

Narrative 4: Educational Attainment

Present a plan to raise the Educational Attainment rate to 25 percent within three years and 32 percent within five years and 39 percent within seven years.

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Overview

Based on US Census data from the 2008-2010 American Community Survey 3-year estimates, the current educational attainment level of adults 18-64 holding at least an associate's degree is 23%. Furthermore, with an estimated 38.4% of the population within the 18-24 with some college or an associate's degree, we may already meet and/or exceed the 25% required of a Work Ready Community.

Educational training institutions (SACS Accredited) in Hopkins County include Madisonville Community College, Murray State University, Lindsey Wilson University, and Mid-Continent University. Daymar College, independently accredited, is also located in Hopkins County.

Plan to Reach 25% by 2015

The above mentioned colleges are working hard to ensure Hopkins County residents have access to education. To do this, an inventory of what was already in place was taken to ensure that our residents have available opportunities for advancing their education. Current strategies underway are:

- **Dual Credit Opportunities** – Working with all three public high schools in Hopkins County (Madisonville North, Hopkins Central, and Dawson Springs) dual credit opportunities are available in general education, allied health, and applied technology fields. High school students are able to take advantage of this opportunity at a reduced cost. Working with high school teachers, counselors, and administrators, students are identified and individually approached or enrolled (a result of the high school curriculum choice in some cases). Providing an official transcript of college credit each year motivates students to think about obtaining an associate's degree or higher when they know that 3,6,9,12 or more credit hours have already been earned at the college-level.
- **WorkForce Transitions Program** - Launched in fall 2011, the MCC Workforce Transitions program targets individuals trained by the Workforce Solutions department for enrollment in credit-bearing academic programs. Incentives such as credit for prior-learning and increased advising support will make the transition easy for students from training to academic courses.
- **Academic Assistance/Tutoring Support** - Madisonville Community College has been a leader in the improvement of instructional strategies to support students in need of remediation in mathematics, reading, and writing. The Emporium Model of delivery provides targeted instruction in specific areas of weakness, enabling students to improve skills in their areas of deficiency without spending an entire semester in a course. Students achieving at the mastery level can progress at their own pace and possibly skip courses, thus reducing time to credential.

- **Disability Resources** – This service is available to help students, regardless of disability, be successful at the community college and four-year university level. Services are offered to assist students appropriately based on the disability. Special attention is also given to program participants to help mentor them to successful completion at the highest level possible.
- **First Semester Experience** – Retention after the first semester of college is crucial to our target graduation rate; therefore, Madisonville Community College's First Semester Experience program seeks to help admitted students at the beginning of the college journey. Assistance with registration, program advising, and campus culture takes place during these sessions to help ensure first-time freshmen start off on the right foot with MCC. Students participating in the program are much more likely to persist
- **School Counts! Scholarship Program** - The School Counts! program is offered to all three public high schools in Hopkins County (Dawson Springs, Hopkins Central, and Madisonville-North). Students register for School Counts! as freshmen and can progress through the program each year of school. Throughout high school, students must maintain a 2.5 g.p.a., attend school 95% of the time, graduate in four years, and take more than the minimum number of credits to graduate. If students achieve these goals, they are guaranteed tuition at Madisonville Community College with the combination of financial aid, KEES, other scholarships, and School Counts! funds.
- **Scholarship/Funding Support** - A variety of scholarships are available for students at all the postsecondary institutions in Hopkins County. Federal financial aid, loans, grants, payment plans, and other programs exist to help make higher education affordable for our citizens.
- **Flexible Learning Opportunities** - In an effort to meet the needs of a diverse population with diverse needs, programming is available to students at day, night, weekends, online, and through correspondence. Furthermore, many degree programs are all available online so that, regardless of a student's ability to come to class when offered, degrees can still be achieved. Students at Madisonville Community College have access to the complete online catalog of courses taught in the community college system, thus expanding opportunity and making more options and pathways open for students.
- **Murray State University – Madisonville Community College Joint Admission Program** – Students interested in transferring to Murray State University who have between 15 and 45 college hours can enroll in this program. Participants are given degree audits for the program they are planning to pursue with Murray State University after each semester at Madisonville Community College. A mentor is assigned to each student and makes sure the student understands what courses to take through both KCTCS and MSU.

- **Daymar College – Enrollment Opportunities Every 3 months**
Daymar has new enrollment periods every 3 months giving potential students more opportunities to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities here in Hopkins County.
- **Lindsay Wilson – Weekend-Cohort Program for Degree Completion**
Lindsay Wilson partners with Madisonville Community College to offer students an opportunity to complete a bachelor's degree on the weekends in a cohort setting. Students meet every-other weekend over a two-year period on Friday nights and Saturdays.
- **Credit for Prior Learning** – Schools and universities are beginning to recognize the value of past experiences in relation to educational attainment. Presently, students can identify courses in which they believe they have met the competencies in college course catalogs. Students then receive the class syllabus and work to demonstrate competency to the school in which credit is desired. This is a wonderful way for individuals with many years of experience to gain credit for what they know and have learned on the job throughout their careers.
- **Job Net Employment Class** – Each Tuesday and Wednesday a new group of individuals applying for unemployment receives information on the programming available to them. Information on funding is also presented to each group of participants.
- **TRANSITIONAL EDUCATION ACCELERATING GAINS** – College readiness based on testing is often a concern for first-time students. In an effort to address this and encourage incoming freshmen to work to increase their skills to a level of college readiness, Madisonville Community College offers a series of workshops each summer aimed at increasing individual skill sets in reading, writing, and mathematics. Participation is free and voluntary. Statistics support a 90% increase rate on post testing for participants after completing the class.

In an effort to raise the educational level, the following new strategies have been adopted to continually place focus on the opportunities here locally for education at the associate's level and beyond.

- **Individual Student Focus Based on Earned Hours** - In Spring 2012, 1,732 names in Hopkins County were identified by Madisonville Community College as students (since 2000) with more than 75 credit hours on record with no degree. Efforts are underway to individually evaluate each student to determine how much is needed to obtain a degree. Once this is done, students will be notified individually and encouraged to finish.

- **Employer Focus on Tuition Assistance** – Given the state of our present day economy, getting individuals interested in investing in their education (when they do not qualify for grants) is often difficult. Madisonville Community College is working to identify employers within Hopkins County that offer employer tuition assistance. Individual payment arrangements can be made for qualified students; this makes paying upfront not a requirement possibly enticing more individuals to enroll in postsecondary training.
- **Finish It Hopkins County Campaign** – A strategic marketing plan will be developed to brand the idea of college completion for the residents of Hopkins County. Efforts will be made with all local media outlets, and partnerships will be made with other business and industry organizations to promote this campaign. The developed campaign will be implemented year round; however, a concentrated push will take place in June and July of each year in order to meet the fall registration deadlines. Special effort will be made to promote degree completion opportunities to students with several hours, no degree, and employed by a company with a tuition reimbursement program.
- **Murray State University Individual Student Evaluation** – Every student transferring to MSU-Madisonville Regional Campus prior to obtaining an associate's degree will be counseled on the importance of obtaining that degree. Students will be identified and tracked to encourage reverse transfer credit back to the community college to shift focus from the long-range goal of the bachelor's degree back to the short-term goal of the associates degree (by showing the student that this is possible without additional classes).
- **Murray State University 2 + 2 Advising Sheets** - Murray State University will update advising materials to include a 2 + 2 pathway which offers an exit with the Associate's Degree. This will help ensure that more people know what is ahead of them and the transfer is seamless (with a degree in hand).
- **Unsatisfactory Academic Progress/Financial Aid Alternatives** - Federal regulations have resulted in changes to federal financial aid and Workforce Investment Act monies have been cut. As a result, many individuals are not able to return to school because they lack the ability to receive financial aid and do not have the resources to return to school at the community college level. These students will be individually counseled on alternative funding methods (like the Rotary Loan Program for Hopkins County) as well as the benefit to transferring to a four-year institution and do concurrent enrollment with the community college to gain access to funding.

With all the above mentioned initiatives, we are confident that Hopkins County will meet the criteria of a Work Ready Community in the next few years. The academic partners have joined forces to make a concentrated effort to raise the educational level of Hopkins County. Working together, we have the infrastructure in place for success.