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Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation

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### **Abstract**

The Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) Foundation is a nonprofit organization that acts as the fundraising arm to Monterey Peninsula College. The agency serves all students attending MPC. The macro-level problem that this capstone addresses is that there are too many students dropping out of college. The MPC Foundation is able to address the issue by providing financial assistance to alleviate the stress of college and the cost of living expenses for students in need. The project, named Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation, consisted of designing a strategy to reach current students in order to expand their awareness of the foundation's services. The project was based on collecting first-hand information from students through table demonstrations. The data was used to inform the foundation of current awareness levels and to offer recommendations regarding students' preferred ways to receive information from the foundation.

Keywords: *Outreach, Community College, College dropouts, Financial Assistance.*

## **Strategic Outreach Program for MPC Foundation**

### **I. Monterey Peninsula College Foundation**

The MPC Foundation is a Nonprofit Organization that was founded in 1994. The Foundation has raised over \$12 million, and currently holds \$6 million in assets (MPC Foundation, 2019). This organization aims to advance the educational experience of students and faculty of Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). The MPC Foundation has six employees and two student interns. The Foundation is governed by a 30-member board, including 25 influential community leaders and five designated representatives from the campus community (MPC Foundation, 2019).

MPC Foundation provides over 150 scholarships, textbook assistance, and emergency assistance programs to the students of MPC. Additionally, they support the Faculty and Staff through professional development, instructional materials, and equipment for classrooms.

The social issue that the MPC Foundation primarily addresses is financial need. Due to students not having enough financial contribution towards their education, a college degree could be unattainable while living in Monterey County. The supplemented financial support encourages students to stay in school and reduces the risk of students dropping out. One example of the ways that the MPC Foundation addresses this social issue is through the Evans College Incentive Program. Students who present a financial need and face challenges in their lives that are likely to prevent them from attending or completing college, who are currently in high school, are nominated by faculty at their schools, continuation or alternative schools, and a number of non-profit organizations to receive scholarships that pay for their college education (MPC Foundation, 2019).

## II. Communities Served

The Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) Foundation serves a very diverse population that come from different cities throughout Monterey County. The MPC Foundation serves the same population as Monterey Peninsula College. According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (2019), during the annual term of Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, MPC had 12,650 students. Of those students, 49.3% of the population was between the ages of 19 to 24 years old, 22.06% are between the ages of 24 to 34 years old, and 28.51% are 35 years of age and older. Of this population, the highest reported race at 41.2% reported being Hispanic, and 35.71% reported as White Non-Hispanic. Those who identify as Asian represented 5.41%, African Americans represented 3.1%, Filipino represented 2.95%, and Multiracial represented 5.41% (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2019)

Discussing the different cities in Monterey County, the socioeconomic situation varies drastically. To express the differences between the cities in Monterey County, take a look at the following median income levels for non-family households: Monterey has a median income of \$51,040, Greenfield has a median income of \$41,201, Salinas has a median income of \$34,547, and Seaside has a median income of \$34,723 (American FactFinder, 2017). In 2017, Monterey County had an estimated population of 435,477 persons, and of that population, 15,660 ages 18 to 34 years old were reported to be living in poverty (American FactFinder, 2017).

The students attending Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) prove to be a very diverse population in demographics and financial backgrounds. The Monterey Peninsula College Foundation seeks to provide scholarships to the financially needy students of the College. The

students who attend MPC have an opportunity to alleviate their financial burdens through the assistance of the MPC Foundation.

### **III. Problem Description**

#### **Social Issue**

The MPC Foundation is a non-profit organization that serves the population of students at MPC. Through its donations and fundraising, MPC Foundation is able to provide supplemental income to students who express financial neediness (MPC Foundation, 2019). In doing so, they are contributing to the macro-level problem of too many students dropping out of college. MPC Foundation works directly with the administration, faculty, and students to provide them with additional opportunities to attend the community college and obtain an associate's degree or certificate of achievement. However, the MPC Foundation alone is unable to tackle such a large issue of student dropout or retention rates. This is a complex problem with contributing factors that are challenging to address.

#### **Contributing Factors**

Several factors contribute to a drop out rate for community colleges. With a focus in Monterey County, the cost of living within this area makes it difficult to afford college. It has been noted that the average cost of living in Monterey, California is 44.7% higher than the national average. Comparable to the cost of living in a large city like Los Angeles where the cost of living is at 42.6% above the national average, Monterey is very costly (Cost of Living Calculator, 2019). How this affects a person who hopes to attend a community college like Monterey Peninsula College (MPC), it is highly likely that they would need to live with family or have many roommates in order to sustain the cost of living in addition to the cost of education at MPC.

