IN TRENTON, FOR TRENTON: BUILDING EXCELLENCE AT THE JAMES KERNEY CAMPUS

A report for Mercer County Community College by graduate students at the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Founded in 1930, the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs offers a rigorous academic program alongside opportunities for shaping real-world policy change. Students, faculty, and staff use academic scholarship and data-driven approaches to address local, national, and international challenges. Motivated by public service, the Princeton School of Public Affairs aims to promote positive changes in its surroundings.

DEFINITIONS

Anchor Institution: A place-based organization that plays a foundational role in its community, often driving local economic growth and community development.

Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT): A cooperative leadership model that allows business and industry stakeholders to offer direct input in the development of college programs, emphasizing equal partnership between industry representatives and college faculty and opportunities to identify areas of common need and meaningful collaboration.

City University of New York Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP): A program that provides low-income students with targeted financial assistance, structured pathways, early engagement, flexible scheduling, and personalized advising throughout their academic journey.

Guided Pathways: A structured approach to higher education that organizes fields of study into broad career sectors and assists students in navigating the community college system with a specific career or educational goal in mind.

Micro-credentials: Compact credentials that complement but differ from certificate and degree programs in that they are smaller and more focused, designed to provide immediate workforce ready skills, and wherever possible, also serve as a pathway to an initial or advanced degree that is stackable.

Micro-pathways (also known as "fast-track programs"): Two or more stackable credentials, including a 21st century skill micro-credential, that are flexibly delivered to be achieved within less than a year and result in a job at or above the local median wage.

Placemaking: The collaborative process of designing, activating, and transforming public spaces into vibrant and attractive environments for local residents that foster a sense of identity, community, and well-being.

Silos of Excellence: The process of co-locating credit and non-credit programs that contribute to similar career pathways and industries, engaging in outreach to employers for professional development opportunities, and designing programs to be more responsive to regional economic and labor needs.

Stackable credentials: Credentials that offer opportunities for college students to start by earning short-term credentials in vocational and technical fields, then stack additional credentials as they progress in careers, building skills in the classroom and in the workforce.

ACRONYMS

AAS - Associate of Applied Science
ACE - Accelerate, Complete, Engage
ASAP - Accelerated Study in Associate Programs
BILT - Business and Industry Leadership Team
CHIPS - Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors
CPTED - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
CUNY - City University of New York
EMT - Emergency Medical Technicians
EPIIC - Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity
IAB - Industry Advisory Board
JKC - James Kerney Campus
KSA - Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
MCCC - Mercer County Community College
PCC - Pima Community College
RCN - Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods
SHEEO - State Higher Education Executive Officers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a comprehensive vision for strengthening the role of Mercer County Community College's (MCCC) James Kerney Campus (JKC) in serving the needs of Trenton residents. At the heart of this vision are three key initiatives: 1) revitalize the campus and surrounding area to reaffirm MCCC as an anchor institution in Trenton and improve perceptions of safety at JKC; 2) bolster academic programs through curricular adjustments and student supports to ensure students successfully graduate and transition into high-quality careers; and 3) foster industry partnerships through the establishment of sector-focused "Silos of Excellence"–specialized areas within the college aligned with regional job market demands and opportunities.

The core thesis of this report is to reinforce a mutually-beneficial relationship between MCCC and the Trenton community by creating "Silos of Excellence" as pilot programs housed at JKC and offering targeted benefits to incentivize enrollment. To access these advantages, students must be enrolled in at least one class at JKC, creating a direct link that ensures the three proposed initiatives increase enrollment at JKC.

Report Outline

The report opens with a historical overview of the James Kerney Campus in Trenton, providing context for MCCC's long-standing relationship with the city. It also includes a comprehensive analysis of Trenton's demographic and labor trends, offering insights into the evolving needs of the community and economy. This background sets the stage for understanding MCCC's current enrollment and program offerings, and the urgent need for strategic change.

The first initiative "Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization and Engagement" underscores MCCC's role in neighborhood revitalization and engagement, highlighting efforts in outreach, placemaking, and community partnerships. This approach is more than just physical transformation; it aims to enhance the social and cultural fabric of Trenton through community engagement and strategic partnerships. By transforming the perception of JKC, the college can attract more students—especially from Trenton—and better contribute to the educational advancement and economic mobility of local residents.

The second initiative "Enhancing Educational Impact through Curriculum Innovation and Micro-Pathways" focuses on adjustments to MCCC's curriculum through innovative approaches like micro-pathways and guided programs. This is not a simple curricular overhaul: it is a recommitment to aligning the college's offerings with real-world demands and equipping students with skills for the future. Ultimately, the goal is to help students find and succeed in well-paying jobs.

The third initiative "Fostering Robust Industry Partnerships in Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, and Public Administration" discusses the cultivation of robust industry partnerships to get students connected to these jobs. By establishing specialized "Silos of Excellence" in three key Trenton industries, MCCC will not only enrich the student learning experience, but also open the door to local employment opportunities and drive economic growth.

In all, this report aims to lay out a roadmap for JKC's future that aligns with the college's dedication to academic excellence, community engagement, and economic development. Through these efforts,
MCCC will re-establish itself as an anchor institution in Trenton and position itself to serve as a catalyst for positive change, contributing to Trenton's social, educational, and

economic revitalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization and Engagement

1. Improve engagement with Trenton residents by increasing Trenton-based experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty as well as hosting community listening sessions.
2. Activate underutilized spaces at JKC through placemaking, short-term rentals, increased parking, expanded shuttle service, and employer-assisted housing.
3. Direct JKC's Outreach Specialist to build strategic partnerships with other anchor institutions in Trenton and increase staff capcity to facilitate deeper alignment with institutional goals.

Enhance Educational Impact through Curriculum Innovation & Micro-Pathways

1. Examine current curriculum and bundle together similar micro-credentials into three JKC micro-pathway pilots in the high-demand fields of health, public administration and advanced manufacturing.
2. Analyze market data to confirm local demand for micro-pathway jobs, ensuring they pay above the median wage or lead to a promotion that pays above the median wage.
3. Pick two or three initial industry partners to identify applicable skills and competencies and offer feedback on curriculum.
4. Market micro-pathways to students so they have a clear understanding of the return on investment from the start.

Foster Robust Industry Partnerships: Silos of Excellence

1. Hire a workforce navigator – a new staff position that will serve as the main point of contact for industry engagement.
2. Informally engage industry and community partners when evaluating possible Silos of Excellence.
3. Transform industry advisory boards into Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) to leverage private sector guidance and inclusion.
4. Lay out a set of long-term options for expanding stakeholder engagement.

BACKGROUND

The origins of MCCC's James Kerney Campus can be traced back to 1890, when Trenton's Evening Drawing School first enrolled ten students in mechanical drawing at 120 North Broad Street. The school formally opened as the Trenton School of Technical Science and Art in 1898. The next year, a reporter wrote, "The fact that the school is maintained for the benefit of the city and the promotion of its industries is kept well to the front." By 1920, the school had been renamed The School of Industrial Arts, moved into a new, larger building to accommodate its growing student body, and expanded course offerings to teach skills like metalwork, electrical wiring, and auto repair. During this time, Trenton experienced significant economic growth, driven by its strategic location on the Delaware River and the expansion of industries like manufacturing and transportation. The city became a hub for pottery, rubber, and steel production, earning it the slogan "Trenton Makes, The World Takes."

The fact that the school is maintained for the benefit of the city and the promotion of its industries is kept well to the front.

By 1960, enrollment had surpassed 1,300 and the school, renamed Trenton Junior College, was turning away hundreds of applicants. In response, Mercer County Community College was founded in 1966 and the two schools merged. During this era, like many other industrial cities, Trenton faced challenges as firms and residents relocated to nearby suburbs. The new West Windsor campus largely served these growing suburbs, but the Trenton campus continued to serve its residents. In 1972, the James Kerney Foundation, which supports institutions focused on family services, community development, and education for the residents of Trenton, donated land to create the James Kerney Campus. By 1998, demand for educational opportunities in Trenton had increased again, and JKC opened the new, modern facility that houses its programs to this day.[1]

In 2014, the Trenton planning board adopted Trenton 250, a comprehensive master plan guiding the city's development through 2042. The plan highlights the importance of partnerships with anchor institutions like MCCC in driving economic development efforts to revitalize the city. It emphasizes bringing industry back to the city, primarily through the creation of industry clusters in advanced manufacturing and technology. The plan also proposes establishing business incubators, which will require partnerships with educational institutions to create new talent pipelines. This presents an opportunity for JKC to become a key partner and anchor institution. By aligning academic programs with the city's economic development strategies, JKC can reinforce its commitments to empowering the community, fostering economic growth, and preparing students for the 21st century job market.[2]

Despite its storied past and legacy of service to the community, JKC serves only 230 credit students as of Spring 2023, indicating missed opportunities to serve Trenton residents but also potential for growth. By tapping into the Trenton community, MCCC can further

support local residents and establish itself as an anchor institution. The campus's down-town location is another source of potential; located just blocks from the State capitol, JKC is ideally positioned to partner with the State of New Jersey. While this partnership has not yet been fully explored, collaboration can reveal opportunities for the campus and community.

This report marks a timely occasion to center on JKC's strengths and successes as it looks toward the future. It represents a clarion call for change and reinvestment in the campus that has served Trenton, its residents, and its workforce for so long. The recommendations included in this report seek to honor JKC's legacy, uplift the Trenton community, and meet the evolving needs of its students and its city.

