

# MOUNTAINS OF OPPORTUNITY



**Mountain Empire**  
*Community College Foundation*

2017-2018 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



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**F**or nearly 50 years Mountain Empire Community College has been serving the citizens of Southwest Virginia, providing opportunities and opening doors to bright careers for thousands of our region's citizens. I am reminded of this each time I speak with a current student or alumnus who tells me about the positive experience and benefits of attending MECC. As the college's seventh president, I am proud of the strong programming and student supports in place at MECC.

Inside this annual report, you'll read about amazing MECC students who have overcome formidable barriers in order to attain their educational goals; supporters who provided opportunities that benefit hundreds of students; communities engaged in crowdfunding to raise money for scholarships and student emergencies; an alumna who paved the way for the next generation of MECC students; and corporate and private partners who helped strengthen the area's workforce. You'll read about the transformational changes underway at MECC to encourage and increase workforce readiness and participation in our region; and you'll read about the transformative changes underway at MECC enacted to ensure more students who come through our doors receive the degree or credential they seek.

Our college, our students, our communities, and our culture are strengthened through the contributions that you have made to the MECC Foundation. We know that an investment in MECC is an investment in our students, our workforce, and the economic vitality of our community. As a supporter, you understand this too, and we are thankful you are part of the amazing MECC legacy. Thank you for providing opportunities to make a positive, long-term impact in the lives of our students and in our communities through your continued support.

Dr. Kristen Westover  
*President, Mountain Empire Community College*



# Boards and Staff

## Mountain Empire Community College Foundation Board

|                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
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| Ben Allen, <i>Past Chair</i>      | Chris Jones                  |
| Diana D. Pope, <i>Treasurer</i>   | Valerie Lee                  |
| Ron Vicars, <i>Vice-Treasurer</i> | The Honorable Cynthia Kinser |
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| <i>President of MECC</i>          | Virginia Meador              |
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| Dr. Kathleen DePonte              | Donald Raber                 |
| Bonnie Elosser                    | Donnie Ratliff               |
| Joseph Funk                       | Jack Rhoton                  |
| Ruth Gilliam                      | Doris Rife                   |
| Sarah Gilliam-Burrill             | Ryan Witt                    |
| Karen K. Hall                     | W.C. "Buzzy" Witt, Jr.       |

## MECC Foundation Staff

Amy M. Greear  
*Executive Director*

Jearline Bledsoe  
*Annual Fund Coordinator*

Stacey Miniard  
*Financial Services Specialist*

Samantha Bevins  
*Administrative Assistant*

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|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Betty Cornett, <i>Wise County</i>                   | Freda Starnes, <i>Scott County</i>     |
|   | Keith Wilson, <i>Scott County</i>      |





## NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED

Amy Greear was appointed as Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Mountain Empire Community College Foundation in August 2018.

Ms. Greear had previously served as MECC's Coordinator of Community Relations and as the college's Interim Director of the Foundation. Ms. Greear holds a bachelor's degree in English and Communications from Clinch Valley College, a Master's degree in Educational Communications and Technology from East Tennessee State University, and is a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Learning program at the University of Tennessee– Chattanooga.

"We are excited to be working with Amy in her new role," said MECC President Kristen Westover.

## Inauguration of Seventh President

Dr. Kristen Westover was inaugurated as the seventh president of Mountain Empire Community College on Friday, October 19.

The inauguration event was held in coordination with the college's annual Home Craft Days Festival.

Dr. Kristen Westover first gained a love and appreciation for the community college mission through her own life-changing experience at Colby Community College in Colby, Kansas.

In her first year at MECC, Dr. Westover has led the development of a new mission statement and strategic plan for the college, preparation for accreditation review, established a new recognition for outstanding college employees, and has assisted with the implementation of a centralized advising process for students.

Additionally, she created the MECC President's Institute, a fifteen-week professional leadership development series for current MECC employees



interested in strengthening their knowledge of MECC and Virginia Community College System governance and programming. She co-chaired the taskforce that successfully created new general education outcome expectations for the Virginia Community College System, and is currently co-chairing a committee leading the way in redesigning how colleges work with students who come to the college with gaps in their learning.

Dr. Westover holds an A.S. from Colby Community College, a B.S. in mathematics, a M.S. in instructional technology from Fort Hays State University, and an Ed.D. in organizational leadership from Nova Southeastern University.





## Special Events Raise Scholarship Funds



### Larry Sparks Entertains Dickenson County

A full house came out to support the Dickenson County Endowed Scholarship in November when the MECC Foundation hosted Larry Sparks and the Lonesome Ramblers at Clintwood's Jettie Baker Center.

More than \$5,000 in proceeds for the scholarship was raised at the event. Special thanks to Platinum Sponsors Columbus Phipps Foundation, Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, and the Rife Family; Gold Sponsors BB&T, Splashdam Freewill Baptist Church, and Thompson & Litton; Silver Sponsors Farmers & Miners Bank, First Community Bank, Kiwanis of Clintwood, Johnson Chevrolet, Lions Club of Clintwood and the Town of Clintwood.

### Lee County Scholarship Hits the High Notes

MECC held its first ever concert fundraiser benefitting the Lee County Endowed Scholarship in September 2018, raising more than \$10,000 at the event.

The event, coupled with funds raised at the Cedar Hill Golf Tournament, helped the Lee County Endowed Scholarship Committee meet a match pledge of \$30,000 by the Slemp Foundation and establish a fully endowed scholarship for Lee County students attending MECC.

Special thanks to Gold Sponsors Edward Jones—Jason Sturgill, Elk Knob, Farmers & Miners Bank, Lee Bank & Trust, Powell Valley National Bank, and Pro-Art; Silver Sponsors Americore Health and Town of Jonesville; and Bronze Sponsors C.M. Callahan Law Office, Kinser Law, PLC., Ronnie & Sandy Montgomery, Lee County Democratic Party, and the Republican Party of Lee County.

### Dancing in Diamonds and Denim

The Mountain Empire Community College Foundation raised more than \$50,000 at "Diamonds and Denim," a sell-out event benefitting the Scott County Endowed Scholarship.

Special thanks to Platinum Sponsors Dr. David and Annette Templeton and Courtesy Chevrolet; Gold Sponsors Mark & Judy Musick; Humphreys Enterprises, and Campus Drive-In; Silver Sponsors Jack & Martha Rhoton, New Peoples Bank, R-Mac Realty, Eastman Credit Union, Powell Valley National Bank, and Komatsu; and Bronze Sponsors Scott County Telephone Cooperative, Town of Nickelsville, Town of Gate City, Thermocopy, Otis Rhoton, and Food City.

A matching donation of \$25,000 was provided by the late Joyce Tallman of Atlanta. Ms. Tallman named the MECC Foundation as a recipient of the gift as part of the Joyce Cutshaw Tallman Trust. Ms. Tallman was a long-time friend and coworker of Foundation Board member Mark Musick.

The August 25 event doubled the amount held in the Scott County Endowed Scholarship Fund.





## Coaching Toward a Brighter Future

The MECC Foundation supports career coaches, Navigators, in area high schools as part of the Virginia Community College System's Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative (RVHI). In 2018, the program was reenergized with support from a RVHI grant to better meet the needs of students in our region.

Through the expansion, MECC added five part-time Navigators and one full-time Lead Navigator. "This change allows each Navigator to focus on two area high schools and ensures they spend less time on the road and more time in each school," says Dual Enrollment Coordinator Melissa McKinney. The Lead Navigator visits all ten high schools on a monthly basis to meet with school administrators, teachers, and students. This ensures quality advising and



forges deeper connections with high school students and personnel.

The restructure places a heavy emphasis on dual enrollment and admission for post-secondary education at MECC. As part of their core responsibilities, Navigators assist area high school students with career and educational planning, while also preparing them to succeed in their post-secondary education and training.

**"My career coach helped me discover my career interests, research job availability and demand, and determine what skills and educational requirements were necessary."**

—Ethan Hounshell

Thomas Walker High School

## Leading Through Action



Christian Hale has adopted a philosophy on leadership that he practices daily as a student at Mountain Empire Community College.

"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence," he said, quoting Cheryl Sandberg.

For three years, Hale has been donating goods to stock MECC's Food Pantry. Developed by Student Services in coordination with the MECC Foundation Emergency Assistance Program, the pantry offers free food and hygiene items to students in need. Hale purchases items regularly to stock the pantry.

"Christian is a faithful giver with a servant's heart and MECC is very blessed to have him as a student," said Dean of Students, Lelia Bradshaw.

