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Success Story: Community College Guarantee offers families a brass ring

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As college choice season looms and initial financial aid offers arrive, NMC has an important message for area families: the Michigan Community College Guarantee could cover up to \$11,000 for tuition and fees — but they might not see it on those initial offer letters.

NMC Financial Aid Director **Linda Berlin** said the CCG, which offers free in-district tuition and fees for high school graduates, can't be awarded until students register for classes. At NMC, that won't start until new student orientation in April. Some won't register until May or June.

Meanwhile, the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, the four-year counterpart to the CCG, will appear on financial aid offers arriving now. But the CCG covers more of the cost. Berlin said 94% of the 552 2024-25 recipients at NMC had their costs covered completely with combined grants and scholarships, receiving \$1.7 million in CCG aid.

Garnet Mullet, a 2024 St. Francis High School graduate, pictured right, and **Ty Atwood**, a 2024 Traverse City West High School graduate, are two of them.

"There's so much I've gotten from the Michigan Community College Guarantee. Not only am I given an opportunity to get started on a degree for free, but also, through NMC specifically, I can transfer out and pursue my goal of becoming a pharmacist," Atwood said.

He hopes to earn his associate degree by 2026 and then transfer to Ferris State University's pharmacy school.



Garnet Mullet (right) is another. Last fall, the 2024 St. Francis High School graduate originally committed to an out-of-state school to play volleyball. The tuition bill was an unpleasant surprise.

"It ended up being a lot higher than we originally thought," said Mullet. "It was definitely a big hit to us."

Then, she was injured. She returned to Traverse City for rehab and decided she didn't want to go back to the New York university, where she had direct entry into a physician assistant

master's degree program. Instead, she met with an NMC advisor and found out about the CCG.

"That was pretty amazing, to come back and not have to worry about the cost of school," said Mullet, who discovered she liked NMC better. She especially enjoys studying in the lower level of the Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center.

"The community is a thousand times better," she said. "I came here and I felt like I belonged. The community really just embraced me."

In order to play volleyball again, Mullet will transfer to Grand Rapids Community College in the fall. But she could be back again. Two weeks ago she attended the Physician Assistant preview day held by Grand Valley State University at the University Center.

"I was really impressed with that," said Mullet, who works at Kalkaska Memorial Health Center. She also plans to attend [tomorrow's Career Fair](#).

"The community here is really strong, with all the opportunities outside academics," she said.

Both Atwood and Mullet are in-district students, living in Grand Traverse County. For out-of-district students, Pell grants, other state aid and NMC scholarships typically cover the higher tuition rate, Berlin said.

The CCG was introduced in July 2024, when many students had already made college plans. This year, Berlin expects "much greater participation." She's thrilled to be able to make the awards, pointing out that increased funding correlates with student success.

"Overall, NMC student completion rates are increasing each year, while financial aid has increased each of the past couple of years. In addition, NMC has received grants and substantially increased student success support," she said.

[Learn more about the Community College Guarantee here.](#)

Learn about [Michigan Reconnect](#), which offers free tuition and fees to in-district students 25 and up who don't already have a degree.