



ALLEGANY COLLEGE
of MARYLAND

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028

Introduction

As is ever the case in higher education, Allegany College of Maryland faces new opportunities and challenges each year. Like other institutions, there are concerns about funding, artificial intelligence, and changing expectations around learning. Yet throughout, ACM keeps focus on its central Mission: to deliver high-quality, relevant education centered on student success, built on the hallmark of the College—personalized attention and genuine care for each student in a supportive and engaging community.

With the development of a new Strategic Plan, the College has a unique opportunity to reflect on what it does well, where it has opportunities for improvement, and how to prioritize its resources to ensure ongoing commitment to students and stakeholders. Through gathering and analyzing data, prior plans are evaluated and new plans are developed using stakeholder input and intentional consideration of the College's future. This process allows ACM to distill the many possible directions it could pursue into a few key priorities so that resources can be invested where they will have the greatest impact on students and their individual learning experiences.

Since the last Strategic Plan was undertaken, the College is faced with a number of challenges, including:

- The retirement in 2024–25 of President Dr. Cynthia Bambara, who has led the institution for thirteen years along with many other long-serving key employees.
- Changing levels of funding from Maryland and Allegany County as the state implements the sweeping changes required of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the County faces budget challenges of its own.
- Growth in online education reflecting the evolving expectations of students regarding course delivery.
- The shifting cultural perception of higher education, with increasing attention on return on investment and the value of a college credential.

The core concepts of student success and student access, however, remain central to ACM's role in its community. The 2022 American Community Survey shows that 68.5% of Allegany County residents over 25 years old have less than an Associate's degree in education. The median household income is \$46,913, about half the amount for the state of Maryland at large. Education remains one of the strongest predictors of career earnings and improved life circumstances, reinforcing the importance of the opportunities ACM provides.

Amidst this backdrop, the College is well-positioned to continue offering education, opportunities, and life-changing learning experiences—delivered with the kind of individualized guidance that has long defined ACM. Some of the great things that have happened recently or will soon include:

- ACM has seen enrollment growth over the last two years for the first time in over a decade. This success is due to many factors, including the rapid expansion of the online Nursing program, re-development of the Early College dual enrollment system, and renewal of Athletics—all enhanced by personal advising, outreach, and encouragement from dedicated staff.
- Significant facilities upgrades and renovations have occurred, including the updated Technology building, renovated Athletics facilities, a new correctional training facility for industry partners, a

complete overhaul of the College theater, and the upcoming large-scale renovation of the Continuing Education building—ensuring students learn in spaces designed to foster connection and success.

- The College has integrated key software programs to enhance the student experience, including Navigate and Brightspace, which provide new ways to engage with students, offer timely support, and help faculty and staff deliver the personal reminders, encouragement, and guidance students need to thrive.

While the specific obstacles facing the College in the coming years may feel new and intimidating, they are similar to those faced historically. New technologies emerge every few years. Community colleges are constantly asked to deliver more with limited resources. But the guiding principles on which the College was founded have not changed. A consistent focus on personal touch, one-on-one advising, mentoring, and relationships between faculty, staff, and students ensures ACM will continue to serve its community well into the future.

Every year shows that the College is more than any individual, more than any department. Through the dedication of hundreds of faculty and staff who know their students by name and take pride in walking beside them on their journey, ACM delivers continuity, care, and quality to thousands of students every year. Focusing on key priority areas ensures this tradition of personal connection and student-centered service continues well into the future.

With the implementation of the Strategic Plan, priority work groups will be convened to determine what the actions and objectives of each priority should be in the coming academic year. These actions will be conveyed to individual programs and units as appropriate and reported out annually (see Timeline).

STUDENT ACCESS

Rationale

Internal:

As an open access institution, Allegany College of Maryland is dedicated to the principle that anyone is welcome to enjoy the benefits of higher education. Great students may come from anywhere and it is the privilege of ACM to provide the opportunity for success to all comers. The College's Vision statement emphasizes that the College "...transforms lives [and] strengthens communities..." Without the capacity to accept students from all backgrounds and myriad aspirations for what education means, it would not be possible to advance these ideas.