Welcome to
DOWN
TOWN
TRENTON

Trenton
Downtown
Association

TDA

THEORY OF CHANGE

In considering the challenges confronting MCCC as well as the city of Trenton at large, it is imperative to also recognize the potential for transformation. The theory of change presented in this report envisions a future in which Trenton residents see JKC as the place where they can enroll in industry-informed programs that lead to sustainable, high-quality family-sustaining jobs. To achieve this, it is recommended that MCCC:

- Implement a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy through investments in targeted engagement with Trenton residents, placemaking, and partnerships;
- Invest in bringing robust programming back to JKC with a focus on curricular changes through the establishment of an ASAP program, guided pathways, and micro-pathways; and
- Allocate time and resources towards establishing robust partnerships with key industries through the establishment of Silos of Excellence—select disciplines that will lead to good, local jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened barriers to learning for Trenton students, just as it impacted students around the country. Focused outreach to the Trenton community, whose residents have not returned to JKC at pre-pandemic levels, will promote enrollment. These students will specifically be encouraged to enroll in one of three Silos of Excellence. They will be offered ASAP-style wraparound services, including advisory and financial support, to help them complete their studies and navigate challenges along the way. By studying in programs guiding them towards high-demand local jobs, they will become better-positioned for economic security.

By implementing the above recommendations, MCCC will strengthen its position as an anchor institution in Trenton and provide career-enhancing opportunities for its residents. Placemaking efforts, beautification, additional parking, increased connectivity to other community spaces, and addressing safety concerns will encourage people to spend more time on the campus. Curriculum centered on in-demand industries relevant to the Trenton metropolitan area's economic needs will pave the way for stable, well-paying jobs—one of the driving reasons students seek out higher education in the first place. In order to prevent students from leaving college and not returning, evidence-based support systems will promote program completion and graduation.

TRENTON BY THE NUMBERS

Key Findings:

- **Trenton has the lowest share of residents employed in city jobs among US state capitals at 8%, coupled with higher unemployment and lower educational levels compared to regional averages.**

- **Approximately 66,000 new jobs, many not requiring a bachelor's degree, are projected in the Trenton area by 2030.**

- **Three sectors emerge as high growth and/or high demand that should be prioritized in creating programming at JKC: healthcare (high growth and high demand), state government (high demand) and advanced manufacturing (high growth).**

Understanding Trenton's urban dynamics is crucial to recognizing JKC's potential as an anchor institution in the city. Insight into the city's demographic and labor trends is vital to addressing Trenton's challenges and leveraging opportunities, especially in education and local economic development.

An analysis of Trenton's labor market reveals that residents hold only 8% of the city's 67,000 jobs,[3] the lowest share among all US state capitals, reflecting historical and regional patterns. Compared to Mercer County and New Jersey, Trenton consistently experiences higher unemployment rates, partly due to the city's lower average educational attainment.

Residents hold only 8% of the city's 67,000 jobs.

City Resident Participation in Local Labor Markets
US State Capitals

Share of Residents' Jobs Located within the City (y-axis)
Share of Total Jobs in the City Held by Residents (x-axis)

Trenton, New Jersey

Source: authors' calculations using On The Map Census Data
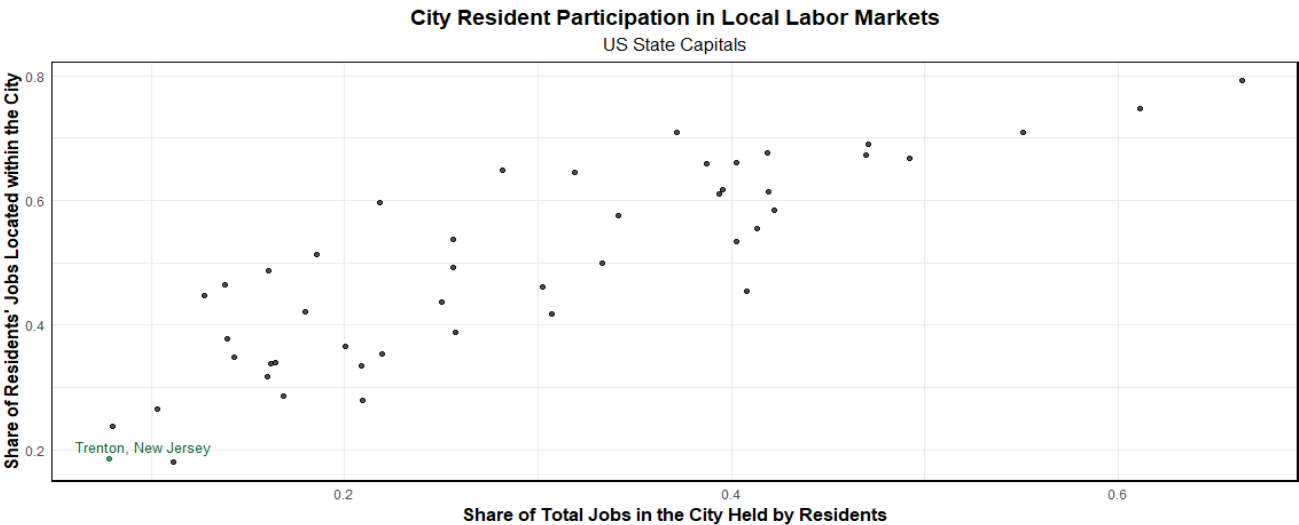
Official projections foresee the Trenton area adding approximately 66,000 jobs between 2020 and 2030,[4] with 40% requiring postsecondary education below a bachelor's degree.[5,6] Solidifying JKC as an anchor institution in Trenton will be a first step to linking city residents with these upcoming opportunities. MCCC must create programming that caters to in-demand industries and occupations, preparing the Trenton workforce for the forthcoming labor market shifts.

The following are three promising industries that can be the basis for silos of excellence at JKC, as they are either in high demand in the region, have exhibited high growth in the recent past, or both.

1. HEALTHCARE

In the past three years, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector has emerged as the top employer in the Trenton area for those with associate degrees, posting 7,316 job openings from 2021 to November 2023. Dominating these roles are positions for practical and vocational nurses (27%), registered nurses (20.9%), and medical and health services managers (4.9%). This sector is a crucial economic driver in Mercer and Bucks counties, accounting for 19% of all jobs and employing about 82,000 people as of March 2023.

Job Postings with Associate Degree Requirements
2021-Nov 2023

Source: authors' calculations using Lightcast Data
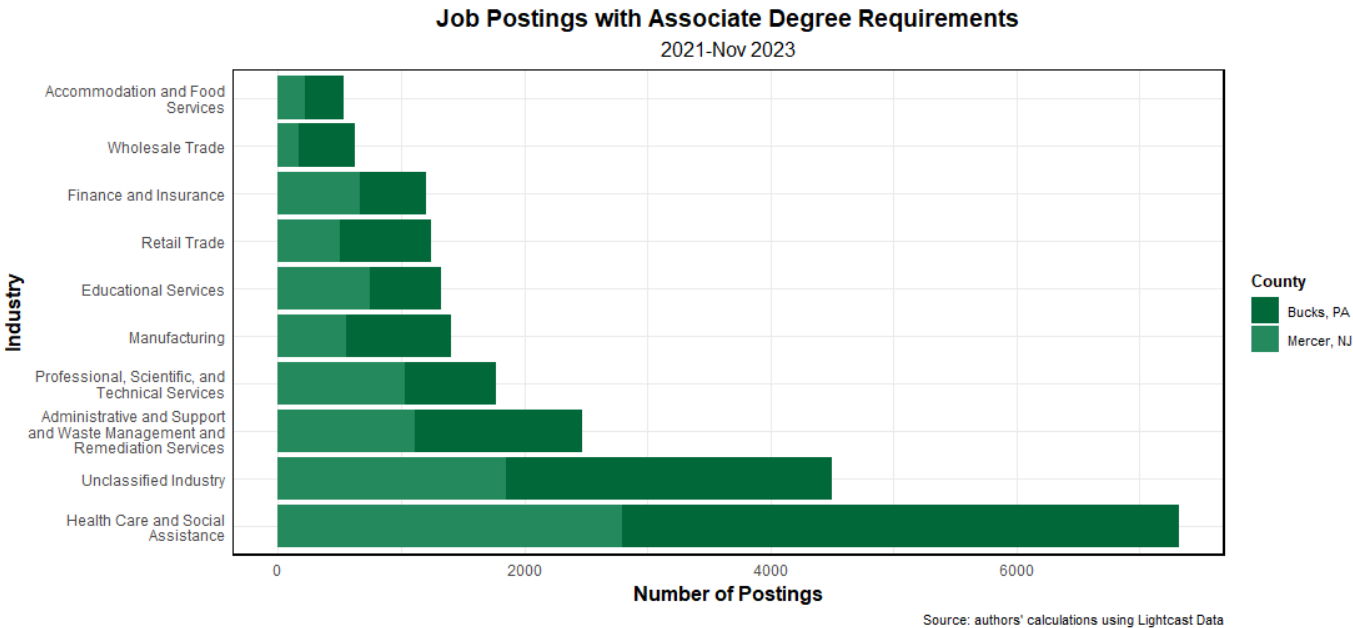
Continued growth in this sector is anticipated, fueled by an aging population needing more healthcare services. Federal forecasts predict a sharp rise in healthcare employment through 2030, with most roles requiring postsecondary education or training.[7] In particular, Bucks and Mercer counties are projected to add 12,690 healthcare jobs between 2020 and 2030.

To capitalize on these trends, developing targeted programs at JKC to link Trenton residents with current and emerging job opportunities is vital. Collaborating with large local employers like Capital Health, which led in healthcare job postings for associate degree

holders over the last three years, can enhance these initiatives. Other key healthcare employers in Trenton during this period include BAYADA Home Health Care, Trinity Health, St. Francis Medical Center, and Aveanna Healthcare. These partnerships can significantly boost labor market prospects in the city by aligning programs with the evolving skill demands of these employers.

2. STATE GOVERNMENT

Trenton residents hold a disproportionately low percentage of city jobs compared to other US state capitals.[8] As the city's largest employer, the state government is pivotal in addressing this disparity. Presently, Trentonians fill a mere 5.3% of the city's roughly 50,000 public sector roles.

