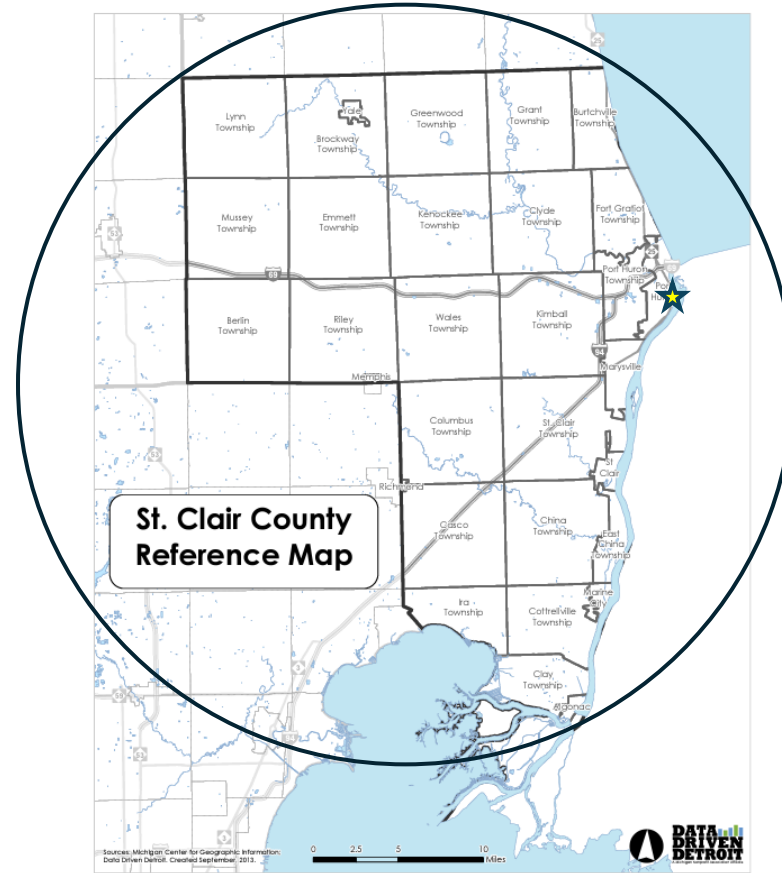


Are we truly open access, or is
our door just propped open?

Carrie Bearss, Registrar

Who's familiar with Port Huron/St. Clair County?



SC4

Geographical Considerations

- Canada to our east
- Two primarily agricultural counties to our north and an agricultural county to our west
 - No community colleges in Sanilac, Huron or Lapeer Counties
- St. Clair County is at the tip of Automation Alley and is the terminus for Interstates 69 and 94; Port Huron is the County Seat
- Fun fact: mileage-wise, Port Huron to Buffalo, NY is equidistant as Port Huron to Lewiston, MI (216 miles!)

Population Considerations

- St. Clair County is home to 160,383 people*; Sanilac County is home to 40,611 people*
- Bachelor degree attainment is 19.4%* in St. Clair County; 15.3%* in Sanilac County
 - Michigan as a whole = 21.2% (residents ages 25-64)**
- In St. Clair County, 13.7% of the population lives in poverty*; the figure is 15.0% in Sanilac County*
 - Michigan as a whole = 13.4%

*United States Census Bureau – 2020 decennial census data

** MI School Data, <https://www.mischooldata.org/progress-toward-sixty-by-30/>

K-12 Considerations

- In 2018, St. Clair County had 2,058 high school seniors.
- In 2023, there were 1,825 high school seniors (a 11.3% decrease from 2018).
- In 2018, 734 students, or 35.7% of the senior class was economically disadvantaged.
- In 2023, 772 students, or 42.3% of the senior class was economically disadvantaged (a 6.6% increase from 2018).

Data Source: <https://www.mischooldata.org/student-enrollment-counts-report/>



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“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, then starting on the first one.”

