

Mountain Empire Community College's Rural Educator Academy Team Presents:

# K.I.T. Program

"Keeping In Touch" Mentorship Initiative



Mountain Empire  
Community College



## OUR JOURNEY OUR "WHY", GOALS, CHALLENGES, WINS & PROGRESS

### MENTORSHIP MATTERS

At Mountain Empire Community College, student mentorship is vital in ensuring academic success and personal growth. Mentors provide guidance, support, and encouragement to their mentees, helping them navigate the challenges of college life and achieve their goals. This one-on-one mentorship also helps students build essential relationships with faculty and staff and creates a sense of community on campus. Through mentorship, students are equipt to develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their chosen fields and become leaders in their communities. Overall, student mentorship at Mountain Empire Community College is an essential part of the college experience



### Project Goals



Increase Enrollment  
& Retention



Cultivate a sense  
of belonging



Increase  
employee  
engagement

One of the most significant challenges new students face is answering the question, *"Do I belong?"*

DO I BELONG AT  
MECC?

-NEW STUDENT

When students internally answer that question with a "no," they often struggle academically and leave without completing any credentials. When that answer is "yes," students typically do well academically and continue until graduation. Therefore, MECC has recommitted to ensuring that all students feel they belong, starting with relationships with the campus community. This is the emphasis of the Keeping In Touch (KIT) Initiative. Our goal is that this program will effectively boost the success of all students, including rural and underserved populations, by fostering intentional communications to build relationships within the campus community.



Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org>

## REA Team Members

### Facilitator

**William Brownsberger**  
VP of Academic Affairs and  
Workforce Solutions

### Faculty

**Ken Tucker**  
Professor

**Kyle Scanlan**  
Assistant Professor

### Staff

**Lelia Bradshaw**  
Dean of Student Services

**Beth Kelly**  
Coordinator of Advising

### Leaders

**Kristen Westover**  
President

**Kristy Hall**  
Dean of Financial Aid &  
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# K.I.T. Program

## "Keeping In Touch" Mentorship Initiative

**"Midterms and finals are not the (ideal) time to start conversations about tutoring and basic needs. Systems of Support should be offered prior to and/or early in the term to ensure we are setting our students up for success."**

COLLEGE STAFF MEMBER

### Capstone Project Process

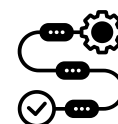
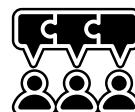
1. Enlist and train faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. Offer mentorship opportunities to students.
3. Establish regular schedule of interactions with students.
4. Collect survey, enrollment, and retention data.
5. Assess and improve the program.

### Project Progress & Milestones

- Surveys as an indirect but highly valuable measure of assessment.
- Enrollment and retention data to gauge program efficacy.
- Program growth—more employees and students opting in.
- Implementation and refinement of interaction schedule.

### REA Core Competencies Applied

- Collaborate with staff and faculty to outreach to marginalized groups in the local community.
- Apply the concept of self-efficacy and the value of goals/goal-setting in their personal and professional ability to help increase rural student success in and out of the classroom.
- Structure a process that validates the rural Appalachian student experience, increasing the awareness and utilization of student support services in a timely fashion to increase rural Appalachian student success.



### Challenges along the way

COVID, general outmigration, and lower birth rates have restricted MECC's enrollment pipeline. The College cannot afford a cavalier "win a few, lose a few" approach to its student numbers. MECC must create support for prospective and current students that foster perseverance and success.

### Wins along the way

- "Esprit de corps" among students participating in the program.
- Increasing MECC employee engagement.
- Cultivation of a culture of care on campus.

### Lessons Learned

Having a mentor and building solid relationships with others have been crucial in students' learning journeys. Through guidance and support, students can navigate challenges and grow personally and professionally. It's amazing what you can accomplish when someone in your corner is cheering you on and providing valuable insights.

**Let's "remove failure as an optional student outcome."**

COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBER