

MCC alumna Abby Mulcahy completed her general education requirements as well as other coursework at MCC before transferring to Grand Valley State University.

MCC's transfer options help students

Abby Mulcahy did her homework before enrolling at Montcalm Community College. It's a decision that has paid off for her in more ways than one.

The 21-year-old from Cedar Springs earned an Associate of Liberal Studies and completed all of her general education requirements at MCC before transferring to Grand Valley State University (GVSU) to pursue a Bachelor of Arts for English, language and literature. It's a decision she said made sense for her situation.

"I definitely wanted to attend MCC first," Mulcahy said. "It was cheaper, and it was 25 minutes from home. Also, I just wasn't ready to go to a place where there were additional distractions and variables, like being away from home and parties — that whole social aspect at a university. It was just easier for me to go to a place that was mostly for school, but had the options for social encounters."

Before she enrolled at MCC, Mulcahy met with an advisor to learn about her options.

"I met with advisor Lisa Gardner, and she made the transfer process super easy for me to understand," Mulcahy said. "I was interested in an Associate of Liberal Studies, so she printed out the requirements for that. I also told her three different colleges I was considering so she printed out all of the classes that would transfer for their general education requirements."

Mulcahy decided it would be best for her to select the institution she would be transferring to because the transfer requirements varied at the three institutions she was considering, making it difficult to determine her best course of action at MCC.

BRIDGE THE WAY

After she selected GVSU, Mulcahy and Gardner worked together to identify MCC courses that would satisfy her associate degree and general education requirements, as well as meet program requirements at GVSU. To be sure she was on the right track, she also met with a GVSU advisor.

“Once I knew I was going to GVSU, I just tried to get as many credits to transfer as I could, even if they didn’t necessarily count toward my associate degree. If they counted toward GVSU’s requirements, I also took them at MCC,” Mulcahy said.

MCC Counselor Brandy Bunting urges students to consider their options early “to find the best fit” for their program of study. In addition, she said it is essential for students to meet with a counselor or advisor at their future institution early to make sure they are taking the best classes at MCC.

“Students need to make sure they are taking classes that not only transfer, but also meet requirements for their future program,” Bunting said.

MCC Student Success Counselor Tore Skogseth agreed.

“We have basic information, especially about local transfer colleges, but sometimes there are very specific rules, obstacles or loopholes that students can only learn about from the future institution,” he said.

Mulcahy said she is glad she started at MCC because she feels it helped prepare her for the larger university setting.

“You get more one-on-one attention at MCC because there are fewer students in the classes,” she said. “I really love the community there and the instructors. At a bigger university, you really only get to know the professors in your area of study. At MCC, you get to know all of the instructors from every field. They’re friendly and caring, and they really go out of their way to get to know you and talk to you.

“One thing that sticks out to me about MCC versus a university is that the instructors are really interesting and engaging. In my humanities class, the instructors brought in artifacts, we watched videos, we made crafts – it was really interactive. I think that’s just a good example of what MCC does. They make it interesting and applicable. They make memories,” Mulcahy said.

According to the National Student Clearinghouse, on average during the last five years, 553 students per year have transferred to another two- or four-year institution after completing some coursework at MCC. According to MCC’s annual graduation survey, 54 percent of graduates in 2017 and 55 percent on average during the past three years reported they are continuing their education after receiving a degree from MCC.

The most popular fields of study reported by MCC’s transfer students include advanced degrees in nursing, education, business administration and management. Institutions most often transferred to include Central Michigan University, Davenport University, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University and Western Michigan University. More than 100 transfer agreements with these and dozens of

other colleges and universities, both in-state and out-of-state, allow students to take selected courses at MCC and transfer directly into programs at the receiving institution.

In addition, MCC regularly hosts visits from transfer representatives from a variety of colleges and universities so students may speak directly with them about transfer options.

The Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) is another tool students may use to further their education locally. MTA allows students to complete general education requirements at one college or university, then transfer those courses to meet general education requirements at another college or university without any special exceptions.

Data shows that MCC students who transfer to another institution are well prepared for their next step in their education.

“The feedback that we receive from receiving institutions is that our students do as well as, and often better than, students who start at a four-year school,” Skogseth said. “We offer a high-quality education with the convenience of being local, as well as a great bridge between a local high school and a much larger four-year institution.

“That idea that you can get anywhere from here really is true,” he added.

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