

Mt. Hood Community College

2021 ACCT Equity Award Criteria Statement

Introduction

Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) – one of the largest community colleges in Oregon serving an average 25,000 student per year since 2016 – is committed to becoming a more equity-minded institution. MHCC defines equity as providing what each individual within our community needs, and simultaneously, seeking to create systems of equity to promote fairness and justice. Though work has been done over the last five years, significant progress has been made in the last 16 months, as evidenced by the Board of Education’s recent adoption of a MHCC Equity Lens.

The **MHCC Equity Lens** will be used in board and college decision-making to examine equity in problem identification, solution development, and success of outcomes. The goal is to be intentionally inclusive in our decision-making process and reflect on how our institutional policies and processes might be inherently biased or racist.

Application of the tool has us asking and answering the following questions in our decision-making:

Race and Intersectionality: Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups affected? What is the potential impact of the decision, resource allocation, and/or strategic investment to these groups? What is the racial makeup of the decision makers?

Challenge the Dominant Culture/Status Quo: How does the proposed policy, decision, program, and/or practice challenge the way we have addressed the issue in the past? What barriers (institutional, structural, intrapersonal, interpersonal) may exist that could hinder implementation? Is the college committed to prioritize, publicize, and sustain these efforts?

Commitment to Social Justice: What is the potential impact on eliminating any existing opportunity or outcome gaps? Might the decision being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? How could these impacts be mitigated? How does the policy, decision, program, practice build community capacity and power in communities most affected by inequities?

Including the voices of those most impacted: Have we solicited and received input from students and others closest to the issue? How are we meaningfully including or excluding people who are affected? Is there stakeholder support or opposition to the proposal, and if so, why? What process will we use to check back in with the stakeholders as part of a feedback loop?

Using Data to Inform: What baseline data do you have, and how will you utilize quantitative and qualitative data to measure impact on non-dominant groups? How will you use data to modify or enhance your strategies to achieve the intended outcomes?

Over the next year, in preparation for the Year-Six Accreditation Report, a review of all Board policies will employ the Equity Lens to address inclusivity, unintended consequences, and inherent biases. At the forefront of this review is the college’s vision, mission, and values.

Adopted in 2013, and reaffirmed in 2016 as part of the strategic planning process, MHCC’s vision, mission, and values are void of references to equity. To remedy this omission that is so central to the work done at the college, the board and president launched a **Strategic Equity Planning** process. The work, and resulting plan, will not be a supplement to the MHCC’s strategic plan; it will be the MHCC’s strategic plan. Through contracting with a firm specializing in this work, MHCC will engage internal and external stakeholders in crafting a future centered on equity and student success.

In addition to the development of the Equity Lens and launch of a strategic planning process centered on equity, MHCC works hard to increase access and completion, increase our faculty and staff representation, and engage the community. Below are a few select examples of the MHCC’s work to advance equity.

Criteria One: Increases in access by underrepresented or underserved populations and increases in completion of the educational objectives (attainment of a degree, certificate, credential, transfer or gainful employment) of those populations.

The MHCC service district has a population of 300,000 residents over 950 square miles, serving both urban and rural communities, with Portland city limits on the west end of the district and the majestic Mt. Hood on the east. The majority of the residents reside in East Multnomah County. With cost of living increases in Portland, gentrification changed the face of the district over the last decade. A recent report showed communities of color have increased 15 percent in East Multnomah County, compared to a 13 percent in the rest of the county. Overall, East County is 26 percent persons of color.¹ In addition, while housing is more affordable, nearly 60 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing.² With 18 percent of residents living under the poverty line, and 26 percent of children in poverty, East Multnomah County has the **highest rate of poverty** in the entire state.³

To increase access, MHCC employs a variety of strategies targeted to the communities it serves. With many immigrant and refugee households in our district, we communicate in their **home language**. MHCC partners with Univision to stream advertisements in Spanish about educational pathways and language supports while pursuing a degree. Similar communications are done in Russian and Vietnamese publications. We have also set up internal supports, so potential students reach someone who speaks their language. In addition, we participate in public service messaging, like **sponsoring Black History month** teaching shorts on the local CBS network. News of our work is spreading organically as local publications such as *Street Roots* (which focuses on social, economic and environmental justice) has been sharing the college’s advocacy work around serving food and housing insecure students.

