

a **visionary** leader

Bob Ferrentino reflects on 10 years serving as Montcalm Community College's president

After 10 years at Montcalm Community College, countless hours connecting with students and members of the community, visits with legislators, endless hours volunteering with local organizations and thousands of handshakes with new graduates, Bob Ferrentino is wrapping up a 35-year career in higher education when he retires from his post as MCC's fifth president on Dec. 31.

Known as a visionary leader who during the course of his career has sought opportunities to positively engage others through active listening and discussion, Ferrentino looks ahead to the future and reflects on his time at MCC.

Looking back on your time here, how would you sum it up?

It has been the best 10 years of my career.

I had a chance to actually implement a vision and build a joint vision together. I have had chances to make choices that I have felt over the years have had to be made for students. The people we have worked with



MCC President Bob Ferrentino, right, will retire Dec. 31, after serving 10 years as the college's top leader.



Facility and technology upgrades allow students such as Caleb Watson of Ionia to experience timely, hands-on training at MCC.

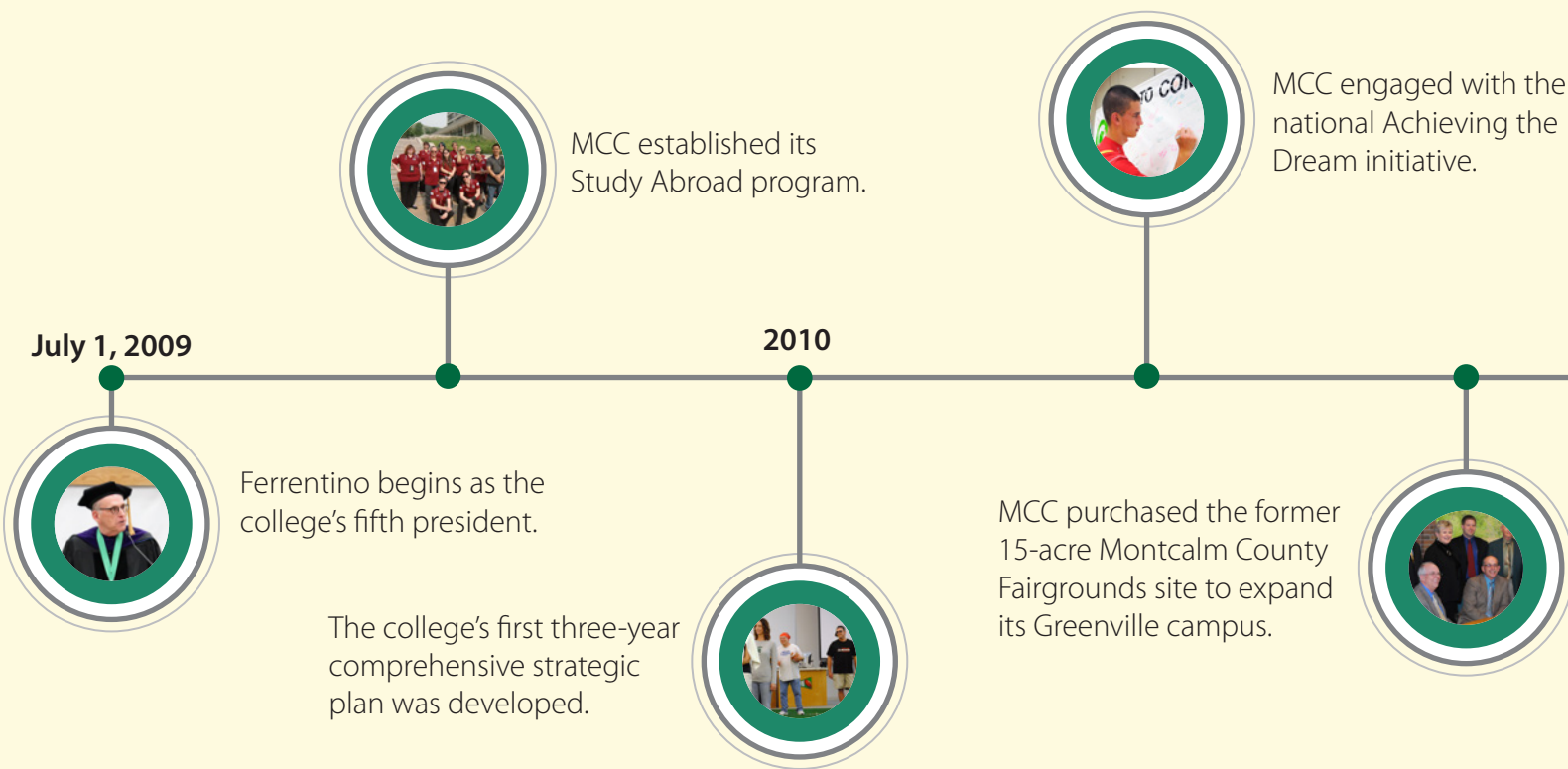
have been eager to look at new ways of thinking, eager to make changes and they just roll up their sleeves and get to work. That has been great.