The already high expenses of living locally within Monterey with the cost of education could support why students are dropping out of college. MPC has its cost of attendance listed on their college website. There it is stated that the annual budgeted cost of attendance for a student living away from home is right around \$30,490 for an academic year (Monterey Peninsula College, 2019). This budgeted cost accounts for the cost of tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses according to the California Community College Chancellor's Office. However, this budgeted cost doesn't apply to every individual and every individual comes prepackaged with their own set of financial debts and goals. "We live in a costly area where it is extremely challenging to be a college student, which typically requires working fewer hours to attend class and study," said Beccie Michael, MPC's vice president of advancement and the executive director of the MPC Foundation (Wright, 2019).

Another contributing factor to be highlighted would be added is the inability of balancing work-life with receiving a college education. When a student enters college they are suddenly responsible for the important choices in their life from choosing a major and balancing school, outside commitments and a job. This juggle can be extremely stressful. Especially if a student is paying for their education unassisted by financial aid, and they are forced to work more hours than they are spending a class or studying. According to The Duke Perspective, having less time to complete labs or extensive assignments such as an expository essay can decrease grades and further adds to why those enrolled may consider dropping out (2019).

## **Consequences**

The aftermath of dropping out of college can create a lot of turmoil for those individuals who are making that decision. A consequence of dropping out of college would be a greater marginalization and negative labor market outcomes due to not having the credentials. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of employers that are requiring postsecondary education for jobs that traditionally did not have an educational requirement. This type of requirement only limits those without degrees from attaining work in fields such as sales representatives, clerks, secretaries, and administrative assistants (Khine, 2019).

Due to the lower job outlooks, it is likely that the individuals who aren't qualifying for higher-paying jobs are taking lower salaries. Therefore they are making less than individuals who have a college degree. According to the Committee on Education and Labor, Associate's degree holders also receive positive returns on their college investments, generally earning about \$400,000 more than high school graduates over the course of their lives (House Committee on Education and Labor, 2019). Workers with a bachelor's degree typically make one-third more (Porter, 2019). Due to the cost of living in California, individuals who are working a minimum wage job are likely to be living paycheck-to-paycheck and are forced to work multiple jobs.

Lastly, dropping out of college can create more financial hardships on the student if they choose to drop out. Students who dropout may find themselves with substantial student debt without a credential that would lead to a better paying job (Smerdon, Kim, and Alfeld, 2018). It is likely that a student who drops out of college will default on their student loan payments, as it is said that a dropout does not have a credential to use and the likelihood of the loan repayment



be minimal (Cooper, 2018). This can negatively impact them after dropping out because it can lead to additional interest and late fees, while also negatively impact on their credit (Lake, 2020).

Figure 1 presents the problem model described in this section.

**Figure 1: Problem Model**

<b>Causes/Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem statement</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
High cost of living	Too many students drop out of college.	Lower job outlooks
High college expenses		Less likely to be financially stable
Limited accessibility to support services		Paying back loans for education you did not receive

### **Connection to Capstone**

The MPC Foundation addressed the prevalence of this problem by providing supplemental income through scholarships to students who express a financial need. This capstone assisted the Foundation by providing awareness of this beneficial organization that works to serve its community through financial support to students to achieve academic success. Bringing attention to the Foundation enables the longevity of the organization while also reaching out to more members of the community who, in the long run, could benefit from its services or become a future donor.

## **V. Project Description and Justification**

### **Project Title**

Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation

### **Project Description**

The Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation consisted of an outreach project that focused on the population of current students that attend Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). This outreach program included several face-to-face interviews with students through table demonstrations that are promoting the MPC Foundation. For this program, interview questions were curated for the purpose of gaining student's knowledge of the MPC Foundation, and to provide feedback on whether they are interested in learning more about what the Foundation has to offer. The tabling demonstrations represent a grassroots approach to directly communicate with the population that the Foundation serves. Utilizing a set schedule with demonstrations held throughout the MPC the outreach program provided specific data that comes directly from the students in order to inform the Foundation on students' current awareness of the foundations and on how to facilitate their outreach.

### **Project Justification**

The goal of the Strategic Outreach Program was to bridge the communication gap between the Foundation and the students of Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). In doing this, the Strategic Outreach Program will be able to make a larger impact on the social issue of students dropping out of college. The short term goal was to uncover how many students had knowledge of the MPC Foundation, and if they were interested in receiving information on the services that the Foundation had to offer.