State government positions, often associated with higher pay, traditionally require a four-year college degree. However, Governor Murphy is shifting this paradigm by emphasizing work experience and skills training in the recruitment process.[9] The Civil Service Commission is tasked with identifying positions suitable for candidates without bachelor's degrees,[10] broadening employment opportunities in Trenton's primary economic sector for those with alternative higher education credentials.

Of the 55,000 state government employees in Mercer County, 38,000 are in public administration.[11] These roles offer an average weekly salary of $1,657, which is 13.8% more than Trenton's average weekly household income.[12] Since 2021, there have been approximately 1,384 job openings in Trenton's state government agencies, with 40% requiring a bachelor's degree. The most in-demand occupations during this period were in Computer and Mathematical fields (356 openings), Management (304), and Business and Financial Operations (160).

For Trenton residents to fully capitalize on these employment opportunities, JKC must act as a conduit, forging pathways into state government roles. Concurrently, MCCC needs to tailor its programs to align with the Civil Service Commission's identified positions for non-bachelor's degree holders.

3. ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

In recent years, Mercer County has transitioned from traditional to advanced manufacturing, notably in pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing. This industry's employment concentration in Mercer is 6.8 times the national average,[13] making it the 15th highest in the U.S. While pharmaceutical manufacturing accounts for 2.7% of the nation's total manufacturing employment, it represents a substantial 38.9% in Mercer County. Neighboring Somerset and Union counties also rank among the top 15 in this industry concentration. Furthermore, from 2014 to 2023, pharmaceutical employment in Mercer grew 3.5 times faster than the national rate, an increase of 83.5%.

Despite the pharmaceutical sector's tendency to require advanced degrees, there is a notable demand for workers with associate's degrees. From 2021 to 2023, there were 177 job openings in Mercer County for such qualifications, with Bristol-Myers Squibb, Aurob-

indo Pharma, and PTC Therapeutics leading in demand.

Mercer County also hosts other advanced manufacturing sectors like medical equipment and navigational and electromedical instrument manufacturing, though these represent a smaller portion of the manufacturing workforce. Despite recent employment declines in Mercer, the semiconductor industry holds promise due to the CHIPS Act's federal incentives for microchip production.[14] This act could bring 70,000 to 90,000 new fabrication jobs nationwide in the short term, potentially rising to 300,000 with continued U.S. expansion in chip manufacturing.[15] New Jersey's involvement in the CHIPS Act positions the state to potentially benefit from the influx of semiconductor manufacturers.[16]

Industry Employment and Job Openings by County
Comparing Job Openings with AA Degree Requirements to Employment Concentration

Source: authors' calculations using Lightcast Data and QCEW Data
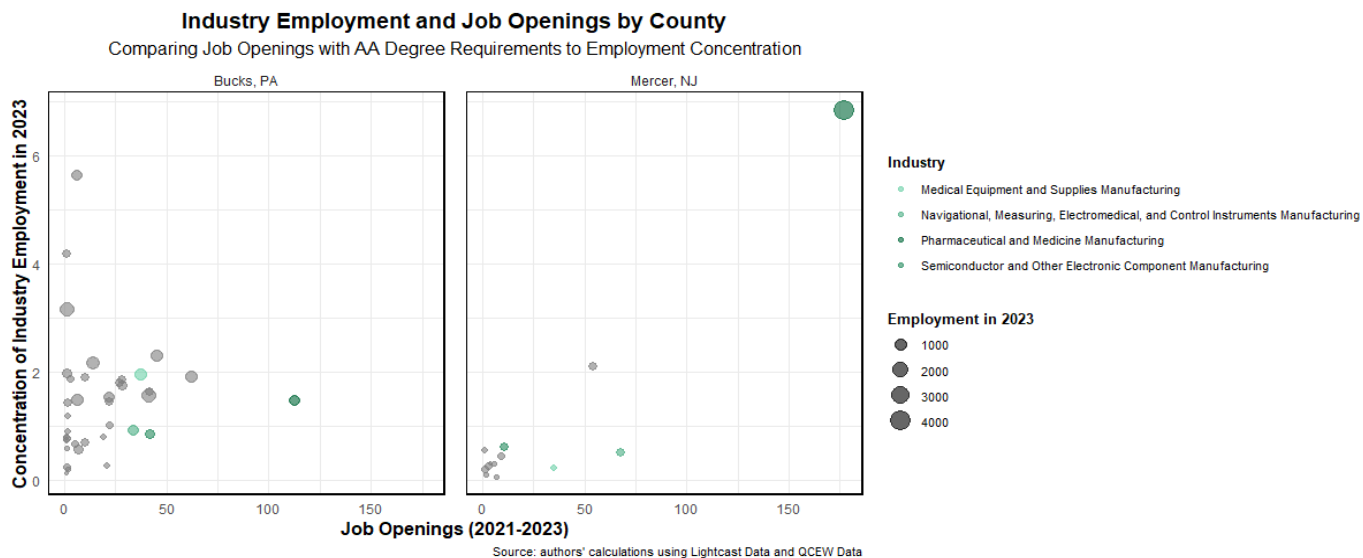
MCCC BY THE NUMBERS

Key Findings:

- **Credit hours at JKC have fallen by about 70 percent since the pandemic with just around 200 students taking at least one credit course, leading to an underutilized campus.**

- **Much of the decline is due to fewer Trenton residents taking fewer classes at JKC, resulting in a campus that no longer predominantly serves Trenton residents.**

- **Data shows the credit programs necessary for the three silos of excellence of Health, State Government, and Advanced Manufacturing are currently popular with Trenton students, demonstrating their potential for success at attracting students to JKC.**

JKC is not reaching its potential as a place where Trenton residents are enrolling in programs that lead to them securing good jobs in the region. The campus is underutilized, serving substantially fewer students than it did before the COVID-19 pandemic. This leads to the campus struggling to maintain a sense of community and attract students. Much of the decline in enrollment is due to Trenton residents who left during the pandemic to never return. It is vital for MCCC to revitalize JKC and attract the Trenton residents it lost to help them receive degrees in in-demand and high-growth industries.

JKC has substantially fewer students than it did before the pandemic.

JKC Credit Hours
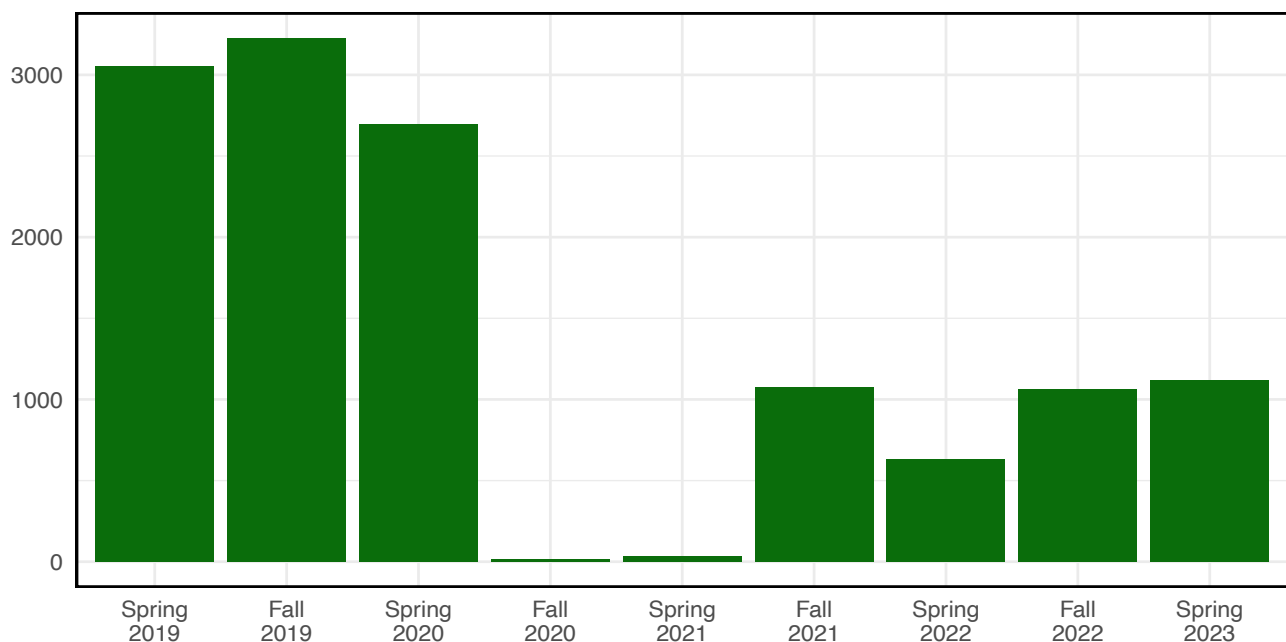
Credit hours taken at JKC are about a third of what they were before the pandemic. The number of students taking at least one credit class at JKC has fallen by more than half, and the number of unique courses offered has decreased from 45 in Spring 2020 to just 23 in Spring 2023.

As a result, the campus is underutilized and feels somewhat empty. The average student at the campus takes just 1.5 courses, leading to most students spending an extremely limited number of hours on campus each week. This emptiness causes there to be a lack of feeling of community. This puts the campus in an unfortunate situation where people do not want to enroll in classes because of the lack of community, but there will never be that community unless more people enroll in classes.

Much of the drop in enrollment is driven by a decrease in Trenton Residents.

