

## Pride Ourselves

- *Student Services offers an array of support services that are coordinated into a comprehensive “one-stop” environment at each of the three campuses and two centers.*
- *MCC extends the reach of traditional student services through support services that mitigate barriers to learning.*

## We Challenge Ourselves

- *To continue exploring additional co-curricular activities improving student life at MCC.*
- *To continue to balance the use of “high tech with high touch” in reaching and informing MCC students about programs and services.*



## Chapter 9

# Criterion 3—Student Services

## Introduction

**A**s evidence to support MCC’s fulfillment of Criterion 3, this chapter presents a variety of services provided to students at MCC. In this chapter, each service is addressed as it relates to creating a supportive environment for student learning. The chapter covers the Student Services division and the services it provides, student life, and student services survey results.

## Student Services’ Mission and Purposes

As a division of the college, Student Services’ mission is “shedding light through shared knowledge.” MCC’s Student Services is more

than a department; it's first an attitude. The department believes that customer service is a willingness to provide thorough and timely information respectfully. The department strives to exceed expectations.

The executive dean of Campus and Student Services is responsible for the college-wide operation of the division and oversees the following departments: Financial Aid, Enrollment Management, the TRIO programs, Central Registration, Records Office, and other student services located at the three campuses and two centers.

Student Services develops and implements retention strategies to assist students in reaching their educational and/or career goals. The division also strives to provide convenient personalized services for all students. It is important to Student Services that prospective and currently enrolled students are knowledgeable about programs, services, and college resources; that students are accurately assessed and advised; and that systems are student-friendly and easy to access.

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To accomplish these purposes, Student Services routinely creates, maintains, and updates its internal systems and processes. For example, the division provides ongoing training to Student Services personnel four times a year to improve processes and information sharing. Topics have included financial aid updates, customer service training, student advising processes, and use of technology to meet student needs.

The division attempts to meet student needs by developing and modifying its services based on feedback from students, faculty, staff, and community leaders. Data collected from student and community surveys provide feedback. Personal communication with secondary and postsecondary colleagues influence services provided to MCC students.

Results of student surveys, along with graduation statistics, enrollment/retention patterns, student concerns, and faculty sessions assist Student Services in making appropriate changes. All Student Services supporting evidence is located in the Resource Room.

## **Student Services: A One-Stop Approach**

As the “front door” to the college, Student Services offers a variety of assistance to students. Services for students are available at each campus 70-80 hours per week, including Saturdays. The south campus offers limited services on Sundays. These extended hours of operation and MCC's “one-stop” approach at all locations are indicative of MCC's commitment to offering effective and accessible services to students.

Each campus provides and/or connects students with support in:

- Academic advising and counseling;
- Assessment and testing services;
- Career services;
- Cashiering services;
- Financial aid and veteran services;
- Special support services;
- Student retention services; and
- Single parent/homemaker services.

### **Academic Advising and Counseling**

Academic advisors and counselors provide students information about MCC's programs and services, along with the college's policies and procedures. They assist students in selecting and scheduling classes. They work collaboratively with program faculty in helping students stay on track and achieve their professional and educational goals. They also may assist students in selecting courses that successfully transfer to other colleges and universities.

MCC advisors are generalists and answer approximately 90% of student questions relating to advising. Counselors are specialists who deal with caseloads. Counselors are divided into three areas of expertise to meet the specific needs of students: student retention counselors, special needs counselors, and academic counselors.



An ongoing challenge for MCC is keeping students and staff informed in a timely manner of program and course changes. One solution to this challenge is a recently developed electronic advising tool, Student Online Services. It is a clearinghouse for students, advisors, and other personnel who may assist students in their educational decisions. The site offers advising notes and other pertinent information and is updated regularly to provide the latest information available. It is one solution to the many challenges of serving MCC students' academic needs.

### **Assessment and Testing Services**

Assessment services in testing centers are available on each campus and provide students with computer-based testing in reading, English, science, and mathematics. Students are encouraged to participate in basic skills assessments during their first quarter of classes.

For basic skills assessment, the testing centers offer the ASSET, the Michigan ESL assessment, and an in-house science assessment along with the COMPASS. The centers also offer proficiency tests, CLEP, DANTES, TOEFL, and admission testing for nursing and allied health. New students receive all assessment results preceding their first quarter of registration, which may help guide their class selections. In some cases, the testing centers allow faculty flexibility in the classroom by offering make-up testing.

### **Career Services**

Career Network centers provide students a wide range of career, employment, and support services. Career exploration, education and training opportunities, skills assessments, career counseling, and support with job searches, including workshops and individual assistance on resume development and interviewing skills are examples of services. In addition, periodic career events give students, alumni, and community members opportunities to discuss career options with employers from a wide array of fields and industries.

