

# TECHNOLOGY MASTER PLAN

## 2025-2030





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# Executive Summary

The 2025-2030 Technology Master Plan (TMP) for Merced College outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance the College's technological capabilities, aligning closely with the institution's mission to transform lives through education and workforce development. This TMP emphasizes creating a seamless, accessible, and secure digital environment that empowers students, faculty, staff, and community members. It is a forward-looking blueprint developed to support the goals of the Education Master Plan (EMP) and meet regulatory requirements for California community colleges, which mandate regular updates to ensure evolving educational needs are met effectively.

## Vision and Objectives

At its core, the TMP is driven by a vision to prioritize students and education. By focusing on strategic priorities that foster accessibility, data-driven decision-making, comprehensive support, and an integrated digital environment, the plan ensures that technology is a powerful yet unobtrusive enabler of educational success. The goal is for technology to operate effectively in the background, allowing users to focus on learning, teaching, and community engagement without distractions.

## Process and Stakeholder Collaboration

The TMP was developed through an inclusive and transparent process that engaged diverse stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, staff, and community members. The development process featured:

- **Needs Assessment Survey (October 2024):** This survey captured insights from key stakeholders regarding their technology needs and experiences.
- **Strategy Workshop (Late October 2024):** A collaborative, two-day workshop with TMP committee members created initial strategic priorities based on survey findings.
- **Feasibility Interviews (Early November 2024):** Ten interviews with internal stakeholders across Merced College identified potential challenges, ensuring the feasibility of the proposed initiatives.
- **Town Hall Listening Sessions:** The broader Merced College community provided feedback on refined strategic Priorities, ensuring a diverse range of needs and perspectives were incorporated.

As the division responsible for driving innovation, Merced College's Technology and Institutional Effectiveness (TIE) division played a pivotal role in shaping this forward-looking plan and will continue to lead its implementation with a focus on continuous improvement and strategic alignment.

## Strategic Priorities

The TMP is built around five strategic priorities that reflect Merced College's commitment to excellence in technology:

1. **Integrated Digital Environment:** Standardizing and streamlining technology platforms for a seamless user experience.
2. **Enhanced Accessibility and Compliance:** Ensuring full accessibility compliance and improving user access to campus technology across all District areas.
3. **Comprehensive Tech Support and Training:** Providing responsive, proactive tech support and structured training for all campus technology users.
4. **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Using data insights to inform technology investments and enhance the strategic use of resources.
5. **Strengthening Data Security and Simplifying Access:** Protecting district data while simplifying student, faculty, and staff access.

## Alignment with the Education Master Plan (EMP)

The TMP directly supports Merced College's EMP goals, enhancing student success, workforce readiness, accessibility, equity, and community engagement through technology-driven initiatives. By aligning strategic priorities with EMP objectives, the TMP ensures a unified and effective approach to advancing the College's mission.

## Commitment to Innovation and User-Centric Design

Merced College's TMP represents a commitment to using technology as a strategic asset that empowers education, fosters community engagement, and enhances operational efficiency. Through collaborative planning, stakeholder engagement, and a focus on continuous improvement, the TMP serves as a roadmap for leveraging technology to create a more connected, inclusive, and effective educational environment. This commitment is operationalized through the leadership of the Technology and Institutional Effectiveness (TIE) division, which serves as the engine for innovation at Merced College.



# The Role of a Technology Master Plan in Student Success

## Why We Need a Technology Master Plan

Merced College's Technology Master Plan (TMP) is guided by key regulatory requirements and educational mandates set forth by the State of California, specifically for community colleges. California law requires that community colleges regularly update their Education Master Plan (EMP) and the associated Technology Master Plan to ensure that they remain aligned with the evolving needs of students, staff, and the community. Compliance with these laws ensures that the institution's technology infrastructure and educational strategies are continuously optimized, meeting legal and operational standards and facilitating effective learning outcomes.

## Vision and Focus: Students First

At the heart of Merced College's TMP is a commitment to putting students and education first. The TMP envisions a digital environment where technology enables student success, academic achievement, and workforce readiness. By aligning technology initiatives with the college's broader mission to transform lives through education and workforce development, the TMP seeks to enrich community experiences and support services and foster lifelong learning. This plan emphasizes the role of technology as a means to enhance the educational journey, ensuring access to degree programs, career training, and community engagement efforts.