Trenton residents enrolled in credit programs

Note: "JKC Student" is a student who takes at least one class at JKC
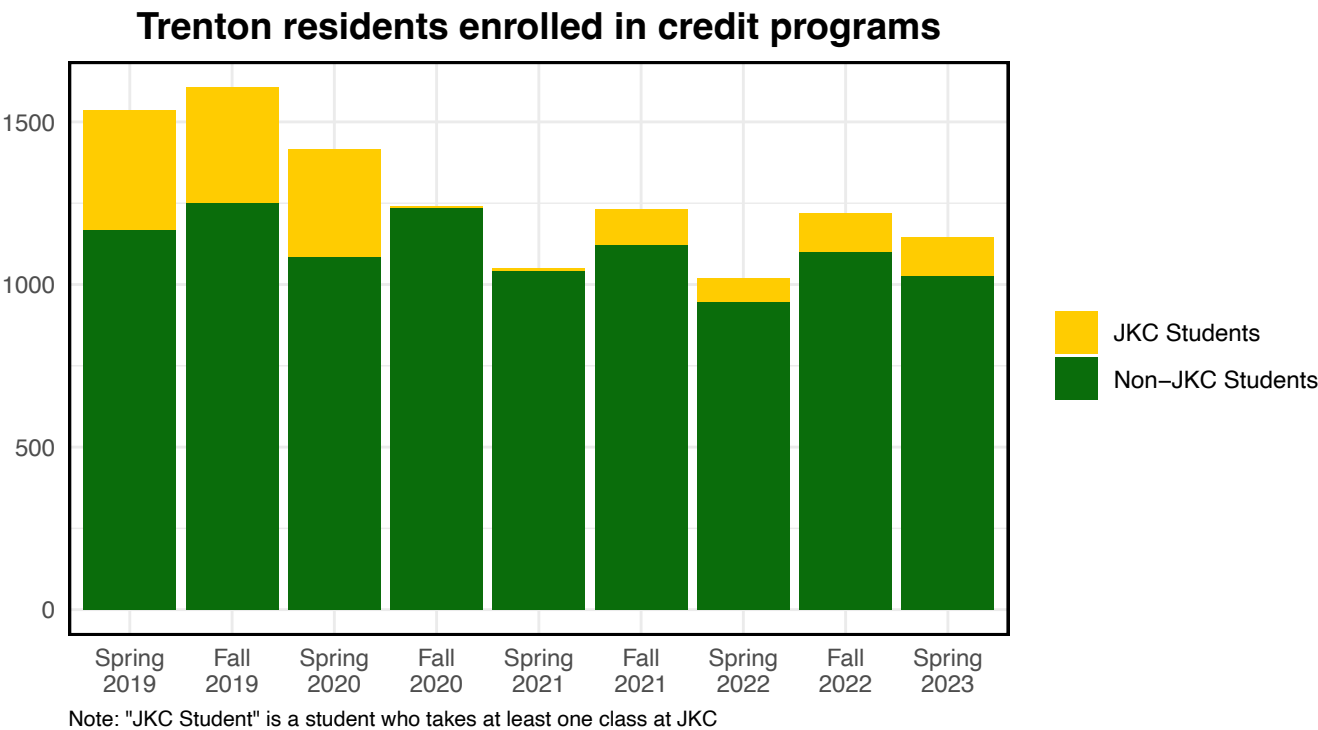
The number of Trenton residents enrolled at all campuses at MCCC has decreased by about 30% since the pandemic and has been almost entirely driven by a decrease in enrollment at JKC. The head count of Trenton residents at West Windsor and Mercer Online held relatively steady throughout the pandemic and afterwards. When JKC offered no in-person class in Fall 2020, however, Trenton residents who were previously enrolled at JKC disappeared from the data. Only a small number of Trenton residents have returned to JKC, with just 117 Trenton residents taking a credit class at the campus in Spring 2023, down 70% from 2019.

JKC head count by residency
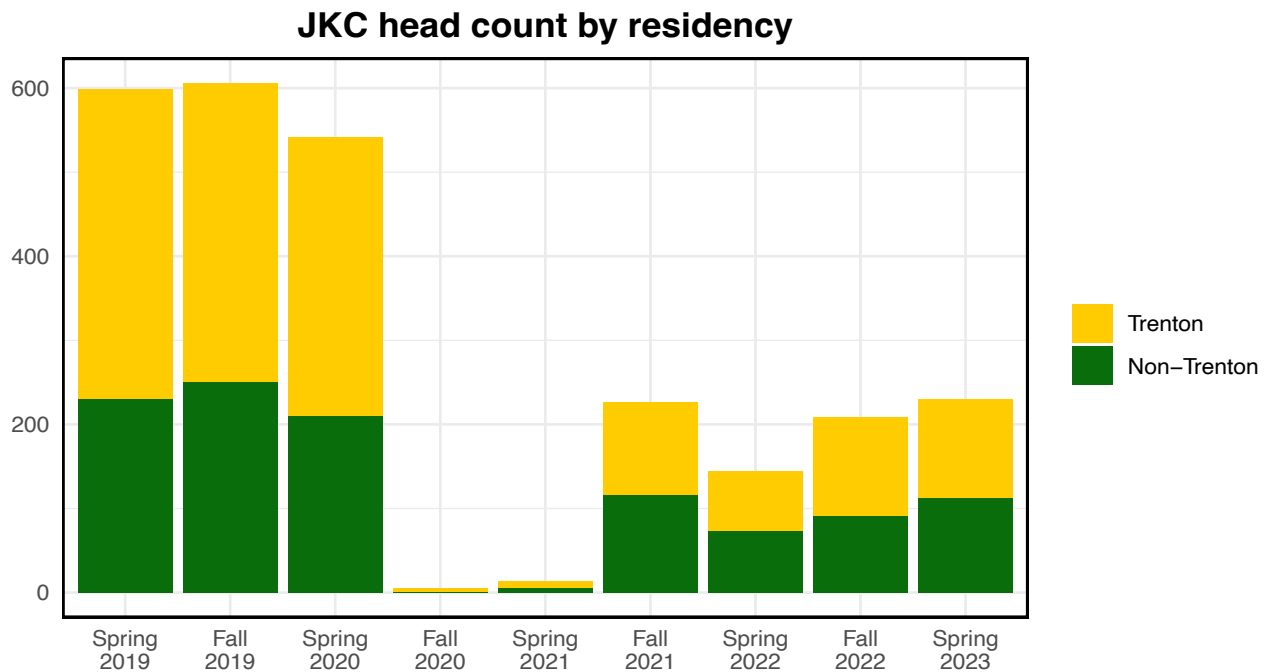
As a result, JKC no longer serves a student body that is predominantly from Trenton. Before the pandemic, about two-thirds of credit students taking a class at JKC were Trenton residents. Now, just about half of the students at the Trenton campus are Trenton residents.

JKC classes and programs could be more tailored to Trenton residents.

Currently, the only program that offers electives at JKC is Fashion, a program with just 38 total students enrolled. All of the other credit classes offered at JKC are general education requirements. This makes it difficult for part-time students and all but impossible for full-time students to take all their classes at JKC.

Percent of Trenton residents taking 100% of courses at JKC
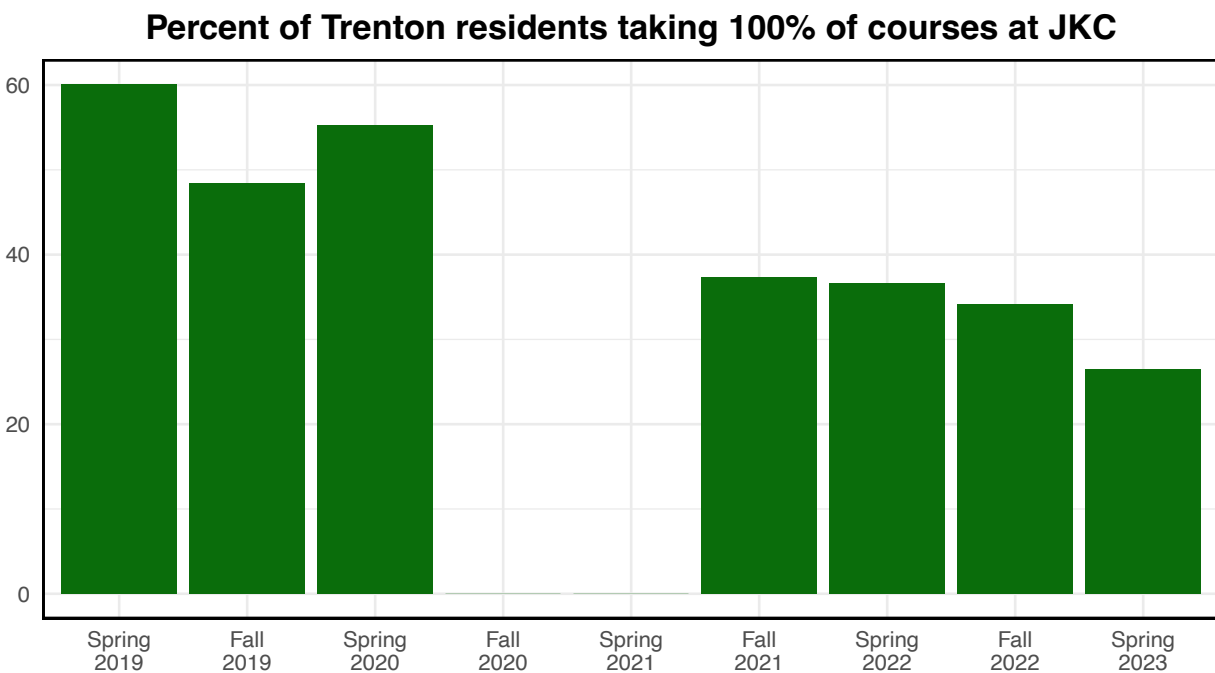
Ideally, JKC would be a place where Trenton residents could come to complete their entire degree. Instead, the Trenton residents at JKC have been unable to take all their courses at the campus. Less than 30% of Trenton residents that take classes at JKC take all of their classes at JKC, with many opting to take other classes at West Windsor or online. This is down from before the pandemic when over half of Trenton residents at JKC took all their classes at the campus. Many of these students are splitting their time between JKC and other campuses are likely willing to take more classes at JKC as they already are taking at least one class in Trenton. MCCC must expand the programs it offers at JKC to attract these students to take more classes at the campus.