This time has also been the culmination of 25 years of prior experience coming together with the chance to really provide some leadership. The Board of Trustees trusts us and allows us to do our jobs, to implement and uphold the college's policies.

How are you viewing this transition?

This is a critical time for the college.

We have worked hard to make student success a priority. We have seen the numbers rise. We have spent money on the development of a campus master plan that outlines a vision for the next 10 years. We have laid groundwork that the next 10 years can be even better than these 10 years. We can really



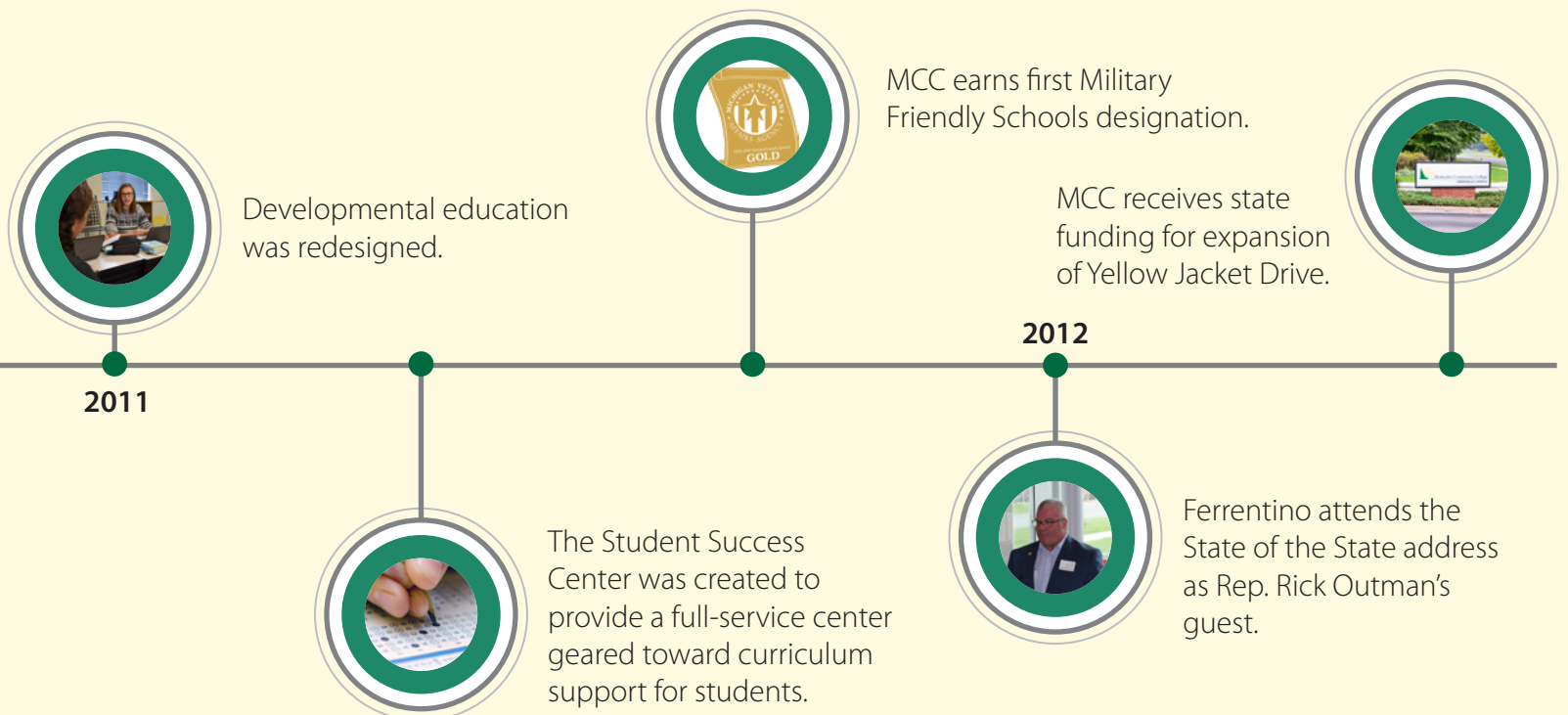
continue to grow our students and our community and support economic development, all of which work together to create a more vibrant atmosphere.

