MOUNT
TAMALPAIS
COLLEGE

Midterm Report

Submitted by

Mount Tamalpais College (formerly Prison University Project)
P.O. Box 492
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to

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
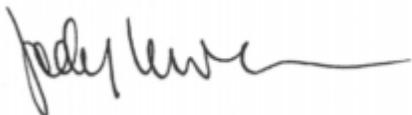
October 2025

Certification

To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

From: Jody Lewen, Ph.D., President/Chief Executive Officer
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This Midterm Report is submitted to the ACCJC for the purposes of 1) highlighting recent improvements or innovations and 2) providing an update on institutional performance with regard to student outcomes since the last comprehensive peer review. The Midterm Report reflects the nature and substance of this institution, as well as its best efforts to align with ACCJC Standards and policies, and was developed with appropriate participation and review by the campus community.

Signatures:

Jody Lewen, Ph.D.   10/13/25
President/Chief Executive Officer

Theresa M K Roeder, Ph.D.   10/13/25
Chairperson, Governing Board

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A. Reflections on Continuous Improvement Since Last Comprehensive Review

1. Briefly describe major improvements or innovations since the time of the last comprehensive peer review, focusing on areas where your institution is excelling or showing significant improvement with regard to equitable student outcomes, educational quality, and/or mission fulfillment.

Since the last comprehensive review, MTC has implemented substantial improvements to increase institutional effectiveness and better fulfill its mission. The college has engaged in several strategic planning processes since becoming accredited in 2020, producing iterative plans for 2021-22, 2023-25, and 2026-28 (in progress). As the ACCJC peer review team recommended, MTC strengthened its resource allocation model by developing and implementing new processes to integrate planning and budget, and then providing opportunities for stakeholders to review, discuss, and provide input. The 2021-22 strategic plan was developed with the help of an expert consultant, and subsequent plans were driven by the college's executive team with input provided by staff and the board. Each strategic plan focused on student and college needs as determined by assessment. For example, the most recent strategic plan and budget process allocated funding to fulfill recommendations stemming from the college's written communication and critical thinking learning outcome assessments. Additionally, each iteration of the strategic plan has included goals focused on planning for financial sustainability. The college's financial planning and annual budget process was directly connected to strategic goals and included a process to gather input from staff and the board. (I.2, I.4, III.4, III.5, ER 18, ER 19)

Starting in 2024, MTC's strategic plan goals were translated into Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) to guide and communicate the goals and work of the college, teams, and individual staff. The OKRs inform the workplans of all college staff and have proven invaluable as a tool to prioritize projects and tasks as well as communicate progress toward goals to the board. Also in 2024, the executive team developed a vision statement and theory of change as tools to guide strategy and communication. This document elaborates on the "why" behind the college's mission, and also outlines its goals, strategic direction, and anticipated outcomes. College staff and the board of trustees discussed and provided input on the vision statement and theory of change during Fall 2024 staff and board meetings. In 2024-25, the executive team developed a pitch deck to communicate MTC's work and impact to a broad audience of stakeholders. (I.5, ER 19)

In 2023-24, MTC developed its inaugural, annual College Factbook so it could share institutional data among its stakeholders and track trends over time. MTC's Factbook trend data helps guide continuous improvement across the college. For example, academic and student services staff are able to monitor trends in student data (e.g., why students are dropping courses) and assess (e.g., are the improvements resulting in fewer students dropping their courses for reasons that MTC can control?). The factbook also enables MTC to be transparent with its data with stakeholders. (I.3, ER 3, ER 11)

Since earning Initial Accreditation in 2021, MTC has also worked to increase the effectiveness of its board and staff. The college contracted with the Association of Governing Boards from 2021-22 to provide training and support to transition its board from a nonprofit board of directors to a college board of trustees. In addition to this training to increase clarity about how a board of trustees should function, MTC worked to recruit new members with governance and higher education experience, as well as fundraising expertise. MTC has hired new administrative staff, including a three-person Institutional Effectiveness and Research team, a Student and Alumni Services team, and staffing to implement a new computer lab, along with computer literacy curriculum and training, and library services. (III.1, ER 8, ER 14)

MTC has implemented innovations, described in detail in the Quality Focus Essay of its 2021 ACCJC Follow-Up Report, to improve equitable student outcomes and educational quality. These new initiatives include its work to:

- **Increase students' access to technology in learning:** Prior to MTC's accreditation in 2021, most MTC students did not have access to computers; some had access to word processors, and a few to computers, but the majority handwrote their papers. A good number of students who had been incarcerated for several decades had never used a computer. In the spring of 2022, MTC introduced student laptops, a computer lab staffed with computer-savvy support volunteers and printing capabilities, and computer literacy workshops. To further increase students' opportunities to use and master technology, the college has also offered classes that incorporate online, asynchronous content, communication with instructors through Canvas, and smartboards. Additionally, students now have access to EBSCO and a limited version of JSTOR to supplement MTC's research assistant program for accessing library resources. (II.6, II.7, ER 15, ER 17)
- **Address students' needs through a continuum of care:** MTC's Director of Advising, Learning Support Specialist, Alumni Affairs Associate, and the Academic Affairs team provide enhanced services to students from the beginning of their student experience through graduation to address challenges unique to the prison environment, as well as re-entry support to help alumni succeed in life post-release. A comprehensive intake process identifies students' college enrollment goals, as well as learning needs, challenges, and disabilities to establish early referrals to MTC's Learning Specialist. One-on-one student advising is available to students throughout the semester, and daily staff debriefs ensure that all college staff have current information about students' needs and challenges. The Student Information System allows staff to access information about students, courses, and advising. Finally, the Director of Advising and the Alumni Affairs Associate provide advising and re-entry referrals and resources for students leaving prison to help them succeed in their transition. (II.7, ER 15, ER 17)
- **Prepare students to succeed in college coursework, assist students to transition to academic pathways beyond MTC, and provide opportunities for life-long learning (II.6, II.7,II.8, ER 15, ER 17):** MTC launched its Introduction to College course in 2021 to support student readiness for college-level coursework through skill building (e.g., study skills, understanding learning

styles, etc.) and preparing students to access and successfully use college resources such as the computer lab and tutoring. MTC also began offering one-credit early college seminars in writing, science, humanities, and social sciences in 2024 to introduce new students to these disciplines, support early college motivation and interest, and help them succeed in more advanced courses.

MTC has expanded its work to help students access academic pathways beyond MTC through targeted academic advising for students who want to transfer to BA programs as well as by developing articulation agreements with public colleges and universities across the state.

To provide opportunities for learning outside of formal coursework, MTC began its weekly college-wide lecture series in 2024, with topics including astrophysics, elections and democracy, generative AI, and healthcare professions. In addition, each Spring semester the math and science department offers a weekly STEM-specific lecture series called, "Frontiers in Science and Technology," in which MTC math and science instructors are invited to present their research to students.

2. Briefly describe actions taken in response to any recommendations for improving institutional effectiveness or feedback noted in the Peer Review Team Report for the last comprehensive peer review.

MTC has implemented the following improvements that pertain to comments and recommendations from the peer review team report:

- **Faculty training:** MTC's new faculty orientation has been expanded to include an in-prison orientation. Topics covered include information about the college, the campus, prison rules, and working with MTC staff. There is also a student-led session to teach faculty about MTC students. Directors of the Writing, Math and Science, and Humanities and Social Science programs and the Learning Specialist provide additional training that is subject-specific and includes focus on pedagogy. (III.2)

- **Writing and math course placements:** MTC has improved its process for placing new students into writing and math courses by: 1. Developing additional assessments to place new students who are more advanced in writing and/or math into courses that are higher in the writing and math sequences, and 2. Implementing a system for validating placement results. Each semester, instructors assess whether students come into their courses with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed. Through this process, MTC's academic directors gain information about the accuracy of their course placements, as well as whether beginning courses are providing students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in more advanced courses or if unprepared students are inappropriately progressing through courses due to problems with the curriculum or grade inflation.