Being the institution of choice for the greater Cumberland region, Allegany College of Maryland serves the vital role of transitioning students from secondary education into ongoing education and workforce by providing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for success. Allegany County faces some of the lowest household incomes in the state and higher unemployment rates than other counties. Students must balance the economic needs of supporting themselves (and often family) against the prospect of a higher return upon completion of the degree. For this reason, the College's ongoing excellence in providing scholarship and financial aid opportunities remains paramount to the student educational experience.

ACM demonstrates on a regular basis its commitment to accepting all students who seek educational opportunities, regardless of background. Whether students attend from another state or on campus, whether they have the financial means to access classes or not, and whether they're prepared for college-level education or not, the College is prepared with services and supports to give them the opportunity to try.

External:

A [Gallup poll in 2023](#) showed that only 36% of Americans indicate they have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education. Inside Higher Ed indicates this is the lowest it has been in years, with the public showing a steady decline in confidence over the last eight years. Combatting this idea that higher education is not worth the price of admission, or worse, that it isn't necessary or valuable, is a necessary step for all institutions of higher education to take in order to continue bringing in students to educate.

The Educational Advisory Board (EAB) has indicated a growing trend of high school graduates not attending higher education. These so-called non-consumers cite a variety of reasons for their decisions, including cost, perception of value, educational burnout, and the availability of alternative incomes that did not exist ten years ago and need minimal education. Combined with already low educational pursuit in the region, decreasing consumption rates indicate a shrinking pool of students being competed over by the same number of institutions regionally, reinforcing the need to prioritize not only attracting, but also retaining students at ACM.

The Maryland State Plan for Higher Education cites Student Access as one of its main goals with equitable and affordable access to post-secondary education installed as one of the driving forces behind the state's educational policy. ACM's affordability and open-access continue to demonstrate the College's commitment to helping as

many students as possible become a part of and succeed at their educational ventures. Aligning with the State Plan requires ongoing and intentional analysis and development of accessibility.

Additionally, the State continues to emphasize accessibility through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. As more students move through the K-12 system with the expectation of being College ready, it is imperative that ACM reinforce its existing resources for the enrollment management process to facilitate entry to higher education for these students.

Data Informing

Regional Educational Attainment	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Associate's Degree (25+)	10.2%	9.6%	9.6%	10.8%	8.7%
Some College, No Degree (25+)	20.1%	16.1%	20.4%	17.8%	18.9%
High School Graduate (25+)	43.1%	43.2%	40.5%	40.3%	40.8%
Regional Economy	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Median Income (Allegany County)	\$42,068	\$48,867	\$49,449	\$48,888	\$46,913
Unemployment (Allegany County)	9.0%	6.2%	7.5%	5.6%	6.7%
Student Financial Aid	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Students receiving financial aid	93.2%	87.4%	91.8%	89.7%	94.4%
Students receiving Pell grants	38.1%	35.6%	35.3%	30.6%	32.1%
Market Share	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
First-Time Full-Time Freshmen	57.7%	60.2%	55.7%	50.7%	50.8%
Part-Time Undergraduates	79.0%	80.5%	80.7%	82.3%	82.8%

Assessing

Credit Enrollment	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
Annual Headcount	3172	3248	3117	3072	3196
Credits	48,124	48,065	44,469	42,185	45,792
Application Conversion	32.0%	25.0%	30.7%	31.1%	28.9%
Early College	2018FA	2019FA	2020FA	2021FA	2022FA
Enrollments	760	764	738	806	947
Degree-Seeking Conversion	23.2%	23.1%	23.5%	17.3%	21.2%
Student Experience	RISC survey began in	2021SP	2022SP	2023SP	2024SP
Paying for College [is difficult]	2021SP	37%	39%	36%	41%
College Foundation	FY2007	FY2010	FY2013	FY2018	FY2022
Academic Scholarship Awards	\$487k	\$491k	\$564k	\$1.0M	\$1.1M

Targets

1. Increase Applicant conversion rate to a three-year average of 33% by 2028.
2. Increase Annual Credit enrollment to 3,300 by 2028.
3. Increase Degree-Seeking Conversion rates of Early College students to 25% by 2028.

Possible Action Steps

- Continue Financial Aid efforts to educate prospective students and their families regarding the new FAFSA.
- Ensure ongoing resource allocation towards the Marketing Plan.
- Reevaluate efforts to communicate with and reengage stop-out students and evaluate effectiveness of those methods.
- Support ongoing efforts by the Foundation to ensure student access to higher education.
- Leverage Blueprint for Maryland opportunities to continue supporting dual enrollment opportunities, including developing pathways for Early College students.
- Evaluate which degrees can be made available online.
- Eliminate technology barriers faced by students in the onboarding process.
- Consider how to implement a mandatory orientation for students with flexible modules reflecting student needs.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Rationale

Internal:

ACM's mission notes that the education offered by the College is "Centered around student success." All other actions and activities are in service to this one intention of the institution. What student success means varies from one student to the next; it may be completing a single course or successfully retraining to shift from one career to the next. Whatever motivation a student has for attending ACM, their success while here is the main focus of institutional priorities. The College's Educational Master Plan (2022-2025) additionally outlines the importance of student success, steps to be taken to improve it, and mechanisms for evaluating its success. The Strategic Plan's role is to observe Student Success at a macro level, evaluating how the entire institution is doing.

Allegany County has the lowest educational attainment in Maryland, with 77% of residents having no higher than an Associate's Degree compared with 56.3% statewide. The opportunity for students to improve their livelihoods and career opportunities through education necessarily requires that the College supports their ability to transition from student to graduate in a timely and effective manner. Although an increasing number of ACM students are enrolled from outside the county, the primary service regions affected by the institution continue to demonstrate demand for graduates prepared by the institution.

College data consistently shows strong graduation rates for ACM students relative to other Maryland community colleges. For the first time cohort entering in Fall 2018, 62.2% of ACM students graduated or transferred within four years (200% time) compared with 52.4% of students statewide. Students are able to achieve these successes despite being highly likely to be a first-generation student, likely to be working at least 20 hours a week, and facing educational and financial hurdles. The support services, faculty and staff professional development opportunities, and technical infrastructure necessary to maintain academic excellence are a focus of this priority and underpin the student academic experience from application to graduation.

In line with the State's expectations, the College is committed to identifying which students could benefit the most from strategic interventions, services, and programming to improve ongoing outcomes. Ensuring all students at the College are positioned to perform to the best of their ability is key to long-term institutional success.

External:

One of the goals of the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education is Success – to "Promote and implement practices and policies that will ensure student success." The State of Maryland enumerates its expectations that institutions of higher education continue to demonstrate excellence regarding the development and delivery of academic programming. Emphasis is placed on communication with local industry, on the assessment and review of academic programs, and ensuring graduation within a reasonable time frame. Recommendations from the State Plan focus on things like the Near Completer Initiative, improving credit for prior learning, and refocusing on general education learning outcomes.

Additionally, the focus for education in Maryland has expanded dramatically to include the requirements and purview of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. With changing expectations for what it means to be college ready, ACM will need to continue its emphasis on quickly preparing students for college-level material regardless of their level at entry and transitioning them through their curricular expectations into success.

As a key component of the College's Mission, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education places the ongoing expectation that the College fulfills its intent to students to help them find success during their educational experience.