We have accomplished a lot and we have laid the foundation for more good work in the future.

What are some of the accomplishments you are most proud of during your time serving as MCC's president?

Getting the job was one of the proudest moments in my career.

After that, we developed the first comprehensive strategic plan for the college. We have played off of that plan for the last 10 years. We used that plan to develop initiatives for student success, custom training, building our business and industrial partnerships, improving K-12 partnerships – the list



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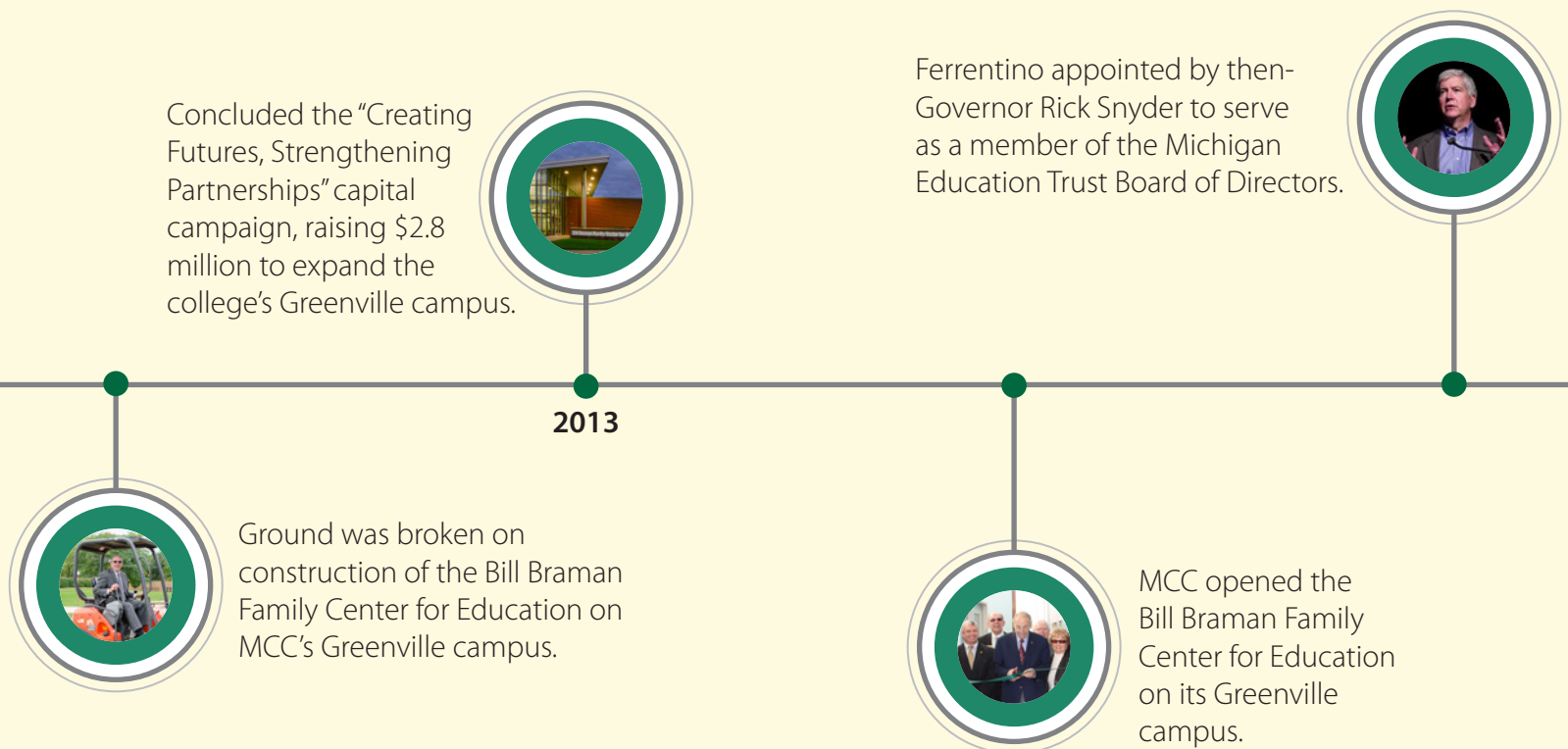
is long. It is the basis for everything we have been up to. When we look back and see the key performance indicators improving, we know what we're doing is the work we need to be doing.