Christian would like to encourage other students to get involved in their school and community. Although he is a full-time student double majoring in general studies and pre-teacher education, he still finds time to volunteer at local organizations.

"I hope that one day when I'm a teacher that I can start a food pantry like this. I know some of our students struggle and I think about that every time I donate," Hale said.

**To donate to MECC's Emergency Assistance Fund or the MECC Food Pantry, contact the MECC Foundation at 276.523.2400 ext. 466.**





## It's Elementary—Investing in Workforce and Innovation

MECC embarked on its first building expansion in more than a decade, opening the Center for Workforce and Innovation of Appalachia in 2018.

The center, located in the former Appalachia Elementary School building in Appalachia, will house the college's Power Lineman program, and will provide additional college coursework in agriculture, culinary services, unmanned aerial systems (drones), early childhood education, and more.

The MECC Foundation received a \$420,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission to launch the Center, a \$50,000 Slemple Foundation grant to establish a media and archival resource room, as well as a \$300,000 GO Virginia Region One grant to implement Smart Farming coursework that utilizes drone technology with farming.

Mountain Empire Community College President, Dr. Kristen Westover stated, "Mountain Empire Community College is honored and excited about the Center for Workforce and Innovation. The grant funds awarded to the MECC Foundation by various organizations will support the College in developing entrepreneurial offerings, purchasing equipment, and developing coursework, programming and other new and innovative learning opportunities to enhance the workforce development offerings for the entire region.

The Foundation plans to apply for additional grants to establish more academic and student support resources at the Center with plans to partner with the United Way of Southwest Virginia and Frontier Health.



*Power Linemen students are being instructed at their new outdoor classroom at MECC's Center for Workforce and Innovation of Appalachia*





### Tripling Student Success

Mountain Empire Community College is the first of 23 Virginia community colleges to achieve the goal of tripling the number of credentials earned by students, three years ahead of schedule.

The goal is part of the Virginia's Community College System's six-year strategic plan to triple the number of credentials earned by VCCS students by the year 2021. The completion objective involves not only the number of associate degrees, certificates, and career studies certificates awarded by its colleges, but also includes the number of industry credentials earned by students who have completed a VCCS workforce training program.

To meet this objective, VCCS Colleges measure completion rates based on the total number of credentials earned by their students. In 2014–15, MECC awarded 636 credentials. In 2017–18, MECC students earned 2,352 credentials. Credentials include industry certifications and licensures, Associate Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates, and Career Studies Certificates.

According to the VCCS Complete 2021 Strategic Plan, the opportunities Virginia community colleges provide include some of the most cutting-edge and highly-demanded training and education available. But, simply accessing those opportunities is no longer enough. Students have to earn a credential to make it count toward a career.

Over the next ten years, Virginia will need to fill 1.5 million jobs. The majority of these jobs will require a postsecondary credential—an associate's degree and the certifications and licensures that provide students with a nationally recognized standard of knowledge. Tripling the number of credentials that our students earn is the single goal in this strategic plan.



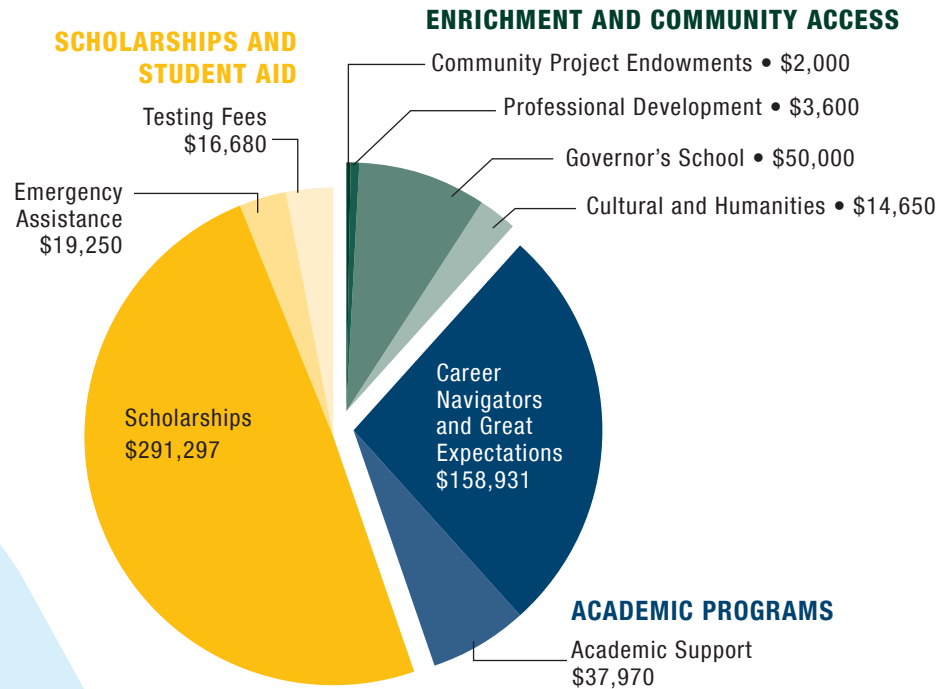
**Mountain Empire Community College is the first of 23 Virginia community colleges to achieve the goal of tripling the number of credentials earned by students, three years ahead of schedule.**