## The Ideal Invisibility of Technology

The effectiveness of the Technology & Institutional Effectiveness Department at Merced College is best demonstrated when its operations are seamless and largely invisible to users. This "invisibility factor" signifies that when technology functions as it should—efficiently, reliably, and consistently—it allows students, faculty, and staff to focus entirely on learning, teaching, and supporting each other without interruption. The TMP strives to create a digital ecosystem where technology solutions work quietly and powerfully in the background, providing robust support without becoming a distraction. In this way, Merced College ensures a streamlined, user-centric, and accessible technological experience that drives excellence across all facets of the institution. The TIE division's leadership in shaping this environment ensures that innovation is not only encouraged but systematically supported across all functional areas of the College.

This commitment to operational excellence, accessibility, security, data-driven decision-making, and comprehensive support ensures that Merced College remains a leader in educational innovation and meets the needs of its diverse and dynamic community.

# Alignment with the Education Master Plan (EMP)

The Technology Master Plan (TMP) is closely aligned with the Education Master Plan (EMP) at Merced College, ensuring that technology initiatives directly support and enhance the College's overarching educational goals. By integrating strategic priorities outlined in the TMP, Merced College creates a unified and practical approach to meeting student, faculty, and community needs. Here is how the TMP aligns with and supports the goals of the EMP:

## **1. Supporting Student Success and Learning Outcomes**

The TMP emphasizes an integrated digital environment, accessibility, and comprehensive tech support, which aligns with the EMP's goal of fostering student success. By streamlining access to essential digital resources, providing robust technical support, and enhancing accessibility, students can engage more effectively in their learning experiences. The TMP ensures that technology is an enabler for achieving educational milestones, improving retention, and facilitating academic achievement.

## **2. Enhancing Workforce Readiness and Lifelong Learning**

The TMP aligns with the EMP's focus on preparing students for meaningful careers and lifelong learning through initiatives such as career and technical education support and workforce training. Technology solutions are developed to support degree and certification programs, transfer readiness, and workforce development opportunities, allowing students to build highly valued skills in the job market.

## **3. Promoting Accessibility and Equity**

The TMP's focus on enhanced accessibility ensures that digital tools and platforms are available to all students, faculty, and staff, removing barriers to learning and improving inclusivity. This directly supports the EMP's goals of fostering equity and inclusion across all educational and support services offered by Merced College. A phased accessibility improvement plan and campus-wide training ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or abilities.

## **4. Data-Driven Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement**

The TMP leverages data analytics to inform technology investments and enhance decision-making processes, aligning with the EMP's emphasis on continuous improvement. By using real-time dashboards and key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess technology utilization and student engagement, the College can proactively identify opportunities for improvement and better allocate resources to meet evolving needs.

## **5. Strengthening Community Engagement and Collaboration**

Merced College's TMP supports community engagement efforts outlined in the EMP by creating accessible and intuitive platforms that foster collaboration between students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. Initiatives like the integrated digital environment and comprehensive tech support enhance communication, streamline collaboration, and promote community-based learning experiences.

## **6. Ensuring Security and Compliance**

The TMP's data security and compliance focus ensures that Merced College's technology infrastructure meets the highest protection protocols, safeguarding student and institutional data. This supports the EMP's objective of maintaining a secure and compliant educational environment, furthering trust and confidence in the College's digital resources.

By aligning technology initiatives with the goals and objectives of the Education Master Plan, the Technology Master Plan at Merced College plays a critical role in transforming lives, enhancing learning, and building a strong, connected community through education and innovative digital solutions.

# **Mission & Vision of Merced College**

## **Mission**

At Merced College, students are our focus, and we are known by their success. We transform lives through education and workforce development.

## **Vision**

Enriching our community through educational experiences and support services:

- Degree/Certification Programs
- Transfer
- Career Technical Education
- Workforce Training
- Lifelong Learning
- Basic Skills
- Community Engagement

# Process for Developing the Technology Master Plan

The development of Merced College's Technology Master Plan (TMP) followed a comprehensive and collaborative process designed to ensure that the strategic priorities reflected the needs and priorities of key stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and community members. The approach prioritized transparency, broad engagement, and iterative refinement of ideas to build a robust and actionable plan. The following steps outline the process used to develop the TMP:

## 1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The process began with a needs assessment survey conducted in October 2024. This survey engaged key stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and community members, to gather insights on their experiences, needs, and expectations for technology use and support at Merced College. The survey results provided a strong foundation for identifying priority areas and understanding the current state of technology on campus.