- Mark Twain

Where we started

- Really looked at the data
 - We wanted to learn more about what our area high school graduates were doing fresh out of high school
 - Utilizing MCCA's High School to College Dashboard, we learned the following about our county:
 - College enrollment was plummeting
 - In 2022, 50% of the graduating class started college within six months of graduating.
 - In 2023, that figure had dropped to 47%.
 - Of the economically-disadvantaged students, only 34% enrolled in college.
 - Also in 2023, the second-largest high school in our county had a college-going rate of just 33%.

What we did next

- Conversations about the data
 - A variety of initiatives and goals were developed and presented to the college community for input
 - An Enrollment Visioning Task Force was formed

Creation of Initiatives and Goals

- 100% student focused
 - Each initiative is defined with a purpose, objective, measurable goal, bulleted features, benefits, and budget considerations
 - Understanding that some of the initiatives are new/different than anything we've done before
 - Understanding that positive change is a process

Creation of the Enrollment Visioning Task Force

- Challenged with envisioning the college's future 5, 10, even 20 years from now
- Considerations given to various student segments, program offerings, community engagement
- Task Force comprised of 10 full-time faculty and administrators
 - Met bi-weekly during 2024 winter semester

Unintended (fantastic) consequences

- From the roundtables where the initiatives were presented and during Task Force meetings, multiple current-need 'Aha' ideas were generated
- Outstanding conversation, relationships built with individuals who don't regularly cross paths

Actions taken

- From our 10 Initiatives/Goals efforts, one is already in effect, and several others are in-progress.
 - Embedded college advisors focused on career/college preparation
- From the Enrollment Visioning Task Force, one effort has already been implemented, with several others in-progress.
 - Removal of Health Sciences application fee

Embedded College Advisor

- We are focusing on two high schools currently
 - One with a low high school-to-college transition percentage
 - One rural school that has started offering dual enrollment courses at the high school
- Plan is to track efforts, revisit data to see if efforts are making a positive difference

Removal of Health Sciences Application Fee

- Instituted during ‘Michigan Works years’ (circa 2008)
- Original motivation was to separate serious applicants from individuals who were applying just because they could
- Application fee was \$25; not an insignificant fee in 2008 or 2024
- Evaluation of Health Sciences processes and candidate pools revealed that some of the best candidates didn’t pay the fee and were therefore not considered for their program 😞
- Plan is to track applicant figures, evaluate if fee removal increases size and quality of applicant pools

Other data-driven initiative wins

- Dual enrollment options offered during school day
 - Students in our rural districts don't dual enroll at levels of more urban districts
 - Rural districts' administrators are eager to offer their students dual enrollment choices
 - Reliable home internet and transportation are challenges for after-school dual enrollment
 - Initiative started to offer ENG-101 in fall semester and ENG-102 in winter semester to 12th graders
 - Offered in place of AP English Language and AP English Literature in curriculum
 - Taught by high school English teacher who has been vetted as a qualified adjunct instructor
 - Highly transferable
 - Extra seats in classes open to community

Other data-driven initiative wins

- Direct admission for all St. Clair County 2024 high school graduates
 - Data showed that despite having an online, free application for admission, students were not applying
 - Effort that started as a two-school initiative quickly spread to all high schools in the county
 - Schools provided FERPA-compliant student lists; each student was sent a welcome letter explaining direct admissions before an acceptance letter was sent
 - Students were encouraged to visit the college to pick up SC4 shirts and a yard sign, and to share social media posts
 - Plan is to track enrollment trends from county high schools to see direct admission impact



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Time to chat!

- What initiatives has your school implemented to combat declines in college enrollment?
 - Do you have a specific focus group (e.g. low-income students, dual enrollment, etc.?)
 - Have you been tracking data?
 - What has it taught you?
 - What changes have you implemented as a result?
- Which initiative are you most proud of, and why?

Thank you for sharing your time with me!

Carrie Bearss

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