INTERSECTIONS

A message from Dr. Rai

It's hard to believe spring break is just over a week away. I am so grateful to all of you for your efforts to recover lost instructional time and to engage students in ways that generate excitement about learning. I am still enormously grateful to our facilities staff for their round-the-clock efforts to ensure that the College is ready and safe for all activities.

Last year, Dr. Pollard shared the College's Score Card https://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/ScoreCard/. In January, it was announced that Montgomery College has been selected to participate in Achieving the Dream's (ATD) National Reform Network. These are just two of the indicators that we are transitioning and becoming a data driven institution using metrics to improve the student experience and increase student success. You have heard the expression, "If you can't measure it, you can't fix it." I would add that if you don't measure it, you won't know whether your efforts have been successful.

During the fall 2015 semester, DFW rates in the top 20 enrolled courses were examined. Deans, chairs, and faculty came up with strategies to bring down the DFW rates. I am very pleased with the ear-

ly and promising results of the work that was done in the fall and that will continue – work that is the result of our focus on data. It shows that if we use our data to clearly define problems, resources and innovative strategies to engage students can be carefully targeted.

The first draft of the Academic Master Plan (AMP) is being readied for review by the College community. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks for you to review the draft and provide feedback. I am grateful to those of you who have already provided ideas and input through work groups, and forums. The future of any successful organization today is one of continuous transformation. The AMP will provide the roadmap that will enable us to nurture disruption that makes Montgomery College relevant by preparing every one of our

students to grow and thrive in today's dynamic world.

The Life Sciences Park at Germantown has a new name that better captures the vision for the integrated academic, business and research campus. The Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology at Montgomery College (PIC MC) is already home to anchor resident partner, Holy Cross Germantown Hospital. You recently received an email announcing the request for proposals for the 2016 initiatives that enhance health care education and/or health care workforce development and training. These funds are the result of an MOU that was signed between MC and Holy Cross Health that expanded our partnership and reflects the commitment of Holy Cross Health to growing the number of nurses in the county. Please consider submitting a

proposal; I look forward to hearing of the awarding of the funds later this semester.

I always anticipate graduation with great excitement—this year, even more so. Faculty Council unanimously approved a new Montgomery College Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Award (MCOFA) program. This year, the first Montgomery College Professor of the Year will be awarded $5,000 and will join honored guests on the dais at graduation. The Director of the Part-Time Faculty Institute is working on part-time faculty awards. I will share the details, shortly.

Many of you are contributing to critical initiatives outside of the classroom and beyond the regular scope of your job. Thank you for your commitment to our students.

INSIDE

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Is it Time to Switch to Free Online Textbooks?

Evidence from Economics at Germantown

Professor Bruce Madariaga

As the price of new economics principles textbooks soared beyond $250, Germantown's economics faculty began to explore low-cost, on-line alternatives. Last spring we discovered the Openstax College project. Openstax College is a non-profit organization started by Rice University and supported by various other non-profits such as the Gates Foundation. Openstax provides entirely free, downloadable, extensively peer reviewed, and entirely customizable (no copyright issues) college textbooks. They also include supplemental material for instructors and provide the option for students to purchase hard copies of their books for around $40. We thought, what's not to like?

We reviewed the Openstax economics book and adopted it, tentatively, at the Germantown Campus last semester. However, before committing to the Openstax book longer-term, we sought evidence that switching to an online book would not have adverse academic impacts. To estimate the cost savings and academic impacts associated with switching to the free Openstax textbook, we surveyed all Germantown economics students during the spring 2015 semester before the change to Openstax and then again during the fall 2015 semester after the change. We received more than 200 responses from students each semester. Our preliminary survey results indicate that after switching to Openstax students:

- Rated the Openstax book significantly more useful than the traditional book we were using,
- Read a significantly higher percentage of required readings, and
- Read slightly more time per week.

Meanwhile, the change to the Openstax book saved Germantown's economics students about $120 per student or roughly $25,000 in total last semester.

These findings suggest that other MC disciplines should consider the Openstax textbook option. We owe it to our students to reduce their educational costs when feasible, especially when evidence suggests that the academic impacts of doing so are not negative and may be positive.

Currently, 2500 courses and 400,000 college students are using Openstax books. To see the current list of Openstax books, go to https://openstaxcollege.org/books.

