



Mount Wachusett *Community College*

Director of Financial Aid

Leadership Profile

December 2025



Executive Summary

Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) seeks a student-centered, innovative Director of Financial Aid to lead and modernize aid operations while advancing equitable access and student success across a broad portfolio of associate degrees, certificates, workforce, and adult education pathways.

Reporting to the Executive Director of Student Financial Services, the Director will also collaborate closely with Enrollment Management and Finance and Administration leadership to deliver high-quality service, ensure rigorous compliance, and strategically leverage aid to support enrollment, persistence, and completion. The Director will lead a Financial Aid Office of eight (8) staff members. In 2024-2025, the office awarded about \$45.8 million in financial aid, including \$36.7 million in scholarships processed from internal and external sources, to 4,990 students.

The Director actively demonstrates a commitment to exceptional student service, a growth mindset, and a deep dedication to the mission of community colleges.

The Director will also possess a clear understanding of the current financial aid landscape and will be adept at incorporating ongoing changes and helping the staff uncover new ways to serve students with excellence and efficiency. They will be skilled at leading teams through periods of transition, implementing new processes, and adapting to change in policy, best practices, and technology.

This is a pivotal moment for MWCC and Massachusetts community colleges: MassEducate and MassReconnect have [made tuition and mandatory fees free for eligible residents](#), expanding access for traditional, adult, and returning learners. The Director will operationalize these programs locally—optimizing policies, communications, and systems to serve a diverse region while maintaining accuracy and stewardship.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this leadership profile.

Role for the Director of Financial Aid

As a key member of the Enrollment Management team, the Director of Financial Aid provides vision, leadership, and day-to-day management of the Financial Aid Office, including the delivery of financial aid training and information updates to staff and campus partners. They are responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures to administer all Federal Title IV programs, Massachusetts state aid programs, and institutional funds, with a commitment to compliance, accuracy, and ethical stewardship of funds, which include MassEducate and MassReconnect. Coordinating cross-functionally with members of Enrollment Management and the Business Office, the Director also maintains a system of internal checks and balances for funds applied to student accounts.

Reporting to the Executive Director of Student Financial Services, this position supervises the work of a dedicated team of eight (8) professional and clerical staff to accomplish institutional and departmental objectives, advancing equitable access, student success, and the mission of MWCC.

Major areas of responsibility include, but are not limited to, the following:

Program Administration & Compliance

- Administer of a complex student financial services and financial aid program, including procedure development, funding application, accounting, management and oversight of the Banner financial aid module, fiscal reporting and training of staff focused on financial aid awarding/disbursement and accounts receivable functions.
- Formulate, implement, review and evaluate policies, procedures and standards to ensure departmental compliance with financial aid guidelines and objectives for all federal, state and institutional programs.
- Maintain current Policy and Procedure Manual for Financial Aid.
- Develop and review financial aid applications and forms used in the administration of the office.

Financial Aid Operations & Reporting

- Oversee the awarding process, working with the Associate Director of Student Financial Services Information Systems.
- Direct the review, verification, awarding, and disbursement of student financial aid according to all federal, state, and institutional regulations and policies; Collaborate with other appropriate institutional departments to coordinate programs, services and policies.
- Direct the processing of student loan applications and disbursements; Manage electronic reporting and reconciliation of all federal and state funds as necessary.
- Responsible for submitting federal and state reports, such as Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP), and the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistant Year-End.
- Manage the federal and state audits.

Leadership & Training

- Train and supervise staff to provide a consistent high level of customer service.

- Conduct formal and ad hoc training sessions for entire Financial Aid staff and cross functional training for other areas in and outside of Student Financial Services.
- Administer department budget.

Student & Community Engagement

- Familiarize potential students and their parents with the availability of financial aid through workshops and presentations.
- Interface with guidance counselors, local high schools, and community service organizations to provide timely and accurate flow of financial aid information.

Communication & Outreach

- Work in consultation with Executive Director to develop procedures and communication plans to provide for a smooth flow of information between the administration and students in both electronic and print communications to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. Prepare informational materials for publication and maintain current financial aid and student accounts information on the College website.
- Represent MWCC and the Financial Aid Office at internal and external events and respond verbally and in writing to inquiries regarding service delivery, audits, administrative functions and daily operations.

