# Community College Local Strategic Value

The Board of Trustees of Southwestern Michigan College confirms that the College has met the best practices identified by the State for providing strategic value to the community. Specific examples are as follows:

**Category A-Economic development and business or industry partnerships.** ***The College meets 4 out of 5 best practices in this category.***

1. **The community college has active partnerships with local employers including hospitals and health care providers.**

Southwestern Michigan College through its nursing and human services division partners with the following health organizations:

Beacon Health Systems

Bronson Commons

Bronson Health Care Group

Cartel Inns of Lakeland

Cass County Council on Aging

Cass County Family Clinic

Cass County Medical Care Facility

Corewell/Quest

Corewell South

Edwardsburg Ambulance

Goshen Health Hospital

Heritage Southwest – Lewis Cass ISD

Jim Gilmore Community Healing Center

Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital

Michiana Hematology Onocology

Penn Township Fire and EMS

Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center

Southwestern Michigan Community Ambulance Service (SMACS)

South Bend Clinic (General)

South Bend Clinic (MRI)

St. Joseph Health System

Three Rivers Health

Timbers of Cass County

Tri-County Head Start

Van Buren EMS

Westwoods of Niles

Whole Family Direct Care Family Practice

Southwestern Michigan College has partnerships with the following area companies in support of the College's intern and apprenticeship programs and who have employees enrolled in specific courses at the College:

1st Source Bank

A+ Window & Door

Auto Value

Basney Honda

Beacon Health System

Berrien County

Bonnell Aluminum

Convergix

C & S Machine

Corewell Health

Cressy Construction

Crowe LLP

CWU Contractors Inc.

Eagle Technologies

ER General Auto Repair

Fearless Kustoms

Flowers Early Learning

G.W. Jones Bank

General Stamping and Metalworks

Great Lakes Repair & Towing

Gurley Leep Motorworks

Hanson International

Holtec Decommissioning Intl.

Honors Credit Union

JX Truck Center

Laidig Systems

Lane Automotive

Lippert Components

McCormick Motors

New Heights Auto Services

Niles Steel Tank

Oselka Constructors Company

Paramount Tool Company

PEI Genesis

Place Homes Inc.

Rescue Team Remodeling

Signature Dealer Group

Southwestern Michigan College (various departments)

TC Scott Construction

Trinity Health Information Services

Walmart

Weirco

2. **The community college provides customized onsite training for area companies, employees, or both.**

Southwestern Michigan College has historically provided customized on-site training for area businesses for over twenty years. Some of its clients have been the following:

AACOA-Machine Guarding and Hazard Identification

Acemco Automotive-Safety and Health Administrator's Course ACT Test Panels, LLC-Lock-Out/Tag Out

Adrian Steel-Machine Guarding Hazard Identification Advance Packaging- Guards for Power Transmission

All American Exteriors-Lead Safety RRP

Ancast-Lean Systems

Aquatic Company-Lock-Out/Tag Out Artisan Restoration-Lead Safety RRP

Ausco Products-Lock Out/Tag Out Autocast-Rapid Changeover

Beaudoin Electrical Construction-Safety & Health Administrator's Course

Berry Plastics-Lock Out/Tag Out

Blossomland Container Corp.-Guards for Power Transmissions

Bosch Rexroth Corp.-Personal Protective Equipment

Bronson Products-Machine Guarding Hazard Identification

Burnette Foods-Train the Trainer

Cabo Mechanical-Lead Safety RRP Cascade Die Casting-Rapid Changeover

Crystal Flash Energy-Machine Guarding Hazard Identification CTR Construction- Lead Safety RRP

Dee Fry Construction-Lead Safety RRP

Delta Machining Inc.-Ergonomic Principles

Diversified Machine-Six Sigma Green Belt Certification

Eagle Technologies

FAPCO Inc.-Lean Systems

Genzink Steel-Guards for Transmissions

Graphic Packaging International-Train the Trainer

Great Lakes Die Cast-Rapid Changeover GRP 2 Construction-Lead Safety RRP

Hanson International

H.C. Starck Inc.-Ergonomic Principles Heater Stamping-Lock Out/Tag Out 1/N Tek-Basic Welding Phases 1,11 and III Kamax-Train the Trainer