- **Library services:** To increase the quantity, variety, and depth of library services, MTC has focused its efforts on student access to technology-based research resources. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has introduced EBSCO and a limited version of JSTOR research software to incarcerated students in California, so MTC students now have access to these resources. The college's technology in learning initiative prepares students with the skills and knowledge needed to successfully use the online research databases (computer literacy workshops and resources, and specific workshops to train students to use EBSCO and JSTOR), as well as necessary material resources (computers, printers, support staff to help with questions). In addition, students still have access to the college's research assistant program, in which students submit requests for volunteers to access library resources on their behalf. (II.7, ER 15, ER 17)

- **Document and communicate constituents' roles and their participation in decision-making processes (IV.2, IV.3):**

  Faculty (II.2, ER 3, ER 9, ER 11, ER 14): Given that the college has just one degree program and is relatively small, MTC is able to rely upon ad hoc working groups to engage faculty in shaping the college. Each academic director (i.e., Directors of Writing, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Math and Science Programs) regularly convenes faculty working groups to make decisions about and changes to curricula. Examples by discipline include:
  - Working groups of math faculty assisted the Math Program Director to produce workbooks for each of the four courses in MTC's math sequence. Ad hoc faculty working groups have also provided input for revisions to math and science prerequisites, course descriptions, learning outcomes, and course plans.
  - Humanities and Social Sciences faculty have served on ad hoc committees for curriculum changes in a variety of courses.
  - Writing faculty worked with the Writing Program Director to create MTC's Writing Skills Lab as well as to restructure the capstone writing course, English 204.
  - Faculty across the disciplines serve on ad hoc grade appeal committees, as needed.

  Faculty working groups are also convened for each assessment of student learning outcomes. Faculty have thus far served on committees to assess written communication, oral communication, and critical thinking. As a part of that process, faculty make recommendations to improve student learning and an action plan is created to implement those recommendations.

  Faculty also communicate ideas and input for program improvement via a semesterly feedback survey. Verbal feedback provided to staff during the course of semester is captured by staff debriefs, which are written after each teaching shift.

  Students: Students provide ideas and input to improve the college via semesterly course and instructor evaluations. MTC staff publish a summary of evaluation findings and actions taken to

address student feedback each semester in the student newsletter, called "TamGram," and also provide the same information from previous semesters in the verbal instructions they give to students before they complete these surveys, as well as in a cover letter on each evaluation that is signed by the relevant academic director. MTC's goal is for students to always learn how the feedback they provide is used to shape and improve the college.

Additionally, students often provide verbal feedback about the college to staff. MTC staff escort faculty into the prison for each teaching shift and then make themselves available for students' questions and advising. Students' ideas and feedback are recorded and discussed in staff debriefs written after each teaching shift and are often elevated for discussion during weekly academic and student services team meetings.

MTC does not have a representative student council or similar group to represent the concerns and needs of students to the college's leadership; instead, we rely on the above systems for gathering input. Experience has shown us that placing some students into positions of power or perceived power over others can create conflict or resentments that even undermine their intended purpose.

Staff: MTC's annual climate survey provides a regular, formal opportunity for staff to assess and provide feedback to improve the college's culture, leadership, practices, and strategy. MTC's executive team disseminates the survey results to all staff and highlights areas for improvement. The executive team provides regular updates on the status of improvements at staff meetings.

Informally, staff often provide feedback to their managers about how to improve the college and those ideas are discussed at weekly executive meetings and acted upon if the ideas are beneficial and feasible.

- **Evaluation of governance systems and organizational functions and roles:** MTC has a regular evaluation calendar that includes the following:

  Board evaluation: The board completes an annual self-evaluation to assess their understanding and fulfillment of governing roles and responsibilities. The board discusses the self-evaluation results and generates recommendations for focus and improvement over the next year. (IV.6, ER 7)

  President evaluation: The board evaluates the President's progress on her goals and also gathers feedback from the staff whom she supervises on an annual basis. Together, these provide the foundation for a formative assessment of the President and aid in setting her goals for the following year. (IV.5)

  Staff evaluation: Staff complete self-evaluations for feedback meetings with their managers to discuss their progress toward goals, challenges, successes, and needs in September and January

each year. Staff goals include responsibilities that ensure implementation of MTC's OKRs, which are based on fulfilling the strategic plan. The evaluation process is designed to prompt staff to reflect with their managers on ways they can improve their performance as well as on their professional development needs. (III.2, III.3)