Program registration by residency, 2023
Programs with more than 100 students

Program	Trenton residents	Non-Trenton residents	Trenton resident share
Education	46	102	31%
Health Science	**197**	**459**	**30%**
Criminal Justice	55	133	29%
Biology	**48**	**136**	**26%**
Liberal Arts	107	325	25%
Engineering	**24**	**77**	**24%**
Business	**104**	**338**	**24%**
Computer Science	45	163	22%
Nursing	31	159	16%
Aviation	6	269	2%

MCCC will need to make the important decision of which programs to bring to JKC. In addition to considering the promising industries for in-demand jobs in the region laid out in the previous section, it should also consider which programs are currently popular with Trenton students to ensure they will attract Trenton residents to the campus. The above table shows the breakdown of program registration at all MCCC campuses by residency. While Trenton residents make up just 20% of MCCC's total credit enrollment, they are overrepresented in many of these programs.

Trenton residents are especially overrepresented in Health Science, where 200 of them make up 30% of all Health Science majors. Other popular majors among Trenton students are Business, Biology, and Engineering. This data coupled with the industry data demonstrates there could be interest from Trenton residents for these programs at JKC. They lead to the recommendation of silos of excellence in Health, State Government, and Advanced Manufacturing.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR MCCC'S TRANSFORMATION & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The following sections delve into a trio of strategic initiatives that will be pivotal to the transformation and revitalization of JKC and its surrounding community. The first initiative, "Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization and Engagement", presents an evidence-based strategy for re-establishing MCCC as an anchor institution in Trenton, emphasizing outreach, placemaking, and community partnerships. The second initiative, "Enhancing Educational Impact through Curriculum Innovation & Micro-pathways", combines a focus on aligning JKC's curriculum with community needs and implementing innovative micro-pathways to advance student success and employability. The third initiative, "Fostering Robust Industry Partnerships in Health, Advanced Manufacturing, and Public Administration", outlines our strategy for building strong industry partnerships to create local employment opportunities and cultivate specialized areas of excellence. Each of these approaches will serve as a cornerstone in the college's commitment to increasing enrollment at JKC, supporting academic excellence, improving graduation and employment outcomes, while also being a catalyst for local economic development in Trenton.

- **Activate JKC buildings to host Silos of Excellence** in health, advanced manufacturing, and public administration
- **Develop streetscape and community relationships** to attract Trenton students back

Neighborhood

SILOS OF EXCELLENCE
- Responding to the needs of **Trenton students**
- Improving **graduation outcomes**
- **Complementing industry growth in Trenton**

Curriculum

- **ASAP** program to support Trenton students
- Build upon **guided pathways** with industry support to improve career linkages
- **Design micro-pathways** in industries such as health, public administration, and advanced manufacturing

Industry

- **Workforce navigator** to bridge divides
- Introduce **Business and Industry Leadership Teams** to channel stakeholder guidance
- Devise **a natural progression of employer engagement** (resume reviews, lectures, site visits, internships)

1. Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization and Engagement

Key Findings:

- Targeted community engagement will help boost JKC retention rates and ensure that Trenton residents have ownership and agency in determining the future of JKC.

- Research on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) provides evidence that place-based physical enhancements invite more foot traffic, improve perceptions of safety, and attract more residents and businesses to the neighborhood.

- The most successful neighborhood stabilization strategies led by higher education institutions often involve other anchor institutions because multi-anchor approaches increase the financial resources and community expertise available to partners.

A thriving Trenton neighborhood and vibrant campus will significantly enhance MCCC's competitiveness and ability to attract students to JKC and its Silos of Excellence recommended in this report. Given the steep decline in Trenton residents taking classes at JKC detailed in the last section, MCCC urgently needs to restore its connections to this local community and increase its visibility and impact as an anchor institution in Trenton. In order to increase enrollment at JKC, improve students' sense of safety and belonging in Trenton, and attract businesses and foot traffic to neighborhoods near JKC, it is recommended MCCC implement a comprehensive neighborhood stabilization strategy focused on three pillars: people, place, and partners.

PEOPLE: Community Engagement

Recommendation: Improve engagement with Trenton residents by increasing Trenton-based experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty and hosting community listening sessions.

To attract Trenton residents back to JKC, MCCC must strengthen its relationships with the people this campus aims to serve. In the short-term the college should **increase opportunities for students and faculty to learn about the history and culture of Trenton** and deeply engage with local K-12 schools, non-profits, faith-based institutions, and community groups. Examples of such opportunities include integrating Trenton-based field work and experiential learning into the college's curriculum, Silos of Excellence, faculty training, and community service volunteerism.

Secondly, a medium-term goal is that college administrators should **host listening sessions and focus groups** with institutions that have served long-time residents and have a deep understanding of Trenton to help MCCC tailor its courses, programming, and Silos

of Excellence at JKC to fit the needs and interests of Trenton students. This approach will help boost JKC retention rates and ensure that the people of Trenton have ownership and agency in determining what is best for their community when it comes to improving JKC. Central questions these listening sessions should seek to answer are: 1) What are the social, economic, and academic priorities of Trenton residents?; 2) What role does JKC currently play in addressing those priorities?; 3) What can JKC do better to serve the needs, priorities, and interests of Trenton residents?; and 4) What are the key points of intersection between Trenton residents' priorities and MCCC's institutional goals?

PLACE: Placemaking, Parking, Transportation, and Activating Vacant Property

Recommendation: Activate underutilized spaces at JKC through placemaking, short-term rentals, increased parking, expanded shuttle service, and employer-assisted housing.

MCCC should make the area surrounding JKC more physically appealing, increase accessibility between the two MCCC campuses, and activate underutilized spaces. Research on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) provides evidence that **place-based physical enhancements** like new pedestrian pathways, sidewalk landscaping, facade improvements, public art, improved lighting, and increased community gathering spaces can invite more foot traffic to JKC, improve students' perceptions of campus safety, and attract more residents and businesses to the neighborhood.[17,18,19]

To advance placemaking goals in the short-term, MCCC should relentlessly advocate for increased investment in revitalizing Trenton and especially the Broad Street corridor JKC is located on. MCCC's advocacy campaign can begin by remaining deeply involved in the implementation of the Trenton Housing Authority's $1,300,000 **Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Action Grant**[20], an initiative that MCCC is on the steering committee for and that aims to improve safety, affordable housing, connectivity, and economic vitality in the downtown Trenton neighborhood. MCCC should also work with businesses and property owners in the area around JKC to **apply for placemaking grants** through the Downtown Trenton Neighborhood Preservation Program.[21] MCCC can even apply for a grant itself to host a hiring event, health fair, or cultural festival at JKC that features local vendors, artists, and student showcases and will attract people to the downtown area. Additionally, MCCC should **lobby the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to expand the Activation, Revitalization, and Transformation "ART" Program** to include Trenton.[22] The "ART" program, which is currently restricted only to projects in Newark and Atlantic City, offers large grants to developers in transit-centered neighborhoods facing economic hardships due to the decrease in commuters throughout the pandemic.

Attracting more people to JKC will also require increased access to parking and transportation. As a medium-term goal, MCCC is well positioned to partner with a local development entity or non-profit organization to apply for the U.S. Department of Transportation's **Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant** next year.[23] This grant is a wonderful opportunity to fund projects that **increase parking in Trenton**, particularly near JKC and **expand MCCC's shuttle service** to have more buses, add new stops near community-centric locations in downtown Trenton, and be free and accessible to the public. The New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant is another potential funding

"In The City Of Dreams,
A Dream Can Be Fulfilled as
easy as a Child Blowing air
Into a Bubble. It is the Power
of your intent that will
Determine how big or how
small your Dreams

ROSETTA

source to subsidize planning, design, and feasibility studies for development of a parking structure in the Trenton neighborhood surrounding JKC.[24]

Secondly, to activate underutilized properties, MCCC should leverage its existing building "Trenton Hall" located on 137 N Broad Street to **offer low-cost, short-term rental space** to local small businesses or artists, or alternatively, allow residents and community groups to reserve the space at no-cost for events and meetings. This is a low-cost, high-reward strategy that will increase foot traffic around JKC and raise the profile of MCCC as an anchor institution in Trenton by inviting the community into its spaces, sending a message that JKC buildings are intended to benefit Trenton residents rather than leaving them vacant as a visible sign of continued disinvestment.

The three Silos of Excellence recommended in this report—Health, Public Administration, and Advanced Manufacturing—also present unique opportunities to **activate the buildings at JKC**. For example, 101 N Broad Street can be transformed into a Health Hub, the computer lab in 137 N Broad Street can become the Public Administration Center, and the warehouse at 137 N Broad Street can be transformed into a Clean Room Training Facility.

A long-term approach that MCCC might also consider to make a major impact on neighborhood revitalization is **launching an employer-assisted housing program**. Many colleges and universities have embraced employer-assisted housing programs to rehabilitate vacant properties and stabilize housing markets in neighborhoods surrounding their campuses. Successful examples include the University of Pennsylvania,[25] Case Western Reserve University,[26] and Kettering University,[27] which were funded in part through foundations and federal grant programs. MCCC could consider offering its employees a forgivable loan towards purchasing a home in Trenton to incentivize them to move to the neighborhood surrounding JKC or to rehabilitate a home for employees that already live in Trenton. To fund its employer-assisted housing program, MCCC can partner with the Downtown Trenton Neighborhood Preservation Program[28] and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation,[29] which have both supported various neighborhood stabilization initiatives and community organizations based in Trenton.

PARTNERS: Strategic Partnerships and Funding Opportunities

Recommendation: Direct JKC's Outreach Specialist to build strategic partnerships with other anchor institutions in Trenton and increase staff capacity to facilitate deeper alignment with institutional goals.