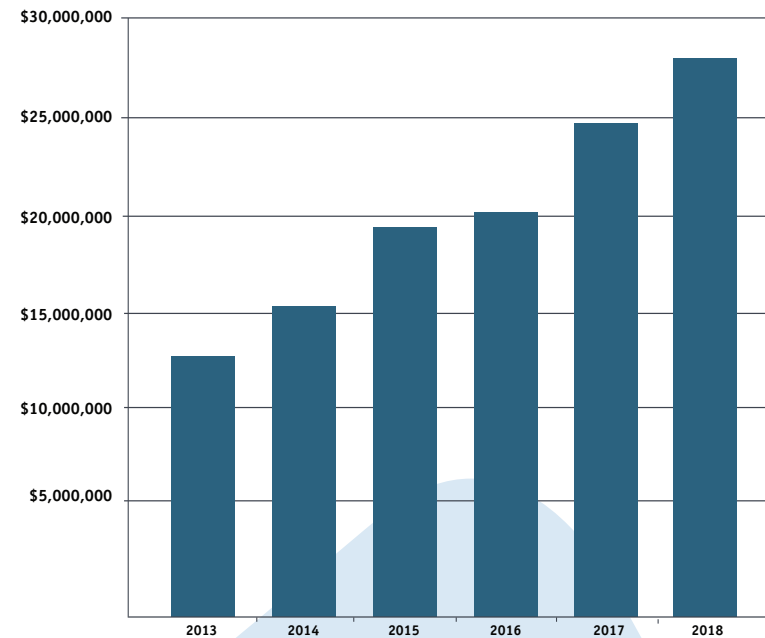
## PROGRAM BUDGET

Total 2017–18 Investment \$594,378



## ENDOWMENT GROWTH

Balance as of June 30, 2018 \$25,603,906



## FAST FACTS

**319 STUDENTS  
RECEIVED  
\$338,193  
IN SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS**



**RAISED MORE THAN  
\$1.05 MILLION  
IN 2018**

Special events raised  
**almost \$118,000**  
close to tripling the 2017 amount

Invested more than  
**\$70,000**  
in Community Outreach

Provided more than  
**\$200,000**  
to support student support initiatives

Secured more than  
**\$2 MILLION**  
in grant funds

Endowment grew to  
**\$25 MILLION**



## It Takes A Village



*The late Mr. Ken Gilley and Mrs. Thelma Sorah Gilley*

### Hall of Honor Gala Honors Gilleys

The late Mr. Ken Gilley and Mrs. Thelma Sorah Gilley were the honorees at the 2018 Hall of Honor Gala hosted by the MECC Foundation. Proceeds from the event benefitted the Gilley-Sorah Hall of Honor Mountain Music School Endowed Scholarship at MECC. Mountain Music School draws many local and out-of-state

students to the one-week summer program.

The Gilleys were recognized for their support of Mountain Empire Community College and their service to the region. They have been strong proponents of higher education in Southwest Virginia. The Gilleys have created two scholarships, the William Kenneth Gilley Memorial Scholarship for Mountain Music School, and the Gilley-Sorah Endowed Scholarship, which was created along with their son, Michael, and Thelma's sister, Shirley Walborn. Additionally, Mrs. Gilley was involved in establishing the East Stone Gap Tigers Scholarship at MECC.

