



CHARTING THE COURSE: SMCC 2030

*Propelling SMCC forward, **together.***



OUR **STUDENTS**
OUR **PEOPLE**
OUR **COMMUNITY**

Charting the Course: SMCC 2030



Setting the Course: Executive Summary

Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) is embarking on a bold and transformative journey—one shaped by the evolving needs of our students, our communities, and the state of Maine. As one of the largest and most diverse community colleges in the state, SMCC serves over 6,000 students annually across more than 40 academic programs. With campuses in South Portland and Brunswick, as well as a robust array of online and satellite offerings, SMCC is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality education that empowers students to reach their goals and navigate a dynamic workforce.

As a cornerstone of education and workforce development in Maine, SMCC offers associate degrees, certificates, workforce training, and transfer pathways to four-year institutions. Our students represent a broad range of ages, backgrounds, and aspirations—and we are proud to support them through innovative programming, personalized support, and strong partnerships with local industries.

At the heart of this strategic voyage is our commitment to implementing a comprehensive Guided Pathways framework—a nationally recognized model designed to support student success through clear, purpose-driven academic and career paths. By adopting this approach, SMCC joins over one-third of the nation’s community colleges in leveraging collaboration with state and national colleagues to implement best practices tailored to our community.

Guided Pathways is not just a framework—it is a philosophy that aligns with SMCC’s mission of equity, opportunity, and student-centered growth. Its core principles guide our work:

- Clarifying students’ pathways to their end goals.
- Helping students choose and enter their pathway.
- Ensuring students stay on their path.
- Focusing on student learning throughout their journey.

We are proud of the progress already made in embedding Guided Pathways into the fabric of our institution. SMCC has developed clear program maps and meta-majors, streamlined admissions processes, and strengthened early college partnerships—all while aligning academic and career pathways to meet workforce needs. These early accomplishments provide a strong anchor for the ambitious goals outlined in this strategic plan.

While our previous strategic plan focused heavily on supporting **Our Students**, we recognize that their success depends on the strength of the entire vessel. Without **Our People**—the dedicated faculty and staff who guide and teach—and **Our Community**—the businesses, organizations, and neighbors that create opportunity—we cannot fully meet the needs of our students. This realization has led to the evolution of our approach, expanding our focus to include three interconnected **strategic anchors**: *Our Students, Our People, and Our Community*. These anchors stabilize and guide us, ensuring a holistic and sustainable course toward our mission.

This plan is built on those three strategic anchors that define SMCC’s commitment to fostering success, innovation, and collaboration across all facets of the college:

- **Our Students:** Supporting students through every step of their journey—*Getting Them In* through expanded access and pathways, *Getting Them Through* with robust support and teaching excellence, and *Keeping Them Connected* through alumni engagement and career-focused partnerships.
- **Our People:** Fostering an environment where faculty and staff thrive through clear communication, professional growth opportunities, and efficient systems that promote operational excellence.
- **Our Community:** Deepening connections with local and state partners to enhance workforce development, community engagement, and financial sustainability—ensuring SMCC remains a vital resource for Maine’s evolving needs.

With the steadfast support of the Maine Community College System (MCCS), SMCC is poised to lead not only within our region but also within the broader landscape of higher education. This plan reaffirms our dedication to investing in the resources, technology, and innovation necessary to stay the course and advance our mission.

Charting the Course: SMCC 2030 is a living document—meant to evolve alongside our institution and the people we serve. We are committed to listening to and learning from our community: students, alumni, faculty, staff, industry partners, and neighbors—especially those who have been historically underserved or underrepresented.

Together, we will propel SMCC forward—empowering students to achieve their goals, fueling growth across our region, and setting the standard for equity, opportunity, and innovation in higher education. This plan is both a roadmap and a call to action, ensuring that SMCC remains steady at the helm and boldly navigates toward a brighter future.



Mapping the Journey: Strategic Planning Process

When I began my presidency at Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), the institution was in the last year of a strategic plan that had yet to be finalized. While the plan outlined some foundational goals and strategies, it lacked critical components, such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), to measure success. Recognizing the importance of having a fully developed and cohesive strategic plan to guide the college's future, we made the decision to pause, reevaluate, and refocus the planning process. This shift allowed us to broaden the scope of input and engagement, bringing new voices and perspectives into the conversation while aligning the plan with the evolving needs of our students, faculty, staff, and community.

To ensure that the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan reflected the collective vision and priorities of the SMCC community, we implemented an inclusive and data-informed approach. Our process engaged stakeholders at all levels, both internal and external, and was grounded in collaboration and evidence-based decision-making. Key components of this methodology included:

- 1. Professional Development Day with All Employees**
Early in the process, we convened a Professional Development Day that brought together all faculty and staff. This session served as an opportunity to reflect on the college's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Through guided discussions, workshops, and breakout sessions, employees shared their insights and ideas, laying the groundwork for the strategic direction.
- 2. Summer Work Sessions**
During the summer, focused work sessions were conducted with key leadership teams, departments, and committees. These sessions allowed us to analyze preliminary findings, refine objectives, and identify actionable strategies across the three anchors of the strategic plan: Our People, Our Students, and Our Community.
- 3. Business and Industry Roundtables**
Recognizing the importance of aligning our mission with workforce needs, we hosted roundtables with representatives from local businesses and industries. These discussions

provided valuable insights into workforce trends, skill gaps, and partnership opportunities, ensuring that the plan addressed the needs of Maine's evolving economy.

4. **National, Local, and Institutional Data**

We utilized data from national best practices, regional workforce projections, and internal assessments to shape the plan. This data-driven approach ensured that the strategies and objectives were both ambitious and achievable, grounded in evidence and aligned with broader trends in higher education and workforce development.

5. **Broad Stakeholder Engagement**

Throughout the process, we actively sought input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including students, alumni, community members, and system-level colleagues. By expanding the circle of contributors, we ensured that the plan reflected the voices of those we serve and those who contribute to SMCC's mission.

The culmination of this inclusive and iterative process was the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. This plan not only builds upon the previous work but also represents a new, comprehensive vision for the future of SMCC. With clear objectives, detailed strategies, and measurable KPIs, the plan is designed to position SMCC as a leader in student success, workforce development, and community engagement for years to come.

Adjusting the Sails: Strategic Planning as an Ongoing Process

The SMCC Strategic Plan is designed to be a living document—one that evolves as we learn, grow, and respond to internal and external realities. As part of this ongoing process, the College will develop and refine **Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) on a quarterly basis**. These OKRs will serve as short-term action drivers aligned with the broader strategic priorities outlined in this plan. Each quarter, executive team members and their respective leads will collaborate to identify specific, measurable outcomes that reflect immediate focus areas. These quarterly OKRs will be integrated into the strategic plan, allowing for increased agility, alignment, and accountability as we work toward long-term institutional goals.





Anchored in Purpose: SMCC's Strategic Drivers

Anchor 1: Our Students

Goal: Support students throughout their educational journey by guiding them into, through, and beyond SMCC.

Key Objectives:

- Onboard
- Advance
- Engage



At the heart of Southern Maine Community College's mission is a deep and unwavering commitment to our students—their goals, their growth, and their futures. Anchor 1 of the strategic plan affirms this commitment by focusing on how we support students *into*, *through*, and *beyond* their journey at SMCC.

The goal of this anchor is to ensure every student receives the guidance, support, and resources they need to access college, succeed academically, and leave SMCC prepared for continued education, meaningful employment, and community engagement.

To achieve this, we are guided by three core objectives:

- **Onboard** – Help students start strong by creating clear entry points, removing access barriers, and setting expectations for success.

- **Advance** – Keep students on track through proactive advising, relevant academic pathways, and responsive support structures.
- **Engage** – Deepen students' connection to the college, their learning, and their future through relationships, co-curricular opportunities, and alumni engagement.

Achieving this vision requires coordinated action across the entire institution. Faculty, student affairs staff, academic advisors, operations and support teams, workforce and community partners, and our alumni all play a vital role in shaping a student's experience and outcomes. This anchor emphasizes the shared responsibility we carry—from the classroom to the advising office, from systems and processes to personal connection.

To bring these objectives to life, the following strategies will guide our work:

1. **Simplify Institutional Processes and Clarify Pathways**

We will identify and remove barriers in academic and operational processes that slow or discourage student progress. At the same time, we will ensure all academic pathways are easy to navigate and clearly aligned with career opportunities, industry needs, and alumni outcomes. This work involves academic leaders streamlining curriculum, staff improving business operations, and faculty embedding real-world relevance into teaching.

2. **Build Scalable First-Year Structures and Elevate Teaching Excellence**

First-year success is a critical foundation for long-term achievement. We will scale programs like summer bridge, orientation, and learning communities while implementing consistent, proactive advising across faculty and staff. Our approach will ensure students receive timely guidance from all touchpoints. We will also invest in faculty development that promotes active learning and student engagement.