Knape and Vogt-Guards for Transmissions

Lakeshore Engineering-Safety and Health Administrator's Course

Lounsbury Excavating-Personal Protective Equipment

Lyons Industry-Materion Brush Alloys-Rapid Changeover

Metal Components LLC-Train the Trainer

Michiana Window World-Lead Safety RRP

Mid-States Die Cast-Rapid Changeover

Modineer Company-Personal Protective Equipment NADCA-Rapid Changeover

National Airlines-Lock Out/Tag Out

Niles Steel Tank-Ergonomic Principles

Pfizer-Machine Guarding and Hazard Identification

Pilkington-Lock Out/Tag Out

Port City Group-Rapid Changeover

Pratt Industries-Guards for Power Transmission

Premier Tool and Die-Lock Out/Tag Out

Q3 Technologies LLC-Personal Protective Equipment

Richwood Industries-Machine Guarding and Hazard Identification

Robert Bosch-Ergonomic Principles

Shepherd Casters Corporation-Development for Project Teams

Siemans-Train the Trainer

Steinbauer-Engineering

Strive-OSHA 10 Hour for Construction Trades

Stryker Instruments-Management Conflict Facilitation

TDF Contractors-Lead Safety RRP

Dow Corning Corporation-Guards for Transmission

Universal Forest Products-Ergonomic Principles

Vail Rubber Works Inc.-Lock Out/Tag Out

Vickers Engineering-Ergonomic Principles

Vylonis Contracting-Personal Protective Equipment

Whirlpool-Lock Out/Tag Out

Wii-Kast Inc.-Rapid Changeover

During the "great recession," there was an out flux of industry from our local taxpaying district. For this reason, the College no longer has a significant emphasis in on-site customized training.

3. **The community college supports entrepreneurship through small business assistance center or other training or consulting activities targeted toward small business.**

Southwestern Michigan College offers a certificate in Business Management as well as a degree in Business, both of which prepares community members to be successful managing their own businesses.

4. **The community college supports technological advancement through industry partnerships, incubation activities, or operation of a Michigan technical education center or other advanced technology center.**

Southwestern Michigan College operates a Michigan Technical Education Center (M-Tec) on our Niles Campus. The facility was designed to be a flexible training facility that could change functions to meet the evolving needs of local industry. This facility currently provides state-of-the-art training in welding as well as robotics.

5. **The community college has active partnerships with local or regional workforce and economic development agencies.**

Southwestern Michigan College partners with the following economic development agencies:

Tri-County Workforce Development Board

Cass County Economic Development Corporation

Berrien County Manufacturers Council

Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce

Cass County Chamber of Commerce

Edwardsburg Chamber of Commerce

Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce

Kinexus

WorkOne Northern Indiana

Buchanan Chamber of Commerce

**Category B-Educational Partnerships.** ***The College meets all 5 (out of 5) best practices in this category.***

1. **The community college has active partnerships with regional high schools, intermediate school districts, and career-tech centers to provide instruction through dual enrollment.**

Dual Enrolled Students – 2025/2026:

Bangor High School – 1 student
Berrien Springs High School – 58 students
Bloomingdale High School – 1 student
Brandywine High School – 10 students
Bridgman High School – 6 students
Buchanan High School – 22 students
Calvary Bible Academy – 1 student
Decatur High School – 20 students
Dowagiac Union High School – 114 students
Edwardsburg High School – 126 students
Great Lakes Academy – 1 student
Hartford High School – 15 students
Highpoint Virtual Academy – 1 student
Home School – 19 students
Howardsville Christian High School – 2 students
Ignite Christian Academy – 1 student
Lakeshore High School – 2 students
Lawrence High School – 7 students
Life Tech Academy – 1 student
Marcellus High School – 11 students
Mattawan High School – 1 student
Michigan Lutheran High School – 1 student
Michigan Lutheran Seminary – 1 student
Michigan Virtual Charter Academy – 1 student
New Buffalo High School – 9 students
Niles Cedar Lane – 2 students
Niles High School – 96 students
Paw Paw High School – 1 student
River Valley High School – 2 students
Ross Beatty High School – 62 students
Watervliet High School – 58 students
W-A-Y Niles – 1 student

Southwestern Michigan College has partnered with Tri-County Head Start by providing a classroom for 30 pre-school children on campus. The relationship not only benefits the Head Start students, but Southwestern Michigan College students enrolled in the Early Childhood curriculum also have observation and internship opportunities.

