

Student Success

Talent Development

Community Vitality

Expanding Access Through Michigan Reconnect

Michigan Reconnect is a program designed to make community college affordable for Michigan residents who have not yet earned their college degrees, providing last-dollar, tuition-free access for in-district students and substantial tuition support for out-of-district students. In fall 2023, the Michigan Legislature temporarily expanded Michigan Reconnect to include students ages 21 to 24. To maximize the impact of this expansion, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential invested in a variety of interventions across campus offices to enhance direct outreach to eligible students.

At Kellogg Community College (KCC), administrators seized this opportunity to implement **IT, marketing, and financial aid** strategies, driving enrollment growth and increasing student engagement.

Reconnect-Driven Institutional Redesign

Kellogg Community College strategically optimized funding to strengthen outreach, expand marketing efforts, and improve financial aid capacity, ensuring more students benefited from Reconnect.

- **IT enhancements.** KCC leveraged Reconnect expansion IT funding to refine its student outreach by integrating targeted text messages, emails, and learning management system pop-ups. Administrators identified eligible students ages 21 to 24 through financial aid records, focusing on those registered but not enrolled in Reconnect. Short, direct messaging informed students of their eligibility and guided them to events like Enrollment Wednesday, where KCC advertised free advising and enrollment support. Because KCC rarely used other pop-ups or text alerts, engagement was high, with fewer students opting out.
- **Marketing expansion.** KCC reinforced its successful marketing efforts by focusing on a clear message: free tuition. Additional funding amplified outreach through billboards, campus posters, ads on pharmacy wellness kiosks, internet search and social media ads, local magazine ads, and Spanish-language advertising. Internet search ads were more successful than organic search results in directing people to [KCC's Reconnect page](#), making it the college's second-most visited web page. The college also hosted a dedicated Reconnect event before the fall 2024 semester, promoted through personalized postcards to eligible students, and included Reconnect flyers in over 2,000 giveaway bags distributed at a local parade.

“Implementing the program feels natural. Reconnect is a win for the students and the college.”
— Director of Admissions

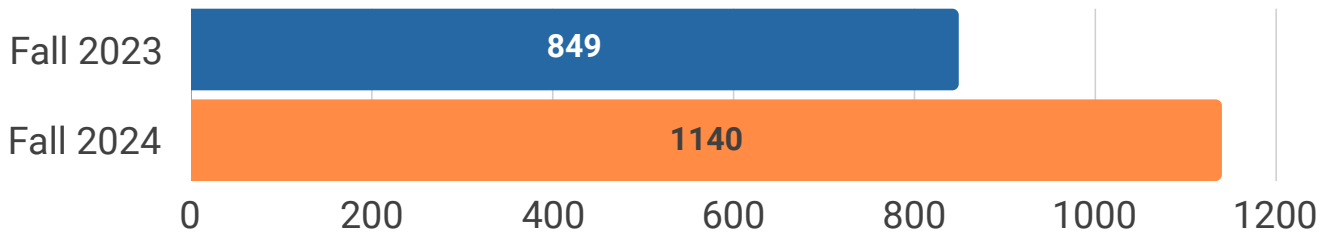
- **Financial aid optimization.** Reconnect funding strengthened KCC’s financial aid operations by expanding staff capacity, upgrading equipment, and providing specialized training. The college streamlined coordination between admissions and financial aid to get student accounts linked between the two systems, improving tracking and outreach. The funding also allowed the staff to receive KCC-branded gear, which ensured staff were easily recognizable at student-facing events.

Outreach and Enrollment Success

Outreach efforts led to increased online engagement, awareness of the Reconnect program, and enrollment of students. Through spring and summer 2024, the college’s digital marketing efforts saw a **nearly 13 percent click-through rate for KCC students**, more than double the [industry standard of around 6 percent](#). The Reconnect information and enrollment event was also successful, with **26 percent of attending students** registered for the following fall semester.

Beyond special events, Reconnect enrollment grew from 849 students in Fall 2023 to 1140 students in Fall 2024, a 34 percent increase across age groups.

Student Enrollment in Reconnect by Age Group, Fall 2023 and 2024



The increase in Reconnect enrollment specifically had a significant impact on selective programs at KCC. The nursing program now has a waiting list, and applications for the dental hygiene program have tripled, demonstrating how financial accessibility is directly expanding educational opportunities.

A Sustainable Model for Future Success

Moving forward, administrators emphasized the importance of ensuring that all college staff are equipped to discuss Reconnect with students. This shift has fostered a campus-wide culture of awareness, making it easier for students to receive guidance on Reconnect, whether speaking with faculty, admissions, or student support staff. KCC remains committed to sustaining and expanding its efforts to engage future Reconnectors. The college plans to continue targeting 21- to 24-year-olds, potentially through a state-partnered event, to boost participation in the program before the summer deadline. Administrators will also continue to contact students through text messaging and home mailers.

Beyond Reconnect, the state’s interventions have reshaped the college’s overall student recruitment strategy. Recognizing that older, nontraditional students form most of its enrollment, KCC is shifting its focus to better serve them. KCC is also prioritizing staff capacity expansion, particularly in financial aid, to manage program complexities and ensure more students can access higher education opportunities.