



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

“With Reconnect, we can help students reach their goals even more easily!”

— Marketing and Communications Manager

Reconnect-Driven Institutional Redesign

Mott used the intervention funding for the Reconnect expansion to enhance student engagement through digital messaging and personalized coaching, strategically improve program marketing efforts, and strengthen staff capacity to ease program implementation.

- **IT enhancements.** Mott leveraged IT funding to develop a direct communication system for eligible students using targeted text messaging and pop-ups within their learning management system. By focusing on students ages 21 to 24 with outstanding balances who had not yet received Reconnect funding, administrators improved engagement and financial aid accessibility. Beyond increasing participation in Reconnect, these efforts led to broader institutional benefits. The initiative sparked discussions about student communication strategies, resulting in a more standardized and proactive outreach approach that ultimately enhanced student support across the college.
- **Marketing expansion.** Additional Reconnect funding allowed the college to explore new and creative marketing strategies, including expanded print, social media, and smart phone application advertisements. Mott also launched a transit campaign, featuring interior bus ads on 32 buses across 12 routes, with QR codes linking directly to the Reconnect website. By targeting public transit riders, Mott reached a captive audience who could use their commutes to learn more about the program. Mott also participated in a Reconnect on Campus day in partnership with the state and GÜD Marketing. Applications around the event spiked, showing the effectiveness of special events in promoting the program.

Michigan Community College Association

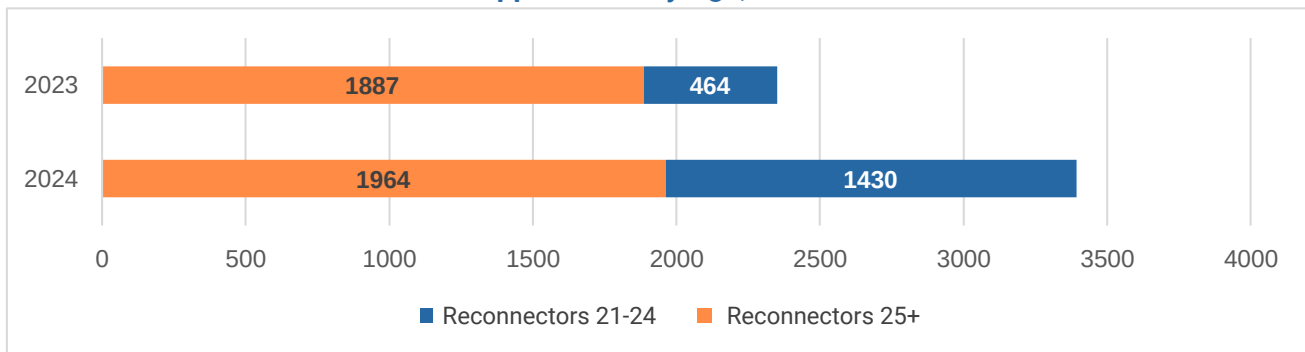
- **ReUp coaching support.** Mott also partnered with [ReUp](#), an organization that specializes in enrolling and aiding adult learners, to provide students who had paused their educations with personalized coaching and long-term support toward resuming their educational journeys. Success coaches provided hands-on support for FAFSA completion and assisted students in troubleshooting submission challenges. They also proactively reached out to students eligible under the expansion to ensure they completed their Reconnect applications.
- **Financial aid optimization.** Mott enhanced the abilities of its financial aid staff to ensure efficient implementation of the Reconnect expansion. Stipends were provided to staff to accommodate the additional workload associated with program setup, compliance, and training. Professional development opportunities further equipped staff with the skills needed to navigate future funding shifts, foster collaboration, and enhance overall financial aid support. The funding also enabled staff to review and adjust prior-term awards, process retroactive student refunds, and manage increased student inquiries.

Outreach and Enrollment Success

Strategic marketing and outreach efforts led to improved metrics and engagement for Mott. Online and social media ads generated over a million impressions, resulting in **1,600 visits** to the Reconnect web page. Increased online traffic translated into greater engagement with the college, with administrators recording approximately **1,621 campus visits** linked to the Reconnect advertising campaign. Outreach and engagement efforts directly contributed to increased Reconnect applications and program enrollment:

- Reconnect applications **increased 40 percent** in 2024, driven almost entirely by the expansion age group (ages 21 to 24), whose numbers **more than tripled**.
- Reconnect enrollments for all ages **increased by 30 percent** from fall 2023 to fall 2024.

Reconnect Applications by Age, 2023 and 2024



A Sustainable Model for Future Success

Mott administrators continue to evaluate previous efforts to strengthen Reconnect engagement. They recognize that while Reconnect provides an excellent opportunity, effective messaging requires a nuanced approach. Instead of emphasizing "free money," the college is focusing on communicating how students can achieve their goals through a degree from Mott. Mott's leadership is committed to using the lessons learned from this initiative to refine student engagement, marketing, and financial aid strategies. By continuously adapting its approach, the college aims to sustain and build upon these successes, ensuring that more students take advantage of Reconnect and pursue their educational and career aspirations.