2. **The community college hosts, sponsors, or participates in enrichment programs for area K-12 students such as college days, summer or after school programming or Science Olympiad.**

For many decades, Southwestern Michigan College has hosted thousands of K-12 students on its campus for tours, open houses and events.

For example, the College annually hosts the Heritage Southwest Intermediate School District's Science Olympiad. During the past few years the College has also held math competitions, spelling bees, robotics teams, and STEM camps for area students. The College has regularly hosted the area band/choir Solo and Ensemble Festivals for area schools.

3. **The community college provides, supports, or participates in programming to promote successful transitions to college for new or reentering adult students by actively, or recruiting and advising adult learners.**

Southwestern Michigan College provides placement testing and provides excellent support services to access the best fit courses for each student. In addition, free tutoring is provided at the Carole A. Tate Teaching and Learning Center. Academic advisors help assess a student's educational and career goals to determine a pathway for completion. Students may choose to complete a 2-year occupational program or a certificate for direct employment, or an associate's degree to transfer to a 4-year school for a bachelor's degree. The College also has a dedicated admissions advisor for recruiting adult learners. Given the addition of MiReconnect including students 21+ our admissions and marketing teams are leveraging this additional financial support to help recruit and retain adult students.

4. **The community college has active partnerships with regional 4-year colleges and universities to promote successful transfer, such as articulation, 2+2, or reverse transfer agreements or operation of a university center.**

SMC maintains 33 articulation agreements with 14 four-year colleges and universities across Michigan and Indiana, ensuring that students who start at SMC can transfer and finish anywhere. Furthermore, as a member of Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) and Michigan Transfer Agreement participant, SMC guarantees the transfer of general education credits to every Michigan public university and many private institutions. Reverse transfer agreements with Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Western Michigan University, and others move credit in both directions, allowing students who transfer early to still complete their associate degree.

Many of these programs are program-specific. Nursing graduates may advance from SMC's associate degree to a BSN through partnerships with Andrews University, Western Michigan University, the University of Michigan–Flint, Saginaw Valley State

University, Indiana University South Bend, and others. Ten program-specific agreements with Western Michigan University span nursing, education, social work, criminal justice, sport management, and psychology, while a Ferris State University partnership lets students complete seven bachelor's programs fully online, without leaving the community. A dual-credential agreement with Michigan State University's Institute of Agricultural Technology allows students to earn MSU certificates in Agricultural Operations and Agricultural Business while completing an SMC associate degree in Agricultural Technology, and a dedicated pathway carries sport management graduates to Aquinas College's bachelor's in business administration.

Agreements are continuously reviewed, renewed, and renegotiated as necessary, and new pathways are pursued wherever regional demand points. For students, the payoff is concrete: lower cost, shorter time to a bachelor's degree, and the ability to start, and increasingly to finish, a four-year credential close to home in southwest Michigan.

**Category C-Community Services.** ***The College meets all 5 (out of 5) best practices in this category.***

1. **The community college provides wellness enrichment courses for leisure, wellness, personal enrichment, or professional development.**

Southwestern Michigan College offers the following wellness enrichment courses: Music, Taekwondo, Life Wellness. In addition, the College offers a changing menu of wellness offerings through the college's Student Activity Center.

2. **The community college operates or sponsors opportunities for community members to engage in activities that promote leisure, wellness, cultural or personal enrichment such as community sports teams, theater or musical ensembles, or artist's guilds.**

The Department of Visual and Performing Arts at SMC is both dynamic and deeply engaged with community outreach. The College typically presents multiple theatrical performances—dramatic works, one acts, musicals—throughout the academic year. Community members can also audition to be part of the College's various instrumental and vocal ensembles, as well as theatrical productions. Several sections of applied music are offered to those with little to no training who are interested in learning basic techniques, as well as those with extensive backgrounds in vocal and instrumental arts, who may be interested in advanced study. Private study is offered for voice, and a variety of instruments including piano, guitar, wind instruments and many more. We also facilitate a community brass band as part of the instrumental ensembles; this band consists chiefly of members from the community and performs in concert with our other symphonic bands.