The centers are a no-cost service available to MCC students and the community. Career interest inventories and assessments along with an extensive collection of career resources are available. Local job market insights, job listings, on-campus employer and college visits, and access to computer-based local and national job banks also are available.

### **Cashiering Services**

Cashiering services are offered as a convenience to students at all campuses and centers. Students may make tuition payments and cash personal checks. Other services, which vary for each campus and center, may include bus ticket purchases, parking permits, and student identification cards.

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### **Financial Aid and Veteran Services**

MCC helps students in securing financial assistance from federal, state, and institutional sources. The college is committed to providing students information about financial aid to pursue their educational goals or upgrade their skills for the job market. Available financial aid resources include gift aid, self-help aid, loans, scholarships, and grants.

A support person for financial aid is located at each campus. Limited assistance is available at the Sarpy and Fremont centers. Personnel knowledgeable in veteran services are available at the Fort Omaha and South Omaha campuses. All information pertaining to financial aid and veteran services is located in the Resource Room.

## Special Support Services to Students

Specially trained vocational special needs counselors are available at each campus to accommodate students with disabilities. MCC's Special Support Services team, which includes professional special needs counselors, was recognized when the Omaha Mayor's Commission of Citizens with Disabilities presented its 1999 Golden Spoke award. The award honors entities that consistently exceed requirements or consistently demonstrate awareness of issues dealing with disabilities.

Support services to students include, but are not limited to, sign language interpreting, note taking, mobility assistance, reading assistance, counseling, career exploration, schedule building, route training, adaptive equipment loans, and tutoring for students with documented, specific learning disabilities.

## Student Retention Services

Student Retention Services (SRS), a U.S. Department of Education TRIO program, is designed to assist college students who may be educationally or financially disadvantaged to successfully complete a program, transfer courses, or attain program-related employment. SRS's purpose is to help disadvantaged students address deficiencies and overcome the barriers associated with higher education.

SRS counselors are available at each campus to support students from low-income, first generation, disabled, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Counselors provide career, academic, personal and group counseling; tutorial services; academic transfer coordination; financial aid coordination; skill-building experiences; and cultural enrichment activities. In addition, students have access to a book loan library for classes.

## Single Parent and Homemaker Services

Federally funded through a Perkins grant, the Single Parent and Homemaker Services Department assists single parents, single pregnant women, and displaced homemakers in achieving their educational goals, overcoming barriers, and attaining needed occupational skills to enter the mainstream of today's workforce. MCC provides special services, workshops, and personal assistance to those needing assistance. Referrals are available to other college offices and relevant outside community agencies.

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## Enrollment Management

Enrollment Management, an area within the Student Services division, utilizes a systems approach to managing and integrating processes and services that support student enrollment. In addition to campus-based services, Enrollment Management provides the following college-wide services.

### Outreach and Recruitment Activities and Events

MCC provides prospective students a mixture of avenues to learn more about the college.

**Campus Visits.** Students are encouraged to meet with Student Services and program or faculty representatives to receive a one-hour overview of the college, its programs, and services. A Career Services staff member may also explain resources to enhance professional development.

**Group Tours.** MCC offers group tours and presentations of up to 50 individuals. Tours are customized to meet group needs and provide requested information.

**MCC College Information Night.** College Information Night is offered five times each year for prospective students, parents, friends, and family members. Valuable information addressing first-time college enrollment, financial aid, career outlooks, transferring courses, and MCC programs of study, services, and facilities is presented.

**High School Visitations.** Enrollment Management personnel conduct semiannual visits for all high school students within MCC's four-county service area. These visits create awareness of MCC's programs and services, establish positive relationships with high school counselors and teachers, and connect prospective students to the college.

**Quarterly High School Newsletter.** A quarterly newsletter is published by Enrollment Management targeting area secondary administrators, counselors, and faculty with up-to-date information about the college, its programs and services.

### Records Office

The Records Office is responsible for all student-related record processing and storage. It receives, manages, stores, and maintains credited, student-related permanent records (grade-related documents and issues, graduation information, special forms, all college inbound transcripts and evaluations, outbound transcript requests and production), as well as receives and mails large quantities of correspondence. The Records Office measures its success by testimonials, statistical data, student surveys, and input from faculty, staff, and external clients. Refer to the Resource Room for supporting evidence.

## Registration Services

MCC's registration process was designed to create easy access for students, faculty, and staff to register in multiple ways at the college for credit, noncredit, and staff development classes. The college has provided telephone registration with personal service since 1987. In addition, campus and center counselors and academic advisors have registered students since 1995. Most recently, Internet registration was implemented. By providing convenient and accessible registration options, the college has expanded services to students within and outside of MCC's service area, which may have played an integral role in the growth of student enrollment.

## International Student Admissions

Enrollment Management facilitates the admission of all F-1 visa students with the authority of the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). It offers student assistance with required INS applications for work permits, reinstatement, and change of status. The department also advises students about INS rules and regulations pertaining to F-1 student status and is responsible for reports to INS; the *Open Doors Report*, an international student report; and monitoring and tracking currently enrolled international students.



## Student Online Services

A newly developed Web site entitled "Student Online Services" provides information on MCC articulation agreements, academic programs, advisement, credit and noncredit schedules, important dates, as well as links to other Web pages such as Educational Services, the bookstore, the library, and financial aid (<http://www.mccneb.edu/onlineservices.asp>). The Web site also provides a request form for college information, an electronic catalog, and a discussion board.

## Web Advisor

Web Advisor is a Web interface that allows students to view their personal and academic profiles, submit a change in address or telephone number, request transcripts, register for classes online, view course offerings, drop classes, check personal class schedules, and review personal academic histories at MCC.

## Student E-mail

Upon request, MCC provides e-mail accounts to students enrolled in its college classes. Accounts remain active as long as students remain continuously enrolled in credit classes.

## Other Services for Students

### Transfer Initiatives

MCC's transfer initiatives are coordinated through the Student Services division. Agreements are developed with institutions in areas of high student and community interest. Articulation information is presented in a simplified template for students to determine which MCC courses transfer to specific postsecondary institutions. Over 90 transfer guides have been developed with 19 four-year institutions. Information is accessible to all students on MCC's Web site.

MCC's articulation coordinator serves as a liaison for transfer students to provide a smooth transitional from MCC to other institutions. The coordinator also trains all academic advisors and counselors on the transfer initiatives so that students receive current and accurate information. MCC's articulation agreements are further discussed in Chapter 12: Criterion 5–Integrity.

## Resolving Student Concerns and Complaints

The college has procedures in place to resolve student concerns and complaints. Formal procedures are established to address access to and review of student records; discrimination and harassment issues; discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin or disability; student conduct; and grade appeals.

Students are given suggested procedures in contacting offices for assistance in resolving concerns. Problems may be handled informally by discussing the issue with appropriate MCC personnel listed in the procedures. If issues are not resolved informally, students may begin formal procedures by submitting a signed written statement and proceed through the same order of contacts as the informal procedures. Evidence of support is located in the Resource Room.

## Student Life

As with most community colleges, MCC students vary in age, background, interests, and educational goals. As a commuter college with multiple sites, MCC strives to fulfill the needs of this diverse group of students with a variety of activities.

MCC struggles with providing co-curricular student activities that create an inclusive atmosphere outside of academic programs and have the potential of attracting younger students. However, changes have occurred over the last several years in this area. Two examples are a steady growth in student clubs and the creation of a new student ex officio seat on the Board of Governors. Despite these actions, the college recognizes the need for continued improvement. A committee has recently completed an initial study and made recommendations regarding student government and co-curricular activities. The Executive Team plans to pursue the committee's recommendations during the coming year.

MCC continues to take steps toward enhancing student life. For example, during 2001-02 three student life issues were addressed: child care, student government, and student athletics. A council and two college action committees charged with addressing these topics worked throughout the academic year gathering and analyzing data. Charter findings and recommendations were presented to the Executive Team in the spring 2002. The committee work and results of these charters are available in the Resource Room.

To meet MCC's educational goals, faculty and staff believe students should be involved in the learning process on many levels to develop professionally and personally. Through involvement in one or more of the following activities, students enhance communication skills, become more culturally aware, develop computer skills, and learn more about personal and professional relations. Structured student activities help the college meet its general education goals while also providing students with leadership opportunities.

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## Student Organizations

MCC's student organizations provide numerous opportunities for student development. Leadership is a common thread among many of the groups. Community service plays a potential role in several of the organizations. Sensitive to student needs, the staff schedule meetings for student organizations during hours when full- and part-time students are available. MCC student organizations include:

**Phi Theta Kappa**, an international honor society for two-year colleges;

**Health Occupations Students of America**, an organization which encourages excellence in knowledge, skills, and leadership for practical nursing students;

**Kappa Beta Delta International Society**, a business honor society associated with the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs;

**Mu Gamma Gamma**, a criminal justice student society; and

**SKILLS USA**, activities support vocational technical instruction and professional development.

Another type of organization available to students is special interest groups associated with selected professions. The Culinary Association of MCC, the Criminal Justice Association, and the Computer Club are examples of special interest groups. See the Resource Room for the history and attributes of MCC student organizations.