This capstone aims to educate the students of MPC on a valuable resource on campus. Additionally, it seeks to provide the Foundation with recommendations on how to best communicate with the students at Monterey Peninsula College. Through these actions, there should be increased student contribution to the Foundation, through applications of scholarships and student signups for keeping in touch with the Foundation. In this way, the Foundation will be able to consistently communicate with current students and future alumni.

### **Benefits**

This program is supplying the MPC Foundation with a resource to utilize for future outreach. Through this resource, also providing the Foundation with a greater understanding of the communication needs of the population within MPC. This benefit also has the feature of staying in touch with new, current, and future students of MPC. It provides the Foundation with a baseline of students who can be a part of a future alumni association. The MPC Foundation maintaining a relationship with the students creates an opportunity for donor contributions to the Foundation. The current alumni association members contribute to the funder population for the Foundation. The alumni not only contribute scholarships for the students but they also participate as board members and make decisions for the Foundation. This allows the Foundation to continually serve Monterey County residents, and specifically the student population at MPC, with additional financial support towards their educational goals.

**Table 1. Project components**

<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Intervention Development</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Implementation methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Research target population</li> <li>● Develop digital and physical marketing materials geared towards the MPC Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Disseminate promotional materials</li> <li>● Interview students</li> <li>● Collect information from students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data analysis</li> <li>● Reporting</li> </ul>

## **VI. Project Implementation**

The Strategic Outreach Program began with the desired outcome of increasing audience knowledge of the MPC Foundation. The implementation of this capstone required developing marketing materials. In addition to promotional materials, the capstone required the creation of a schedule for implementation and the selection of interview questions to ask students. Finally, the interviews were conducted during pre-established tabling events designed to promote the MPC Foundation's Scholarship Workshop events held on campus. Table 1 describes the components of the implementation of this Capstone. Table 2 presents detailed activities through a scope of work timeline.

### **Participants**

The role of this Capstone was to reach out to the population of students at Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) and provide them with information on the MPC Foundation. The Strategic

Outreach Program held the responsibility of interviewing students, gauging their knowledge of the Foundation, as well as, providing ways for students to participate with the Foundation.

Select colleagues within the MPC Foundation had direct involvement in the Strategic Outreach Program. The Data and Digital Communications Manager directly oversaw the supervision within this program and provided the appropriate guidance and critiques that will determine the target population, implementation, and evaluation. The Director of Development oversaw the promotional materials that include the fliers for the Foundation's Scholarship Workshops. The Executive Director had minimal direct involvement but approved all of the steps throughout this project.

The biggest participant is the targeted community population. The students that are reached through this Strategic Outreach Program. This program provided the Foundation with direct access to information that can be utilized for future advertising distributions. Including modes of contact for the students reached for future promotional material from the Foundation.

### **Resources**

The Strategic Outreach Program had very little need for financial backing. The location for table demonstrations, dissemination of promotional materials, and interviews took place directly on campus in a variety of locations. Contribution from the MPC Foundation's personnel was scheduled for supervision and evaluation. Additionally, materials for the tabling were limited to a table, table cloth, flier stands, clipboards, and pens. Additionally, an incentive was necessary in order to draw students to the table. For this capstone, custom-made sunglasses with the MPC Foundation name were used.

**Implementation Challenges**

One challenge that affected this program implementation was time. The coordination of schedules for supervision and tabling events demonstrated to be a challenge. As a result, some table demonstrations took place in times that did not coincide with high-traffic periods on campus.

The main implementation obstacle, however, was the Novel Coronavirus, also known as the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic impacted the implementation of this program directly and substantially. In mid-March 2020, Monterey County implemented a Shelter-in-place emergency response to slow the spread of the virus causing all non-essential organizations to close. Forcing students into online learning environments from home, employees facing mass layoffs, and all residents in their respective communities to stay home. Unfortunately, this obstacle cut the implementation of the outreach program short. The results obtained represent the data collected up to the point when the MPC campus was closed.

**Findings from Tabling Demonstrations:**

For the implementation of this program, five table demonstrations were scheduled with the goal of interviewing 10 students per demonstration for a total of 50 students. As previously mentioned, due to the global pandemic, COVID-19, only three of the five table demonstrations were completed. During the three demonstrations, this capstone was able to reach a total of 24 students.

For day one of the Strategic Outreach Program the location was set in front of the Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) Library. This event proved to be the most successful with reaching a total of twelve students. Day two of the program was set near MPC's Humanities and

Support services. Though there was a lot of foot traffic, given the proximity to the student parking lot, only four interviews were done with students. On the last day, the table demonstration was held outside of MPC's Administration building where the program reached eight students.