The Gilleys were active in civic organizations and volunteered in the community. Mr. Gilley worked for Norfolk Southern Railway for 41 years, and was a member of the Masonic Lodge and Shriners. Mrs. Gilley retired from the Department of Labor as supervisor of the Black Lung Office in Norton and served as a negotiator for the local AFL-CIO. After their retirement, the Gilleys enjoyed taking classes at MECC and participating in Mountain Music School.

### Investing in Cultural Heritage and Recognition

Michael Gilley sees the cultivation and preservation of Southwest Virginia's unique music, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage as one of the most important missions of Mountain Empire Community College.

As the Director of Library Services at MECC and now the coordinator of the Home Craft Days Festival, Mountain Music School events, and the Career Studies Certificate in Old Time Music, Dr. Gilley is able to see firsthand how donations to cultural programming at MECC are making a significant impact in the community.

- More than 200 students participated in MECC's Mountain Music School, a one-week event that allows students age 10 and up to learn the basics of old-time music. A large percentage of students are able to attend the week-long summer music camp through local scholarships and support from the MECC Foundation.
- Three of the six graduates from the Old Time Music program at MECC who received Foundation scholarships are now working on degrees in music-related fields at four-year colleges.
- The Home Craft Days Festival, now in its 47th year, brings thousands of individuals to MECC's campus each year. More than 100 local vendors share their crafts as live mountain music plays throughout the three-day event.
- The MECC Foundation's Cultural and Humanities Committee provides funding for guest speakers, the John Fox Jr. Festival and the MECC Veteran's Day programming. The John Fox Jr. Festival welcomed author Sharyn McCrumb in 2018.

"We have a rich and unique culture that can not only enrich our lives but the lives of others, well worth preserving and sharing," said Gilley.





# THANK YOU

to our many generous donors

*The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following people, organizations, and businesses who contributed from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.*

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Courtesy Chevrolet-Cadillac Inc.  
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## TURNER GIFT

Wiley A. "Ike" Turner was so inspired by a relative's personal struggles and triumphs in obtaining her Registered Nursing degree at Mountain Empire Community College that he decided to make a difference for future clinical healthcare students attending MECC.

Turner, of Castlewood, donated \$50,000 to establish a scholarship fund honoring 2018 MECC graduate, Kara Kennedy, and his late wife, Dr. Lorraine C. Turner, the former Superintendent of the Russell County School System. The Kara Kennedy/Dr. Lorraine C. Turner Endowed Scholarship will benefit students enrolled in clinical health science programs at MECC.

Turner said he wanted to do something that would assist students who will eventually go to work caring for the residents of this region. "The Lord has blessed me and I just want to pass it forward."

Turner's cousin, Kara Kennedy, was a student in MECC's Registered Nursing Program, when she was seriously injured in a hiking accident. Although Kennedy lost her leg, she recuperated and re-enrolled in the nursing program. Through the support of her family and friends, along with MECC students and staff, she graduated with her Registered Nursing degree in May 2018. Kennedy was one of two featured student speakers at the graduation ceremony.

"We are grateful for Mr. Turner's generosity and for his extraordinary commitment to our students and the community. The Kara Kennedy/Dr. Lorraine C. Turner Endowed Scholarship will benefit generations to come who will enter health care careers in Southwest Virginia, touching thousands of lives with their skills," said MECC President Dr. Kristen Westover.



Wiley A. "Ike" Turner with RN Instructor Deborah Wright (left) and MECC Dean of Health Sciences Kim Dorton (right).

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## LEGACY SOCIETY

*The following individuals have notified the MECC Foundation of arrangements to provide for the MECC Foundation in their estate plans, name the college as a beneficiary of life insurance, or provide a gift of paid-up life insurance.*

|  |                                      |                                     |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anonymous (7)                          | Terence Michael Gilley               | Ben and Nancy Sergent               |
| Ben and Dotty Allen                    | Howard and Ruth Gilliam              | R.C. "Snook"* and<br>Marti Shelton* |
| Carroll W. Bailey*                     | Jean Hill Grigsby*                   | Dale and Donna Stanley              |
| Jim Bates                              | Ann Verta Hamilton*                  | Helen Jackson Sutherland*           |
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| W.H. and Callie Anne<br>Coughlin Clark | Nell Phillips*                       | Beth Wendell*                       |
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| Ralph T. and Shirley Fisher            | Frank and Ginger<br>Rutherford*      |                                     |
| Frank and Mary Fugate                  |                                      |                                     |

\*deceased

## PHILANTHROPY AWARD



Ms. Donna Stanley, former Executive Director of the Mountain Empire Community College Foundation, received the 13th Annual Virginia Community College System Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy.

