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Excellence 2026

Systemwide 2023-2026
Strategic Plan



Excellence
in education for
a better world.



MARICOPA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES



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On behalf of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) Governing Board,

I am thrilled to introduce *Excellence 2026*—the Maricopa County Community College District Strategic Plan. This visionary plan marks a momentous milestone in the journey of Maricopa Community Colleges, signaling our unwavering commitment to elevating our position as a leading educational institution on a national scale. But let us never forget that this plan holds a profound purpose—to transform lives and empower our communities.

At the heart of *Excellence 2026* lie four interwoven strategies—student outreach and success, economic resources and sustainability, a cohesive identity, and organizational talent. Together, these threads form the fabric of our collective efforts, each one vital to realizing our grand vision: Excellence in education for a better world.

This plan embodies the futures of our student voyages within our System, which begins long before high school graduation. With innovative programs sparking their curiosity during their K-8 years, a passion for education is ignited in their hearts at an early age. In high school, they seamlessly embark on one of our dual and concurrent enrollment programs, earning their associate degree alongside their high school diploma. Yet, their transformative journey with Maricopa does not cease there. Today, our students have the opportunity to earn their bachelor's degree at one of our esteemed colleges and, through strengthened partnerships with universities, advance to graduate degree programs, equipping them to thrive in a dynamic world.

This inspiring vision demands a symphony of internal efforts. As we revisit our funding model, tuition structure, and revenue streams, we unlock boundless possibilities for our District. From the very outset, our innovative programs captivate young minds, fostering a passion for learning that grows stronger with each passing year. However, we must ensure that our System has the financial resources to sustain and grow these programs. Equipped with the finest technology tools for students and bolstered by workforce development partnerships, our graduates have the potential to emerge as formidable leaders primed to thrive in a changing world. This vision of economic resources and sustainability fuels our resolve to reshape our internal structures to be a community college system of the future.

The MCCCD Governing Board also envisions the Maricopa County Community College District continuing achievement and national recognition for our pioneering and collaborative endeavors in higher education. By fostering a culture of unity amongst our ten colleges and supporting innovation, we have become a high-functioning System, harnessing the brilliance of our employees across every discipline. An essential foundation of this is rethinking the future of work and sharing employees across our System as we emerge from the global pandemic that taught us a great deal about what a new-era workplace could be. Additionally, with structures like an Innovation Think Tank, we will be able to breathe life into employees' future-focused ideas and amplify their impact.

As we embark on this transformative expedition, I stand resolute in the belief that *Excellence 2026* will steer us toward our vision for Maricopa County Community College District. On behalf of the Governing Board, I eagerly anticipate embarking on this momentous journey together.

Sincerely,



Letter From The Governing Board President

Marie Sullivan



I am thrilled to announce Maricopa Community Colleges' new 2023–2026 Systemwide Strategic Plan, *Excellence 2026*.

This plan and our new mission, vision, and core values are a testament to the future we are creating together. The effort to craft this plan and revitalize these statements involved substantial engagement from internal and external communities, resulting in a clear and compelling direction for the future of our System.

These statements capture what we do while reflecting our commitment to positively impacting individuals and our community. It is vital that we carry these principles with us as we strive to be the best in everything we do, making a meaningful contribution towards creating a better future for all. Education is a powerful force for change, and we have a responsibility to enhance what we do to meet the needs of the changing world.

The strategic plan provides a framework to align our current and future states, including four key priorities:

1. Student outreach and success
2. Economic resources and sustainability
3. A cohesive identity
4. Organizational talent

As Arizona's most extensive community college system, MCCCDC enrolls nearly 140,000 students annually across ten colleges and 31 satellite locations. We are also proud to be the No.1 provider of undergraduate education to students of color in the state of Arizona. Our commitment to access and affordability is seen in our diverse student population, 48 percent of which are the first in their family to attend college. MCCCDC is proud to contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of our growing region providing educational and employment opportunities to our local community. An Economic Impact Study from fiscal year 2016-17 concluded that our System added \$7.2 billion in income into our local economies throughout Maricopa County. This impact is powerful considering how many jobs this revenue stream enables—one out of every 27 jobs in Maricopa County is supported by our System.

Our new mission statement reaffirms our purpose to ignite talent, transform lives, and enrich communities, as we emerge from a global pandemic while adjusting to the ever-changing landscape of higher education. As we set our eyes toward the future, our new vision statement details what we hope to achieve: excellence in education for a better world. Our students and community need us to raise the bar—to be excellent. Please join me in accepting this challenge to become what the future needs us to be.