3. **Enhance Communication and Alumni Engagement**

We will modernize and coordinate student communication using tools like texting, AI, and integrated platforms to ensure students receive timely, relevant, and personalized information. Beyond graduation, we will formalize our alumni network, define clear engagement strategies, and use improved data systems to track outcomes and foster lifelong connection to SMCC.

Together, these strategies will create a more seamless and student-centered experience—one that supports each student's success from their first interaction with SMCC to the day they join our growing alumni community.

Anchor 2: Our People

Goal: Foster an environment where staff and faculty thrive, collaborate, and deliver exceptional services to students and the community.

Key Objectives:

- Communication
- Resources
- Support



At SMCC, we know that student success is directly tied to the experience, well-being, and effectiveness of the people who support them—our staff, faculty, and administrative teams. Anchor 2 of the strategic plan focuses on creating a healthy, collaborative, and high-performing institutional culture where every employee has the tools, information, and support they need to thrive.

The goal is to foster an environment where staff and faculty are empowered to do their best work—where communication is open and transparent, where resources are aligned with needs, and where support systems are both personal and professional.

This anchor is built around three key objectives:

- **Communication** – Strengthen transparency, clarity, and trust across departments and roles.
- **Resources** – Ensure employees have the tools, information, and infrastructure to perform their jobs effectively.
- **Support** – Promote a culture of care, growth, and recognition that values both personal wellness and professional development.

This work is institution-wide and deeply collaborative. Faculty and staff in every division—from academics to operations, finance to facilities, IT to student services—play a critical role in shaping the culture and systems that define the employee experience. Success in this anchor requires ongoing partnership between employees, department leaders, human resources, and executive leadership.

Strategies

To deliver on these objectives, SMCC will pursue the following strategies:

1. **Promote Transparency and Improve Institutional Processes**
We will strengthen communication by increasing the frequency and clarity of institutional updates and encouraging shared decision-making at all levels. In tandem, we will undertake a review of departmental processes to improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and better support cross-functional collaboration. Staff and faculty voices will be central in identifying pain points and co-creating solutions that improve how we work together.
2. **Improve Access to Real-Time Data for Decision-Making**
When employees have access to timely, reliable data, they can better serve students and the institution. This strategy focuses on building and expanding dashboards, improving data literacy, and ensuring that academic and operational teams—from faculty to department chairs to frontline staff—can use data to inform decisions around scheduling, program design, staffing, and service delivery.
3. **Invest in Professional Development, Wellness, and Recognition**
We are committed to helping our employees grow professionally while feeling supported personally. We will offer tailored professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, promote the use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and increase the number of appreciation and recognition events. Teaching excellence, staff advancement, and leadership development will all be prioritized as part of this effort.

Together, these strategies aim to strengthen SMCC's internal culture—creating a place where employees are not only productive, but engaged, connected, and proud to be part of our community.

Anchor 3: Our Community

Goal: Deepen community engagement and strengthen partnerships to enhance opportunities and mutual success.

Key Objectives:

- Awareness
- Engagement
- Sustainability



SMCC's strength lies not only within our campuses, but in the vibrant network of partners, employers, alumni, and supporters that surround us. Anchor 3 of the strategic plan focuses on intentionally cultivating and deepening these external relationships—so that our students, our institution, and our communities grow stronger together.

The goal of this anchor is to deepen community engagement and strengthen partnerships in ways that expand opportunity, increase visibility, and promote long-term, shared success.

Our work is organized around three key objectives:

- **Awareness** – Increase visibility and recognition of SMCC's programs, student impact, and community value.
- **Engagement** – Build authentic, reciprocal relationships with industry, education, and community partners.
- **Sustainability** – Create lasting financial and strategic partnerships that contribute to SMCC's future viability.

This anchor extends across all divisions of the college. Marketing and communications, workforce and continuing education, academics, student services, and institutional advancement each have a key role to play in building strong, mutually beneficial connections with the community. By working together, we can ensure that our programs reflect community needs, that our graduates are workforce-ready, and that our institution remains a valued and visible part of the Maine economy and education ecosystem.

Strategies

To achieve this vision, SMCC will focus on the following strategies:

1. **Develop and Execute a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy**
We will strengthen our brand presence across Maine and beyond by telling our story—highlighting our academic programs, student success stories, and the college's impact on the

region. Through strategic use of digital platforms, print media, video storytelling, and targeted campaigns, we will enhance public awareness and drive interest among prospective students, donors, and partners.