The college encourages faculty to continue to form new clubs in other areas. Current faculty support is strong, and student leadership to date has been commendable. Although much positive work has been achieved, the accomplishments and opportunities involved with many of these organizations are not well known across all campuses.

MCC is committed to supporting student organizations with budget provisions and dedicated personnel. Funding is allocated to send

organization advisors and top officers to related conferences. An educational service project coordinator is the designated administrative support for the organizations, along with faculty advisors.

### Student Recreational Activities

MCC students, along with faculty and staff, may participate in recreational opportunities through the University of Nebraska-Omaha (UNO). A variety of intramural sports and Outdoor Venture Center programs are available at the same costs charged UNO students.

### Ex Officio Board of Governors Student Representative

In July 2000, the MCC Board of Governors voted to create an ex officio student member position to enhance communication among students and the college. The student ex officio sits with the board at monthly board meetings and participates in discussions of agenda items. This position provides a voice for MCC students. Elected each November by the student body, the student ex officio serves a one-year term.

## Student Services Survey Findings

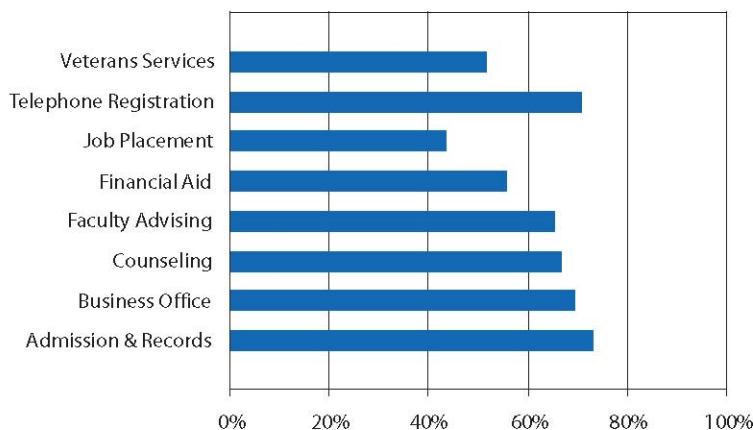
MCC’s Student Services division intermittently conducts the college’s student information survey, distributed twice a year. Typically, the surveys are administered to a stratified sample of MCC students based on locations, times of day, and course prefix offerings.

In the winter 1998-99 student information survey, of the 2,208 students in 147 course sections receiving the survey, 1,191 surveys were completed and returned, with a response rate of 54%.

Students were asked, “How satisfied are you with these services for Metro students?,” and were requested to rate only those services they had experienced. The results of the winter 1998-99 student information survey pertaining to that question raised college concerns. Overall, the division received low response ratings in all eight areas. Consistently, students were minimally satisfied with services provided by MCC.

Veterans Services Telephone Registration Job Placement Financial Aid Faculty Advising Counseling Business Office Admission & Records

Figure 9.1 Student Information Survey Winter 1998-99



Based on these survey findings, the division developed and implemented an intervening strategy of employee training in customer services.

During the 1999-00 academic year, the division distributed a new student services survey, which focused on provided services to determine if their quality had improved since the previous survey and to identify areas for improvement.

The student services survey was administered to a stratified sample of MCC students, based on locations, times of day, and course prefix offerings. In 102 course sections, including five telecourses, 2,014 surveys were distributed, and 1,089 were completed and returned, for a return rate of 54%. Again, students were asked to rate the 10 services and to rate only those services they had experienced.

Of the 10 services listed in this survey, the front counter in the Student Services area was rated highest, with 95% of students (919) who used the services indicating they were “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied.”