The feedback from the interviews revealed the following results. Of the twenty-four students interviewed for this program, only 20% of the students have heard about the MPC Foundation. Of that 20%, one student was a previous recipient of a scholarship and the other three had only recently learned of the Foundation and their scholarships through classroom presentations held by the Director of Development. The other 80% of the students interviewed did not know about the Foundation and were equally unaware that there were scholarships available. One of the students interviewed had even mentioned that he didn't qualify for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and he believed that he wouldn't qualify for a scholarship. For those who do not know, FAFSA is used by colleges and universities in order to determine a student's eligibility for federal grants, work-study, and loans. This needs to be highlighted because any student can qualify for a scholarship through the MPC Foundation. A student not qualifying for FAFSA doesn't automatically disqualify students from accepting any financial assistance from the MPC Foundation during the duration of their educational career.

Another part of the interview process was to ask the students if they followed the MPC Foundation on any of the social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. All of the students stated that they did not. As stated above, most of the students stated that they didn't know the Foundation existed and that contributed to their not knowing about the Foundation's social media accounts. A couple of the students made specific comments about not following

organizations like Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) or the MPC Foundation due to the fact of wanting to ensure that they kept their private lives separate from the professional organizations.

Attempting to get students to take an interest in the table demonstration there were fliers on the table promoting upcoming scholarship workshops. These fliers seemed to be of interest as some students walked by just for a flier. In addition to the fliers, this program provided customized MPC Foundation sunglasses for the students. These were used as a trade-off for the students who provided their contact information to the Foundation. Through the trade-off of sunglasses, twelve of the 24 students interviewed participated in the trade-off.

### **Conclusion**

The Strategic Outreach Program provided relevant resources to the MPC Foundation in order to bridge the communication gap between the MPC Foundation and current students. This program set out to target the population of students at Monterey Peninsula College. Through interviewing the students during table demonstration, it was discovered that of the students interviewed, 83% of students preferred all contact for promotional advertisement or information on support services to be done through email. The information that was most important to the students was information on scholarships.

Additionally, it was discovered that the tabling demonstrations work best when stationed in front of the library. This is where most of the student traffic occurred. It also presented that this location had the most students who were willing to be interviewed, in comparison to the other locations closer to the classrooms where students were typically in a rush and unable to converse.



Overall, this project provided insights into the lack of accessibility to the MPC Foundation. This agency has proven to be an extremely beneficial agency that has changed the life of many students. During the duration of this internship, the Foundation has proven its worth through the words of the students they have provided scholarships to. It is prudent that more of the students at MPC know and participate in the services that are available to them.

**Table 2. Scope of Work and Implementation Timeline**

<b>Goal:</b> Increase MPC Foundation visibility within the community and create a new alumni association/future donor base		
<b>Primary Objective of the project:</b> Strategic Outreach Program for MPC Foundation		
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Timeline/ Deadlines</b>
Discuss capstone project ideas with the mentor(s)	Final capstone project approval	Nov - Dec 2019
Define Target Population and Message	Fully understand the community and how to reach them	Nov 2019
Define the message for Foundation promotion	Understanding the Foundation Goals	Oct 2019
Implementation of program	Dissemination of promotional material through on-campus table demonstrations	Feb- Mar 2020
Analyze data collected	Organize data into a usable format	Mar 2020
Discovery	Identify key issues surrounding the program evaluation	Mar 2020
Present information	Present findings to the agency	April 2020
Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 2020
Prepare capstone presentation in the selected format	Instructor approval & dress rehearsal of final capstone	May 2020
Final preparation for capstone festival	Final presentation at virtual capstone festival	May 2020

## **VII. Reflection of COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Agency and Population Served**

### **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Agency:**

The impact of the global pandemic, COVID-19, has directly impacted the MPC Foundation. Due to the novel virus, on March 17th, Monterey County issued a county-wide Shelter-In-Place order for all residents. This caused all non-essential operations to cease. The MPC Foundation was forced to move operations to an online setting and this caused a disruption, as with other agencies. The Shelter-In-Place order called for all residents to stay at home, and to only leave for essential travel (essential activities, essential governmental functions, to work for essential businesses, or to perform minimum basic operations for non-essential businesses).

Since MPC Foundation is the fundraising arm of Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) they used this time as an opportunity to start an emergency relief fund for the students at MPC. This information was shared on all of their social media platforms. The emergency relief fund is something that is already offered to students, but the dissemination of the information was to hopefully increase incoming donations to supply to students.

