



Location: Blue Bell, PA

Focus Areas: Academic supports; Community

Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) is a public community college and commuter institution with two primary campuses and a culinary arts institution. Located outside of Philadelphia in Southeast Pennsylvania, MCCC serves 10,309 undergraduate students, 75% of whom are enrolled part-time.



At A Glance:

- » Developed Montco Connect, a centralized communications portal for students to receive personalized content, resources, and virtual engagement opportunities in social feed view
- » Created a student usability board that compensates members with a one-credit stipend and continuously gathers student feedback

Approach Overview

MCCC introduced [Montco Connect](#), a new web portal with companion mobile app, during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020. At the same time as the Montco Connect launch, MCCC implemented a laptop loaner program to ensure all students had access to necessary technologies at home. Unlike traditional portals, Montco Connect is built on the Campus.App platform and offers a private social media experience for students. As a multi-campus commuter institution, MCCC sought out a flexible platform that could quickly adapt to individualized needs of different student populations. Leveraging the fact that all within the MCCC community must log into the portal to access any online system, the platform helps address concerns about whether students are accessing critical information and communications. Montco Connect offers a space for engaging and communicating with remote students in a convenient, simplified, and centralized way.

The Montco Connect web interface is very similar to that of Facebook or other modern social media platforms, placing all new content and communications in a centralized and personalized “feed” view. This view is personalized to the student, containing recent communications targeted to groups they belong to, to all students, to the individual student, etc. No additional navigation is necessary for students to see

communications – messages are tailored to organizational groups they belong to, to all students, and to the individual student - upon accessing the system. While the web portal is 100% mobile responsive in design, the companion app provides additional benefits such as the ability to use the device alarm or camera.

A comprehensive content calendar helps departments schedule current and relevant content. Often, this content is announcing (or reminding) students of a support or service offered by MCCC. Many of these posts include links, videos, or other material to effectively inform the student and permit immediate action. Montco Connect also includes the ability to display widgets which, in implementation, include direct links to Blackboard courses, an events calendar, and a custom-developed academic profile which includes pertinent information such as Academic Advisor contact, program of study, GPA, etc.

Groups for all student support organizations across the organization have been created within the Montco Connect platform. With the ability to seek and join groups (e.g., student clubs or affinity groups), students are able to find others with similar interests and elevate their sense of belonging.

Professions at MCCC said the following about their MontcoConnect efforts:

“You have to be willing to go through some trial and error. Something that works for somebody else may not work for you. I know we’ve definitely tried things and learned from them and we’re doing things to improve upon that. I don’t think there’s really an out-of-the-box solution for every institution.”

“It doesn’t stop when the launch happens. This is a continued effort.”

“You get to understand how stressed students are with other challenges and how important it is to have information right there when they need it.”

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