Leadership and manager evaluation: Staff provide feedback about their managers and college leadership on MTC's annual climate survey. In addition, the executive team is currently working on a process for staff to provide individualized feedback for their managers on an annual basis. (III.3)

3. **How are the actions described above helping your institution deepen its practices for continuous improvement and transformation in relation to the 2024 Accreditation Standards?**

Over the past several years, MTC has worked to align its mission, vision, and theory of change with its strategy, goals, and staff workplans. The college's student learning outcomes assessment process, as well as plans to assess student services, were new at the time of our follow-up report for initial accreditation. Now, assessment cycles and systematic data collection feed improvement plans and clear and factual communication with stakeholders. Altogether, this work has allowed MTC to more efficiently and effectively achieve its mission. (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5, ER 3, ER 6, ER, 11, ER 19)

The new academic and student support initiatives we developed for our Quality Focus Essay now support success for all students in a variety of ways. The technology in learning initiative has resulted in exponential increases in MTC students' use of and proficiency with technology since 2021. Students who had never before used computers received computer access and computer literacy training, and enrollment in increasingly advanced computer literacy workshops remains high each semester. Students have transitioned from writing papers by hand to routinely using computers and printers for this task. Several courses use Canvas to provide asynchronous learning. Computer access and competency has also allowed students access to richer research resources as well as improve their information literacy skills. (II.6, II.7, ER 15, ER 17)

The Student and Alumni Services team's leadership in developing a continuum of care for students has resulted in increased and enhanced resources to support success for students with learning disabilities, including a new process to provide learning accommodations, as well as workshops and training for both instructors and students led by the college's Learning Specialist. All students have had increased access to advising to support their success. Analysis of student advising data reveals that advising topics have expanded beyond new student orientation, course advising, and transfer advising to include student support pertaining to personal, academic, and career goals and addressing personal and prison-specific barriers to success. By hiring an Alumni Affairs Associate in 2021, MTC increased its capacity to provide reentry advising and support specifically for students leading up to and after their release from prison. The college is currently partnering with UC-Berkeley's Possibility Lab to assess alumni outcomes and gain feedback on how well MTC's re-entry work is currently

supporting alumni and how this area of work may be improved to better meet alumni needs. (II.7, II.8, ER 15, ER 17)

MTC's innovations to improve equitable student outcomes and educational quality have engaged students and supported their academic success. There has been consistently high demand for and participation in the college's lecture series, suggesting that this new academic programming has been successfully engaging students in learning outside of the classroom. In addition, an evaluation of one of the new early college seminars, Writing Skills Lab, supports its effectiveness in preparing students for success in more advanced writing courses. (II.6, II.7, ER 15, ER 17)

Finally, since the time of MTC's 2021 ACCJC Follow-Up Report for initial accreditation, new faculty working groups and systems for gathering feedback from faculty, students, and staff have resulted in deeper faculty engagement in curriculum improvement and greater and more consistent use of stakeholder feedback to continuously improve communication and how the college is run. (II.2, ER 3, ER 9, ER 11, ER 14)

B. Reflections on Institution-Set Standards and Other Metrics of Student Achievement

1. **Review the most recent ACCJC Annual Report and other meaningful metrics of student achievement. Has the institution met its floor standards? Exceeded its stretch goals? Describe any patterns or trends you see in performance against your institution-set standards and other metrics of student achievement.**

Successful course completion rates
As shown in Table 1, MTC's successful course completion rates, defined as a grade of C or above, exceeded both its Institutional Set Standard of 80% and stretch goal of 90% of courses successfully completed during the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 school years

Table 1. Successful course completion: College goals and performance.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Institutional set standard	80%	80%	80%
Stretch goal	90%	90%	90%
Actual	96%	97%	93%

The college's President, Chief Academic Officer (CAO), Chief of Institutional Research (CIER), and the Board of Trustee's Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) reflected upon reasons for these high rates. The main points of the discussion were:

- One possibility is that the high successful course completion rates is due, in part, to grade inflation. One method the college uses to identify whether students are inappropriately receiving passing grades is the Instructor Assessment of Student Readiness, in which instructors assess whether each student in their class is prepared with the needed skills and knowledge to successfully complete the course. This process allows the college to identify curriculum or grading problems in courses earlier in the sequence.
- MTC has policies to support student success that increase successful course completion rates. The college has a later course drop date than other colleges to account for the many instances in which students need to drop courses due to prison barriers or factors related to their incarceration. Thus students who would receive failing grades in other contexts are able to drop courses.
- Successful course completion is likely also due, in part, to MTC's early alert systems to identify students who need support as well as plentiful student supports (e.g., tutoring, tutor-led study groups for specific courses, a dedicated Learning Specialist). The Director of Advising reviews

course drop forms on a weekly basis to determine if students list reasons for dropping that an Advisor, Learning Specialist, or Academic Director can help with so students can successfully stay in the course. MTC maintains an online student support form that faculty, students, and staff can use to refer students for support from appropriate staff. The Learning Specialist also reaches out proactively to any student flagged as "not prepared" in the Instructor Assessment of Student Readiness process.

Degrees

As shown in Table 2, MTC exceeded its institutional set standard in 2021-22 but did not meet this standard in 2022-23 or 2023-24.

Table 2. Degrees granted: 2021-22 through 2023-24.

	2021-22	**2022-23**	**2023-24**
Institutional set standard	10	10	10
Stretch goal	20	20	20
Actual	11	4	7

Reflections from MTC's President, CAO, and CIER, and the ACC, include:

- There was an average of nine graduates per year from 2001-2019, but there were large fluctuations in graduate numbers over that time. There was an average of seven graduates per year from 2021-22 through 2023-24, but we cannot say whether this represents a trend toward a decline in graduates or is a normal fluctuation.
- Numbers of students completing degrees may have been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, when some people who were close to the degree were released. If this is true, the college should start seeing more graduates in the coming years.
- There is some concern that people who complete the degree will be transferred to other prisons to make more room for new people to take advantage of San Quentin's programs. This risk may cause some students to delay completing the degree.
- If MTC gains additional classroom space in the new buildings being built at San Quentin and is able to hire additional staff, the college could offer classes during more time periods and students could complete the degree more quickly. Part of the reason why people do not finish the degree is because they parole or transfer.
- It may be useful to survey graduates with nuanced questions about how they have benefited from the degree, or about the learning they have done. Sharing this information with current students, perhaps in Introduction to College, could help them think about their own academic

and other goals and inspire them to complete the degree.

- MTC needs to consider its goals in relation to student completion. The college will consider revising the ISS for degrees after we have data on how long it takes students to earn the degree, on average. The CIER will examine data from all MTC graduates and determine how long it took them to complete the degree.

2. When you disaggregate the data for the institution-set standards and other meaningful metrics of student achievement, what do you see related to equitable student achievement outcomes (i.e., equity gaps)? What patterns or trends excite you? What patterns or trends concern you?

Generally speaking, MTC's process for examining disaggregated student data is:
- MTC's Chief Academic Officer (CAO), President, and Chief of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (CIER) review disaggregated data once per year
- Findings are presented to the board's Academic Affairs Committee (AAC)
- Numbers are expected to fluctuate and some variation may be due to different or low numbers of students in subgroups
- Any percentage below 80% will prompt curiosity and investigation into the data
  - Examine instances of low grades to understand why
  - Bring information for discussion about meaning and action with Academic Directors (ADs) and Student Services teams
  - Create opportunities for to learn more through student focus groups, surveys, etc. if more information about meaning or effective corrective actions is needed

In September 2025, MTC's President, CAO, and CIER, and the AAC, examined 2022-23 and 2023-24 successful (i.e., grade of C or above) credit course completion rates and pass rates for college preparatory courses by age and race/ethnicity (September 2025 data review notes). As shown in Table 3-7, successful course completion rates for 2022-23 and 2023-24 range in the mid to high 80s to 100% across most subgroups.

