

Midwestern Higher Education Compact

Summary of Planning Documents

MHEC Strategic Plan (2017–2021)

- **Articulated the purpose of MHEC:** To provide greater higher education opportunities and services in the Midwestern region, with the aim of furthering regional access to, research in and choice of higher education for the citizens residing in the several states which are parties to this Compact.
- **Articulated four themes to focus its efforts:**
 1. Shifting demographics – changing composition of the student body
 2. Evolving modes of packaging and delivering education
 3. Declining share of public investment in higher education
 4. Desire for collaboration beyond the institution

Environmental Scan (2018–2019)

- **Conducted to** help Susan Heegaard transition into her leadership role and to understand the current and future landscape of higher education and how/where MHEC fits into that landscape; to identify value of MHEC's existing programs and accomplishments; to identify gaps in programs; to identify states' priorities; to consider MHEC's policy approach.
- **Projects identified have merit:**
 - Purchasing (contracts savings) – political power in demonstrating cost savings
 - MCMC (good policy/great politics) and OER (unique, innovative, efficiency, cost savings)
- **Recommendations**
 - Develop stronger external communication strategy (including social media)
 - Organize convenings with wider array of stakeholders
 - Utilize limited resources more effectively (staffing and financial)
 - Identify clear & actionable strategic priorities tied to strategic plan and stakeholder needs
 - Partner with appropriate organizations/associations
 - Secure funding for ongoing/new initiatives

HCM Strategists Review of Strategic Plan (2019–2020)

- **Mission and vision need to be more clearly articulated.**
- **Focus priorities on:**
 - Increase access and improve outcomes for all of the region's students.
 - Better align workforce and higher education.
 - Lower costs for students, institutions and states, including leveraging cost-savings contracts, while advancing quality.
 - Articulate the value and return on investment of higher education.

Strategic Framework, developed from HCM Review (2020-2021)

- **Revise vision, mission, target audiences, and priorities to improve implementation.**
 - *Vision:* MHEC members collaborate to address the region's most pressing challenges in higher education and transform educational opportunities so that people and communities thrive.
 - *Mission:* MHEC brings together midwestern states to develop and support best practices, collaborative efforts, and cost-sharing opportunities. Through these efforts it works to ensure strong, equitable postsecondary educational opportunities and outcomes for all.

- *Four priority themes identified in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan:* 1) shifting demographics; 2) evolving modes of packaging and delivering education; 3) declining share of public investment in higher education; and 4) desire for collaboration beyond the institution.
- *Four strategic priorities identified in the 2020-2021 Strategic Framework:*

Strategic Priority	Progress
Increase access, promote affordability, and improve outcomes for all of the region's learners, including the historically underserved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Education Resources (OER) – deepened existing efforts, expanded new work supported by Hewlett Foundation Grant • Concurrent Enrollment – provided resources and support for teacher training through new database • MCMC – continued to offer support to states and institutions serving veterans education needs
Foster a culture of continuous learning through increasingly aligned educational and workforce systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credential Engine initiative – developing systemic approach to better credential access and comparisons across all twelve midwestern states supported by Ascendium Philanthropy grant • Produced research reports and offered remote webinars and presentations sharing best practices
Sustain and advance affordable, high-quality educational opportunities through cost-savings initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology hardware, software, and service contracts – expanded use, support and access as remote learning increased during the pandemic • Property insurance – developed a revised Captive program, continued to provide programs with strong customer support • Student Health insurance – expanded student health insurance offerings and based on customer feedback and trends, developing complementary mental health services
Understand and communicate the value of and return on investment in higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted multiple remote learning opportunities on topics ranging from budget and finance to credentialing • Produced research and reports tied to current demographic trends and pressing needs • Enhanced interactive data dashboard allowing comparisons on a wide range of data

Communications Review Recommendations (2021)

- MHEC's primary audience is its commissioners, with CIOs, risk managers, and CFOs also essential to MHEC's mission.
- There is a disconnect between how MHEC describes its purpose and value and how its commissioners perceive the organization. Commissioners value the cost savings MHEC delivers and believe those cost savings are the primary benefit to member states.
- Commissioners generally believe that research should only be done if it advances knowledge on topics prioritized by members.
- MHEC commissioners would like to engage with the organization in more interactive ways, leveraging the convening power of MHEC to learn from peers, advance ideas and solve problems collaboratively and quickly.
- MHEC commissioners would prefer to receive information and opportunities curated for their role.
- There is a need for better systems to ensure quality contact data, essential to reaching MHEC's key audiences.