## 2. STRATEGY WORKSHOP

Building on the insights gained from the needs assessment, a two-day strategy workshop was held on the Merced College campus in late October 2024. TMP committee members participated in collaborative sessions to discuss the survey findings, share perspectives, and define initial strategic priorities for the plan. This workshop was instrumental in creating a shared vision for technology priorities at Merced College.

## 3. FEASIBILITY INTERVIEWS

To assess the viability and practicality of the initial strategic priorities, ten feasibility interviews were conducted in early November 2024. These interviews involved internal stakeholders across the Merced College campus, including representatives from different departments and user groups. These interviews aimed to identify potential weaknesses, operational challenges, and opportunities for successful implementation. The feedback gathered during this phase helped refine and strengthen the strategic priorities.

## 4. TOWN HALL LISTENING SESSIONS

The refined strategic priorities were presented to the broader Merced College community through a series of town hall listening sessions. These sessions provided an open forum for students, faculty, staff, and community members to offer additional input, share their perspectives, and ask questions about the proposed direction of the TMP. The listening sessions ensured diverse voices were heard, and the final plan reflected a wide range of stakeholder needs and expectations.



## 5. SYNTHESIS AND FINALIZATION

The feedback and insights gathered throughout the process were carefully reviewed and synthesized into this final report. The refined strategic priorities, which form the core of the TMP, are the culmination of broad engagement, thoughtful analysis, and a commitment to aligning technology goals with the needs of the Merced College community.

### **Commitment to Transparency and Stakeholder Engagement**

Throughout the development of the Technology Master Plan, Merced College prioritized transparency and made consistent efforts to engage a cross-section of stakeholders. By involving key users at each stage and fostering open communication, the TMP reflects a shared vision and actionable strategies to enhance technology use, accessibility, and support for all members of the campus community.

## STRATEGY 1

# Integrated Digital Environment

*An Integrated Digital Environment is a comprehensive and interconnected network of digital tools, platforms, and resources that seamlessly enhance user experience and efficiency. At Merced College, an integrated digital environment would simplify access to essential digital tools and resources for students, faculty, and staff. This would ensure that users can find what they need quickly and intuitively, foster efficiency, and provide a more engaging campus experience.*

**Strategy Outcome:** Standardize and streamline technology platforms to enhance compatibility and user experience.

**Objectives:**

- 1.1 Implement an AI-powered search assistant to recommend relevant tools and resources based on user queries.
- 1.2 Develop a centralized hub for essential resources and provide targeted tools and recommendations for students, staff, and faculty.
- 1.3 Increase standardization in Canvas course shells by working with instructional designers, ensuring a uniform student experience across all faculty.
- 1.4 Establish and communicate best practices for using essential digital tools (Teams, Canvas, Colleague, etc.), helping users navigate existing technology more effectively.
- 1.5 Collaborate with the Technology and Institutional Effectiveness (TIE) division to identify, pilot, and scale innovative digital solutions that enhance teaching, learning, and institutional operations.

**EMP Alignment:** Strategy 2, Themes 2.1, 2.3; Strategy 4, Theme 4.2

**Suggested Success Indicators:** Higher user satisfaction, increased platform engagement, and reduced support needs.

## STRATEGY 2

# Enhanced Accessibility and Compliance

*By partnering with the CCC Accessibility Team and developing a phased plan, Merced College aims to ensure full accessibility compliance across the entire District's Information Communication Technology (ICT) in alignment with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. This proactive approach, combined with campus-wide training, addresses gaps in navigation, course design, and communication tools to make digital technology and information accessible and inclusive for all users, without overlap into ADA or physical accessibility.*

**Strategy Outcome:** Ensure full accessibility compliance and improve user access to campus technology across all District areas.