The most successful neighborhood stabilization strategies led by higher education institutions often involve other anchor institutions. Multi-anchor strategies increase the financial resources and community expertise available to partners. MCCC should **build strategic partnerships with other anchor institutions in Trenton** that are mission-aligned and share the college's goals of providing quality education, connecting residents with jobs, advancing economic development, and improving the perception of Trenton. JKC should leverage its Outreach Specialist on faculty to facilitate these partnerships. Additional partners not yet mentioned that MCCC should engage in a neighborhood stabilization strategy include: Greater Trenton, Isles, East Trenton Collaborative, New Jersey Community Capital, Trenton Downtown Association, and the City of Trenton.

CASE STUDY: Syracuse University Connective Corridor

The Connective Corridor project led by Syracuse University in collaboration with the City of Syracuse is an example of placemaking focused on enhancing walkability, livability, and accessibility to businesses and cultural hubs for college students.[51] The project included new pedestrian pathways, sidewalk landscaping that involved planting 285 trees, and free public transit connecting the campus with various community venues.[52] Syracuse's Connective Corridor also used creative placemaking to revitalize the area with visual art, light installations, outdoor video displays, re-designed parks and community gathering spaces, and public performances and art workshops. Syracuse's Connective Corridor contributed to a 31% population increase as a result of new residential development and increased occupancy rates, attracted tech companies to the city as well as more job opportunities for graduates, and increased student applications, all while transforming the previously disinvested area of Near West Side into a thriving neighborhood.[53] One of the major funders of Syracuse's Connective Corridor project was the U.S. Department of Transportation, which recently launched the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant Program—a brand new $200 million federal grant fund to revitalize neighborhoods that were historically burdened by transportation infrastructure.

2. ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL IMPACT: STUDENT SUPPORTS, CURRICULUM INNOVATION & MICRO-PATHWAYS

Revitalizing education at MCCC requires a commitment to significant curricular innovations. This includes the establishment of an Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), the continued implementation of guided pathways, and the introduction of cutting-edge micro-pathways. Collectively, these educational reforms will prepare students with the essential skills and knowledge for the job market. This will ensure that MCCC's curriculum not only meets the academic aspirations of students but also addresses the workforce requirements of the larger Trenton community.

JKC Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

Key Findings:

- **The introduction of a JKC ASAP program can significantly address barriers to degree completion through comprehensive support services including financial support, personalized advising and career development.**

- **Evidence from implementation of the ASAP program at Ohio community colleges shows that the ASAP program is easily adaptable to different settings, making JKC ASAP a promising investment.**

Attrition is a major problem in community colleges and MCCC is no exception. In the 2018-2019 academic year, MCCC had an overall graduation rate of just 19%, lower than the national average of about 40%.[30] Researchers and policymakers have argued that low completion rates reflect underfunding of community colleges, lack of college readiness that extends completion time, or a difficulty in balancing other priorities such as child care or full-time work.[31,32]

Recommendation: Establish relationships with ASAP Replication teams & State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) to implement a pilot ASAP program adopted to JKC.

Recognizing these challenges, community colleges have taken several steps to address them. **The CUNY ASAP Program is one example of a program that has been very successful** in eliminating multiple barriers that prevent students from completing their degrees.[33] The program covers gaps between financial aid and tuition costs, gives textbook assistance, and provides New York City Transit MetroCards. It also provides comprehensive direct support services like personalized advising, tutoring, career development services, and early engagement opportunities.[34]

Evaluations of the program show **outstanding results**. MDRC, a leading policy evaluation firm, implemented and evaluated a random assignment study of CUNY ASAP at three CUNY community colleges. The researchers found that CUNY ASAP substantially

improved students' academic outcomes over three years, nearly **doubling graduation rates**, and significantly **increasing the number of transfers to four-year universities**.[35] The model's success led to replication at three community colleges in Ohio. Indeed, these programs showed similar results, with the **three-year graduation rate nearly doubling and the number of four-year transfers increasing**.

Given the stark differences in geography, student populations, and local economies, the success of the Ohio programs provides **clear evidence of its applicability outside NYC**. As such, this makes a 'JKC ASAP' program a promising endeavor to help bring students back to campus and support them when they are there. To gauge what support would be most useful, MCCC should conduct a **student survey** to assess barriers to completion, including questions about transportation costs, financial concerns, and scheduling constraints.

Development of Guided Pathways

Key Findings:

- **Guided pathways ensure student success through structured career exploration, regular advising, and easy-to-understand program maps.**

- **MCCC has already invested heavily in guided pathways, providing a strong foundation for continued investment and focus on Trenton students.**

- **Industry-specific funding or large foundation grants are promising avenues for sustained funding.**

To address student difficulty in selecting courses, defining programs of study, and navigating support services, a substantial number of community colleges, including MCCC, have adopted the guided pathways approach. This approach allows students to explore careers with structured support, develop an academic plan using program maps, and monitor their progress.[36]

Recommendation: Continue to strengthen guided pathways with a focus on Trenton students.

MCCC has **already invested substantially** in the four "pillars" of guided pathways: (1) clarifying the path; (2) entering the path; (3) staying on the path; and (4) ensuring that students are learning.[37] MCCC has all the foundational infrastructure necessary to leverage the guided pathways framework for improving student outcomes. The college should **continue to invest in these pathways and build out "sticky" structures** that will remain in place as the college rebounds from COVID-19. The college should particularly focus on building out guided pathways within the three Silos of Excellence to best reach Trenton residents.

Recommendation: Implement sustainable, structural processes to make guided pathways sticky within each silo.

To this end, it is recommended that a key part of the pilot program focus on making these into **permanent, self-sustaining structures**. The pilot program would leverage the Career Coach tool and program maps to front load information about career paths and opportunities early in a student's college journey within each silo.

The college should also establish permanent processes, such as required meetings with an advisor or hands-on orientation sessions, so that students are fully immersed in the guided pathways approach and feel connected with their peers and faculty. By implementing these within the three silos of excellence, the college will be able to most effectively reach Trenton students.

Additionally, the college should require **regular and structured** meetings with a faculty advisor to monitor progress and address any roadblocks. The meetings should occur at least twice a month, and advisors should set the structure of these meetings focusing on progress to date and addressing any roadblocks. Finally, **it is imperative that faculty collaborate** to define and assess learning outcomes for an entire program **with industry input**, as outlined in our upcoming section on robust industry partnerships.

Guided pathways are expensive to implement. However, **industry-specific grants or grants from large foundations** such as Arnold Ventures or the Gates Foundation are promising avenues.

Key Findings:

- Micro-pathways bridge the gap between the noncredit and credit sides of community colleges, providing the shortest route to immediate employ-ment and a known pathway to continuing education.

- Micro-pathways are most successful when employers co-create and vali-date the curriculum, changing how they view graduates in terms of readi-ness for positions in their companies.

- Marketing materials that include skills, educational and career steps, job opportunities and wage gains are crucial for learners to understand the return on investment from the outset of the program.

In addition to robust neighborhood revitalization and student support strategies, cen-tering workforce development in community colleges is more important than ever. In a workforce approach, "curriculum is driven by the needs of local industry, course deliv-ery systems are sufficiently flexible to meet the diverse needs of students and industry, and students experience a mixture of work-based and classroom learning"[38]. The nature of work has changed dramatically across industries, especially with middle-skills posi-tions—those that require less than a four-year degree but more than a high school diplo-ma. Through the implementation of micro-pathways in the Silos of Excellence, MCCC will be poised to further align its credit and noncredit programs with industry feedback—the ultimate goal being to increase enrollment at JKC and ensure career success for students.

Recommendation: Examine current curriculum and bundle together similar micro-credentials into three micro-pathway pilots in the industry-informed silos of excellence of health, public administration and advanced manufac-turing, available exclusively at JKC.

Developed by Ed Design Lab, micro-pathways are **"two or more stackable credentials, including a 21st-century skill micro-credential, that are flexibly delivered to be achieved within less than a year and result in a job at or above the local median wage, and start learner-earners on the path to an associate degree."**

Micro-Pathway 1:
Health

In the Ed Design Lab database, health micro-pathways include Healthcare Technician (administrative), EMT, and Community Health Worker. The existing health credential, certificate and degree programs at MCCC make a health micro-pathway a logical choice. The JKC campus has available physical space for health programs at 101 N Broad Street, and by piloting micro-pathways exclusively at JKC, we will bring new workforce development to downtown Trenton. MCCC was intending to expand health programs at JKC before the pandemic, when other priorities took precedence. By cultivating key industry partner relationships and combining credit and noncredit offerings, MCCC will be able to enhance the appeal of a health micro-pathway at JKC. The next section, "Fostering Industry Relationships," expands on this recommendation.

Micro-Pathway 2:
State Government (Public Administration)

For a second area of focus, MCCC should develop a micro-pathway for aspiring public administrators, potentially utilizing the computer lab in the upper level of 137 N Broad Street. While MCCC should establish contact with the NJ Civil Service Commission's Center for Learning and Improving Performance[39] to discuss the pathway's scope and which key competencies are most in need across state agencies, several areas, such as IT and procurement, have potential to prove promising. In addition, such a public administration micro-pathway could potentially integrate components from Ed Design Lab's Project Management and Business Office Technology certificates, the latter already finding application in public affairs as evidenced by its validation by the City of Austin.

