

# MECC Strategic Plan 2024-2025 Goal Progress Report

## Overarching Goal (Target 428 - Actual 329)

Summary: MECC advanced its overarching goal of improving student access and success through strategic partnerships, expanded support services, and data-informed evaluation practices. Notable achievements include the renewal of the Flatwoods Job Corps Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the implementation of a comprehensive evaluation framework aligned with Accelerate Opportunity goals. MECC advanced its overarching goal of improving student access and success by aligning institutional strategies with the Virginia Community College System's (VCCS) Accelerate Opportunity framework. This alignment was evident in both internal planning and external reporting.

Key accomplishments include:

- **Strategic Alignment with VCCS Goals:** MECC's local strategic plan was developed in parallel with the VCCS Accelerate Opportunity plan, ensuring that institutional priorities such as equity, workforce readiness, and student success were reflected in both local and system-level metrics.
- **Renewal of the Flatwoods Job Corps MOU:** This partnership with the USDA Forest Service supports curriculum alignment and enhances student employability. It exemplifies MECC's commitment to regional workforce development and access to technical training.
- **Implementation of a Comprehensive Evaluation Framework:** MECC adopted a structured evaluation process that includes faculty and staff development, performance tracking, and alignment with Accelerate Opportunity goals 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4. This framework supports continuous improvement and accountability.
- **Data-Informed Decision Making:** The college utilized system-provided metrics and internal data to assess progress and identify areas for growth. This approach enabled MECC to respond proactively to enrollment trends, student needs, and workforce demands.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions engaged in a strategic realignment process that incorporated input from multiple departments, including academic affairs, workforce solutions, and student services, fostering a shared commitment to institutional goals.

## Accelerate Opportunity Goals (1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4)

Summary:

- Implemented a new evaluation conversation guide to support faculty and staff development.
- Expanded dual enrollment and career navigator support in local high schools.
- Increased student access to tutoring and emergency assistance through Foundation funding.
- Strengthened data use in decision-making and goal tracking.

MECC made significant progress toward the Accelerate Opportunity 2024–2025 goals, with targeted efforts across academic programming, student support, and workforce alignment. A data-informed approach and a commitment to equity and access guided these efforts.

**Goal 1.4 – Increase graduates in regionally high-demand fields (Target 156 – Actual 122)**

MECC aligned its program offerings with regional labor market needs, especially in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology. The college expanded its partnerships with local employers and workforce boards to ensure that graduates possess industry-recognized credentials.

**Goal 1.5 – Increase graduates entering high-growth industries (Target 173 – Actual 233)**

To meet this goal, MECC enhanced its advising and career navigation services, particularly for students in high-demand programs. The college also leveraged Foundation funding to support students in high-cost programs through funding licensure testing requirements, reducing financial barriers to completion.

**Goal 2.1 – Increase enrollment in high-demand fields (Goal 299 – Actual 514)**

MECC implemented targeted recruitment strategies and expanded dual enrollment opportunities in partnership with local high schools. Career navigators, funded through the MECC Foundation, played a critical role in guiding students into regionally aligned programs. These efforts contributed to a measurable increase in enrollment in priority fields. MECC successfully finalized the VEDP Talent Accelerator Scope of Services agreement, which involved collaboration with the Virginia Community College System. This partnership aims to enhance workforce training and supports Virginia's economic development goals, highlighting MECC's role in statewide talent initiatives.

**Goal 2.2 – Increase FastForward enrollment (Goal 89 – Actual 98)**

The college increased awareness and access to FastForward programs through community outreach and employer engagement. The College's growth in Fast Forward enrollment has been substantial, with double-digit percentage increases over the last three years.

**Goal 2.4 – Increase enrollment of working-age adults (Goal 367 – Actual 659)**

MECC expanded its evening and online course offerings to better serve adult learners. The college also provided wraparound services—including tutoring, emergency assistance, and flexible scheduling—to support the success of adult students. These initiatives were supported by Foundation resources and were informed by community needs assessments.

## Accelerate Opportunity Goals (5.2, 5.3, 5.7)

Overview:

- Enhanced professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Improved transparency and service delivery through HR system upgrades (Team Dynamix).

- Promoted a culture of recognition and inclusion through campus-wide celebrations and acknowledgments.

MECC made significant progress toward the Accelerate Opportunity goals related to funding, capacity-building, and student affordability. These efforts were guided by the Chancellor's 2024–2025 priorities and reinforced by MECC's leadership in aligning institutional strategies with statewide objectives.

### **Goal 5.2 – Seek additional FastForward funding investments**

MECC actively supported the VCCS system's efforts to secure increased FastForward funding from the Commonwealth. This included presidential advocacy through the Chancellor's Office, as well as participation in legislative activities and strategic planning discussions. MECC's Strategic Priorities for FY25 emphasized the importance of expanding FastForward programs to meet growing regional demand.

### **Goal 5.3 – Seek additional annual funding for capacity-building**

MECC prioritized infrastructure and staffing investments to support high-demand programs. Notable initiatives included:

- A proposal to create a dedicated space on campus for building trades instruction.
- Renovation of classroom space to support expanded workforce programming
- Life-safety upgrades to Godwin Hall
- Elevator upgrades in Robb Hall
- Upgraded and expanded Simulation Lab for use in multiple health sciences curricula.
- Received funding from the MECC Foundation to improve campus infrastructure.
- Funding allocations for professional development to enhance instructional quality.
- A third-party assessment of MECC's salary structure to ensure competitiveness and support recruitment and retention
- Approval to offer Machine Tool Technology programming and credentials through the Technology Studies degree pathway.