MHCC’s collective efforts have **increased access by six percent** for underrepresented or underserved populations, at rates exceeding the overall East County population by 13 points.

Percent of Students of Color

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Students of Color	38%	38%	39%	40%	42%

¹ https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/East%20Multnomah%20County%20One-pagers_4.5.19-p2.pdf

² <https://portlandalliance.com/advocacy/2018-economic-check-up--multnomah-county.html>

³ <https://pamplinmedia.com/go/419740-323217-income-disparity-hurts-east-multnomah-county-funding>

In building systems of equity, MHCC started measuring student success differently in 2020. Current measures track completion, retention, and persistence indicators disaggregated by age, gender, race, full- and part-time status, and Pell recipients. From the data, opportunity gaps are identified in student populations, and interventions are developed to improve outcomes for underrepresented or underserved populations. Highlighted fields in the chart below show current gaps.

Measures of student success for underrepresented or underserved populations 2019

	MHCC Average	Women	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Multiracial	Pacific Islander	Native American
Six Year Completion	34%	39%	35%	20%	52%	34%	24%	11%
Fall to Winter Retention	71%	75%	70%	63%	78%	74%	75%	83%
23 Credits in Year 1	33%	42%	33%	18%	49%	41%	40%	62%

To provide what each individual within our community needs, MHCC offers a variety of programs, services, and supports to increase persistence, retention, and completion. Examples include:

Student Basic Needs: In 2020, MHCC formed a **Student Basic Needs Response Team** to triage the basic needs facing our students due to the pandemic. With an allocation of \$500,000, the team worked to get students laptops, hot spots, bus cards, rent support, and food, among other things, to help keep students enrolled. In addition, **Barney’s Pantry**, funded by donations from the MHCC Foundation, Amazon, and employees, provides emergency food assistance to students throughout the pandemic. Between July 1, 2020, through June 1, 2021, 800 students received over 43,000 pounds of food, personal hygiene, and household items. Since 2018, the pantry has served 3,540 students and saw 8,378 individual visits.

Cultural support: Established in 2018, the **Multicultural Diversity Resource Center (MDRC)** started as event-based programming and has moved to a student leadership development model. In the 2020-21 year, the MDRC launched the Social Justice Advocates Leadership Program and the Student Council for Multicultural Affairs Program, to further engage students in DEI issues. In addition, MHCC’s **DACA /Undocumented Supports** is a collaborative team of stakeholders across the college working to support undocumented/DACA students through resources and training.

Educational enhancements: In response to the gaps in student success for our Black students, MHCC offered two new courses this year – **African American Literature** and **African American History** – and revamped a Human Development course to explore the impacts of institutional racism on human development. In addition, MHCC has actively engaged in the creation and use of Open Educational Resources (**OERs**) as a way to keep overall student costs lower. Since 2017, MHCC faculty have developed free textbooks for students. To date, it is estimated that these OERs have saved students \$3,118,975 in textbook costs.

Criteria Two: Increases in the institution’s workforce and leadership positions by underrepresented or underserved populations.

Over the last five years, the number of employees from underrepresented or underserved populations has increased across all employee groups and the Board of Education. The most significant gains were seen in MHCC’s Board and management staff, where **Board diversity quadrupled** and **management diversity nearly doubled**. Gains were also seen for staff and faculty.