When I look around this place, I started counting how many people I have hired in the last 10 years, and what are those people doing today. We have found the right people. We have been bringing people in with a refreshed, invigorating approach, who think out of the box and are technology driven.

We have also built capacity to support the needs of our community. In 2010, we purchased the former Montcalm County Fairgrounds property in Greenville, which added 15 acres to our Greenville campus. Subsequently, we launched a capital campaign and raised nearly \$3 million to build the Bill Braman Family Center for Education on this property. The building opened in 2013, doubling the college's capacity to deliver education in the areas of skilled trades and

advanced manufacturing on our Greenville campus. This summer, we renovated the Braman Center. The need for this project was immediate due to large existing enrollment in the welding program and not enough capacity in our labs to handle the demand. The renovation doubled capacity in the lab, enhanced equipment and support systems throughout the building and expanded space for robotics training. The completion of the Braman Center renovation represents a significant investment in our students and our community and allows us to fulfill our commitment to them.

We have also grown the MCC Foundation tremendously during the past 10 years, to its current value of about \$20 million. This year, the Foundation offered more than \$360,000 in scholarships to our students and supported a number of grants to enhance teaching and learning. This is an amazing accomplishment for a college our size. The growth of the Foundation has helped students find MCC to be affordable and have more opportunities.



The college continues to shine through accreditation reviews, and this year, we completed the steps necessary to earn NLN Nursing Accreditation.

**"It has been the best
10 years of my career."**

-- MCC President Bob Ferrentino

We have really set the stage for the next 10 years with the development of a facilities master plan. With input from staff and the community, we worked with an architectural firm to review existing college facilities on both the Sidney and Greenville campuses related to longevity and deferred maintenance, space utilization, wayfinding, academic changes, modernization related to student learning and engagement, and community engagement. This plan will assist the college with long-

term planning to offer students access to an excellent education and provide our community with additional opportunities to use our campus facilities. The master plan represents a significant investment in our students and community and allows us to fulfill our commitment to prepare individuals for careers that strengthen our local economy. It also provides a road map for the college's future administration.

You're known for being very accessible to students and employees. How did that evolve?

I started my education career 35 years ago as an adjunct faculty member at Lansing Community College. I loved being an adjunct because I loved the interaction with the students. When I got the opportunity to become full-time, I learned that maybe that wasn't everyone's motto. I learned that adjuncts were often in the dark, and what I learned later is that students a lot of times were in the dark. So, I made it a goal that adjuncts

Completed a successful millage campaign for continued funding for the college.