Collaboration & Institutional Service

- Serve as key administrator within Enrollment Management Division, consistently collaborating with Admissions, Student Records/Registrar's Office, Advising, Student Affairs, Business Office and others to create streamlined student enrollment experience.
- Serve and participate in cross-functional college-wide committees representing Financial Aid.
- Attend statewide meetings representing MWCC among other Financial Aid directors and leaders in the Commonwealth.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Candidates for the Director of Financial Aid position must possess the following minimum qualifications and required skill, knowledge, and aptitudes listed below. Strong candidates will also possess one or more of the desired qualifications.

Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in business administration or related field.
- Five years of progressive administrative financial aid experience.
- Experience with Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) and National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS).
- Three years of supervisory experience in financial aid, preferably in a community college setting or with knowledge of the unique financial aid schedule associated with two-year, enrollment-dependent institutions.

Required Skills, Knowledge and Aptitudes

- Demonstrated leadership excellence, with a record of building and sustaining high-performing teams grounded in trust, collaboration, and shared purpose.
- Proven management abilities, including coaching, mentoring, and developing staff in a culture that values positivity, accountability, continuous improvement, and a growth mindset.
- Ability to cultivate a supportive, inclusive, and service-oriented team environment, fostering open communication, mutual respect, and a collective commitment to student success.
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to maintain a positive attitude, demonstrate patience and humor when navigating complex challenges, and inspire confidence across diverse stakeholder groups.
- Expert-level skills in the dynamic use of financial management and aid administration systems, including testing, reporting, troubleshooting, and implementing new functionality to strengthen operational effectiveness.
- Exceptional analytical and decision-making abilities, with the capacity to interpret data, forecast trends, identify operational gaps, and drive strategic improvements.
- Strong organizational and project management skills, with the ability to prioritize competing demands and maintain momentum in a fast-paced, student-centered environment.
- Collaborative mindset, with the ability to work effectively across Enrollment Management, Business Office, Academic Affairs, and Student Services to achieve institutional goals.
- Commitment to the mission of community colleges, including equity-minded practices, accessible service delivery, and removing barriers for diverse student populations.

Desired Qualifications

- Graduate Degree in Educational Leadership, Business Administration, or another applicable field.
- Bilingual – English/Spanish.
- Experience with Massachusetts State Aid.
- Experience with Banner.
- Experience with recruitment and retention CRM (TargetX).
- Knowledge of Massachusetts state aid programs, including but not limited to MassReconnect and MassEducate (Free College), Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA), and MASS Grant.



About Mount Wachusett Community College

Overview

Mount Wachusett Community College, also known as MWCC and "The Mount," is a public, NECHE-accredited community college serving North Central Massachusetts with a mission centered on access, affordability, and student success. The college offers 70+ degree and certificate programs, flexible scheduling (day, evening, online, and accelerated 7-week terms), extensive academic support, and transfer pathways designed to help students ladder credentials and move efficiently into the workforce or toward the bachelor's degree. MWCC's ethos emphasizes a personalized experience—"a big fish in a small pond"—with student organizations, intramurals, and campus events providing a robust community in a manageable setting. The college also highlights affordability through low tuition and comprehensive financial aid, including scholarships awarded annually by the MWCC Foundation. Massachusetts' MassEducate and MassReconnect program have made MWCC's tuition and mandatory fee free for eligible students.

Campuses

MWCC's campus in Gardner spans 269 acres and is recognized for sustainability infrastructure—including two Vestas wind turbines, solar photovoltaic arrays, and biomass heating—that make the campus nearly carbon-neutral. Additional sites include the Leominster Campus (recently renovated with new science labs, student commons, and 14 upgraded classrooms) and the Fitchburg Dental Campus operated in partnership with Community Health Connections, where students in Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting learn in a real-world clinical setting. The college maintains a specialized Automotive Technology Center, also located in Gardner.

