

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Education Buzz, the Harvard District 50 monthly podcast, and we have a very nice treat for you this month, that we are here with MCC's president, Dr. Clint Gabbard, who has been an incredible friend to Harvard in many ways. We thought the opportunity to speak with him would shed light to members of our community and perhaps others out there that are trying to form partnerships with their local community college about how can these things work? Because we feel blessed to have this partnership. So, Dr. Gabbard, thanks for joining us today.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

It's my pleasure. Good to be here.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Your first podcast, is this? Have you been on a few of them?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

It is. I'm an avid listener, but first-time participant.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

All right. I'm an avid listener, too, and I think I had the idea this summer that what if we would get some of the voices in our area talking about things that we think matter? This came to me early on, that it would be a good opportunity, and when some of the things ... We've had some good news between Harvard and MCC recently, and so I thought, "Boy, now is the right time to talk about it."

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So maybe that's a good place to start. We were both at the Harvard Chamber of Commerce banquet, annual banquet, and MCC was named the nonprofit of the year for Harvard. I thought that was an incredibly thoughtful choice. I'm on the Chamber, and I was not a part of that deliberation, but I thought it was a very thoughtful choice on their part, because Harvard has reached this nice connection with MCC, and it's really worked out well. So talk about that award. I mean, that's probably not why you did it, of course, but it just kind of materialized, and when I really began to think about it, MCC has had a great influence on Harvard.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

We were incredibly honored, Corey. When you go out and do good work, or at least what you believe is good work, and when you form collaborations, you never do it on the basis of "That will be noticed." You do it on the basis of "There's a need here."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

I would say when it came to that award, part of the real thrill was that we have felt like Harvard has been leaning into us and we've been leaning into them, and to have somebody recognize that and say, "This is a really good relationship." It touched us. We as a community college have lots of towns and communities that we're responding to, but Harvard has been a really rich relationship that predates before I got here, but has some exciting new things going on in it.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Yeah. Well, it was an interesting thing, and maybe one of the things that our listeners would get out of this podcast is to maybe understand some of those things, because I don't think everyone appreciates or really, truly knows all the things that do have those relationships.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

MCC has had classes in Harvard for a number of time, just night classes and various things. There's been that connection for a long time, and that's one thing that maybe our listeners need to know about, is you don't just have to come to this campus. We're here in your office and on your beautiful campus, but you don't just have to come here to be at MCC, to connect with MCC. Isn't that right?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Absolutely. Part of the whole community college system is based on the notion that folks sometimes are pretty place-bound when it comes to pursuing higher ed. They have day jobs. They have families. They have commitments, and if they had to travel out of the county, it was going to be very difficult.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

But even within the county, there are folks who rush from thing to thing, two working parents. They get done, they throw some dinner on the table, and then they have children's activities or just even second jobs. So the idea of bringing education closer and closer to where folks live is consistent with the community college model. But sometimes it's difficult. You have a certain economic model where you have to have so many people in order to be able to run a class. So we have had classes ongoing for years in the community in Harvard.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

One of the or a couple of the really exciting things that have gotten me particularly looking forward to the future with our relationship with Harvard is understanding that, at times, it is the classes that we need to run. At other times, it is the preparation to become a college student that's so critical.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So when we started looking at some federal monies that are out there to particularly focus in on populations and communities, we looked at Harvard and said, "There are a lot of really, really bright students in our high school in Harvard who don't have any sort of model for how to do college. If we're going to open that door, create a lighted pathway for them, it's going to take some energy and focus." So we pursued some federal monies through the TRIO Program, specifically to focus on those really bright and energetic, incredible young people who just need some more attention to get ready to be college-ready.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So that program, which is called Upward Bound, is really, to me, just such an exciting opportunity, as I'm sure you think so, too.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Yes. Right. Well, just the enrichment of that, and I just ran into the Upward Bound director, Rene, in the hallway. He told me about students that had been at a Hispanic leadership conference all weekend. You think about students giving up a weekend voluntarily when they would probably, if on their own, be

doing lots of [inaudible 00:06:08], but they went to a leadership conference from Friday to Sunday, and that they just had incredible feedback about the experience.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So that, for the students, truly can be a life-changing ... I like your terminology, the lighted pathway. We know that there are plenty of ways to get there, but sometimes that's a little obscure to someone that hasn't seen it or hasn't had the opportunity. So this connection really makes it a little bit more obvious for our students. As you said, it's not an ability thing. It's just "How do I get there? What's the pathway?" Those are the real obstacles, and this really has been helpful.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yeah. I try to look at how is it that I knew I was going to college from a young age? Actually, both of my parents were not college attenders, so I am officially a first generation college student. Yet, from the time I can remember being in school, sitting in a classroom, I somehow knew I was going to college. They had somehow transmitted that to me, not through words, but just through an expectation.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Had I not had that, it might've been a difficult thing for me to imagine myself as a college student. So when you have students whose parents have never had that as a part of their experience or their parents' experience, I've heard several students say, "Well, my parents want me to go to college. They just have no clue as to how that happens."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

