

**Testimony of President Rose B. Bellanca, Ed.D., President
Washtenaw Community College
Joint Capital Outlay Committee – Michigan House of Representatives – 102nd Legislature -
Wednesday, April 19, 2023**

Good Afternoon. Thank you, Chairs Price and McDonald Rivet, Vice Chairs Steckloff, Alexander and Irwin, and all members of the Joint Capital Outlay Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. I also want to acknowledge and say hello to Representative Jimmie Wilson from our district.

I am pleased to present for your consideration an overview of Washtenaw Community College's Capital Outlay request and to answer any questions you may have about our plans for a **new Center for Success on our campus.**

This \$23 million-dollar project would transform WCC's existing Student Center into a new Center for Success. The remodeled facility would create an ecosystem where students, employers and the community would converge to spark economic growth and development in an easily accessible, inclusive and welcoming environment that includes:

- instructional and academic courses, programs and services

- employer engagement opportunities
- connections for students, unemployed and underemployed residents, job training and placement programs, apprenticeships, internships and additional earn-as-you learn options to fill in-demand jobs.
- It would expand access to an entrepreneurship center and small business development center for individuals to create and grow successful businesses
- The Center for Success will also address the mental health challenges that so many individuals experience today that can derail their progress from achieving their goals and reaching their personal finish line.
- Barriers happen at every turn for both students in achieving their goals, and for employers in recruiting and retaining the talent to help their businesses thrive.
- This new facility would be one-stop centralized resource hub to fulfill all these needs and would also be designed with a commitment to clean energy and environmental sustainability.

We do our very best today to meet the needs of our community which includes students and employers, with an array of services spread across a 285-acre campus. That's a long way to walk to access everything you need.

The Center for Success would locate comprehensive instruction and holistic support services all under one roof. More than 100,000 people access our campus each year and this new center is for all of them.

WCC's "Center for Success" would match the needs of employers with students and community members seeking high-demand careers to the benefit of all.

The purpose of this project is to create a powerful new Workforce Development ecosystem focused on ensuring that residents in the region receive the postsecondary education and training that is required to attain a career that will support a family and will help employers access workforce talent they need for economic growth.

Community colleges were formed 100 years ago to provide accessible education. A century later, the definition of accessibility has changed and expanded. Isn't it about serving the diverse needs of your community?

- At WCC, it's about connecting the single mom who wants a better life for her family with the education and training she needs to find the right job.
- It's about the 18-year-old high-school graduate who isn't sure what they want to do and wants an affordable college experience.
- It's about serving the disabled individual who wants to find work that's right for them.
- It's about the veteran, looking to use what they learned in the military to earn a credential to help them secure a job.
- It's the individual with a degree who just lost his job and wants to learn a new skill or trade.
- It's the employer who is looking to find talent to fill a skills gap.
- It's about the individual trying to fulfill a dream
- It's about a place of hope and possibility

Who is a student today? Each of us in this room. I often say that WCC is a highway to career success – students can merge onto this highway whenever they need us on their educational or career journey. They're career starters, shifters and advancers.

WCC has a diverse student body that reflects the diversity of our community. More than 36% of our students represent a minority group -- higher than the overall minority population in Washtenaw County.

More than a third of our students are the first in their families to attend college. 15% percent of our students are single parents, veterans and active military, have disabilities or are international students. While WCC serves traditional-age students, 42% of our students are adult learners age 25 and older.

About 60% of our students plan to pursue a bachelor's degree, and WCC has numerous transfer agreements with colleges statewide.

We have innovative partnerships for student support and seamless transfer to several Historically Black Colleges and Universities, part of our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Centralizing and improving access to key academic and student support services is the foundation for institution-wide transformative change to increase student persistence, retention, and degree or certificate completion to meet the ever-increasing demand of business and industry for a qualified workforce.

Right now, the state of Michigan has more than 118 thousand job openings. What's unique about this project is that it will house the services students need in a convenient one-stop location to help them succeed in filling those jobs.

From academic instruction and advising, workforce development and training, job placement and career services, to behavioral and wellness services, our Center for Success will be that essential support system for all students. It will also feature flexible academic learning labs for skill-specific training and supplemental instruction in English, math and academic skills.

A critically important aspect of the Center will be new dedicated space for professional counseling, behavioral health and wellness support for students. The new space is a comprehensive response to a widespread need for mental health support.

According to the CDC, last year, over 30% of those age 18 and older reported experiencing anxiety and depression. At WCC, our Care Team referrals for such issues increased over 180% from 2020 to 2022.

Providing accessible, expanded and integrated services, such as counseling, the student resource center, and Campus Recovery Program, which supports addiction recovery, will promote positive outcomes for student retention and success.

In Closing

There's so much more to share about this exciting project and the benefit it will have to our students' success and to building a highly-skilled and educated workforce to fuel economic growth in our state.

In the interest of time, I'd like to open it up to questions.

CAPITAL OUTLAY SUMMARY

Project Description

The renovation of Washtenaw Community College's current Student Center into a comprehensive **Center for Success** will allow the college to bring together academic and wrap-around support to ensure student success; provide workforce training and recruiting for employers; and offer job placement, professional development and career counseling services for those looking to change careers or upskill in their current positions.



Purpose

The purpose of this project is to support the State of Michigan's goal to increase the number of Michiganders with a postsecondary credential to 60 percent by 2030 and help make the state attractive to employers interested in relocating or expanding by increasing access to a highly skilled, highly educated workforce. The Student Center renovation and revitalization will positively impact these goals by consolidating critically needed accessible space for WCC's entrepreneurship and small business incubator hubs, student wellness services, academic lab space utilizing technology for skill-specific training, employment services, and centralized support for students, employers and the community.

Cost

WCC is proposing a 50-percent State match on funding of the renovation of all three floors of the 80,000-square-foot Student Center and the addition of 7,000 square feet of meeting space, which has a total estimated cost of \$23 million.

Key Outcomes

- The Center for Success will serve as a regional hub for current and prospective students, employers, and dislocated employees. It will support the continuous learning life cycle from any point of entry and will be the place they will return to throughout their career for retraining or career transitions.
- The Center for Success will enhance Michigan's job creation, talent enhancement and economic growth initiatives by improving the ability of the Workforce and Community Development Division to connect students and job seekers with employers by bringing them all into the same physical space. It will also house and greatly expand the ability for the WCC Entrepreneurship Center and the Small Business Development Center to work with clients (students and community members) to provide more free opportunities to explore entrepreneurial endeavors or small business creation.
- A new Student Wellness Center will respond holistically to the nationally recognized need for mental health and wellness services. WCC's behavioral intervention team referrals have more than doubled since the pandemic. Integrating existing services (Personal Counseling, Student Resource Center, Campus Recovery Program) with expanded components such as medical services to offer single point of service, increases the likelihood of positive outcomes and student retention and success.
- WCC will strive to design and construct the Center for Success to meet State requirements for Leadership in Energy and Environments design (LEED), which is in alignment with College sustainability goals.

