

Pathways to Opportunities

Strategic Plan 2026

The 2026 Strategic Plan operationalizes DMACC's Strategic Pillars by identifying high-impact, institution-level goals and the targeted objective the College will pursue over the coming year. Over the past several months feedback has been sought from all stakeholder groups. Over 250 employees, students and external people provided written or verbal feedback on the plan and as a result many of the objectives were rewritten. This plan advances excellence and innovation, strength and sustainability, and success and engagement, while positioning the College to continuing to improve student success and long-term responsiveness to environmental changes.



Goal 1: Velocity and Affordability

DMACC will modernize degree requirements and learning pathways to reduce unnecessary structural barriers while preserving academic quality. By aligning credit requirements with national norms, expanding competency-based education, streamlining Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), and reducing residency credit thresholds, the college lowers cost for students, shortens time to completion, and increases momentum toward credentials. These reforms particularly support adult learners and workforce-engaged students by recognizing validated prior learning, enabling faster progression, and improving transfer and re-entry outcomes. Collectively, these strategies increase student success without compromising learning outcomes and help ensure DMACC is a responsive, workforce-aligned institution.

Targeted Objective 1.1: By the end of the 2027–28 academic year, revise all AA and AS degree programs will reduce the minimum requirement from 64 to 60 credits, ensuring full compliance with accreditation and state guidelines,

Targeted Objective 1.2: By Fall 2028, implement a fully streamlined and publicly accessible Credit-for-Prior-Learning (CPL) policy and set of procedures that reduce student time-to-completion by at least 10% and increase the number of students receiving CPL credits by 20%, ensuring consistent application across all academic departments and improving students' transition into the workforce.

Targeted Objective 1.3: By Fall 2027, DMACC will reduce the minimum residency credit requirement for all awards from its current level to no more than 25% of total degree credits, while maintaining academic integrity.

Targeted Objective 1.4: By the end of the 2027–28 academic year, DMACC will expand and fully implement competency-based education (CBE) in at least two additional academic programs, resulting in a minimum 15% improvement in student progression efficiency.

Targeted Objective 1.5: By Fall 2028, adopt Open Educational Resources (OER) or other low-cost learning materials in at least 50% of all credit-bearing courses, reducing average course material costs by a minimum of 30%, and establish a tracking system to monitor adoption rates, student cost savings, and faculty participation.

Goal 2: Adult Learner Expansion

DMACC will advance a coordinated, adult-learner strategy that expands access to both credit degree programs and noncredit workforce training, recognizing that adult learners pursue multiple, equally valid educational pathways. By delivering noncredit training in underserved areas and aligning it with local labor-market needs, the college seeks to increase access to short-term credentials, strengthens employer partnerships, and supports immediate workforce advancement. Simultaneously, by expanding flexible, accessible credit-bearing options for adult degree-seeking students, DMACC will improve persistence, completion, and long-term economic mobility. Delivering programs closer to where adults live and work reduces transportation and scheduling barriers, while intentional alignment between noncredit and credit offerings creates clear, supported pathways for adults to upskill, reskill, and pursue degrees over time. A coordinated, collegewide approach ensures adult learners, whether seeking rapid workforce entry or degree completion, are served through integrated, demand-driven programs that advance individual opportunity and regional economic development.

Targeted Objective 2.1: Launch and scale an adult college opportunity to reduce barriers and increase access for adult learners with the goal of a 5% increase in degree-seeking 25+ year olds by Fall 2027 through both retention and new recruits.

Targeted Objective 2.2: By June 2027, Continuing Education and DMACC Business Resources will collectively expand the delivery of non-credit training programs to at least three additional locations across the district outside the Des Moines metro area and increase enrollment from these areas by 20%, by developing targeted outreach, partnering with local employers and community organizations, and offering flexible scheduling or hybrid options to support access.

Targeted Objective 2.3: By Fall 2028 establish clear, consistent pathways that map noncredit workforce training to aligned credit-bearing programs, enabling adult learners to apply validated learning toward certificates and degrees.

Goal 3: Build an Aligned and Engaged Institution

DMACC's long-term effectiveness depends on strong alignment between its resources, people, and priorities. As enrollment, instructional delivery, and workforce needs continue to evolve, the college must ensure that its physical footprint is right-sized, sustainable, and responsive to current and future demand. At the same time, meaningful institutional alignment requires transparent communication, visible leadership, and consistent opportunities for employee input to build trust and shared ownership of change.

By strengthening both its facilities planning and employee voice strategy, DMACC advances a more coordinated and responsive institution. At the same time, continued focus on program-level performance, accreditation, and student outcomes ensures that strategic decisions are grounded in evidence and aligned with the college's mission. Together, these efforts support organizational clarity, reinforce accountability, and position the college to adapt effectively while maintaining a cohesive, engaged workforce and responsible stewardship of resources.

Targeted Objective 3.1: Employee Voice Strategy (2026–2029). By June 2029, build and institutionalize an employee voice strategy that increases leadership visibility, strengthens two-way communication, and improves trust, clarity, and alignment across the College by establishing communication norms, feedback systems, leadership communication processes, and evidence-based practices that achieve at least 85% employee awareness and engagement.

Targeted Objective 3.2: By June 2029, DMACC will continue to be guided by the Facilities Master Plan to ensure access to quality education and training for all students and communities across our district. The College will measure and act on space utilization data to meet the needs of students and communities. These actions will balance fiscal responsibility, environmental sustainability, and long-term program vitality, and will be responsive to current and projected enrollment, workforce demand, institutional needs, and community interaction.

Targeted Objective 3.3: Successfully Complete HLC Reaccreditation by Spring 2027 and incorporate feedback into new targeted objectives over the coming years.

Targeted Objective 3.4: By May 2027, faculty, academic deans and the academic affairs retention committee will complete a comprehensive analysis of program-level and modality retention and completion rates, establish baseline metrics, and develop proposed success benchmarks, with the final benchmarks reviewed and approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Executive Committee. Each program will also

identify 2-3 priority instructional and/or academic student engagement strategies for improvement for them to implement.