It's not just a financial barrier. It's an expectation that what you do in your freshman year is going to impact your application to college. So those early decisions, and that's where Upward Bound is so exciting, because they're getting into the classroom, but outside the classroom with these students and saying, "College is a dream that starts now. It doesn't start the second half of your senior year."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So going to a conference like that, and, actually, those students had that conference paid for only through attending a leadership series on our campus for ... It seems like it was ten weeks, where they were giving up time on Fridays to do a long, pretty complex leadership seminar. Based on their completion of that, then they got funding to go to Chicago.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Yeah. So that's, I guess, the two-way commitment that kind of comes, is the commitment MCC has made, but the students then have to kind of meet you halfway a little bit. That's where I find them rising to meet the expectations. That's one of my core beliefs, that people generally rise to expectations. So not knowing that there's anything other than that, students are like, "Oh, so I show up on Friday and do this thing? Sure." They just fall into line, saying, "This is the way it ought to go."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Absolutely.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So those aren't opportunities that would be present just without that partnership, and that's, I think, what's unique and some of the things that the Chamber of Commerce recognized, that this is really a unique partnership.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Well, and part of it is our own sort of looking in the mirror and saying we can't expect students to come here and be college-ready without giving them a sense of how you college. I've started using college as a verb, because it's a series of things that you have to learn how to do. To think that it's straightforward or obvious was really, I think, haughty on our part.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we started an MCC 101 class that is simply about learning how to college and understanding our sometimes clunky and complex systems. So recently, a month or two ago, I came over on a Saturday here, and the Harvard MCC 101 class was on campus. So this is, again, a group of students or prospective students who we're taking through a "Here are the basics of how you're going to do MCC, should you choose to come here."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So came over, it was a Saturday, and they were getting a big tour of our campus. I met with them over in our Student Success Center, just because I wanted to thank them for coming over. It was astonishing, when I started talking to these folks and saying, "So what are you thinking about doing when you come to a MCC?" Electrical engineer, pre-medicine, right? "I want to be an educator. I want to be an early child educator."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Every one of these women and men, young women and men, had dreams already. They were formulated, in part because they were sitting in this classroom, had been for weeks, and being taught, "Develop a dream. You may change that in the middle, but start thinking right now about what you want to do." To me, that's so exciting to hear.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Well, and I think that is even generational change that is occurring, and that's what is so exciting about this, the idea ... and it was just kind of a brainstorm between Chris Gray and I one time was like, "What if we did MCC 101 in Harvard and just kind of brought it out?"

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

In that first group, we had people in their forties and people right out of high school. We had this just wild collection, and they all found their niche through the campus visits or understanding. There's just so much to understand, the financial aspects of it. "How am I going to afford this? What am I interested in?" For some of our students, it was as simple as, "How do I get there?"

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So they were just so flexible, and I guess that's one of the things I have just immense respect for, the problem-solving that generates from your leadership team here saying, "We're going to solve these problems. These aren't the problems that are going to keep you out of college. We'll get you there. But

you've got to talk to us, and we have to create a venue where we can understand what it is that your needs are."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

That's interesting, Corey. We came to believe that we had a front door problem, in that, literally, there were folks who would walk in our front door and just get sort of overwhelmed with, "Which office do I walk into? What am I going to do first there?", and would turn around and walk back out the door. You talk about a painful loss. Somebody who didn't even talk to somebody, but felt so overwhelmed.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we invested in a little welcome center out at our front door specifically so that a person doesn't walk 50 feet before somebody says, "Hello. Can I help you?" Those investments aren't cheap, because you have to fund somebody to sit out there. But they are essential to keep from having that kind of painful leakage occur, where somebody doesn't even get to start their dream because we look intimidating.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