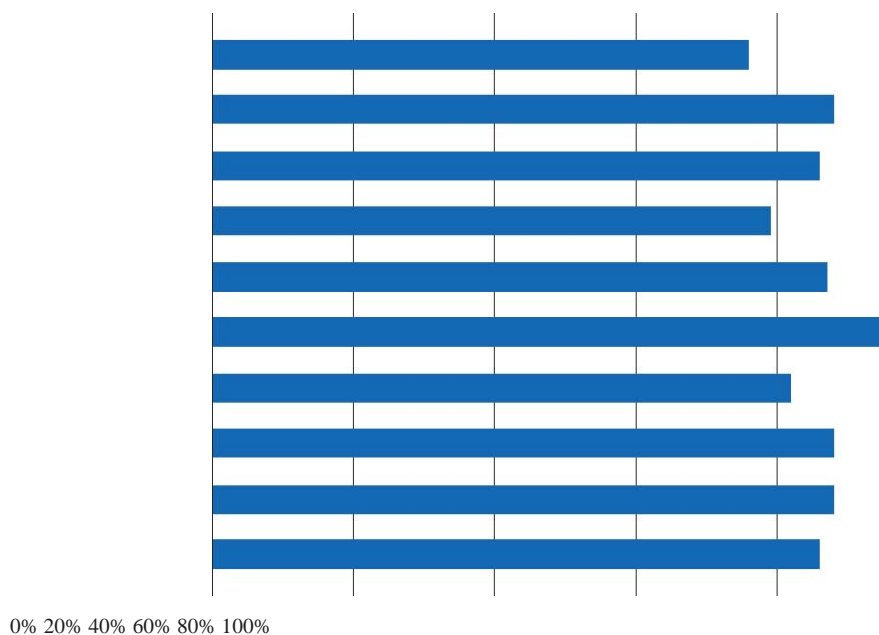
Of those responding, 80% (878) of students indicated they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with Central Registration; 88% (769) indicated they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with Counseling/Academic Advising; and 82% (374) indicated they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with Financial Aid/Veterans Services. Based on results of the 1999-00 student services survey, the Student Services division improved provided services to students in all areas since the last survey.

**Figure 9.2 Student Information/Student Satisfaction Survey 1999-2000**

Tutoring

Student Retention Special Needs Job Placement Homemaker Services Front Desk Financial Aid

Counseling/Advising Central Registration Records Office



The division then distributed an additional new survey twice in 2001, the student information/student satisfaction survey. The survey contained three similar but not identical questions pertaining to services for students:

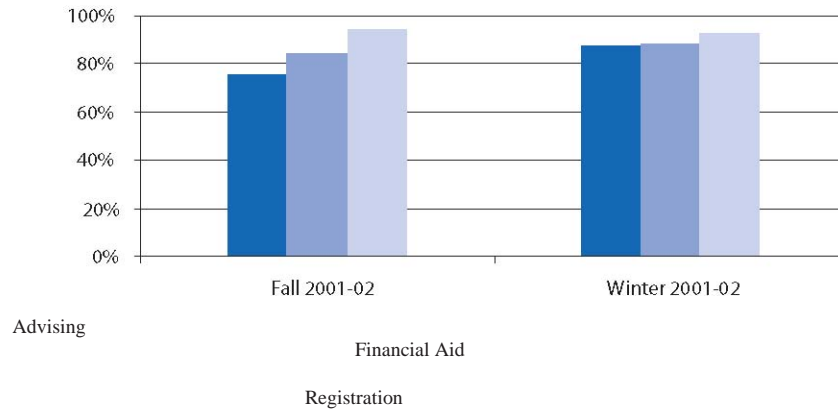
- “How satisfied are you with the financial aid you have received while attending Metro?”
- “How satisfied are you with Metro’s process to register for classes?”
- “How satisfied are you with Metro’s academic advising?”

Students were asked to respond to only those services they had experienced, and the individual question results are based only on students who responded to each question.

In both survey results overall, students were “satisfied” with provided services targeted in the survey. Over 85% of students were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the financial aid received at MCC. Over 93% of students were “satisfied” with MCC’s registration process. Eighty-eight percent were “satisfied” in the winter 2001-02 survey with academic advising, compared to 76% in the fall 2001-02 survey.

100%  
80% 60% 40%  
20%

**Figure 9.3 Student Information/Student Satisfaction Survey 2001-02**



Quantitatively, results from the two student information/satisfaction surveys indicate that students are satisfied with MCC student services addressed in the survey. However, a qualitative analysis of the comments section reveals that further interventions still need to be addressed. In the comments section of each survey question, those students who were unsatisfied with specific services reported unacceptable experiences in the student services area. The division plans to continue to address this ongoing challenge.

## Conclusion

MCC offers an in-depth array of student services to meet the needs of a diverse population. Some of the services are exemplary for a community college. Within the last 10 years, the college has made significant strides implementing systems to provide and maintain a healthy variety of services. The college now needs to focus on improving those systems to better serve students.

For example, although a few new student activities have been implemented over the years and current committees are pursuing additional options, student life could be enhanced. An increased emphasis on technology to communicate with students is another example of MCC improving student services. However, maintaining a quality balance between expedient access to information and personal connections with serving students will continue to challenge the college. The newly created and filled student communication specialist position may help in this regard.