One of the biggest impacts to happen due to COVID-19 is not having enough work to do remotely. The workers at the Foundation have their own roles within the agency. Most of the work can be handled remotely. However, the work that is normally handled by the executive assistant and interns have become sparse. In doing this, there is an inability for the executive assistant to work on tasks remotely due to most tasks involving physically being in the office. The same goes for interns.

**Impact of Covid-19 on Agency Clients:**

Switching to an online platform caused a lot of public events for students and donors to be postponed. This potentially could cause issues with receiving funds. However, this shouldn't impact students losing opportunities to receive scholarships for the time being. The MPC Foundation has specific funding dedicated to providing scholarships. These services have not yet been impacted.

**Impact of COVID-19 on Social Problem:**

The social problem of this capstone is that too many students are dropping out of college. The impact of this pandemic on the students has a multitude of impacts. The confusion, unsureness, and complication of switching from an in-person learning environment to an alternative means of learning could cause a lot of students to be discouraged to finish school. However, some students might excel in an online learning environment in classes they had to take as a requirement. While learning online might be a better option for some, it isn't a feasible option for students who depend on the resources that the MPC campus has to offer, like free wifi, computer access, and quiet learning spaces.

Some students are also workers and that equally as another impact on a student's ability to finish their education. Like the MPC Foundation, a lot of organizations had to cease operations to try and help stop the spread of COVID-19. So not only are some students struggling with school, but they could also be dealing with being laid off or having to work more due to working for essential establishments. Also, if they are still working they are coping with working during a pandemic.

**Impact of COVID-19 on the Agency's Future:**

The future of the MPC Foundation will be impacted in the sense that now there must be measures done in order to continue to raise money for the students of MPC. Though they are impacted in a way that stops social gatherings during this current time, there are other means of raising money and thanking donors. From this pandemic, the Foundation will have to ensure that once the Shelter-In-Place order is lifted that they take the proper precautions once re-introducing themselves to the office and to the general public. This is definitely dependent on the ability of the public administration's ability to have testing kits readily available in order to resume "business as usual". In addition to that, considering the impact that this pandemic might have had on the business a plan to recover any lost revenue. The MPC Foundation isn't alone in this aspect, and this is a trying time for all nonprofits across the board who are providing services to those in need.

**VIII. Recommendations**

The Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation has provided information directly from the population that they serve. This capstone provided the Foundation with some knowledge about how little the students are aware of the existence of this extremely beneficial resource. Additionally, this capstone was able to uncover the preferred method of contact for students. The Foundation should continue this style of strategic outreach, when it is environmentally safe to do so, and continue to interview and inform students of the usefulness of the MPC Foundation.

If the MPC Foundation is to continue with the implementation of the Strategic Outreach Program, there should also be promotions done through alternative means to contact the students

of Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). In addition to having someone representing the agency directly out on campus, the Foundation should consider having information sent directly to new students of MPC upon admission. This would be extremely impactful to students and encourage more of them to complete their degree and further contribute to their communities.

Advice for future colleagues working on this type of project would be to be patient. This type of outreach means understanding that not every student will want to discuss their preferences with you. Having the desire to reach as many students as possible is great motivation but in reality, it doesn't always work that way. Also, exercising active listening is a way to speak with students and build a rapport that could equally benefit students and the Foundation. Being able to listen to the students can uncover the target population's needs and shed light on innovative ways to reach them.

### **Broader Social Significance**

The Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation correlates with the broader social problem of students dropping out of college because it addresses a student's inability to benefit from financial aid resources. This program worked to define an explicit message that students are unaware of the MPC Foundation, and it is imperative that more is done to inform them. When a student is supported financially it alleviates one of the contributing factors to why students stop out of college.

Reflecting on the results of this program, the strategic outreach to the students proves that more needs to be done to increase the awareness of the MPC Foundation to the community it serves. It in no way discredits the Foundation from the success stories and impacts that it has made. In fact, more students should know about the impacts that this organization has made.

More students applying defines a financial need to the organization that could potentially grow and succeed with greater achievements with more success stories and revenue for itself and it's community.

Beyond the Strategic Outreach Program for the MPC Foundation, more can be done to ensure that all students are given the same opportunity to achieve academic success in any capacity. It is not new that the cost of education is extremely high and students who have received their education are paying off student-loans long after graduating from their institution. In order to see more students graduating and contributing to the future success of communities, it is essential that education is affordable and equitable to all applicants. Having an education provides each student with the opportunity for structured environments that harbor growth as an individual and as working professionals. Every student that applies to an institution for an education should be allowed equal opportunities to learn without the stressors that come from the cost of said education.

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