I think one of the exciting things about Harvard is that I haven't looked at the demographics from an actual number standpoint, but I believe that there are a bunch of Latinx students who are here who might not otherwise be. I was in a Meet the President luncheon over in our success center last week, and it was far and away the most diverse group of students that I've ever seen in one place. I fully believe that that is in part connected to some of our diverse students believing that this is a home where they can feel comfortable.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

That's one of the things that is really a value of our community, that we really appreciate that diversity, and we keep reminding people that that is the strength. We just did even some testing on some of our eighth graders and discovered that a good number of them were already showing Spanish proficiency level, where they could earn that seal of biliteracy as eighth graders on the Spanish side.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Wow.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Some of those were native English speakers.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Wow.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So we feel like we're developing some students that are ready to choose MCC or other things. What's great about, I think, the Upward Bound grant is it fits so well with our AVID program. We are definitely an avid district, saying, "Okay, we are going to prepare you. We're not quite sure if you know yet what you're going to be, but we're going to give you experiences that will be postsecondary-ready, whether it's some type of trade and vocational thing that MCC is a great partner for. Maybe it's a two-year before going to a four-year, military, whatever. But there's opportunities here for you, and we're going to

prepare you so that you have those choices. You're not forced, 'This is my only option, because I didn't get a good preparation through that.'

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Right.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

That's what Upward Bound and AVID and those things that we're trying to do now allow our kids to see this. There is certainly an obvious presence of MCC now in the hallways. You see MCC t-shirts. You see these things, and that's what is encouraging, is that it's not this foreign and scary place anymore.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Well, and Corey, please take credit for being an open and receptive partner, because I believe that one of the trends that's going to happen, definitely in the next decade, is a blurring of the lines between K-12 and higher ed. You're already seeing that with the number of dual credit offerings in the high school, and the idea that these were distinct entities, that you completed one and then you chose another and you started another was just really not effective in helping students often pursue and complete a college dream.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

But in order for that to happen, your schools have to have an open door and an open mind and be collaborative in spirit to say, "We want to figure out how college credits can get offered in our school, and if our teachers need some certifications or if they need to accomplish certain things to be able to do that, we're going to support them in doing that."

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Right. I think everyone in the county has been really encouraged by kind of the ... Woodstock had the idea of kind of starting that, and they've kind of begun those discussions. How do students do that simultaneously, earn their associate's and their high school?", which, for some of us that are of the traditional approach that you don't blur those lines, "What are you talking ... You've got to wait until you're a graduate to start that," that's really an encouraging idea, because we know that the success our students are having in these dual credit classes, they're ready. They can do that. It's only through the willingness on both sides to say, "Let's meet the kids' needs first, not worry about adult things," because I think the adults sometimes are where the problem lies.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Absolutely. We have our own work to do to get our faculty completely comfortable with this.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Of course.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

It reminds me of when online learning was introduced, and faculty said, "How in the world can a student learn online?" Frankly, I had the same sentiment, because some of my most motivational, inspirational moments were absolutely about sitting in a classroom. I can remember what the room smelled like. I

can remember what it felt like when somebody inspired me and shared something with me that made me want to learn forever.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So I can become very sentimental very quickly about the classroom. Yet, it came, and we begrudgingly began to do it. What we learned is that students learn through online learning and that the connection that you make to your instructor can be very real in this new sort of online learning world that we live in. So we've made that adjustment.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Now, beginning to take college into the high school is, at times, pressing us as well, because it's easy to think, "Well, that mind isn't sort of stretchable enough to sort of take on all this content. These are complex thoughts for a 15- or 16-year-old to be taking on." That's just a hump for us to get over. We've got to get over ourselves and realize that learning is going to increasingly happen across the spectrum of age and in different environments, and if we're flexible, some really cool outcomes are going to happen.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Well, it allows for so much personalization, too, that they can follow things that challenge them, intellectually or topically. They can find that challenge, that personalization that is meaningful, because some of our students that we find disinterested, perhaps, at a certain point, it's just because we haven't been able to capture them intellectually on something that they felt engaged in, something enjoyable.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

That's what the partnership with MCC allows us to do, is say, "Well, what if we could tell you that you have this opportunity through" ... and they're like, "Well, wait. I don't have to graduate in two years and then" ... So helping them see that has been really something good.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

I want to change topics, though, because, as we sit here on campus, you can't help but notice, as you've been on campus over the last two or three years, just ... I don't know if the beautification is the right word, of the campus. As you drive by Highway 14, the front sign, on the backside of the campus, the new science center, this campus has undergone a transformation in the last four or five years that is really noticeable and visible to our community. Maybe for those that haven't noticed that, talk about your facility here, because it's really inspiring to those of us that are looking at facilities ourselves right now.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