Table 3. Successful credit course completion rates disaggregated by age: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

	2022-23	**2023-24**
Successful course completion rate: 18-24	100% (4/4)	100% (5/5)
Successful course completion rate: 25-30	100% (12/12)	94% (34/36)
Successful course completion rate: 31-45	99% (75/76)	91% (132/145)
Successful course completion	97% (31/32)	93% (86/92)

	2022-23	2023-24
rate: 46-54		
Successful course completion rate: 55-64	94% (59/63)	97% (112/115)
Successful course completion rate: 65 and older	100% (28/28)	88% (50/57)
Successful course completion rate: Unknown age	83% (5/6)	85% (11/15)

Table 4. Successful credit course completion rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

	2022-23	**2023-24**
Successful course completion rate: Black/African American	96% (73/76)	95% (124/130)
Successful course completion rate: White	97% (69/71)	93% (143/154)
Successful course completion rate: Hispanic/Latino(a)	96% (26/27)	86% (74/86)
Successful course completion rate: Two or more races	92% (11/12)	94% (32/34)
Successful course completion rate: Asian	100% (12/12)	96% (24/25)
Successful course completion rate: American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN)	100% (2/2)	86% (6/7)
Successful course completion rate: Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI)	100% (3/3)	100% (6/6)
Successful course completion rate: Unknown race/ethnicity	100% (18/18)	100% (21/21)

Table 5. Successful college preparatory course pass rates: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

	2022-23	**2023-24**
Pass rate for all non-credit college preparatory courses	85% (197/231)	90% (269/298)

Pass rate for college preparatory writing courses	92% (48/52)	80% (52/65)
Pass rate for college preparatory math courses	83% (85/103)	92% (157/170)
Pass rate for LA-99: Introduction to College	84% (64/76)	95% (60/63)

Table 6. Successful college preparatory course pass rates disaggregated by age: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

	2022-23	**2023-24**
Pass rate: 18-24	100% (5/5)	100% (7/7)
Pass rate: 25-30	100% (17/17)	84% (27/32)
Pass rate: 31-45	88% (84/95)	90% (94/104)
Pass rate: 46-54	90% (43/48)	93% (63/68)
Pass rate: 55-64	75% (33/44)	91% (43/47)
Pass rate: 65 and older	68% (15/22)	88% (30/34)
Pass rate: Unknown age	N/A	83% (5/6)

Table 7. Successful college preparatory course pass rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

	2022-23	**2023-24**
Pass rate: Black/African American	84% (65/77)	84% (71/85)
Pass rate: White	87% (58/67)	98% (61/62)
Pass rate: Hispanic/Latino(a)	83% (39/47)	86% (81/94)
Pass rate: Two or more races	86% (19/22)	100% (32/32)
Pass rate: Asian	88% (7/8)	100% (6/6)
Pass rate: American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN)	100% (1/1)	100% (1/1)
Pass rate: Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI)	100% (4/4)	88% (7/8)
Pass rate: Unknown race/ethnicity	80% (4/5)	100% (10/10)

Reflections from MTC's leadership and the AAC:
- The group concluded that nothing about the data is alarming or warrants immediate action.
- There was a lower college preparatory (CP) course pass rate for those 65 and older in 2022-23.

The CP course pass rate for this group was 68% (15 of 22 students) in 2022-23 but rose to 88% (30 of 34 students) in 2023-24. The successful credit course completion rate for this group was 100% in 2022-23 and 88% in 2023-24.

- The group noted that there was a relatively low number of students in the 2022-23 CP group.
- An AAC member surmised that students found it difficult to fully engage in classes in 2022-23 because the in-person courses were just returning after the Covid-19 pandemic during that year and there were many quarantines of the entire prison as well as specific housing units that interrupted semesters for long periods of time. It would make sense that newer students in the 65 and older age group taking CP coursework may have been especially impacted by illness and persistent interruptions to class attendance.

3. What actions has your institution taken/is your institution taking in response to the patterns and trends discussed above? How will you monitor the results of these actions in order to inform future improvements and innovations in support of equitable student achievement?

MTC's President, CAO, and CIER, and the AAC believe that an in-depth look at students aged 65 years and older would prove valuable, especially given that this group comprises 12-14% of MTC's student body each semester. The CAO and AAC discussed how MTC often supports older students with accommodations to help with difficulty seeing or hearing, or to catch up after medical absences. In Fall 2025, the CIER will examine how many courses students aged 65 and older have completed, what their academic goals are, and their use of student support services such as tutoring and study groups, and bring this information to MTC's CAO and the AAC to discuss and take action if needed.

C.   Reflections on Assessments of Student Learning

1.   Review the results of learning outcomes assessment. Describe any patterns or trends related to attainment of learning outcomes observable in these data that may be relevant as you implement improvements and innovations in the design and delivery of academic programs?