Representation by Persons of Color 2021

	Board	Management	Staff	Faculty
2015-16	14%	15%	19%	9%
2019-20	57%	29%	25%	11%
Change	+43%	+14%	+6%	+2%

The Board of Education is comprised of seven members, elected by their constituents. **Six of the seven seats are currently held by women or persons of color.** In 2015, that number was four. The board hired the current president, and placed a priority on increasing the diversity of employees. Since arriving at MHCC, 75 percent of the president’s direct hires have been persons of color, including key leadership positions like the Vice President for Instruction and Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In addition, of the 12 members of the **President’s Cabinet, 75 percent are from underrepresented or underserved populations**, including women, persons of color, and non-native English speakers.

In building systems of equity, MHCC has enhanced the recruitment process to attract more diverse pools and address biases in the screening process. The New Employee Orientation reviews MHCC’s expectations around the Culture of Respect Policy. The **Access and Diversity Council** at MHCC is one of five councils and part of MHCC’s governance structure designed to solicit stakeholder input and shape college policy. Topics addressed have included assessing and improving the student experience with an equity lens, increasing recruitment and retention of students from marginalized/underrepresented groups, improving the recruitment and retention of staff and faculty (specifically from marginalized/underrepresented groups), activating preferred name options in support of transgender students, and prioritizing ADA accessibility upgrades across campus.

In addition, MHCC has made a commitment to professional development. The Director of DEI led a yearlong **Equity Minded Leadership series** with the Board of Education, President’s Cabinet, and MHCC Equity Leadership Team, and in partnership with the Vice President for Instruction, facilitated sessions on the foundations of Critical Race Theory as part of MHCC’s in-service training, attended by 510 employees.

Criteria Three: Success of the institution's community engagement or outreach efforts in attracting and maintaining the interests of underrepresented or underserved populations regarding the institution.

MHCC engages in a number of community-based partnerships to attract and maintain the interests of underrepresented or underserved populations. A few varied examples of the work include:

COVID-19 Vaccination site for BIPOC communities: Based on the college's positive reputation with disadvantaged populations in East County, MHCC partnered with the Multnomah County Health Authority to establish a COVID-19 **Vaccination Site for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**. With appointments made through culturally specific community-based organizations, MHCC was able to serve an important role in the health and safety of our district's most vulnerable populations.

Rosewood Initiative: Since 2018, the college has partnered with the Rosewood Initiative to address community concerns around the concentrated poverty and lack of services in East County. As place-based inequities are disproportionately experienced by immigrants and refugees, Black, Indigenous and People of Color, residents are dramatically impacted by systematic racism, wealth, and geographic injustices. MHCC partners with the Rosewood Initiative by providing **job search and unemployment assistance** to the residents.

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO): IRCO removes barriers to self-sufficiency and helps individuals and families thrive, by providing more than 200 **culturally and linguistically specific services**. MHCC partners with IRCO on vocational English-as-a-Second Language career pathway programs, translation services, and other initiatives in serving the needs of the immigrant and refugee communities in our district.

Educational Talent Search (ETS): MHCC partners with area school districts to engage youth identifying as first-generation, from low-income households, or having a disability. Our ETS program offers a **peer mentoring** model, connecting college student mentors with high school student mentees. Mentors attend DEI training and workshops, such as a Becoming Anti-Racist series, and work with students to navigate school, career, and college related topics.

In addition, the college offers equity programming open to the community, as a way to attract and maintain the interests of underrepresented or underserved populations.

Community events: MHCC hosts a number of community events that target our community's underrepresented or underserved populations. Our **Cinco de Mayo** event is free and open to the public, featuring local musicians, dancers, and performers, and food providers. Similar in format, our **Global Breakfast**, done in partnership by our English-as-a-Second Language and International Student programs, celebrates the many cultures of our community. Prior to COVID-19, the events would bring in approximately 300 guests.

MHCC Reads: The English Department offers a reading group called "Mt. Hood Reads!" that is open to all students, staff, faculty, and community members. Hosted twice a year, the event highlights authors of color. In 2020-2021, the focus was on **African American literature**, featuring James Baldwin's *Another Country* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. The 2021-2022 series will feature Indigenous authors.