I look forward to embracing our new mission, vision, and values working collaboratively across our System to achieve our four strategic priorities, putting students at the center of everything we do. Every employee has a role to serve in this work to achieve excellence in education for a better world.

Thank you for joining me on this journey,



Letter From The Chancellor

Steven R. Gonzales, Ed.D.



The Planning Process

As the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) approached strategic planning, we reflected on its experiences, at systemic, organizational, and individual levels over the last several years. These experiences include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, MCCCD's pivot to online classes to continue to support students, a new Chancellor, changes in the makeup and composition of the MCCCD Governing Board, and the demographic, economic, and political context of Maricopa County, the state of Arizona, and the country. Additionally, the strategic planning process upheld the organization's shared governance practices, as the Governing Board, Chancellor, and Chancellor's Executive Council worked together to develop this plan.

The strategic planning process also included:

- A comprehensive environmental scan.
- A strategic planning session with the MCCCD Governing Board and MCCCD leadership.
- A feedback survey administered to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community stakeholders, collecting more than 1,800 responses.
- Interviews of faculty, staff, administration, executive leadership, community partners, and students.
- Focus groups with faculty, board leadership, external community partners, strategic planning committee members, alumni, and students.
- Future envisioning sessions with the Chancellor's executive council, staff senate representatives, faculty leadership, strategic planning committee members, and the institutional effectiveness council.

MCCCD engaged in a planning process that sought to identify and understand both the internal and external factors that might impact their work and to develop new strategies (or refine current strategies) that would continue to center on students and communities. As such, the MCCCD strategic plan is supported by the idea that effective strategic planning is asset-based and participatory and that the culmination of writing the plan report is not the end of the process.

This Plan as a Living Guide

Our System's aim is for strategic planning to be a continuous process, and the documents created through the process are designed to be "living guides" for the work of the Governing Board and leadership and to inform stakeholders to better understand where MCCCD is headed and why. The systemwide Strategic Planning Steering Team will monitor the plan and provide annual recommendations on modifications and updates to activities, milestones, and timelines, based on the evolving needs of our students and community. This approach is designed to help us become a forward-focused and agile organization that is equipped to respond to the uncertainties that lie ahead.



2024 Update

When we launched Excellence 2026, we committed that it would be a living guide for the work of the Governing Board and leadership. Over the last year, we have accomplished significant achievements, including hosting national convenings that demonstrate the role our System plays in leading the way in areas such as artificial intelligence, workforce development, promise programs, and meeting students' basic needs. Colleges have also scaled high-impact practices to support students, the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation is preparing to launch a \$20 million fundraising campaign, and employee development remains at the top of mind through the continued implementation and evaluation of the Performance Success model. It was a promising year of progress, development, and learning!

We also recognized areas where our System has evolved, and we identified ways to better align our strategies with the internal and external opportunities that arose that did not exist a year ago. For example, at the onset of this work, we committed to improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and the System's senior councils identified that the enrollment processes and technology tools that support that work were one area where we could have the most significant impact on the student experience. We leveraged that momentum to launch the Strikeforce, a group charged with implementing short- and long-term interventions to address the enrollment process, and they have accomplished a great deal over this last year.

However, it also intersected with other goals in the strategic plan. Because of our newly developed integrated planning model, we were able to pause those competing priorities and focus our efforts on the goals of Strikeforce. Some other vital lessons we learned over the last year included:

- Opportunities to further reaffirm our commitment to Guided Pathways and the need to see all of our strategic goals through the lens of the pillars of Guided Pathways;
- The need to remove milestone-level details from the public-facing strategic plan and delineate these in action plans to allow for more authentic, agile, and flexible execution of our strategies;
- Identifying new ways of tracking and measuring progress on our strategic goals, reaffirming the need to remain focused on the end goal, and ensuring we have measures in place to know if we are making a difference.

The Systemwide Strategy Planning Steering Team and the Chancellor's Executive Council reviewed these lessons learned and updated Excellence 2026 for the coming year. This process exemplifies the organizational learning paradigm, recognizing the need to continue building on our current state to realize our vision: Excellence in education for a better world.