A committee of staff and faculty developed MTC's college-wide student learning outcomes (CWLO) assessment process as a part of the college's work toward accreditation with ACCJC. The college has six CWLOs: written communication competency, oral communication competency, information and research literacy, civic and community engagement, and quantitative reasoning and scientific inquiry; and three personal enrichment outcomes: self-advocacy, community participation, and positive long-term outcomes.

Since 2021, the college has completed assessments of written communication competency, oral communication competency, critical thinking, and self-advocacy and is in the process of assessing positive long-term outcomes. Highlights from completed assessments are below.

Written Communication Competency Assessment (2021 Written Communication Competency Assessment)
1.   Formative assessment showed expected increases in written communication scores for more advanced writing courses in MTC's required composition and research sequence (i.e., scores were lowest for English 101A and highest for English 204).
2.   Performance expectations were met in English 101A and English 101B. In English 204, 69% of students met the standard while 31% did not.
3.   Among English 204 students, the criteria "Organization" and" Engages with Other Writers" had the lowest scores.
4.   Due to the small sample sizes from each class, the number of English 204 students who performed below the standard was quite small (n=4) and there were no patterns in demographics characteristics (i.e., no common age or race/ethnic groups, and all 4 were Native English speakers).

Oral Communication Competency Assessment (2020 Oral Communication Competency Assessment, 2023 Oral Communication Competency Assessment)
1.   Overall oral communication competency scores were at the midpoint between "good" and "excellent."
2.   The 2020 assessment found that the lowest scores were for "delivery" of speeches, so more opportunities to practice delivery were introduced into classes.
3.   Assessments showed slight increases in oral communication competency from 2020 to 2023. These minor increases could potentially be attributable to smaller class sizes and

improvements in curriculum, or they may be normal fluctuations or an artifact of the assessment, because the class sizes were smaller in the second assessment.

Critical Thinking Assessment (2024 Critical Thinking Learning Outcome Assessment)
1. Assessment provided evidence that students' critical thinking skills grow as they progress through MTC classes.
2. There was a wide range of student scores in each course and the percentage of students reaching the standard of performance ranged from less than one-third to less than two-thirds.
3. Criterion 1 (The student identifies their own and others' assumptions, and explains their role in the issue / context) was consistently the lowest scoring across courses.
4. Analysis of potential mediating factors showed an inconsistent relationship between critical thinking, age, and number of semesters taking courses. Race/ethnicity was not a relevant factor in critical thinking scores.

Self Advocacy Assessment (2024 Self-Advocacy Assessment)
1. New students rated themselves lower in self-advocacy than did more advanced students, suggesting that these skills may develop as students participate in college.
2. Self-understanding (understanding one's needs as a student) was the most underdeveloped self-advocacy skill for both new and advanced students.
3. Nearly all students reported being confident in their ability to ask for support.
4. About half of new students reported they were proficient in goal setting, understanding the impact of society on themselves, and decision making.

2. How (i.e., for what subpopulations, modalities, etc.) does your institution disaggregate its assessment results? When you review disaggregated assessment results, what patterns or trends do you see related to equitable attainment of student learning? What patterns or trends excite you? What patterns or trends concern you?

- MTC disaggregates assessment results by age and race/ethnicity.
- The college has not found reliable differences in learning for students based on these factors, but this may be due to small subgroup sizes. Future assessments will combine new data with this data to increase subgroup sizes.
- Due to some findings with student achievement data, described in Section B, MTC will especially examine future results for students 65 years and older.

3. What actions has your institution taken/is your institution taking in response to the patterns and trends discussed above? How will you monitor the results of these actions in order to inform future improvements and innovations in support of equitable student learning?

1. Revised course learning outcomes to ensure that writing, public speaking, and critical thinking are consistently taught from semester to semester and focus explicitly on skills that

correspond to CWLOs.