No, that's great, and I appreciate you noticing, Corey. When I came here, I would say it's safe to say that our board was embroiled in an ambitious plan to completely change our campus. Unfortunately, that plan had really mushroomed to a just under \$50 million project, when it had swollen to the place where folks were just stuck, because we're not a community who has been able to avoid the pain of our taxes. For folks to try to imagine taking on a nearly \$50 million project was just very, very hard.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So what we did when we were able to break that log jam was to start picking a few small logs and pulling them out and saying, "What do we really need, more than anything else? What's important?" What emerged was that the sciences were being trained and that lab work was being done in really not just antiquated, but even unsafe conditions.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we pulled that out and said, "What if we were to focus just on a science center, and what if we even weren't going to build offices for people in that science center? I mean, make it completely about learning and labs, and our science faculty would still walk from their current offices over." When we were able to do that, suddenly our board got their head around that, and we were able to go out and seek donor funding so that we wouldn't have to bring a levy to our community to try to support.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So, really, that log being pulled out has led to what you see today and that we built the science center. It is a state-of-the-art, incredible ... It's a beautiful center.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

It's gorgeous. Yeah.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

But the best kind of learning conditions for our sciences, and, really, it's not just for folks majoring in science. Just about everybody's going to take some kind of science class while they're here. So they get to appreciate that and enjoy that as well.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

But as soon as we pulled that out, then suddenly we had some old decrepit classrooms, science center labs that were still great spaces. They just couldn't really be used for that purpose. So then we went and found some donor funding to reimagine our space, in terms of what do students need most, what does the campus need most, and found a donor who really saw that vision and allowed us to add a bunch of new sitting spaces, just hangout spaces for students, because when they come on campus, they're coming here to do their work, and then they leave. But they have gaps in between there, and we really didn't have great places for them to hang out.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we were able to really rehabilitate those spaces to make them more student-friendly. We were able to add some exciting interactive classrooms. We added a little conference center for when we bring people on campus. So all of those vacated science labs and classrooms have really become remarkable space, and you almost hear people talk about that more than our science center. They love the science center, but when they walk in, they say, "This place has a different feeling. It feels more conducive to students being here."

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So because we're discussing some similar things in Harvard right now, after the science center was pretty much understood to be done and funding was secured and people could start to see that vision, were there some more donors that appeared that said, "I want to be a part of that. Maybe I didn't

believe it was going to happen. Then you got some energy and enthusiasm." We have this hashtag that I've been preaching, #harvardrising, that I just keep pounding, because we are seeing some of that same enthusiasm, and just these little bits of enthusiasm and momentum grow.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

I wonder if you kind of capitalized on some of that that came, really, through that broken log jam that allowed the science center to be created, that allowed the rest of the campus to follow along, because it's like painting one room in your house, right? You're like, "Well." You start looking around. "Wow. Maybe I've got to do that place, too." Right?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

That's a great analogy. So yes, there was followup money that came. The board approved simply a science center and not touching all of those vacated spaces. We were just going to leave them empty. But once they saw the excitement of the science center, there were beginnings of folks saying, "Well, we can't just leave these empty. This is a silly sort of waste of our space." It made that next phase much more conceivable.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Then I would say that what's happened after that and the construction that is currently ongoing and what you're about to see here in the next month is a complete redress of our front entrance, in terms of all the essential things that students need to be able to get done to be a student, so advising, registration, financial aid. We're getting ready to gut the front entrance to all of those spaces and make them more user-friendly.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Again, the idea that when you walk in, you should know exactly where to go. If you have a disability and you need services to get accommodations to be more successful, you need to know exactly where to go to register, and those lines need to be better at accommodating you. We never again want to see a line halfway down the hallway, because our space was just bad space for them. So that change, again, was way easier to get support from, because folks were seeing, "Okay, the nature of this place is changing physically," and it creates a better environment to just want to come in.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Right. One thing that I think might be fascinating to people listening is just who is an MCC student anymore? I think there is a stereotype in our mind. This is someone just right out of high school and someone that just jumped right into that and felt like MCC, locally, was the right way for them, for whatever reason. But as I walked in today, I'm noticing a lot of variety of ages and interests and just the hallways lined with opportunity. It's kind of hard to define who a student is here anymore, isn't it?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yeah, it is, and, in fact, when we sit around in cabinet meetings and talk about our students, and I could put that in air quotes, we have to remind ourselves frequently, "Well, who are those folks?" Because they're not 18, 19, and 20. We include those folks, but our Harvard kids who are taking classes at the high school and getting college credit, they're our kids. They're our students. The kids in college that will come here this summer, they're our students, as well as the 30- and 40-year-old people who have been

forced into second careers or who have just said, "I want something more" and are coming to the college.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