Reaffirming Our Commitment to Guided Pathways

The Maricopa County Community College District reaffirms its commitment to the Guided Pathways framework as a core component of its strategic plan, Excellence 2026. By prioritizing efforts to clarify the path, help students get on the path, support them in staying on the path, and ensure their learning, our System underscores its dedication to student success at every stage of the educational journey. This commitment is reflected in the activities of the strategic plan to optimize integrated student support services, scale high-impact practices, create structured activities that engage faculty in supporting students beyond the classroom, and address our enrollment processes and technology needs. Through these efforts, our goal remains to foster an environment where students are equipped with the resources and guidance they need to achieve their academic, personal, and professional goals.

We invite all Maricopans to see this strategic plan and their work through the lens of the pillars of Guided Pathways to build upon the great work we have accomplished and to realize and act on the opportunities that lie ahead.



Our Story, Mission, Vision, and Values

Our Story

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), known popularly as Maricopa Community Colleges, can trace its origins to the establishment of Phoenix Junior College in 1920, the first community college in Arizona. Since then, it has evolved into one of the nation's largest and most innovative community college systems, serving the Phoenix metropolitan area and beyond. Today, the bustling District includes ten regionally accredited colleges and 31 satellite locations across Maricopa County, offering over 600 degree and certificate programs and educating over 140,000 students each year.

As part of our System's strategic planning process, the Governing Board recently approved our new vision, mission, and core values at their March 28, 2023 Governing Board meeting. These values represent the current and future state of our System. We are striving to accomplish these with a renewed focus on collaboration, innovation, and providing our students with high-quality education.

Our Values

- **Student-Centric:** Students are the essence of our work; we partner with students as leaders and decision-makers in their own learning.
- **Integrity:** We foster a culture of honesty, trust, and transparency.
- **Collaboration:** We work together using system-thinking in pursuit of our vision and mission.
- **Inclusiveness:** We value all contributions and diverse perspectives.
- **Innovation:** We advance a culture that stimulates big ideas, creativity, and exploration.
- **Respect:** We treat each other with dignity, civility, and kindness.

Our Vision

Excellence in education for a better world.

Our Mission

The Maricopa Community Colleges ignite talent, transform lives, and enrich communities through teaching, learning, and service.



Multi-Year Strategic Planning

As we embark on a journey of growth, innovation, and continuous improvement, it is crucial to establish a robust and comprehensive planning framework that not only guides our efforts but also ensures seamless alignment across our entire organization. The development of this multi-year planning cycle with a new systemwide plan launched every three years marks a substantial milestone, a testament to our commitment to excellence and our unwavering dedication to the success of our District.

This multi-year timeline serves as a beacon of strategic vision, illuminating the path toward our shared goals. It signifies our dedication to carefully crafting a roadmap that navigates the evolving landscape of higher education, anticipates emerging challenges, and seizes newfound opportunities. Through this systematic approach, we aim to not only set the course but to adapt and recalibrate as needed, ensuring that each annual review and update serves as a compass guiding our collective efforts.

In the intricate tapestry of our educational ecosystem, every thread counts. Each college, each department, and every individual contributes to the rich fabric that defines our identity. By providing a clear and consistent framework for systemwide strategic planning, we foster unity, foster collaboration, and ignite the synergies that power our progress. This cycle is not just about planning—it's about fostering a culture of shared purpose, continuous learning, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.





Strategy 1: Student Outreach and Success



Strategy 1: Student Outreach and Success



In pursuing an inclusive and excellent future, we acknowledge that the foundation of our System's growth lies in student success. At Maricopa Community Colleges, student outreach and success are the primary pillars of our strategic plan. We strive to create an educational environment where every individual is supported, motivated, and inspired to overcome barriers, transforming aspirations into tangible achievements.

There was a resounding shared commitment and passion for student success throughout a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. Students underscored what they viewed to be unmatched access to resources and support from faculty, staff, and their peer support groups.

Additionally, stakeholder feedback and a comprehensive environmental scan show promising growth for our System. Stakeholders expressed their inter-

est in removing student enrollment and retention barriers and collaborating across ten colleges to co-create rather than compete. As the traditional college-going age population declines, the Maricopa Community Colleges will need to diversify our approach to enrollment and recruitment.

During the strategic planning process, we asked stakeholders to review a list of potential opportunities for Maricopa Community Colleges, and more than half indicated the need for more intensive career advising and mentorship with additional interest in broadening in-the-field learning and apprenticeship opportunities for students. Other popular stakeholder responses identified a need for more robust outreach, recruitment, and implementation of high-impact practices to support student persistence. These findings were crucial drivers when identifying the activities and milestones in not only this strategy but throughout the Strategic Plan.