Vice President and Provost Search
Moving Forward

The search process for the Rockville Vice President and Provost position continues and is on track to have someone in place July 1.

Dr. Michael Mills, chair, and the search advisory committee have met several times with expectations that interviews will be concluded by mid-March. The committee will identify up to three individuals and submit those names to Dr. Sanjay Rai, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Open forums are expected to be conducted in April with a final candidate selected by Dr. Rai and Dr. DeRionne Pollard, President, sometime in May.

The search advisory committee has been formed, composed of four members recommended by the Staff Council, four members recommended by the Faculty Council, and one representative from each of the following: chairs, deans, the Student Affairs Division, the Administrative and Fiscal Services Division, the Advancement and Community Engagement Division, the Academic Affairs Division, and the President's Office. Each member brings a unique and valuable perspective to the committee based on work experience at the College.

Project Updates: Making Progress on Prior Learning and Pathways

The Office of Academic Affairs is undertaking two new initiatives this semester.

The first initiative is a redesign of the College's Credit for Prior Learning/Credit by Exam (CPL/CBE) program. The current program will be reviewed and updated to accommodate more students, new certifications, and learning modalities and to provide expedited pathways to credits and degrees.

Prior learning options traditionally include:
- **Credit by exam** (CBE), which may be administered via one or a combination of evaluative methods;
- **Portfolio development and assessment** (designed to respond to specific questions, show work products, and demonstrate knowledge and skills in an integrated way designed to demonstrate that course outcomes have been met);
- **Credits earned through military training or experience**, as recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE);
- **Credits awarded through CREDIT, ACE's college/workplace credit recommendation service** for education and training obtained outside the classroom; and
- **Evaluation of credentials** for course, or course component, equivalency.

COMAR, the Maryland Code of Regulations, was amended in 2014 to include Credit for Competency Based Education as a viable path towards graduation. Maryland SB153, Higher Education - Academic Credit for Military Education, Training, and Experience, which was signed by the Governor in 2013, further instructs MHEC and each public institution of higher learning to develop and implement policies regarding the awarding of academic credit for military training, coursework and education. Similarly, MSCHE will be evaluating us on this process during their site visit in 2018.

The second initiative is the development of Guided Pathways. Now nationally accepted as the best form of ensuring student academic success, pathways are designed to help a student look for a career, an academic path to that career, and credentials that enhance employment opportunities. Pathways, which are part of MC2020, are supported via recommendations in "Redesigning America's Community Colleges." and by a Complete College America Report, Guided Pathways to Success: Boosting College Completion.

The latter defines pathways as:
- informed, limited course choices;
- early selection of a major or meta-major (a broad cluster of majors/Career Clusters);
- academic maps that provide a semester-by-semester schedule of courses;
- milestone courses that must be completed in prescriptive order; and
- intrusive advising for students not on track.

A variety of initiatives at the college have already begun to address these definitions. The spring initiative will focus on conceptualizing the possible routes from credentials to degrees to upward mobility in career progressions

Faculty and staff with experience in career exploration and credit by exam and those whose disciplines are closely aligned with awarding credit for experiences will be invited to work on these programs. All changes to process and procedure will be presented to the faculty via the faculty council and curriculum committee, as appropriate.

Contact Seth Kamen, seth.kamen@montgomerycollege.edu or 240-567-4255, if you have an interest in these areas.

Achieving the Promise Launches ATP Academy

Dr. Jason Rivera
Collegewide Director of Learning Centers

> "*By now you can appreciate the complexities of closing the achievement gap (CTAG) or—as I will now refer to it—Achieving the Promise! We have measured it, theorized around it, and studied best practices for remedying it. Now we are ready to act.*"

> *Dr. DeRionne Pollard,*
> *Montgomery College President*

In 2013, a dedicated group of Montgomery College faculty, staff, and students in collaboration with community partners like Montgomery County Public Schools and other community based organizations developed a set of recommendations to guide the College to close the achievement gap for African American and Latino students. The work of the original taskforce was followed-up by the Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Implementation Team, a group of Montgomery College faculty, staff, and administrators, who developed a series of plans to move the recommendations forward. Both of those teams deserve kudos for their hard work and the leadership they provided in moving the College toward addressing the achievement gap. This semester, Academic Affairs is implementing a research-based program, Achieving the Promise Academy, that pulls together many of the recommendations submitted by the CTAG Implementation Team.