Located about 60 miles west of Boston and 25 miles north of Worcester, MWCC's service area features accessible outdoor amenities, a revitalizing downtown, access to urban, suburban, and rural communities, and commuting proximity to New England's two largest cities and their metropolitan areas. The multi-campus footprint and transportation links complement MWCC's hybrid and online modalities, expanding the reach of the college to serve the students in its [extensive service area](#).

Academic Programs and Pathways

Students can choose programs across health professions, business, STEM and advanced manufacturing, education, public safety, communications and media, computer information systems, and liberal arts. MWCC emphasizes stackable certificates, workforce development, adult basic education/ESOL, and transfer articulation—including MassTransfer pathways—so that credits move seamlessly to four-year institutions. Advising, tutoring, and embedded supports help students persist, while flexible modalities and "quick semesters" accommodate working adults and non-traditional learners.

Student Body

MWCC serves about 5,000 students across credit and non-credit offerings and its demographics reflect North Central Massachusetts' diverse, multi-generational learner population. The college's open-admissions approach in many programs and robust financial aid align with MWCC's mission to expand access, reduce barriers, and support completion.

College History

Mount Wachusett Community College was established in 1963 as part of an initiative to expand accessible higher education across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Since then, MWCC has developed into a regional anchor for workforce training, transfer education, and lifelong learning. Its identity is also shaped by Gardner’s industrial heritage as “Chair City” and the contemporary needs of the area’s learners and employers. Its Gardner campus opened in 1974 and continues to be expanded and enhanced.

The College’s [sustainability portfolio](#) garnered national attention as early as 2007 when MWCC won the National Wildlife Federation’s “Chill-Out: Campus Solutions to Global Warming” competition. The Gardner campus’s green energy portfolio—wind, solar, and biomass—has become a hallmark of the institution’s commitment to stewardship and innovation. The Asquino Science Center is LEED Gold Certified.

Student Life and Community Engagement.

Key campus services include the Academic Support Center, Mount Fitness & Wellness Center, and Theatre at the Mount, which together contribute to a vibrant student experience on and beyond the Gardner campus.

Student life blends intramural sports, clubs, student government, and cultural programming with local outdoor recreation at Dunn State Park and nearby Wachusett Mountain. The college’s Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement and community partnerships extend experiential learning into service, internships, and applied projects, reinforcing MWCC’s role as a civic hub for the 29 surrounding cities and towns in its service area.

Leadership

MWCC is led by [President James L. Vander Hooven](#). Prior to arriving at the College in 2017, Dr. Vander Hooven was Vice President for Enrollment Management at Landmark College in Vermont and president of Tohono O’odham Community College, a Tribal College located on the Tohono O’odham Reservation in Arizona. His doctoral studies at the University of Maine focused on student access and his dissertation was on women who parented children while completing their associate degrees.

With his leadership, governance and strategic direction is coordinated through the institution’s executive leadership, academic deans, and shared governance structures. The college’s leadership emphasizes inclusive excellence, fiscal stewardship, and cross-sector collaboration with K–12 districts, employers, and state agencies to meet regional educational and workforce needs.

Gardner and North Central Massachusetts

Gardner, known as “Chair City” for its [historic furniture industry](#), offers a blend of small-town charm and modern conveniences. The downtown area features red-brick storefronts, locally owned businesses like Paramount Café and Gardner Ale House, and hosts community events such as art fairs and parades. Residents enjoy easy access to outdoor recreation at Dunn State Park (pictured below), Crystal Lake, and the North Central Pathway, as well as nearby [ski slopes at Wachusett Mountain](#).