I was at a creative leadership management class in the evenings. I'm trying to get out to more classes and just sit in and more or less a soak in our core delivery system, what we do, and was immediately struck by just the heterogeneity of that classroom. There were women who clearly were at the end of raising their families and who were saying, "I want more." There were 18-year-olds who clearly ... This one guy, he had to be playing basketball. I mean, his size just dictated he must've been a basketball player, and every everything in between.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So you look at that classroom and say, "What are we doing? We're offering the same thing, but to people in various stages of life who have very different needs," and that's what makes this place exciting.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

If you're kind of an educational junkie or a true believer like both of us are, it kind of warms your heart to know that you can create something that is that versatile. That's what we try to say about our school district right now, that we're trying to create a space where you decide what you like and where your gifts lie. Then we have the variety to kind of honor that and take you as far as we can until it's time to kick you out, because you've graduated, and find those skills and those interests and those passions and then allow a place like MCC to really take them to where it's a professionally marketable degree or experience or certificate.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yeah. Well, and I think, Corey, you've hit your ... You started this podcast by asking about the award, and the award's a really nice thing, but I think you hit the nail on the head when you said this is one education junkie to another. You believe that education changes lives forever. It is an economic change, and it is a philosophical change. Can be a spiritual change. I mean, education changes the vectors of people's lives and their families' lives forever. One entity, Harvard Schools and the Harvard community, has that passion, and they meet up with another college who has a similar passion. You can't help but have creative and exciting things happen.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Sure. So in looking towards the future, you've mentioned some of the redesign in the front entrance. Are there other MCC initiatives that will be on the horizon that we can look forward to?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yes. We just had a new degree approved last month and two certificates, both in what we're calling entrepreneurial agriculture. When you think about the future of agriculture, it is likely to get smaller, from a scale of size, than what you think about, in terms of the corporate farm. But there is a tremendous opportunity, because we sit on some really good land, and we sit as a collar county to the city of Chicago. If you've been there recently, they still have restaurants there, and they open one every hour.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

The opportunity to grow and find a way to economically scale things to provide for your family and create a business model is just something that is very exciting for our county. We have land. We have a huge mouth to feed in Chicago, as well as locally. We have folks who are going to want to eat locally and know that how their vegetables or their proteins are being grown are sustainable, that are eco-friendly.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So this degree combines something. It is really the only degree that we know of, definitely in the state and maybe in the country, for a community college to be combining business skills with growing skills right off the bat. So this is a two-year degree, where you learn marketing basic business modeling, right alongside of learning how to grow a plant and how to deal with plant diseases.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Well, and the culinary program has been one of the pride programs of the college for many years. I've had some good meals down there, and then supplying fresh produce to ... I believe it's called the Tartan Cafe, right?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yeah, Tartan Bistro.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Bistro, yes.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

It's, I think, already filled up. I think they run a restaurant all spring and let our students sort of do the entire restaurant. Yeah, they do a great thing. But yeah, the opportunity to connect that to culinary is great.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Honestly, Corey, we imagine ... So these students are going to learn about wholesale. So they're going to learn if you wanted to take a quarter of an acre of carrots, because you tend to not want to grow 15 things. You want to grow a few things well. How would you become the carrot provider to Harvard school district?

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Sure.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we hope to develop some great little models where we take on the opportunity to work with a local entity and provide them, at wholesale, the vegetables so that students can learn how to do that.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

It's maybe a good just example of how the college is kind of weaving itself into the needs of our county, because it is a county thing, and you can imagine all those connections that are to be made. That's just

fun. I mean, there also is this idea of a business incubator county program that'll be here. So it is fun how MCC has kind of woven its way into the fabric of what our county expects.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

I was wondering, too. You mentioned Illinois, maybe the only program that agriscience kind of programming you mentioned, but talk about the Illinois system, because it would seem to me that various community colleges like MCC, they all have different flavors, don't they? There are just so many different things. What makes MCC stand out from other colleges, community colleges in our state? Because how many are there, even?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