The College sponsors Steve's Run (proceeds benefit student scholarships and the Mayo Clinic). The annual race is open to community participation.

The College also sponsors Campus Bash, an annual fall welcome back festival, which assists students in transitioning back to campus life. Campus Bash is also open to local businesses to have an information table at which student can learn about service and employment opportunities.

There are several pop-up intramural activities per month that students can choose to participate in. Students will also have the opportunity to take part in different intramural sports throughout the Fall and Spring semesters.

With the return of intercollegiate sports to campus, community members continue to have opportunities to support the College by attending or volunteering at basketball and volleyball games, cross country meets and wrestling matches. The College recently added three more teams and built a new wrestling facility to expand such opportunities and has experienced strong engagement by the community in these events.

3. **The community college operates public facilities to promote cultural, educational, or personal enrichment for community members, such as libraries, computer labs, performing arts centers, museums and art galleries.**

Southwestern Michigan College operates the Fred L. Mathews Library and Conference Center that is open to the community. This facility includes a large selection of books and media, which can be checked out by community members. The Library also contains a computer lab and a number of study rooms. In addition, the Library and Conference Center contains meeting rooms that can hold from 30 to 300 people for community events.

The College has a 350 seat theater on campus where community members can attend performances staged by the College's Performing Arts Department and the annual Southwestern Michigan College Holiday Concert featuring the College's instrumental and vocal ensembles. In addition, both the instrumental and voice ensembles perform a number of times each year in the community and at community events.

The College operates an Art Gallery that is open to the community. We hold public receptions for all of our exhibitions (typically 7-8 events over the course of the academic year). The gallery displays student art work as well as the works of featured regional, national and international artists.

4. **The community college operates public facilities to promote leisure or wellness activities for community members, including gymnasiums, athletic fields, hiking or biking trails, or natural areas.**

Southwestern Michigan College operates a fitness center that is available to community members. This facility was expanded and modernized in 2009. Included in this facility are aerobic equipment such as stationery bikes, treadmills, and elliptical machines. Also, the fitness center contains Cybex equipment, hammer strength equipment, and free weights. There are also mats and equipment for floor exercising. We offer both

personal training and group fitness classes. The Canyon rock climbing room features a 35-foot rock wall and 12-foot bouldering wall. Also included in this facility is a gymnasium which was remodeled in 2022.

The College maintains public trails through 50 acres of woods on campus that is used for running, hiking, and biking. In the winter the trails are used for cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

In addition, there is a soccer field, a flag football field, and a softball diamond on campus.

5. **The community college promotes, sponsors, or hosts community service activities for students, staff or community members.**

The following community groups utilized Southwestern Michigan College facilities during the academic year 2025-2026:

1st Source – 2 times

Bonnell Aluminum – 20 times

Cairnstone Adventures – 2 times

Cass Co MDHHS – 4 times

Dowagiac Union High School – 6 times

Flowers Early Learning – 6 times

Great Lakes Learning Academy – 8 times

Greater Niles Chamber – 6 times

HSISD – 13 times

Lighthouse Connections Academy – 4 times

Michigan Great Lakes Learning Academy – 10 times

Michigan Connections Learning Academy – 23 times

Michigan State Police – 2 times

MIOSHA – 2 times

Miss Dowagiac Pageant – 10 times

New Foundations Community Jail Ministry

RoboTech Zone – 33 times

Rotary (Dowagiac)

Special Olympics of Cass County – 19 times

Toastmasters – 8 times

Tracey Hatcher

Woodlands Behavioral Health – 3 times

The College sponsors the following student clubs and organizations, many of which engage in community service projects:

Adventurer's Guild-Purpose: to provide an opportunity for students that love to play board and card games an opportunity to collaborate and play each other.

Alpha Kappa Omega-Purpose: to provide support and Christian fellowship to the students of SMC through regular Bible study meetings and social activities.

Auto Club-Purpose: to bring students together to complete projects or work on vehicles outside of class.

Business Club-Purpose: to promote and enhance students in Business, Accounting and Office Administration fields. The club will promote tomorrow's workforce through advancement of leadership, citizenship and technical skills.

Criminal Justice Club-Purpose: to provide a space for students majoring in or interested in criminal justice to collaborate, study and train for competitions.

