

MATC President hopes to pursue more community collaboration in 2021

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Financial losses and pandemic-influenced enrollment fluctuations have left Madison Area Technical College looking to surrounding communities for guidance.

“Our planning was not just for the fall. Our planning is looking out five, six years, and how we can meet community needs,” MATC President Jack Daniels III (pictured above) told a recent Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce virtual event.

With 40 percent of pre-existing classes already online, MATC had little trouble switching completely to virtual. But in shutting down in-person activities, the college had to expand outwards into surrounding counties to meet their students’ new needs as a result of the pandemic.

“We are looking at those elements that we can assist municipalities and communities with,” Daniels said. “But it’s also given us an opportunity to think through our structures. What is going to be best for the institution? How do we better serve communities within the structures that we have?”

MATC took advantage of unused facilities and offered them for community use by hosting early voting at two of their campuses, as well as proceeding with normal election day polling. They also expanded their Wi-Fi network to outside their buildings, allowing students and staff to stay connected and work from the campus grounds and parking lots. In addition to this, MATC created hotspots for students

facing unstable internet access at home.

Despite concerns of recent graduate unemployment, Daniels holds that their students are well-equipped to find jobs in the current market. MATC prepares students for the workforce much differently than their university counterparts, he said. The college's more industry-focused approach leads to many students in in-demand areas being quickly hired. He added that over 30 nurses that recently graduated from MATC's program have already found employment.

But Daniels still sees room for improvement.

"We have to do a better job in terms of our communication with businesses, understanding their needs. We started to do that prior to COVID," Daniels concluded. "We are positioning ourselves for the long run. Our students are still getting hired."

-By Addison Lathers

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