2. Host Regular Industry and Community Roundtables

To ensure our programs remain aligned with workforce needs, we will convene frequent, structured conversations with employers, industry experts, and community organizations. These roundtables will inform curriculum development, identify training needs, and provide ongoing feedback that strengthens our responsiveness and relevance. Workforce Development, Academic Affairs, and Institutional Research will all collaborate to ensure input is acted upon.

3. Diversify Revenue and Build Long-Term Partnerships

In support of long-term sustainability, we will expand non-traditional revenue streams—including continuing education, contract training, and facility rentals. In addition, SMCC will actively pursue annual and capital fundraising campaigns that engage alumni, community leaders, and private donors. The Advancement and Foundation teams, in partnership with college leadership and external stakeholders, will lead efforts to secure philanthropic support aligned with strategic initiatives.

By amplifying our voice, strengthening our relationships, and investing in long-term financial partnerships, this anchor will position SMCC as a community-first institution—responsive, resilient, and deeply connected to the people and organizations we serve.

Navigational Markers: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Anchor 1: Our Students		
Key Objective	Strategies	KPI
Onboard	Simplify institutional processes and policies that create barriers for students, and ensure academic pathways are clearly communicated and aligned with industry, career opportunities, and alumni outcomes.	Improve time from inquiry to enrolled by increasing the conversion rate annually.
Advance	Create and scale first-year structures such as summer bridge programs, orientation, and learning communities. Standardize advising systems and training across faculty and staff to ensure consistent, proactive guidance throughout a student's academic journey. Elevate teaching excellence through intentional professional development focused on student learning and engagement.	Increase the fall to fall retention rate and three-year graduation rate annually, with a goal to remain above the national benchmark once achieved.
Engage	Leverage coordinated communication strategies—including texting and AI-enabled tools—to deliver timely, personalized information to students. Establish a formal alumni network, define clear criteria for engagement, and track alumni outcomes through improved data systems to foster long-term connection and institutional pride.	Increase the level of student engagement throughout their journey at SMCC.

Anchor 2: Our People		
Communication	Review and assess departmental processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness across the institution.	By utilizing automation and technology, increase the number of processes improved throughout all college departments and cross functional teams.
Resources	Improve access to real-time academic and operational data to support proactive, informed decisions by faculty and staff—enabling course scheduling optimization, identification of bottlenecks, and program enhancement.	Improve access to and the use of data in decision making by cultivating a culture of evidence and data informed decision making.
Support	Provide tailored professional development opportunities and promote initiatives that support employee wellness, recognition, and teaching excellence, including the Employee Assistance Program and appreciation events.	Increase the percentage of employees participating in professional development and campus engagement activities.

Anchor 3: Our Community		
Awareness	Develop and execute a comprehensive marketing strategy to increase awareness of college programs, student success stories, and community impact.	Increase conversion rates by measuring conversion from inquiry to enrollment.
Engagement	Host regular industry and community roundtables to ensure program alignment with workforce needs, enhance responsiveness, and maintain relevance through direct stakeholder feedback.	Increase the number of events and the individuals engaged in those events throughout the community and industry sectors.
Sustainability	Diversify revenue by expanding continuing education, facility rentals, and other revenue-generating programs. Launch annual and capital campaigns to engage donors, alumni, and community leaders in support of long-term financial health and strategic initiatives.	Increase non-State, tuition, and fee supported revenue streams to the operational budget.



Propelling SMCC forward,
together.

Forward, Together

The SMCC Strategic Plan is more than a roadmap—it is our shared compass, charting a bold course toward a future where lives are transformed, communities are strengthened, and opportunity is within reach for all. Rooted in our mission and guided by our core values, this plan represents a collective commitment to providing accessible, high-quality education while navigating the changing tides of higher education with clarity, resilience, and purpose.

This strategic plan outlines how we will support students *into, through, and beyond* their educational journey; empower our faculty and staff to thrive in their roles; and anchor SMCC even more deeply within the communities we serve. From academic departments to student services, from athletics to workforce development, from operations and IT to institutional advancement and the SMCC Foundation—every part of our campus plays a critical role in steering this vessel forward.

At the heart of our journey is a deep belief in continuous improvement and shared leadership. We will adapt with intention, reflect with honesty, and listen to the voices of those who matter most—our students, our employees, our alumni, and our partners. Grounded in data, driven by collaboration, and committed to equity, we will keep our eyes on the horizon while remaining steady in our mission.

We invite every member of the SMCC crew—faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, and community partners—to come aboard and engage with this plan. Your insight, energy, and shared ownership are essential to keeping us on course.

Together, we will sail with purpose, navigate challenges with courage, and move this vision forward—one initiative, one partnership, and one student success at a time.