More than two dozen individuals, families, and businesses from around Virginia have earned the 2018 Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy. The awards were presented at a luncheon ceremony in Richmond on April 17, 2018.

Hosted by the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE), the 13th annual event honors leading philanthropists from each of Virginia's 23 community colleges as well as the statewide foundation. This year's class of distinguished philanthropy leaders has contributed a combined total of \$6 million dollars to Virginia's Community Colleges.

"Donna Stanley dedicated nearly 24 years of her life to Mountain Empire Community College and its students. Donna successfully led the MECC Foundation to hold the largest endowment in the Virginia Community College System, despite serving a region with a relatively low population and limited resources. She built strong, meaningful relationships with local businesses and associations, individuals, community leaders and other foundations to share the needs of the college, its students, and the community MECC serves. The legacy she created will support students for generations to come," said Kristen Westover, MECC President.



## **Mountain Empire** *Community College Foundation*

3441 Mountain Empire Road  
Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219

*Phone 276.523.7466, Fax 276.523.7485*  
*[www.meccfoundation.org](http://www.meccfoundation.org)*



## **Mountain Empire** **Community College**

3441 Mountain Empire Road  
Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219

*Phone 276.523.2400, Fax 276.523.8297*  
*[www.mecc.edu](http://www.mecc.edu)*

Mountain Empire Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award the associate degree. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404.679.4500 for questions about the accreditation of Mountain Empire Community College. Normal inquiries about the institution, such as admission requirements, financial aid, educational programs, etc., should be addressed directly to the institution and not to the Commission's office. Degree programs are approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and are also approved for listing in the U.S. Office of Education directories for participation in various federally-sponsored programs of student aid and educational assistance. The College is authorized by the Veterans Administration to certify students to receive veterans' benefits and is approved by the Department of Health and Human Services for students who receive Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation benefits. The Respiratory Therapy program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care. The Nursing program is approved by the Virginia State Board of Nursing and accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850, Atlanta, GA 30326). The Practical Nursing and Nursing Assistant programs are approved by the Virginia State Board of Nursing. The Emergency Medical Services Technology program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. The Phlebotomy program is approved by the National Phlebotomy Association. The Computer Aided Drafting & Design Technology, Technical Studies/Welding, Computer Manufacturing Technology/Electromechanical Technology, and Computer Manufacturing Technology/Industrial Electronics are accredited by the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering (ATMAE).

Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) is an open entry institution. Its mission is to provide quality higher education and workforce training programs and services that are financially and geographically accessible and meet individual, business, and community needs. The following pathways exist: Allied Health, Arts & Music, Business, College Transfer, Construction, Education, Engineering, Environmental, Health Sciences, Manufacturing, Public Safety, and Technology.

MECC is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in employment and education opportunity. No person shall be discriminated against in the terms and conditions of employment, personnel practices, or access to and participation in, programs, services, and activities with regard to race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission as defined by law.

Harassment of an individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission has no place in a learning or work environment and is prohibited. Sexual violence has no place in a learning or work environment. Further, MECC shall work to eliminate violence in all its forms. Physical contact by designated system, college, and university staff members may be appropriate if necessary to avoid physical harm to persons or property.

Lack of English skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation. In order to eliminate barriers, we take appropriate measures to assess each student's ability to participate and benefit through placement testing and counseling. Based on the assessment and counseling, students are then provided with campus services or a referral to community services to be better prepared for successful participation.

Nondiscrimination Coordinators: Title IX Coordinator – Ron Vicars, Room 136, Godwin Hall, 276.523.7480; Title IX Coordinator (Students) – Lelia Bradshaw, Room 133, Holton Hall, 276.523.2400 ext. 288; Title IX Coordinator (Employees) – Pam Giles, Room 137, Godwin Hall, 276.523.2400 ext. 212; Disabilities Coordinator – Dale Lee, Room 131, Holton Hall, 276.523.2400 ext. 343.

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