2. Revised syllabi to incorporate scaffolding of writing, public speaking, and critical thinking learning outcomes as the curriculum progresses from beginning to more advanced courses.
3. Hired a dedicated Learning Specialist.
4. Review assessment rubrics with instructors each semester and discuss expectations for student learning.
5. For written communication competency:
    a. Introduced new reading and writing skills courses and workshops.
    b. Incorporated teaching and discussion strategies into English 99 and 101A that:
        i. break down analysis into specific skills and tasks;
        ii. give students practice with paraphrasing;
        iii. develop close reading skills that encourage students to develop a layered understanding of how an effective piece of writing is built and that teach them how to directly engage with a writer's ideas; and
        iv. help students practice their ideas and what they want to express in the context of other writers' ideas and support students in contending with differences of opinions.
6. For oral communication competency:
    a. Added course learning outcomes to ensure that courses in addition to Communications 146 include oral communication learning outcomes and student speeches that may be assessed.
7. For critical thinking:
    a. Added course learning outcomes to integrate more instruction in classes about considering multiple perspectives and challenging your own assumptions (related to criterion 1).
8. Will include more advanced courses in learning assessment.
9. Will reassess each learning outcome on schedule to measure changes in learning.
10. Will combine data from future assessments with current data to bolster subgroup analyses and monitor for equitable outcomes.

D. Looking Ahead to the Next Self-Evaluation and Comprehensive Review

Your institution will begin its next comprehensive self-evaluation in 1-2 years. What opportunities, changes, or other internal or external factors do you see on the horizon that are likely to affect the context of your self-evaluation and/or comprehensive peer review?

MTC's President recently reflected upon the current and potential future impact of the ongoing political turmoil in the United States on the college (March 2025 President's Letter). While MTC receives no funding from state or federal government and is not directly impacted by cuts to federally funded programs, the college's financial sustainability could be indirectly affected by recent events. One concern is that the individuals and foundations upon whom the college relies for philanthropic support may shift their focus toward other critical societal issues and human needs that are emerging as a result of current political events. The United States prison system is a chronic humanitarian crisis, and chronic crises may be forgotten when new disasters emerge. Another potential risk to MTC is that current market volatility may curtail both individual and foundation giving, whether due to diminished resources or wariness about the future. These potential risks could affect MTC's financial sustainability and cause MTC to have less money to fulfill its mission.

In addition, cuts to higher education funding have already resulted in some faculty no longer being able to volunteer their time at MTC. The longer term impact on MTC faculty recruitment remains to be seen.

Now, and even more so by the time of the MTC's next comprehensive review, the current political situation is creating a context in which academic freedom and liberal arts education are more important than ever. While developing its vision and theory of change, MTC's executive team reflected upon the role of the college not only in equipping students to be informed and active participants in society but also serving as a place where people from different worlds and with different perspectives teach and learn together and transcend the social barriers and stereotypes that commonly prevent groups in broader society from working together.

Another factor that will impact the context of MTC's next comprehensive review is Governor Newsom's focus on San Quentin as a rehabilitation center. One project of this initiative is the construction of a new education campus at San Quentin, anticipated to be completed in Spring 2026. The new campus is hoped to result in increased classroom space for MTC, which may allow the college to both serve more students and provide additional programming and services to students. Additional space may also allow MTC to offset the impact of higher education funding cuts on its faculty pool by offering more day/time slots in which to teach courses.

Another component of the governor's initiative is to introduce two in-person Bachelor of Arts programs to San Quentin, one run by the California State University, Los Angeles to start classes in Fall

2026, and the other, from UC Berkeley, to start in Fall 2027. This coincides with MTC's continuing work to develop articulation agreements with public colleges and universities across the state. The full impact of having an in-person BA program at San Quentin on MTC is unknown, but it is likely that there will be increased attention on educational programming at the prison. It is also possible that the availability of an in-person BA program could motivate MTC students to complete the AA more quickly.

Finally, a factor that may impact the context of MTC's next self-evaluation and comprehensive review is the growing partnership between MTC's leadership and San Quentin administration. For more than a year, MTC has hosted monthly dinners with San Quentin's leadership and staff as well as monthly meetings with the warden. This relatively recent relationship building has led to an unprecedented level of partnership between the two institutions and has resulted in an increasing capacity to solve problems. The college is in the final stages of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with San Quentin to formalize its commitments and further enhance communication and understanding. MTC's leadership and staff are eager to leverage this growing partnership to continuously improve the running of the college.