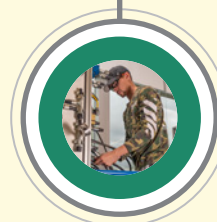


2014



Established Early College at MCC in partnership with the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District (MAISD).

2015



MCC was awarded a \$1.7 million Community College Skilled Trades Equipment Program (CC-STEP) Grant, which allowed the college to enhance facilities and equipment to support student success initiatives.

MCC celebrated its 50th anniversary.



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would be incorporated into the campus life as best we can. Students will be listened to and students will be engaged.

My door has always been open because my role is to be the chief cheerleader. I don't do all the work here. I just try to create an environment where people feel good about doing the work. I want to be visible and be able to interact with students. I hope people see me as just a regular guy.

My open door policy evolved over many years because I just want people to feel as if they have a voice and they are being listened to.

What would you consider to be your legacy?

I hope my legacy is student-centered, employee-focused, community-oriented – bottom line, what's best for the college.

You're leaving MCC in good shape, but is

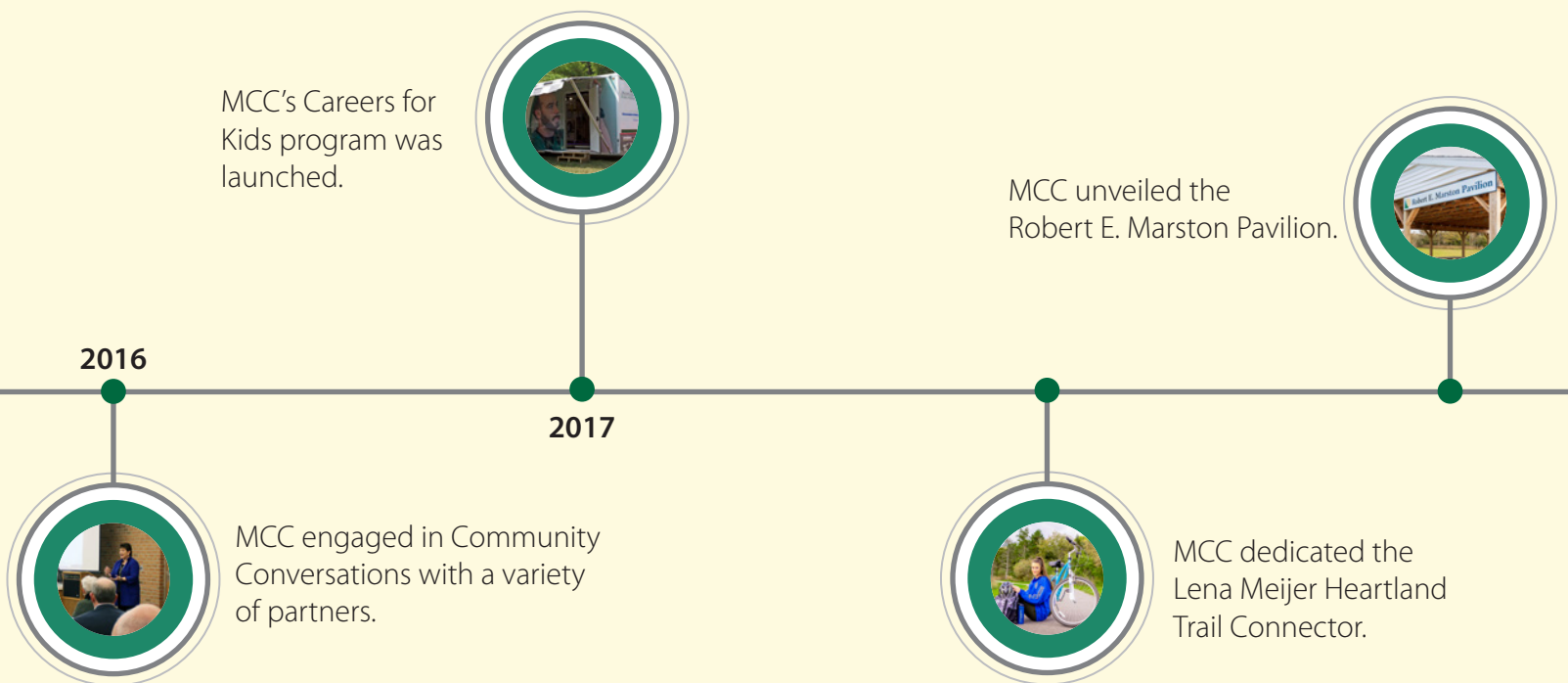
there anything you wish you could have done?