36.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Yeah, it's serving hundreds of thousands of people, not just even, say, students, because they're of all ages. But what makes MCC stand out? What makes MCC so special? Because there does feel to be a lot of enthusiasm here right now.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Yeah. When I get asked that question, Corey, sometimes my first impulse is to almost flip that question around, because I'm a fairly late comer to the community college system. My first career was in colleges and universities, both at Notre Dame and Purdue. So I'm still at this romantic infatuation stage with community colleges, because this model of serving your local community with what they need is ... It's just amazing, and the 1500, 1800 community colleges across the country do this so well. The way they do it is to adapt and form themselves to the community's needs.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So we have some things that we do different here. This program is going to be unlike any other, but it's simply that we sort of look out to our community and say, "What do they need? What do we have here?" We have farmers. We have farm kids. We have kids who want to do something, and they wonder what's the natural resource here that they're going to use?

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Manufacturing will be another area where we are doing some really cool things, especially with work-based learning, where we're getting students into the work setting more quickly so that they see what they're doing and then come back and learn. The learning is a little bit less, I don't know, amorphous or just disconnected from the work experience.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

But, in that sense, I think a bunch of our sister colleges are doing the exact same thing. So if corporate agriculture, if big ag is a big deal south in Illinois, then there are great programs that are featuring how to do big rig driving and how to work on large machinery.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

So I think what we're just doing is saying we're going to do what the community gives us. If we see a community like Harvard that has rich, rich potential of students who will go [inaudible 00:35:35] unless we support what you're already doing, that's where we jump in. I think we're doing some things really well, but I think we're just doing what we're supposed to do as a community college.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

That was a really good answer to that, because it is a unique position. Just the more I learn about all the things going on, the more impressed you have to be, just about the partnerships and that degree of service. One of the things in leadership circles, we talk about servant leadership, and it feels like MCC does feel like, "Hey, we're trying to serve the needs of this community." It's pretty exciting to watch the fruits of the labor.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

One example, I just got the numbers that, over two years, we have saved students \$5 million in books. There have been 50,000 incidents of students purchasing books, one or more books, and, in each case, saving about \$100 a book, which rolls up to nearly \$5 million, by taking books online, by sort of getting away from this really, I think, just a bad model of buying this big textbook at 150 bucks, 200 bucks a pop that you use for one semester and then you try to sell it, and sometimes you can sell it for a fraction of the cost.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

I have a college sophomore who's experiencing that pain right now.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

There you go. So we are taking these books, and we're developing free or almost free online resources that mirror the content of the books, and not just mirror, but most of our instructors are saying, "I'm getting better teaching materials out of online books that cost a student nothing."

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

That has dipped into our profits from our bookstore significantly, and, early on, I said to our chief finance officer, "Prepare to start losing money on our bookstore, because we are going to take ourselves out of the book business." We have done an amazing job of nearly pulling that off. We're not there yet, but, for instance, our general psych course just took their books completely online. \$200,000 a year, students are going to save just from that one course.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Just the one course? Incredible. Well, I think, if I could maybe distill that down a little, what you've prioritized is the learning, not the schooling. I think that's what I try to remind our folks here, is that what we in essence should be about is how to create learning opportunities, not the school and the traditional structures that are nostalgic and important to us all in some way, but when we can talk about "Is it good for learning?", that's really what makes ...

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

That's great.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

This has been a great opportunity. I think we'll wrap it up.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

I've enjoyed it.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

I hope you'll share this with your daughter. She'll be proud of you for being a podcast star now, and we can maybe hook up and do this again sometime.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

She enjoys Pop Culture Hour, I think, more than she'll ever enjoy this.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Well, I don't know if we're quite pop culture, but for the education junkies ...

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

We're working on it.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

... and that's why we call this Education Buzz, buzz in reference to our Harvard Hornets. But, truly, we hope this is something that any educator could listen to and find maybe some nuggets within our conversation.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Corey, thanks for inviting me. Again, let me just publicly say thanks for what you do, in terms of helping us collaborate better. It means a lot to us.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Right. Well, I'm proud to be now on the MCC Foundation Board.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Oh, great. That's right.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

That's something that I'm a proud believer in the work done here.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

We need money.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Yes. I'm working with my friend Carlos on our summer golf event.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

That's great.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

So I'll be talking to maybe some of you listening now about joining me for the golf [inaudible 00:39:12]. So that's great. Well, thanks for your time, Dr. Gabbard. It's a pleasure to be here, and I value the partnership greatly.

Dr. Clint Gabbard:

Me, too.

Dr. Corey Tafoya:

Thanks, everyone, for listening to Education Buzz.