through the MCC website: <http://www.muskegoncc.edu/student-services-and-administration/campus-safety-and-security/behavioral-intervention-team-bit/>
- Academic freedom and freedom of expression also extend to the online environment. MCC’s Social Media Policies and Procedures state that The College “is committed to fostering an educational environment that allows for freedoms of speech and expression in accordance with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.” To protect the rights of all, those protections end any activity or posting that includes “unlawful, defamatory, or obscene” content.
- In 2020, the employee handbook, including student workers, was updated and distributed to employees. MCC’s Freedom of Expression information is included in the employee handbook. The handbook is available on the college website at the following location: <https://www.muskegoncc.edu/human-resources/human-resources-agreements-policies/>
- MCC assesses policies and procedures on a regular basis through the Strategic Planning and Implementation Team, the Student Success Strategy Team, the Assessment Committee, and the President’s Cabinet.
- The College regularly assesses students' engagement and satisfaction through surveys and focus groups, and the results are discussed in small and large gatherings. Over the last year MCC hosted six Futures for Frontliners and Michigan Reconnect town hall meetings where the College Student Services team discussed the programs, answered questions and pointed students in the right direction for resources.
- During the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan process, MCC conducted the following activities:
  - 5 surveys of the general public, business leaders and alumni
  - 2 surveys of students

- 1 community town hall
  - 1 community forum
  - 2 student town halls
  - 2 student forums
  - 3 student focus groups
  - 6 surveys of employees
  - 6 planning committee meetings including employees and students
- Students, employees, and the public have multiple ways to express concerns or ask for help, and concerns are treated seriously and with respect. Every concern provides the opportunity for the college to reflect on policies and procedures to ensure we provide an environment conducive to open and free expression and speech, where students feel safe to learn.
  - In October 2021 a *Priorities Survey for Online Learners* was conducted to gather key information from students about what they consider important including their satisfaction on specific topics regarding online services. Feedback from 377 students (10% return response) was received. This information will be used to evaluate areas of highest importance and to make any necessary adjustments to improve student satisfaction.
  - Objective #2.04.07 of Muskegon Community Colleges' 2022-2026 Strategic Plan ensures there is an annual assessment of the institution's protection of open and free expression and speech, while protecting students from hate-speech, violence and discrimination.