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Program Spotlight: Mid Michigan College and Shepherd High School Dual Enrollment and Early College Programs

Mid Michigan College (Mid) enrolls over 1,200 dual enrollment students through its nine high school and intermediate school district partnerships. One of Mid's largest partners is Shepherd High School, as 140-150 students enroll in Mid courses each year.

Shepherd's students have thrived in the dual enrollment and early college programs, as they have a success rate of 98%. Since the fall 2014 semester, 134 Shepherd students have earned 30 or more college credits, and 66 students have met the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) requirements. The MTA provides for transferability of up to 30 semester credits to meet many (or all) of the general education requirements at colleges and universities who participate in the agreement.

"Our partnership is phenomenal, and we are ecstatic that students have opportunities to get through the MTA, earn an associate's degree, and obtain the Michigan Early Middle College Association Certificate," stated Joe Passalacqua, the Shepherd High School Principal. "Because of our strong math and science curriculum, students will have the opportunity to pursue a STEM-endorsed diploma through the Michigan Department of Education. This could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and support of Mid."

Students may elect to participate in the school's Early College program, in which students delay high school graduation by one year in order to enroll in college courses full-time during their 5th year of high school. Ten percent of the school's senior class participates in the early college program. By attending high school for five years, the early college students can complete requirements for a high school diploma, a Mid associate degree, and the Michigan Early Middle College Association certificate.

"Shepherd was all-in from the get-go," stated Dr. Richard Smith, Mid's Associate Dean of Off Campus Instruction. "The administration understood that there is a difference between a high school and a college class."

One aspect of college that is difficult to replicate on a high school campus is the college classroom environment. High school classes may have PA announcements, or students may be permitted to leave for

assemblies or a student government meeting. One unique aspect about Shepherd's on-site program is the partnership, between the high school and Mid, which allows Shepherd to create a real student college experience on the high school site. On rare occasions class time is interrupted by school announcements and/or assemblies. The students are allowed to still be high school kids while taking their advanced coursework.

Shepherd Public Schools has dedicated its Laidley Building to be used solely for Mid classes. There are three classrooms, and a room for college faculty to use for office hours and student conferences. While many dual enrollment programs in Michigan offer classes at a high school location, those are often held in the main building. Having a designated building solely for Mid courses helps create the sense that students are no longer in high school, but in college.

A sign outside the facility promotes Mid Michigan College, and electronic signage inside displays the same information as electronic monitors on Mid's Harrison and Mount Pleasant campuses. All dual enrollment and early college students, as well as faculty, have key fobs for the building.

The Laidley Building has state-of-the-art technology with Wi-Fi, and essentially functions as a mini Mid's campus. Shepherd High School provides all students with Chromebooks, and those participating in dual enrollment or the early college can access Open Educational Resources used in their college classes.

"Our dual enrollment program has increased our school's academic rigor," noted Passalacqua. "Our community sees how this rigor and advanced coursework are benefiting students."

Shepherd High School students who participate in the dual enrollment and/or early college programs earn an average of 20.4 college credits and have an average college GPA of 3.19.

The student's academic success is supported by Mid and Shepherd who have worked closely to schedule courses to accommodate students.

"Having a master schedule that rolls over allows our college to plan better, and the high school can plan ahead," pointed out Smith.

Mid offers eight course sections each semester in the Laidley Building. Most of these classes are taught by Mid faculty who travel to Shepherd. One speech class is taught by a qualified concurrent enrollment instructor from the high school.

While most of the classes are offered at Shepherd, some classes such as biology and chemistry, are taught on Mid's Mount Pleasant Campus due to lab requirements. Mid offers biology and chemistry classes at 7 a.m. so students are able to return to their home schools by the start of the second period. Most of the students enrolled in these classes are from Shepherd, but students from other high schools may enroll as well. Twenty students are enrolled in the chemistry class this semester.

Mid further extends the college experience to dual enrollment students by offering college resources to all of its dual enrollment students taking classes through Mid's high school partnerships. These include academic support

provided remotely or on one of the Mid campuses, Library Services, the Writing and Reading Center, Math Lab, and research databases. Students can also get a MMC identification card.

Mid's resources have contributed to the students' success, as well as assisting in establishing a strong relationship between the institutions' administrators. The Mid faculty also have a great relationship with Shepherd.

"The Mid professors go above and beyond," said Passalacqua. "They really believe in the program."

Faculty go out of their way to make-up missed class time that can occur due to snow days. The Mid math professor and Shepherd High School math instructor meet to discuss what students need in high school to be successful in college-level math, which demonstrates their commitment to the alignment of secondary and post-secondary curriculum. Because of this collaboration, the high school has seen a significant increase in the number of students taking and passing Calculus 1.

One of the keys to the partnership's success is frequent communication. Shepherd and Mid established this habit in the partnership development phase, and it has continued. Not only do the schools communicate about course scheduling, they also frequently communicate on the status of students' Mid applications and materials.

In addition to helping students gain an authentic college classroom experience, Shepherd and Mid promote college readiness in other ways. Early college students who will be attending MMC for their 13th year are provided with a tour of the college's Mount Pleasant campus in May of their 4th year of high school. This allows students to learn where classes will be held, where the bookstore is located, and where they can find other campus resources. Mid supports students' postsecondary goals through advising. The college will send an advisor to its partner high schools to help students create an Educational Development Plan that is based on each students' intended college major.

Of the 102 Shepherd graduates in 2018, 65 students enrolled at Mid during their high school career. Nearly 85% of those dual enrollment students (55) matriculated to Mid in the fall 2018 term following their high school graduation.

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