Strategy 1 Goals

Goal 1.1.

MCCCD attracts, recruits, engages, and enrolls more students

1.1.A. Expand our recruitment pipeline by clarifying the path and focusing on traditionally underserved and K-12 populations

Goal 1.2.

MCCCD retains and supports students to reach their academic, personal, and/or professional goals

1.2.A. Continue and sustain Guided Pathways efforts to optimize integrated student support services and resources and ensure learning

1.2.B. Scale high-impact practices that support traditionally underserved populations to close equity gaps

Goal 1.3.

MCCCD secures the financial resources needed to support students through increased public and philanthropic efforts

1.3.A. Implement a system-oriented fundraising framework to elevate systemwide fundraising

1.3.B. Launch a coordinated student success fundraising initiative



Strategy 2: Economic Resources and Sustainability





Strategy 2:

Economic Resources and Sustainability



As we embark on our journey towards a future of excellence and sustainability, we recognize that the backbone of our System's growth lies in fostering economic resources and sustainability. This strategic plan section demonstrates our commitment to economic sustainability and charting a path dedicated to fortifying our financial foundation, enhancing technological capabilities, and diversifying revenue streams to ensure our continued success.

Building upon promising growth indicators revealed by comprehensive environmental scans, we recognize the need to adapt to changing demographics and the evolving educational landscape. By embracing technology enhancements and process automations, we will equip our institution to navigate new frontiers efficiently.

Strategic funding models and diversified revenue streams will play pivotal roles in our mission to provide accessible, high-quality education to all. By furthering our efforts with microcredentials and foster-

ing a regional approach to workforce programs, we aim to forge lasting partnerships that transcend competition and maximize our impact on the community.

Stakeholders voiced interest in better adapting to technological advancements and ensuring consistent platforms across the System to provide students with better career preparation and tools to succeed in and out of the classroom. Additionally, there are interests across the System to break down barriers and promote agile decision-making, enhance communication efforts, and address organizational structures to embrace new ways of working.

Together, we set sail on a transformative journey towards economic resilience, driven by the belief that strategic resource management and sustainability are the compass points that will guide us to a prosperous future for our System and the communities we serve.



Strategy 2 Goals

Goal 2.1.

MCCCD enhances its technology capabilities to optimize academic, student, and business success

2.1.A. Deliver long-term technology solutions to enhance the enrollment and registration processes to help students enter their pathways

2.1.B. Implement technology improvements to streamline how the System engages with and retains students

2.1.C. Deliver technology tools and leverage artificial intelligence to prioritize provide process efficiency and automation

Goal 2.2.

MCCCD stewards new and existing resources to achieve financial stability and sustainability

2.2.A. Assess and recommend a strategic funding model

2.2.B. Formulate, pilot, and implement differential tuition

2.2.C. Identify and advance diversified revenue streams through long-term lease agreements and event and facility rentals

2.2.D. Launch a systemwide emergency management planning and training process to ensure the long-term safety of our college community

Goal 2.3.

MCCCD defines and establishes workforce development programs with and for public and private sectors

2.3.A. Expand systemwide micro-credentialing to meet workforce needs

2.3.B. Implement a regionalized approach to programs



Strategy 3: A Cohesive Identity





Strategy 3: A Cohesive Identity



In our unwavering commitment to shaping an educational landscape of unity and collaboration, Maricopa Community Colleges recognizes that a cohesive identity is central to the District's progress. This strategic plan takes a bold stride towards nurturing a harmonious tapestry that celebrates individual college identities while seamlessly integrating the diverse facets of our System.

Informed by invaluable stakeholder feedback, we have heard the resounding call for enhanced collaboration and the need for students to access support across colleges. This call for greater collaboration includes creating a dynamic and integrated planning framework, including academic, enrollment management, facilities, and technology plans that support moving toward this shared vision.

The System will also embark on a thorough evaluation of our operations, seeking to strike an ideal balance that prioritizes cooperation, innovation, and efficiency. With an unwavering commitment to innovation, we set the stage for an innovation think tank—a place of transformative ideas that will ignite progress across the District. We recognize that the power of internal collaborations lies in the seamless exchange of expertise, and as we expand these collaborations, we sow the seeds of collective success.