 The college's current offerings in politics and business (as well as its Project Management Professional Certification Prep and Review course) already possess a strong foundation on which a meaningful curriculum for aspiring public servants could be built. Furthermore, the fact that the state government stands as Trenton's largest employer, with about 38,000 positions in "public administration" as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicates that such a pathway would align with regional employment needs. A preliminary analysis of available entry-level job openings with the State of New Jersey reveals an acute demand for diverse administrative and coordination skills, further emphasizing the usefulness such a micro-pathway could potentially play in the public sector.[40]

Micro-Pathway 3:
Advanced Manufacturing

Finally, MCCC should develop an advanced manufacturing micro-pathway focused on clean room design or semiconductor development. This micro-pathway seems the most long-term, occurring after the successful piloting of health and state government micro-pathways and requiring the completion of investments by biopharma companies moving into the region like BeiGeine and CHIPS Act programs. Redevelopment of the former Roebling facilities along Route 129 would be ideal for light industry. Developers are interested in attracting a pharmaceutical company to Roebling Block 3 and a supplementary vitamins company is set to move into the city, bringing 200 new jobs to the

area. MCCC could potentially use the warehouse at 137 N Broad Street to develop a clean room training facility. As part of its workforce training program, Raritan Valley Community College received $3M in American Rescue Plan Funds to fund a clean room, electric vehicle automotive and mechatronics spaces.[41]

The central design question for MCCC is: **how might they design equitable and accessible micro-pathways toward high-growth careers endorsed by employers and visible to learners moving from post-secondary education into the workforce?** Drawing from Ed Design Lab's design criteria,[42] micro-pathways must:

- **Contain two or more credentials that are portable, stackable and track toward a degree**, focusing on in-demand occupations supported by regional labor market data that result in a job with above median wages.
- **Be employer co-created and validated**. Credentials and skills are identified and validated by key employer partners, accompanied by internships and other work-based learning opportunities.
- **Be attainable in one year or less**, often in 3-6 months.
- **Have a clear return on investment**. Learners need a high level of detail from the outside of the program about skills, education and career steps, job opportunities and wage gains.
- **Be offered in a flexible delivery format**: a mix of online, hybrid and in-person, with times that work for people with families and other responsibilities while also balancing bringing people back in-person to JKC.
- **Integrate technical and 21st century skill**s, a mix of hard and soft skills that cut across industries and job roles.

Recommendation: Analyze market data to confirm local demand for micro-pathway jobs, ensuring they pay above the median wage or lead to a promotion that pays above the median wage.

Types of metrics to look at include current jobs, job openings, median income and future growth projections. For health, there were 7,316 job openings in the Trenton area over the past two years, and continued growth in this sector is expected. More metrics for the other Silos of Excellence are included in the earlier "Trenton by the Numbers" section. The Pima Community College "Great Job and Earnings" figure at the end of this section is taken from the Pima Community College Health Information Technology micro-pathway webpage.[43]

Recommendation: Pick two or three initial industry partners to identify applicable skills and competencies and offer feedback on curriculum.

Employers need to confirm the essential skills learners would need to get hired, as well as the specific soft skills that are most valuable on the job. By offering feedback, employers own the curriculum in a deeper way, impacting how they view graduates as potential hires. Key employer partners for health could be Capital Health, Henry J. Austin Health Clinic, or Trenton Neighborhood Initiative with their Capital Health Initiative Scholarship for Trenton students. In the long-term, the micro-pathways will expand past these initial partners, but a few initial relationships are crucial for immediate success.

Recommendation: Market micro-pathways to students (specifically Trenton students) so they have a clear understanding of the return on investment from the start.

MCCC already has most of the components of micro-pathways, including micro-credentials and industry relationships. This model packages all related noncredit and credit programs together, giving students entry and exit points to a clear growth path with future learning opportunities.

This aligns with the recent work MCCC has undertaken in the career coaching website module, where students can look at the fields of study they are interested in and all relevant certificates and job opportunities. Rather than integrating into the current Continuing Education website, Prince George's Community College created a new, separate landing page for their micro-pathway programs, given how different the programs are from more traditional Continuing Education approaches. These webpages should focus on occupations available to learners upon completion, average salaries, available support (like ASAP) and flexibility.

Marketing and outreach of micro-pathways that specifically target Trenton residents can be especially effective at increasing the visibility and attractiveness of MCCC and JKC. Through advertising and commercials, MCCC should highlight stories about JKC students pursuing micro-pathways and leverage social media, local news networks, and radio stations based in Trenton to heighten awareness of these programs.

PimaCommunityCollege
PimaFastTrack

Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Great Job and Earnings Potential

Become a Health Technologist, Medical Records Specialist, Medical Biller/Coder or Earn a Certificate to Support Your Existing Health Career

119	6%	$37,200
Current Jobs in Pima County	Projected Growth	Median Salary

Source: EMSI, August 2022

CASE STUDY: Pima Community College

Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona designed 8 micro-pathways (labeled FastTracks), with the Ed Design Lab in 2020-2021. Their Emergency Medical Services FastTrack[44] is a micro-pathway to become an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Certificates earned:
- National Registry of EMT Certification
- CPR

Soft skills highlighted:
- Intercultural fluency

Emergency Medical Services Micro-pathway

Workforce opportunities:
- EMT
- EMT/Firefighter
- Paramedic/Firefighter

Continued learning opportunities:
- Fire Sciences Certificate
- AAS Degree in Paramedic or Fire and Emergency Services

Key employer partners:
- Fire departments
- Hospitals
- Ambulance companies

3. FOSTERING ROBUST INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN HEALTHCARE, ADVANCED MANUFACTURING, AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Key Findings:

- Dedicated staff resources to coordinate industry partnerships within Silos of Excellence will enhance employer engagement, improve partnership reliability, and reduce miscommunications and misconceptions.

- Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) improve enthusiasm and strengthen results in curriculum development, student enrollment and satisfaction, and program marketing.

- A progression of meaningful industry engagement opportunities within Silos of Excellence helps grow partnerships organically and meet employers where they are.

Building on the foundations of neighborhood revitalization and curricular innovations, MCCC should work on cultivating strong, mutually beneficial collaborations with industry to reinforce and expand its current offerings. Through the implementation of recommendations designed for the short-, medium-, and long-terms, MCCC will be able to progressively enhance the relevance and appeal of its academic offerings while solidifying the college's role as a crucial partner in workforce development—the ultimate goal being to establish a symbiotic relationship between MCCC, its students, and key industries, fostering a thriving ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders.

Recommendation: Hire a workforce navigator - a new staff position that will serve as the main point of contact for industry engagement.

In the short term, MCCC should **prioritize hiring a dedicated "workforce navigator,"** a permanent staff member tasked with bridging the gap between the college and key industry partners. Feedback from academic faculty, researchers, and business advocates highlights the critical importance of a workforce navigator for consistent communication with stakeholders. Having someone to translate between academic, business, and policy worlds improves the likelihood that groups that have not worked closely together before can find common ground.

CASE STUDY: Hiring a Workforce Navigator

IvyTech in Fort Wayne, Indiana has used a National Science Foundation Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity (EPIIC) grant to hire their own version of a workforce navigator.[45] The IvyTech role involves:

- Building new relationships and maintaining trust with industry and community partners.

- Strategically leveraging internal and external resources to optimize curriculum content and skills development.

- Working with the Marketing Department to develop materials targeted to engage industry partners and community partners.

- Implementing programs and marketing tools focused on manufacturing as an educational and career pathway for underrepresented groups or individuals.

- Becoming confident in making financial asks of industry and community partners.

Recommendation: Informally engage industry and community partners when evaluating possible Silos of Excellence.

Once hired, the workforce navigator can assist in evaluating micro-pathway options within the framework described in the previous section. MCCC should verify that chosen industries and employer partners for Silos of Excellence meet criteria including faculty connections, available lab space, logistical feasibility, connection to state/local political goals, and growth potential. After this, the workforce navigator should **take an inventory of current employer partnerships and conduct informal outreach to partners** for the chosen pipelines. The college should engage industry leadership (especially Human Resources representatives), local and state agencies, relevant community organizations, and residents to get a sense of employer talent needs and MCCC's current capacity. Focus should be given on building in-roads with new employer partners.

Recommendation: Transform industry advisory boards into Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) to leverage private sector guidance and inclusion.

In the medium term, MCCC should focus on establishing a strong track record of collaboration with employers. Research suggests that employers are more likely to hire workers from a trusted intermediary, so maintaining these relationships is critical.[46][47] As MCCC has shared, the quality of industry advisory boards (IABs) can vary across majors due to faculty resource availability, meeting frequency, and no shared language between facul-

ty and industry partners. An annual meeting does not automatically ensure a productive relationship; emphasis should be on reproducing opportunities for **meaningful and relevant collaboration**. Redesigning IABs as Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) can achieve this. The BILT model emphasizes **equal partnership** between business leaders and college faculty.[48] Community colleges across the country have begun to implement this model, including Atlantic Cape Community College and Hudson County Community College in New Jersey.[49]

Differences Between Industry Advisory Boards and Business and Industry Leadership Teams

	Industry Advisory Board	Business and Industry Leadership Team
Leadership	College faculty lead meetings and set the agenda	Jointly led by college staff and business representatives
Membership	Primarily department heads and senior business leaders	Emphasis on diversity of business sizes, representation at multiple levels (senior business executives, HR staff; department heads, instructors, and college staff), and can be expanded to community partners and local government officials
Curriculum Evaluation	Annual knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) evaluation suggested	Annual KSA evaluation required
Time Commitment	May only meet once a year	Meets quarterly
Employer Expectations	Give advice on programs, rubber stamp existing projects	Active partner in evaluating student preparation and curriculum requirements
College Expectations	Perfunctory engagement with partners	Actively solicits guidance and provides written feedback to employers regarding changes

BILTs are a critical component of micro-pathway programs. The Center for Occupational Research and Design (CORD) found that "employers and college personnel involved in partnerships based on the BILT model expressed more enthusiasm for their collaboration and enjoyed stronger results in areas such as curriculum development, student enrollment and satisfaction, and program marketing."