These initiatives reflect MECC's commitment to building institutional capacity in alignment with regional workforce needs.

### **Goal 5.7 – Review current student fee structures**

MECC initiated a review of its student fee structures to identify opportunities for increased affordability, transparency, and program equity. This review was part of a broader system-wide initiative to ensure that financial policies support equitable access and student success.

## **One-System Goals**

### **Dual Enrollment**

MECC significantly expanded its dual enrollment offerings during the 2024–2025 academic year, strengthening partnerships with local school divisions across its service region. This expansion was supported by Foundation-funded career navigators who worked directly with

high school students to guide them into college-aligned pathways. These navigators played a critical role in:

- Increasing awareness of dual enrollment opportunities.
- Assisting students with course selection and registration.
- Supporting transitions from high school to postsecondary education.

The college also aligned dual enrollment courses with regional workforce needs, particularly in healthcare and technical trades, ensuring that students could earn credentials with immediate labor market value. This work directly supports the VCCS One-System goal of improving access and equity across the Commonwealth.

### **Code of Conduct**

MECC reinforced its commitment to ethical leadership and inclusive practices through a series of staff development and student engagement initiatives. These included:

- Hosting professional development sessions focused on inclusive pedagogy, ethical decision-making, and student-centered leadership.
- Integrating Code of Conduct principles into new student orientation and advising sessions.
- Promoting a culture of respect and accountability through campus-wide messaging and leadership modeling.

## **Institutional Goals/Outcomes**

Overview:

- Renewed Flatwoods Job Corps MOU to align workforce training with regional needs.
- Celebrated student and staff achievements through formal recognition events.
- Completed the review and approval process for the VEDP Talent Accelerator Scope of Services document.
- Transitioned from a college-owned and operated bookstore to an online bookstore (VitalSource).
- Transformed MECC's Wampler Library into a welcoming environment, including curated collections and cultural exhibits; the library fosters student success and enriches the broader campus experience.
- Completed the campus site selection for MECC's Amphitheater, funded by the MECC Foundation.
- Completed phase 1 of moving the workforce FastForward programming to campus. Foundation-funded renovations will allow for phase 2 of this project to continue in FY26.
- Provided Leadership professional development opportunities for current MECC employees through the MECC Presidential Leadership Institute. This semester-long course introduces emerging leaders within the College to key leadership principles and the governance structures and operations of the VCCS.

Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) made significant strides toward its institutional goals for the 2024–2025 academic year, implementing initiatives that strengthened workforce alignment, enhanced student support, and built internal capacity. These efforts were guided by the college's strategic plan and aligned with the VCCS Accelerate Opportunity framework.

### **1. Workforce Alignment and Regional Partnerships**

MECC renewed its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USDA Forest Service's Flatwoods Job Corps, reinforcing its commitment to workforce-aligned training. This partnership supports curriculum development and provides students with direct access to technical training and employment pathways.

### **2. Recognition and Culture of Excellence**

The college celebrated student and staff achievements through formal recognition events, including the Celebration of People, the Student Awards Ceremony, and program-specific completion events (e.g., Nursing Pinning, Dental Assisting Pinning, Powerline Worker graduation). Cultural programming was expanded in the Wampler Library. MECC aligned the costs with revenue for all sponsored cultural events. These events highlighted MECC's commitment to fostering a culture of appreciation and excellence.

### **3. Foundation Impact and Financial Stewardship**

The MECC Foundation maintained an endowment of \$39.8 million and continued to fund a wide range of student and community initiatives. These included:

- Scholarships and emergency assistance
- Tutoring and academic support
- Cultural programming and humanities events
- Professional development for faculty and staff
- Grant writing, advocacy and oversight
- Implemented a new endowed accounting system to enhance financial transparency and reporting
- Expanded the MECC Promise Scholarship to eligible high school graduates from the region

### **4. Bookstore Transition**

MECC transitioned from a college-owned and operated bookstore to an online bookstore platform (VitalSource). This change was implemented to provide enhanced access to course materials and lower costs for students, aligning with the college's affordability objectives. In reality, there were merger and communication issues throughout the year. MECC will focus on enhancing access to course materials and reducing costs for students in FY26.

### **5. Campus Infrastructure and Workforce Relocation**

The college completed Phase 1 of locating workforce programming on campus. Phase 2 of the project is scheduled for FY26 and will further expand instructional space and capacity.

### **6. Leadership Development**

MECC launched the Presidential Leadership Institute, a semester-long professional development program for emerging leaders. The course introduced participants to key leadership principles and the governance structures of the VCCS, supporting internal talent development and succession planning.

## 2025–2026 Proposed Goals

- Expand workforce-aligned programs and credentials.
- Align expenses and revenue within academic and workforce programming.
- Increase student retention through targeted advising and support.
- Strengthen Bookstore operations, communication, and services.
- Expand bookstore functions to include college merchandise and other relevant items.
- Complete SACSCOC 5<sup>th</sup> year accreditation review with no need for follow-up reports or monitoring.
- Strengthen community engagement and employer partnerships.
- Leverage relationships with the dental industry to increase their level of resource support.
- Advance equity through inclusive practices and data-informed strategies.
- Complete phase 2 of moving FastForward and workforce programming back to campus.

### **System-Level Engagement**

MECC remained actively involved in State Board updates and legislative briefings, including those related to the Governor's amended budget and the VCCS biennium operating budget requests. These engagements ensured that MECC's voice was represented in policy discussions affecting community colleges across Virginia.