### Objectives:

- 2.1 Partner with the CCC Accessibility Team to assess and address gaps across all District departments, including Instruction, External Relations, Student Services, the President's Office, internal communications, and the public website, focusing on navigation, course design, and communication tools.
- 2.2 Develop a phased plan for accessibility improvements, including goals and objectives
- 2.3 Require all new employees to complete mandatory accessibility training as part of onboarding, including videos and testing.
- 2.4 Formalize accessibility review criteria for all technology purchases, ensuring compliance before acquisition by reviewing a product's Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT).
- 2.5 Provide campus-wide professional development and training initiatives to promote consistency and accountability.
- 2.6 Improve communication efforts through a structured accessibility information campaign, including email updates and training announcements.

**EMP Alignment:** Strategy 1, Theme 1.4; Strategy 3, Themes 3.1, 3.2

**Suggested Success Indicators:** 20% accessibility improvement in the first year, with annual progress goals.

## STRATEGY 3

# Comprehensive Tech Support and Training

*Introduce targeted trainings for core tools and relevant applications that ensures Merced College's tech support is responsive and effective. It offers proactive, tailored support during peak times and ongoing training, empowering users to confidently engage with campus technology.*

**Strategy Outcome:** Provide responsive, proactive tech support and structured training for all campus technology users.

**Objectives:**

- 3.1 Introduce a support matrix to efficiently allocate resources during peak demand periods.
- 3.2 Extend tech support and training offerings to students, prioritizing financial aid tools, self-service portals, and award letters.
- 3.3 Develop a training program that includes scheduled live sessions (monthly or quarterly), aligns with the onboarding process, and provides an inventory of recorded trainings.
- 3.4 Implement an AI-powered support assistant to provide instant help for common technical issues, complementing existing training resources.
- 3.5 Strengthen technology cross-training initiatives in key departments (Payroll, Fiscal, Financial Aid, etc.) to ensure knowledge is documented and retained when staff transitions occur.

**EMP Alignment:** Strategy 2, Theme 2.2; Strategy 4, Themes 4.1, 4.3

**Suggested Success Indicators:** Faster response times, increased training participation, and improved tech satisfaction scores.

## STRATEGY 4

# Data-Driven Decision-Making

*Leveraging data analytics and feedback, Merced College can make informed technology investments, ensuring resources align with user needs. By shifting focus to utilization statistics of core digital resources (such as Colleague, Self-Service, and the website), the College can proactively identify demand and bottlenecks. Real-time, accessible dashboards with key performance indicators (KPIs) will foster transparency and support data-informed decisions, creating a responsive, needs-based tech environment.*

**Strategy Outcome:** Leverage data insights to guide technology investments and improve budget planning.

**Objectives:**

- 4.1 Use detailed utilization analytics and feedback data across all core digital infrastructure resources to scale resources and ensure alignment with user needs.
- 4.2 Develop accessible dashboards for real-time campus tech metrics, incorporating KPIs.
- 4.3 Expand data collection efforts to include student experiences, allowing early identification of pain points in Canvas, Self-Service, and other systems.
- 4.4 Regularly share data insights with cloud-based service providers to help them improve performance.

**EMP Alignment:** Strategy 1, Theme 1.2; Strategy 5, Themes 5.1, 5.3

**Suggested Success Indicators:** Higher engagement with dashboards, better alignment between investments and usage, and improved stakeholder satisfaction.



## STRATEGY 5

# Strengthening Data Security and Simplifying Access

*Merced College is committed to protecting district data while streamlining access through secure, adaptable authentication practices for both on-campus and remote access. Training on data security and awareness practices complements this approach, reinforcing a secure yet user-friendly experience for all campus technology users.*

**Strategy Outcome:** Protect district data while simplifying student, faculty, and staff access.

### Objectives:

- 5.1 Integrate robust data security practices into everyday business operations, promoting awareness of secure operations and responsible data handling.
- 5.2 Streamline authentication processes to reduce unnecessary security hurdles while maintaining compliance.
- 5.3 Create and publish data classifications with corresponding guidelines on how to handle data based on its classification.
- 5.4 Implement digital keycard access with audit trails, ensuring that campus facilities are both secure and convenient.
- 5.5 Provide guidelines and training to increase awareness of secure data handling practices.
- 5.6 Develop and publish transparent data-sharing policies, ensuring users understand how their data is handled and shared with vendors.

**EMP Alignment:** Strategy 3, Theme 3.4; Strategy 4, Theme 4.2

**Suggested Success Indicators:** Reduction in security incidents, user-reported ease of access, and improved feedback regarding data security processes.



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