For each Silo of Excellence, the workforce navigator should operationalize a set of key principles. BILTs meet more frequently than most IABs. It is common for a BILT to host one large annual meeting to conduct a full skills review and three shorter online meet-

ings to discuss emerging industry trends and academic progress. One employer repre-
sentative and one faculty member should co-lead the BILT, with the workforce navigator
playing a key facilitator role. The college should write how it incorporated partner guid-
ance, and industry partners should expect the college to critically engage with their guid-
ance. Finally, the BILT should be focused on a single sub-discipline rather than focusing
on all programs within a department at one time.

**IMPLEMENTATION SNAPSHOT: BILT for Health-Focused Silo of Excel-
lence**

**A BILT for the Health Silo of Excellence would involve key organizations,
including Capital Health, Penn Medicine, Bristol Meyers Squibb, and the fu-
ture Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center, along with community
health groups, advocates, and the State Department of Health. Regular meet-
ings with industry partners would focus on curriculum relevance, emerging
trends, and healthcare workforce needs.**

**Feedback sessions, such as the annual KSA meeting for patient care coordi-
nation, would facilitate information exchange among partners. For exam-
ple, Capital Health could flag its interest in a new electronic health records
program or Capital Health and Penn Medicine could discover they are both
implementing new respiratory treatment techniques. The Department of
Health could identify funding opportunities for healthcare record or cyberse-
curity improvements.**

**Post-feedback, the workforce navigator, in conjunction with faculty and
administrators, would incorporate suggestions into the curriculum. Changes
might include targeted modules on digital health technologies, workshops by
industry partners, and hands-on training reflecting the latest advancements
in patient care. Engagement opportunities, like site visits and guest lectures,
would multiply the chances to incorporate changes in the healthcare land-
scape.**

A big hurdle facing BILTs is getting initial employer buy-in. Trenton faces a challenging
business environment with few employers with large enough hiring needs to solely sup-
port a program. Nonetheless, MCCC can leverage strong academic programs in health
and relationships with Capital Health, a potential champion with cache with additional
partners, to jumpstart the process. The Trenton Neighborhood Initiative (TNI) in partner-
ship with Capital Health is an excellent example of how to bring nonprofits, community
organizations, and industry together to support health careers in Trenton.[50] BILTs pro-
vide the flexibility to integrate Trenton nonprofits into the curriculum process.
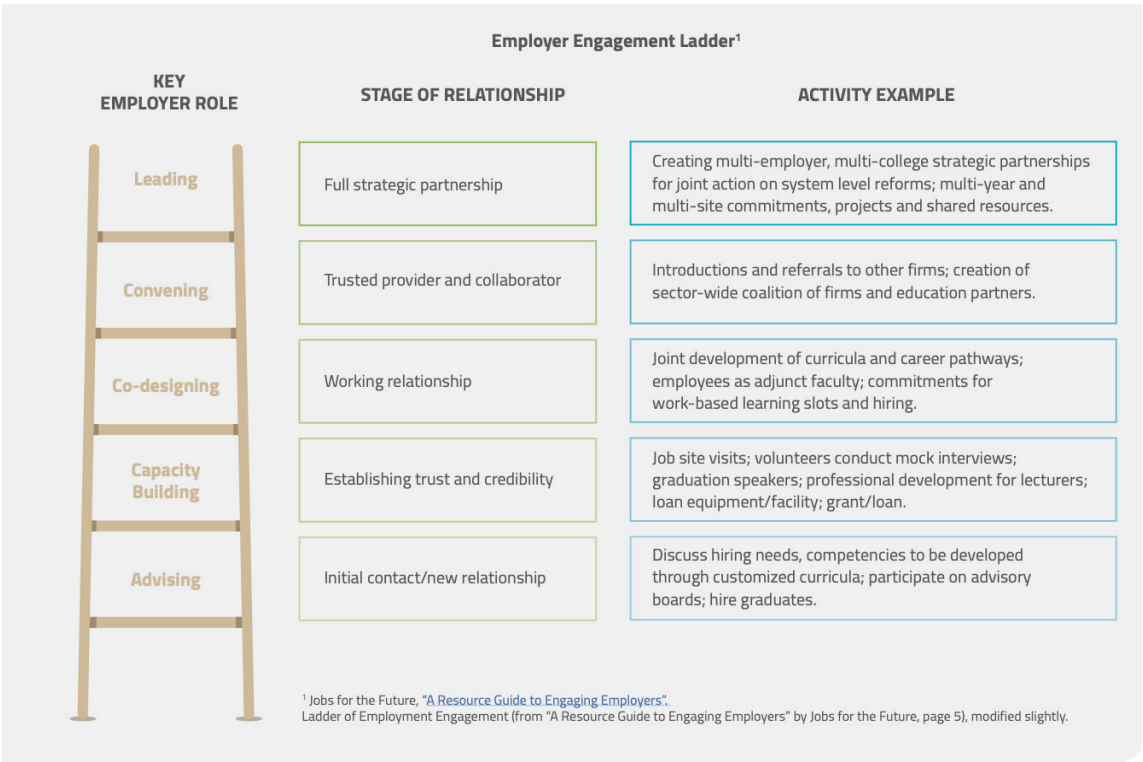
**Recommendation: Lay out a set of long-term options for expanding stake-
holder engagement**

Another goal, integrated within BILTs, is to **offer low-stakes employer engagement opportunities**, like resume reviews and interview coaching. Starting small gives time for MCCC to build rapport with employers, build confidence in the partnership, and lower the barrier to entry for small business partners. These engagements require minimal time investment from industry partners but serve as critical touchpoints.

In the long-term, MCCC should deepen employer engagement, expand partnerships to new industries, invest in faculty development, and evaluate its programming to align with city and state economic goals. Choosing new Silos should be guided by economic trends, market demand, and faculty expertise. For example, an advanced manufacturing Silo can begin with clean room preparation and later expand into related areas like clean room construction and advanced manufacturing technology. Inroads with major partners like the State or Capital Health could lead to a micro pathway in IT should the need for certified cybersecurity workers grow.

Employer engagement should follow a natural progression (see the "Employer Engagement Ladder" below as an example). As a next step, the college could actively **pursue targeted apprenticeships and internships**. Periodic visits to employer partners could help faculty stay current in their fields. Over time, **securing process commitments from these employers** (such as employer commitments to interview a certain number of JKC students for a given position each hiring season) could be a final objective.

As the Silos become established, MCCC can look for ways to tighten connections between their programs and greater city and state development goals. For example, MCCC can work with the NJ Economic Development Agency to attract semiconductor and pharmaceutical companies to the region, should there be political will behind this initiative. Trenton City Hall has also identified 'Eds and Meds,' and particularly light industry in pharmaceuticals and energy, as a key cluster for support in the Trenton 250 plan.

Employer Engagement Ladder[1]

KEY EMPLOYER ROLE	STAGE OF RELATIONSHIP	ACTIVITY EXAMPLE
Leading	Full strategic partnership	Creating multi-employer, multi-college strategic partnerships for joint action on system level reforms; multi-year and multi-site commitments, projects and shared resources.
Convening	Trusted provider and collaborator	Introductions and referrals to other firms; creation of sector-wide coalition of firms and education partners.
Co-designing	Working relationship	Joint development of curricula and career pathways; employees as adjunct faculty; commitments for work-based learning slots and hiring.
Capacity Building	Establishing trust and credibility	Job site visits; volunteers conduct mock interviews; graduation speakers; professional development for lecturers; loan equipment/facility; grant/loan.
Advising	Initial contact/new relationship	Discuss hiring needs, competencies to be developed through customized curricula; participate on advisory boards; hire graduates.

[1] Jobs for the Future, "A Resource Guide to Engaging Employers".
Ladder of Employment Engagement (from "A Resource Guide to Engaging Employers" by Jobs for the Future, page 5), modified slightly.

CONCLUSION

As this report draws to a close, it becomes evident that the outcomes of these proposed initiatives for MCCC's James Kerney Campus (JKC) will transcend the traditional impact of an academic institution. Revitalizing the campus and its surroundings, innovating educational programs to strengthen pathways to graduation and quality careers, and fostering robust industry partnerships through the creation of sector-aligned Silos of Excellence will not only advance JKC but also empower the local Trenton residents it was founded to serve. Central to this strategy is the recommendation to cultivate a mutually-beneficial relationship between MCCC and the Trenton community by marketing JKC's Silos of Excellence as a key incentive for enrollment, especially among Trenton residents. This approach aims to directly connect campus innovations with student success at JKC, fostering an environment where academic advancements, community revitalization, and student enrollment growth are all intimately linked.

The path to transformation will demand the college's unwavering commitment, innovative thinking, and a collaborative approach involving a myriad of stakeholders. By implementing these recommendations at JKC, MCCC has the potential to provide substantial and lasting benefits to students, contribute to the local economy, and play a pivotal role in the development of its surrounding community. In partnership with students, industry leaders, and community members, MCCC can not only meet the challenges of the present, but emerge as a beacon of innovation, opportunity, and community engagement for the future. To this end, the leadership, faculty, and stakeholders of MCCC should consider these recommendations thoughtfully and urgently.
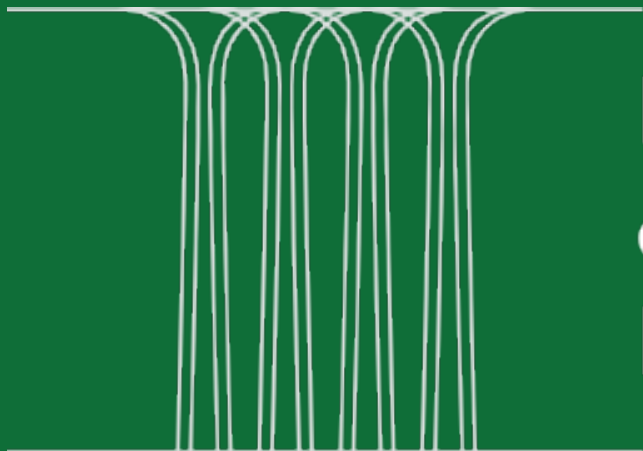
ENDNOTES

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