Data Informing

ACM Graduates	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
ACM Graduates	494	459	536	471	509
# Awards Earned	580	566	650	560	622
Regional Educational Attainment	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Associate's Degree (25+)	10.2%	9.6%	9.6%	10.8%	8.7%
Some College, No Degree (25+)	20.1%	16.1%	20.4%	17.8%	18.9%
High School Graduate (25+)	43.1%	43.2%	40.5%	40.3%	40.8%
Student Demographics	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Credit Students Receiving Pell Grants	38.1%	35.6%	35.3%	30.6%	32.1%
First-Time Students with Developmental Education Needs	64.8%	42.9%	33.6%	30.5%	32.9%
Credit Students Employed More than 20 Hours Per Week*	34.1%	36%	(NA)	53%	41%
First Generation College Students*	40.1%	38%	(NA)	57%	55%

* Methodology for these two questions changed in FY2022

Assessing

Retention	2018FA	2019FA	2020FA	2021FA	2022FA
Fall to Spring (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	83.1%	80.2%	83.7%	81.7%	82%
Fall to Fall (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	58.1%	51.9%	41.2%	58.2%	57.4%
Progression	2018FA	2019FA	2020FA	2021FA	2022FA
12 Credit Accumulation (1 Semester)	45.0%	55.5%	58.7%	47.7%	41.1%
24 Credit Accumulation (2 Semester)	37.9%	43.7%	48.4%	34.0%	33.1%
36 Credit Accumulation (3 Semester)	33.3%	33.7%	36.9%	35.3%	35.0%
Transfer	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
150% Transfer Rate (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	29.7%	25%	30.3%	34.4%	32.1%
200% Transfer Rate (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	34.7%	31.3%	37.4%	38.2%	35.8%
Graduation	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
150% Graduation Rate (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	20%	20.5%	15.9%	15.5%	29.3%

200% Graduation Rate (First-Time Full-Time Cohort)	29.9%	23.1%	21.1%	21.4%	34.2%
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Targets

1. Increase first semester credit accumulation to 55% by 2028.
2. Increase 200% Transfer rate to 38% (3 year average) by 2028.
3. Increase 200% Graduation rate to 35% (3 year average) by 2028.

Possible Action Steps

- Expand faculty awareness of Learning Commons resources to utilize in curricula.
- Apply results of Student Learning Outcomes assessment to development of annual objectives for Strategic Plan and EDMP.
- Leverage Navigate early notifications to improve first semester student outcomes.
- Conduct an analysis of simultaneous course combinations for success.
- Expand professional development opportunities for faculty and staff related to student success and instructional methods.
- Look at DWF rates to see where the interventions are necessary utilizing best practices.
- Ensure student onboarding is as seamless as possible.
- Improve outreach opportunities for at-risk students including faculty/staff mentoring.
- Streamline access to emergency funding for students at risk of dropping out.
- Increase support for students with disabilities.
- Consider how to market ACM as an academic bridge for Early College students looking to complete their higher education work at a four-year institution.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Rationale:

Internal:

Over the last two years, Continuing Education and Workforce Development has demonstrated consistent high amounts of growth, recovering from the difficulties imposed on workforce education by the COVID-19 pandemic with resilience. This substantial increase, coupled with evident shifts in offerings, highlights the enduring value of workforce education not only to the College, but also to the community it serves. With additional institutional support, the success of Continuing Education and Workforce Development can be expanded and sustained into the future.

Additionally, the Continuing Education and Workforce Development building itself is due for renovation and modernization, encompassing both its physical infrastructure and the range of services provided. These improvements will help to better serve the community and enrich workforce training opportunities offered by the College.

By including Workforce Development in the Strategic Plan, we can ensure that ACM contributes directly to the local economy by providing skilled workers, attracting businesses, and fostering entrepreneurship by giving students equitable access to all educational opportunities. We can make sure that our workforce programs are aligned directly with the current and future needs of local industries. Workforce development programs also serve as a pathway for individuals to enhance their skills, increase earning potential and achieve upward mobility. Workforce Development can swiftly adapt to address regional skills gaps by offering targeted training programs and stackable credentials that meet the specific needs of employers.

Workforce Development places a priority on supporting underserved populations and possesses the capacity to promptly address community and employer needs, including business closures. This proactive approach contributes significantly to diminishing socio-economic disparities within the community and effectively meets students where they are. All students have similar opportunities for access to workforce opportunities.