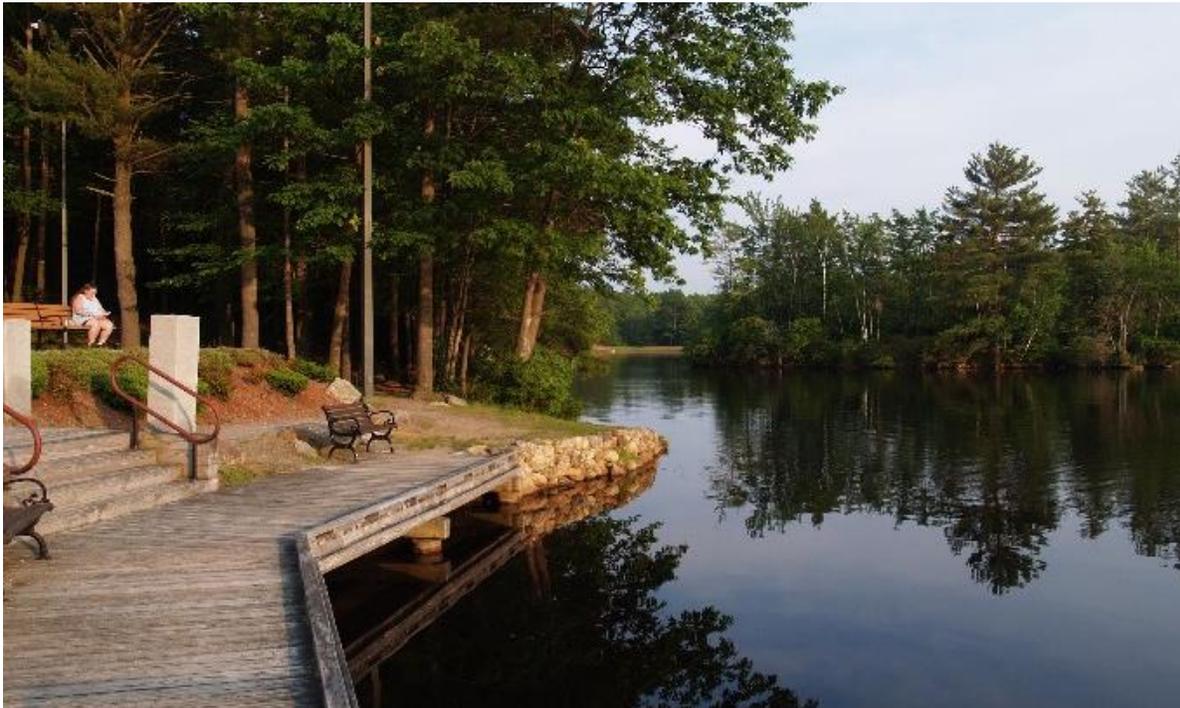
Housing in Gardner ranges from historic multi-family homes near Main Street to newer Colonial Revivals and ranch-style properties on wooded lots. Gardner Public Schools serve grades PK–12, including the recently opened Gardner Elementary School, Gardner Middle, and Gardner High, which offers college-level coursework through its Innovations Pathway Program. Private options like Holy Family Academy provide additional choices for families.

For higher education, Mount Wachusett Community College anchors the city with over 70 degree and certificate programs, while Fitchburg State University, Assumption College, and Quinsigamond Community College are nearby.

Cultural life includes the Gardner Museum, local theater productions, and seasonal festivals, while dining options range from casual pubs to family-owned restaurants.

Located about 60 miles west of Boston and 25 miles north of Worcester, Gardner offers access to major highways and nearby [commuter rail stations with service to Boston's North Station](#), making it a practical choice for those seeking affordability and high quality of life without sacrificing connectivity.

Learn more about the area through the [Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce](#) and the [City of Gardner](#) websites.





Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Mount Wachusett Community College in this search. Applications are considered as they are received. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by February 1, 2026.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#) or by submitting to the email address below.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Robert Springall and Ethan Robles

erobles@wittkieffer.com

The salary range for this position is \$95,000 to \$110,000. In addition, Mount Wachusett Community College employees are eligible for a comprehensive suite of benefits (see MWCC's [Division of Human Resources and Payroll website](#)).

Mount Wachusett Community College is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, genetic information, pregnancy or related conditions, gender identity, sex characteristics, sex stereotypes or sexual orientation in its programs and activities as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and college policies.

The College prohibits Sex-Based Harassment. Inquiries or complaints concerning discrimination, harassment, or retaliation shall be referred to the College's Affirmative Action Officer and/or Title IX Coordinator, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission or the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.