I wish we could have been developing our facilities master plan a couple of years ago, but the timing was right when we did it earlier this year.

I also wish we could have done a little more to do some modernization. We just haven't had enough funds. We have had to make some tough choices, and we have based our decisions on being student-focused and what's best for the overall good of the college.

What do you look forward to after leaving this office?

I'm looking forward to the time when I can be the boss of one, being able to do things I want to do when I want to do them. All of the things I have had to do, I have enjoyed doing. However, at this point, I'm looking forward to having some time to catch up on projects at



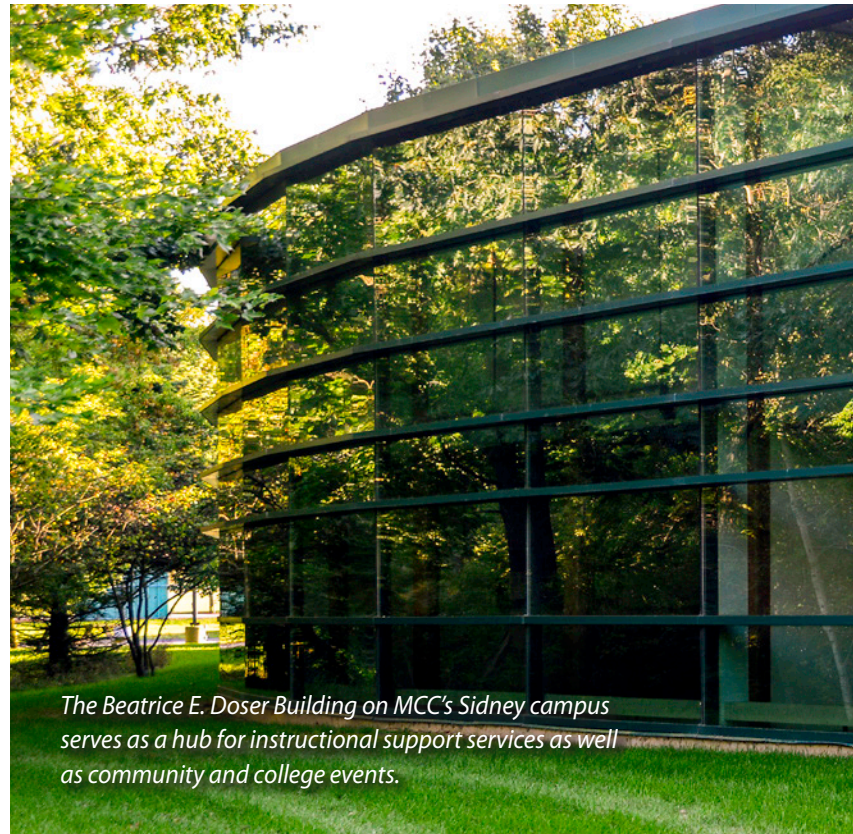
home, spending time with my family and working on improving my golf game.

I'm also planning to continue working with some of the boards and organizations I am currently involved with.

As you face your final weeks here, how are you feeling?

Very bittersweet. I am going to miss the daily engagement with a wonderful group of leaders throughout the college. I was in a meeting recently where we were just laughing and enjoying each other's banter. I'm going to miss that. We have a lot of people on our staff, on our Board of Trustees and on our Foundation Board who are devoted to the college, and I really will miss being part of that good work being done here.

There are many opportunities for someone else to come in with a fresh approach and different perspectives and embrace the foundation we have built. ■



The Beatrice E. Doser Building on MCC's Sidney campus serves as a hub for instructional support services as well as community and college events.