Guided by a shared vision, our System will also dare to imagine a cross-college employee-sharing model that fosters camaraderie and cooperation. Through this model, we aim to create an interconnected tapestry of support, further bolstering our commitment to student success and community engagement.



Strategy 3 Goals

Goal 3.1.

MCCCD establishes alignment and collaboration between and among its colleges and district office to support students, communities, faculty, and staff

3.1.A. Design a dynamic and integrated planning framework

3.1.B. Transform the future of work through centralized and decentralized operations

Goal 3.2.

MCCCD and its colleges are recognized as a cohesive organization working together

3.2.A. Promote the Maricopa story of collaboration and innovation

Goal 3.3.

MCCCD develops the capabilities and cultures needed to support and encourage innovation

3.3.A. Scale an Innovation Think Tank framework systemwide to bring internal innovative and creative ideas to life

3.3.B. Create a cross-college employee sharing model for faculty and staff to meet the needs of the organization

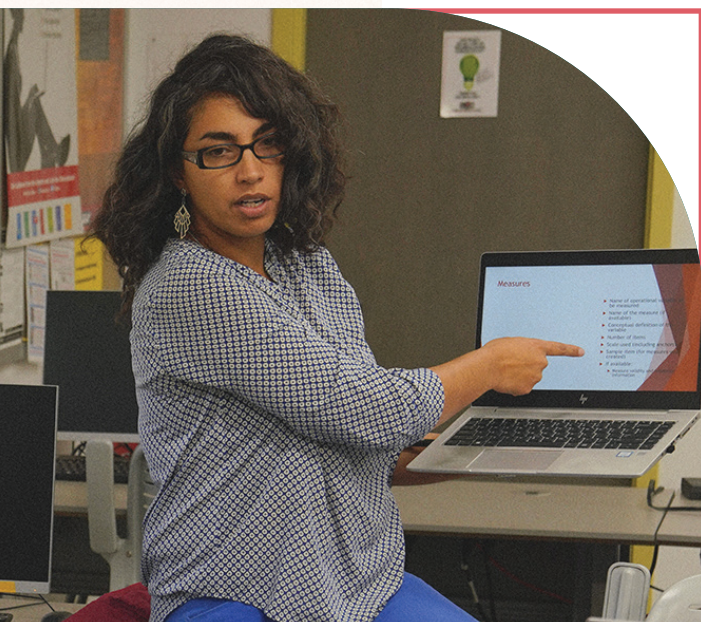


Strategy 4: Organizational Talent





Strategy 4: Organizational Talent



Organizational talent forms the bedrock of our success. This strategic plan takes a decisive leap towards revolutionizing how we develop and empower our faculty and staff, as a thriving workforce will be the catalyst for institutional excellence. Organizational talent is not merely a goal but a guiding principle underpinning our commitment to embracing innovation and progress. By revolutionizing faculty and staff recruitment, we envision a transformative process that attracts diverse, passionate individuals who will shape the future of our educational community.

Launching a performance success model will also be a critical step toward cultivating a culture of continuous improvement. Through this model, our System aims to unlock the full potential of our talented workforce, creating an environment where every in-

dividual's contribution is recognized and celebrated. The unwavering dedication to ignite talent is at the heart of our mission. By fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment, we aim to empower our faculty and staff to embrace their passions, grow professionally, and thrive personally.



Strategy 4 Goals

Goal 4.1.

MCCCD improves the recruitment, retention, and growth opportunities of employees for a stronger organization

4.1.A. Revolutionize faculty and staff recruitment to increase qualified and diverse candidate pools

4.1.B. Launch and scale a performance success model

Goal 4.2.

MCCCD fosters a culture that builds community, values diversity, and supports employee engagement and success

4.2.A. Create a consistent and supportive employee engagement experience throughout the employment lifecycle



The Maricopa Community Colleges

ignite talent, transform lives, and enrich communities
through teaching, learning, and service.



STUDENT-CENTRIC | INTEGRITY | COLLABORATION | INCLUSIVENESS | INNOVATION | RESPECT

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) is an EEO/AA institution and an equal opportunity employer of protected veterans and individuals with disabilities. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or national origin. A lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in the career and technical education programs of the District.

The Maricopa County Community College District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs or activities. For Title IX/504 concerns, call the following number to reach the appointed coordinator: (480) 731-8499. For additional information, as well as a listing of all coordinators within the Maricopa College system, visit <http://www.maricopa.edu/non-discrimination>.