Local entities with statewide impact

Community colleges have a lot in common with other higher education institutions, but there are characteristics that set us apart:

- We’re created by a vote of our community.
- We are local political subdivisions, not arms of the state government.
- We’re open access, meaning we accept students regardless of their level of college readiness.
- We’re governed by locally-elected boards.
- We’re partially funded by local property taxes as well as tuition, state and federal funding.
- We serve the education, workforce and economic needs of a defined local region.

Our mission is to provide associate degree and certificate programs, and we specialize in workforce development. We also serve as Missouri’s lead institutions in delivering postsecondary technical education in partnership with the state’s area vocational technical schools.

Service Regions and Locations

The word community plays an important role, and it means exactly what it says. Community colleges were created by a vote of local citizens. As local entities, each college’s academic and workforce training programs mirror the local economy by design. Unlike in some states, we are not a “system” with a centralized administration under one governance structure. Instead, we are 12 separate and independent local colleges, with a history of being responsive and adaptable to state and local needs.

In 1993, MCCA recommended to the Coordinating Board that the state be divided into service regions that would cover the entire state. This network allows community colleges to serve every Missourian and every Missouri business.
Diverse Students with Diverse Needs

36 percent of students attending a public higher education institution in Missouri are enrolled at one of the state’s 12 community colleges. We are open access institutions, meaning that we do not turn students away, even if they are not ready for college level work. As a result, roughly 60 percent of our students take some level of remedial coursework.

Because our colleges are open to everyone, we have an incredibly diverse student population, coming from all educational backgrounds and walks of life.

Many of our students are the first in their families to attend college; they juggle full or part-time jobs, and many do all of this while taking care of their families at home. Our colleges have to be flexible and innovative to meet students where they are.
Tuition and fees for a typical full time student average $3,197 at Missouri’s community colleges. By comparison, the average tuition and fees at the state’s public 4-year institutions is $7,859 and $5,873 at the state’s technical college.

Missouri’s community colleges maintain these affordable tuition rates, despite receiving only 15 percent of state appropriations for higher education.

Local property tax revenue makes up a portion of the funding gap, but this varies significantly from college to college. For example, at one college property taxes account for a mere 2.3 percent of revenue while at another they amount to almost 36 percent.

What isn’t accounted for by property tax revenue has to be made up by private donations, grants or tuition. This is why state funding and student aid are such important factors in maintaining the affordability of a two-year education.

Missouri’s A+ Scholarship Program

Missouri’s A+ Scholarship Program covers tuition and common fees for two years at any participating community or technical college in the state. In 2015, nearly 13,000 students benefited from the program.

To be eligible, students must meet certain academic and community service requirements. They have to have an overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale, have at least a 95 percent attendance record for grades 9-12, and perform at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.

The program pays any remaining tuition and fees after all available, federal, non-loan financial assistance has been applied. This makes the most of state dollars and ensures that more students can benefit from the program.

In 2016, legislation was passed allowing private high schools to participate in the program. In time, this will significantly expand the number of students who are eligible to receive A+ funds.
Quality instructors for quality programs

To ensure the quality of the education that students receive from Missouri’s colleges, all twelve institutions are accredited by an independent organization called the Higher Learning Commission.

The HLC accredits more than 1,000 institutions and looks at everything from the college’s mission to the qualifications of its faculty to the assessment and improvement of its programs.

In addition to HLC accreditation, most programs offered by our colleges are accredited separately by industry associations and accrediting bodies.

Our faculty and trainers are qualified industry experts—not student graduate assistants. The vast majority of our faculty hold master’s or doctorate level degrees in their fields.

The result is that we award more than 15,000 degrees and certificates annually, and our graduates earn $11,000 more per year than workers with a high school diploma or less.

Our graduates are in Missouri’s top businesses, working in a vast array of fields and positions. Many have gone on to become entrepreneurs, doctors, nurses, engineers. Name a profession, and there is someone who started at a community college.

Missouri is home to:

#10 best community college in the country according to Wallet Hub

1 Aspen Institute College Excellence Program finalist

1 of 6 campuses in the nation named an Active Minds Healthy Campus

4 National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership accredited colleges

4 colleges in the top 50 best online community colleges by AC Online, with one college coming in at #10

4 colleges on the Manufacturing Institute’s M-List

6 2016 SkillsUSA student medalists
Community Colleges are preparing Missouri’s workforce on a massive scale.

In addition to the more than 90,000 students enrolled in our for-credit programs, we also train more than 100,000 students in non-credit programs. Most of these students come to take a few courses or to earn a workforce development certificate so that they can immediately put their new skills to work.

Over the last several years, Missouri’s community colleges have partnered together on a series of workforce training programs focused specifically on some of the most in-demand career fields: healthcare, manufacturing, and STEM. Through this effort, we have trained more than 9,000 people, who now have a greater opportunity to increase their earnings potential and to fill much needed roles for Missouri’s employers.

Training Anyone, Anywhere

Despite having defined service regions, through our collaborative network, community colleges work together in order to expand the resources available to businesses. If a business has a workforce training need in a particular industry, but their local college does not have capacity or expertise in that field, another college can provide assistance to serve the business. This voluntary network allows community colleges to serve every Missourian and every Missouri business.

Real World Training

Nearly all of the programs in support of Missouri’s targeted industries require some form of work-based learning component. Through internships, laboratory practica, clinical setting training, credit for prior learning or on-the-job/apprenticeship programs, community college students learn both the theory and the practice of their disciplines. Most importantly, this provides students with a first-hand look at their new jobs, and it provides employers with an opportunity to shape the training program and evaluate potential employees.

Every community college works in close partnership with Missouri’s businesses and industries. Some programs are specifically designed to support a particular employer. Others are developed in cooperation with a group of businesses within an industry. Through business advisory committees, the private sector continues to monitor the programs and advise the colleges on potential changes.