



College Spotlight

Success Strategies from Michigan Community Colleges

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 Mid Michigan College, administrators seized this opportunity to implement **IT, marketing, ReUp coaching, and financial aid** strategies, driving enrollment growth and increasing student engagement.

Reconnect-Driven Institutional Redesign

Mid Michigan College leveraged Reconnect expansion funding to enhance institutional capacity, streamline student outreach, refine support services, and expand staff professional development.

- **IT enhancements.** Reconnect funding enabled administrators to expand institutional capabilities using text messaging and learning management system (LMS) pop-ups. Mid discovered that LMS pop-ups could be customized without additional programming, allowing for a cost-effective, scalable communication tool. What administrators initially perceived as a complex process turned out to be an easy implementation and will now serve the college for future student communications. By using targeted, strategically timed messages, the college ensured that students received personalized and relevant information without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Marketing expansion.** Mid used marketing funding to broaden its outreach, launching billboards, radio ads, press releases, and digital and social media campaigns. A highlight of these efforts was Reconnect Rally Week, which generated excitement and increased engagement. A dedicated Reconnect landing page on [Mid's website](#) became the central hub for prospective students.
- **ReUp coaching support.** Mid also partnered with [ReUp](#), an organization that specializes in enrolling and aiding adult learners, to provide students who had paused their educations with personalized coaching and long-term support toward resuming their educational journeys. Sixty-eight students received customized assistance through ReUp, of which 24 percent enrolled at Mid Michigan College. Administrators credited the state's support for this initiative as particularly valuable for smaller schools, where investments in student outreach yield long-term benefits.

"The Reconnect expansion came at exactly the right time. It filled a gap for students in their early 20s who didn't have access to free college." — Vice President of Student Services & Advancement

Michigan Community College Association

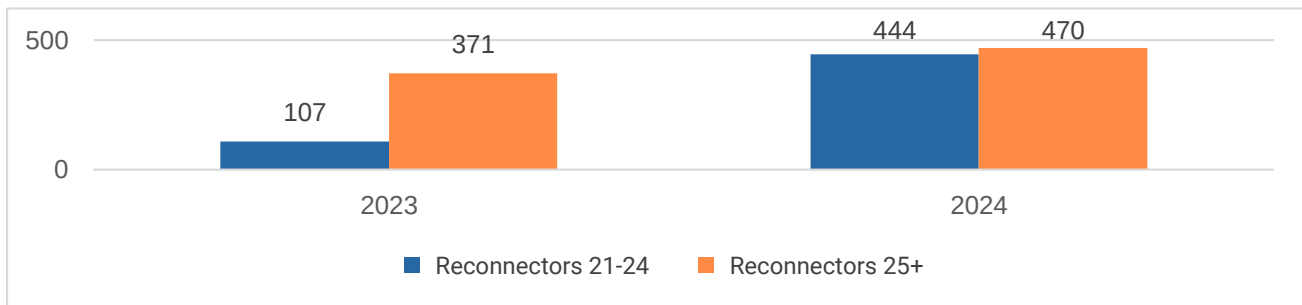
- **Financial aid optimization.** To enhance the financial aid office’s capacity, Mid used funding to expand professional development for financial aid staff, ensuring that staff can effectively implement financial aid programs. Mid also doubled participation in industry workshops, ensuring that more employees received essential updates on state financial aid policies. These investments reinforced Mid’s commitment to supporting students through financial aid improvements.

Outreach and Enrollment Success

Following increased outreach efforts, Mid Michigan College administrators observed strong momentum in online engagement with Reconnect. The number of views on Mid’s Reconnect web page in March and December 2024 was **more than double** the entirety of 2023. By the end of 2024, there were **over 12,000 active users** on Mid’s Reconnect web page, nearly **three times** as many as in 2023. Online engagement not only improved program awareness but also directly translated to increased applications and enrollments for all age groups:

- Applications for Reconnectors ages 21 to 24 **more than quadrupled** from 2023 to 2024, increasing from 107 to 444 applicants.
- **57 percent** of the 561 applicants became enrollees in fall 2024.

Applications for Reconnect by Age Group, 2023 and 2024



A Sustainable Model for Future Success

Mid Michigan College strengthened its institutional capacity through Reconnect interventions and remains committed to sustaining and refining student support efforts. Administrators plan to continue using strategically timed pop-up messages and texts to engage students, while also expanding progressive advising and mentorship programs.

Looking ahead, the college is eager to measure long-term impacts on retention and completion rates. Administrators emphasized the importance of intentionality in these efforts, ensuring interventions are well timed and student centered rather than reactive to changing state policies. They also recognize the critical need for continued financial support through Reconnect or the Community College Guarantee to ensure that more students can access affordable education. By building on these interventions, Mid Michigan College is creating a lasting model for student success, engagement, and institutional innovation. Mid Michigan College’s strategic approach offers a replicable model for other institutions—and reinforces the need for sustained investment in tuition-free programs like Reconnect to keep higher education accessible for all Michiganders.