External:

The Maryland State Plan emphasizes workforce development activities through a variety of avenues, including Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) offices, Adult Education and Literacy Services, and more. The College has been able to utilize Maryland state funding to improve offerings within Continuing Education and Workforce Development and facilities around campus. The Maryland Sequential Scholarships, WIOA funding, Promise Scholarships, as well as Opportunity Scholarships have added to the success of our students and leveled the playing field in recent years making Workforce Development more affordable. Additionally, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future was initially developed by the Governor's Workforce Development Board and focuses heavily

on the role of education in creating career ready individuals. It is anticipated that Continuing Education and Workforce Development will play an ever- increasing role.

The Federal government has expanded its workforce opportunities for higher education with initiatives such as the Second Chance Pell (allowing Pell access for incarcerated persons) and its ongoing Perkins programs (as distributed through the state of Maryland).

Moreover, Continuing Education and Workforce Development persistently cultivates and fosters local partnerships, broadening programming opportunities in collaboration with key organizations such as the Greater Cumberland Committee (TGCC), economic development entities, and Tourism & Recreation initiatives. Additional partnerships extend across various sectors, including healthcare, cosmetology, educational alliances, and career pathways planning aligned with the Maryland Blueprint. Additionally, the College remains dedicated to expanding its network of local collaborations, amplifying the scope and impact of its programming initiatives.

Data

Informing

Poverty	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Under 18	22.4%	24.1%	19.7%	17.4%	15.1%
18-64	16.9%	16.3%	16.5%	15.8%	21.5%
Income	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Median Family	\$ 59,383	\$ 61,181	\$ 62,954	\$ 66,549	\$ 75,725
Median Household	\$ 44,065	\$ 45,893	\$ 49,449	\$ 51,090	\$ 46,913
Median Earnings	\$ 26,513	\$ 26,882	\$ 27,456	\$ 30,910	\$ 36,585
With Food Stamp/SNAP in past 12 months	19.3%	20.5%	20.2%	21.2%	22.9%
Unemployment	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Annual Rate of Unemployment	8.5%	7.4%	7.5%	6.9%	6.7%
	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Non-Credit FTE	604.36	587.85	368.55	375.87	583.39

Assessing

Course Enrollments	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Enrollment in CE Workforce development courses	9552	9256	7239	5110	5473
Enrollment in courses leading to government or industry-required certifications or licensure.	5092	4817	3765	2573	2091
Enrollment in Contract training courses	7879	8006	6815	4479	5040
Enrollment in Adult Basic Education	725	988	700	469	477

Targets

1. Continue growth of Non-Credit (Continuing Education) FTE – 15% growth by 2028
2. Grow contract training courses – 10% growth by 2028

Possible Action Steps

- Expansion of partnerships with the prison and jail systems of Allegany County and surrounding Pennsylvania counties.
 - o May include CDL A Training.
- Expand industry partnerships within the County while developing new and robust programming for existing partners.
- Digitize and modernize the CE registration and scheduling processes
- Develop data solutions based on 5-year trend data within CE with Maryland Labor and Industry data to inform CE decision making.
- Develop Young Entrepreneurs Academy as well as Adult Entrepreneur Programs in partnership with Allegany County Chamber and Allegany County Economic Development.
- Develop and Implement new Cosmetology Program
- Develop and implement new Innovations Center with locations at Cumberland main campus and Western Maryland Works.
- Expand upon CDL B and Forklift training currently in partnership through a grant with Hagerstown Community College including heavy equipment.

Cumberland Campus

12401 Willowbrook Road, SE • Cumberland, MD 21502-2596
301-784-5000

Bedford County Campus

18 North River Lane • Everett, PA 15537-1410
814-652-9528

Somerset County Technology Center

281 Technology Drive • Somerset, PA 15501-4300
814-445-9848



Bedford County Technical Center

195 Pennknoll Road • Everett, PA 15537-6946
814-623-2760

School of Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts

The Culinary Café / Gateway Center
110-114 Baltimore Street • Cumberland, MD 21502-2302
301-784-5410

Non-Discrimination Statement: Allegany College of Maryland does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

For inquiries related to this policy, please contact:

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