IT Club-Purpose: the purpose of the IT club is to provide opportunities for interested students to engage with technology relevant to their professional and social interests. Club projects are run by students and have included designing a high-powered, water-cooled PC; drone piloting and aerial media production; virtual reality demonstrations; trips to conventions; and more.

LGTBQ and Allies Club-Purpose: to provide a safe space for students to be themselves, make connections, learn, and contribute to fostering a positive environment for diversity on campus.

National Student Nurses Association-Purpose: to generate participation and unity in the School of Nursing and Health Services. The purpose of the association is to form professional development and enhancement of student life through extracurricular social and service activities.

Phi Theta Kappa (Sigman PSI Chapter)-Purpose: Phi Theta Kappa is the national honor society of community colleges and recognizes scholarly achievement. Participation is by invitation only. Eligible students (degree seeking students with at least a 3.5 GPA and 12 or more credits in non-developmental course work) will be invited to join in the Fall and Spring semesters.

Psi Beta Club-Purpose: Psi Beta is the national honor society in psychology for community colleges. Psi Beta's mission is to encourage professional development and psychological literacy of all students at two-year colleges through promotion and

recognition of excellence in scholarship, leadership, research, and community service. The society functions as an association of chapters operated by Psi Beta students and faculty advisors, coordinated by a national office. Psi Beta participates with Psi Chi, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, APA's Committee on Baccalaureate and Associate Education (CABE), and other psychological organizations at APA, APS, and regional psychology conventions.

Psychology Club-Purpose: is devoted to advanced learning, conversation, and training in the field of psychology. Our goals include:
- Providing opportunities to become acquainted with and involved with the larger field of psychology and how it applies to helping professions, such as psychology, social work, early childhood education, and nursing.
- Providing a forum for developing one's perspective about psychology, as well as for building a sense of community and identity with others in the field, as well as across campus.
- Hosting guest speakers for student career exploration, organizing events to benefit the campus and community through programs and services that support charitable causes, raising social awareness, and encouraging responsibility of students.
- Providing opportunities to students to enhance leadership skills and encourage independent research.
- Providing a greater opportunity for student/faculty interaction outside of the classroom.

As members share varied backgrounds, students do not need to be psychology majors to join.

Roadrunner Esports-Purpose: to compete against regional teams in online games such as DOTA, Overwatch, and League of Legends.

Sigma Mu Chi-Purpose: to promote relationships among graduates of police schools, research projects in the field, and a better public understanding of police organizations among other goals.

Sociology Club-Purpose: to provide sociology students with social and academic experiences that enhance and deepen their understanding of the field.

Welcome Week Leaders-Purpose: to serve as peer mentors for incoming students. They lead groups during Welcome Week each fall and spring semester.

September 9, 2026

# RESOLUTION

The Board of Trustees of Southwestern Michigan College confirms that the College has met the best practices identified by the State for providing strategic value to the community.

Thomas Jerdon, Chairman
Board of Trustees

9-14-26
Date

# Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 14, 2026

Room 2112, David C. Briegel

1 p.m. Special Meeting

## General Business

Members of the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees met on September 14, 2026 for a special meeting.

The meeting was convened at 1:00 p.m. by Board Chairman Tom Jerdon.

Members Present: Tom Jerdon, Tracy Hertsel, Dr. Elaine Foster, Todd Obren

Members Absent: Beth Cripe, Becky Moore, Skip Dyes

Dr. Elaine Foster moved, seconded by Tracy Hertsel, to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

## Public Input

No individual requested to speak.

## Discussion Items

The possibility of additional athletic team(s) was discussed.

## Action Items

Todd Obren moved, seconded by Tracy Hertsel, to authorize the administration to analyze and determine if NJCCA Soccer and/or Golf should be added to SMC athletics for 2027/2028. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Elaine Foster moved, seconded by Tracy Hertsel, to approve the Instrument Repair Certificate (attachment 4B). Motion passed unanimously.

Todd Obren moved, seconded by Dr. Elaine Foster, to approve the Strategic Value to the Community Resolution (attachment 4C). Motion passed unanimously.

## Adjournment

Tracy Hertsel moved to adjourn at 2:08 p.m. Todd Obren seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Thomas F. Jerdon, Chairman/Acting Secretary