Background and Overview

The Montgomery College mission clearly states, "We empower our students to change their lives, and we enrich the life of our community. We are accountable for results." This mission statement holds true for not just a portion of the community, but applies to all of Montgomery County's residents. Still, the evidence indicates that the lives of our African-American and Latino students are enriched at a rate far lower than those of their peers. Clear evidence of an achievement gap exists when the performance, retention, and graduation rates of these students are compared with those of the rest of the student population. As a result, one of the FY13 initiatives in the MC2020 strategic plan directed the College to develop, implement, and secure resources to encourage meaningful student engagement opportunities and reduce the educational achievement gap for Hispanic/Latino and African-American students, especially males. In alignment with the MC2020 plan, this semester Academic Affairs is introducing the Achieving the Promise Academy (ATPA).

Introducing the Achieving the Promise Academy

Montgomery College's Achieving the Promise Academy (ATPA) is a multifaceted endeavor with the goal of increasing the retention, persistence, graduation, and completion rates of African-American and Latino students, especially males. Using research from national coalitions (RAMC[1], M2C3[2]) and achievement gap scholarship (Harris III & Wood, 2013[3];

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[1] *Redesigning America's Middle Class: A Coalition of Community Colleges*
[2] *Minority Male Community College Collaborative*
[3] *Harris III, F. & Wood, L. (2013). Student success for men of color in community colleges: A review of published literature and research, 1998-2012. Journal of*

continued from page 4

Harper & Associates, 2014[4]; Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013[5]), the mission of ATPA is to prepare students for success in college through academic coaching, tutoring, and the creation of Learning Success Cohort Communities (LSCC). LSCCs, which are focused around specific academic programs (e.g., Business, Criminal Justice, Communications), pair ATPA coaches with students through a cohort model that provides participating students with guidance, mentoring, and support as they work toward the completion of a degree at Montgomery College. Students who participate in LSCCs will benefit from an array of academic supports and build closer relationships with peers, professors, and tutors while working towards graduation.

The goals of the Achieving the Promise Academy are as follows:

- To increase year-to-year retention as well as graduation rates of African American and

Latino students enrolled at Montgomery College.
- To increase African-American and Latino participation in academic support programs.
- To create Learning Success Cohort Communities that increase the academic successes of African-American and Latino male students as evidenced by GPA, course pass rates, retention rates, transfer rates, and graduation rates.

Benefits for participating in a LSCC include:

- Exposure to smaller academic support com-

munities with peers who have similar academic courses and/or career interests.
- Access to tutoring and other academic support services (workshops, coaching, academic planning).
- Orientation to college resources and services that support academic success.
- Participation in planned study sessions.

ATPA Coaches: Profile

The ATPA boasts an impressive group of coaches who represent an array of fields and disciplines including education, criminal justice, applied & natural sciences, engineering, and psychology, to

name a few. Additionally, all of the coaches have strong academic records with eight holding Doctoral Degrees, four holding Juris Doctorates, and twenty-three holding Masters Degrees in various disciplines.

ATPA coaches are integral to Montgomery College's Achieving the Promise efforts. The individuals serving in these roles will be responsible for providing students with academic mentoring and guidance. Additionally, coaches will facilitate a series of Cultural Navigation workshops focused on preparing students to navigate the college and leverage available academic supports (e.g., tutoring, counseling, and advising).

Diversity in Higher Education, (6)3, 174-185.

4   Harper, S. & Associates. (2014). *Succeeding in the city: A report from the New York City Black and Latino High School Achievement Study. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania. Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.*

5   Saenz, V. B., Bukoski, B. E., Lu, C., & Rodgriguez, S. (2013). Latino males in Texas community colleges: A phenomenological study of masculinity constructs and their effect on college experiences. *Journal of African American Males in Education, (4)2, 82-102.*

Outstanding Faculty Awards for Full Time Faculty

At its meeting on February 4, the Faculty Council unanimously approved a new Montgomery College Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Award (MCOFA) program. The focus of MCOFA, which will replace FOSA, is on teaching and counseling, since helping students succeed through teaching and counseling is Montgomery College's main purpose. Full-time faculty who have been at the College for three years are eligible.

A total of 14 Outstanding Faculty Awards for full-time faculty will be given. Thirteen awards will celebrate excellence in the following areas:

- The Excellence in Teaching and Excellence in Counseling and Academic Advising will recognize individual faculty for sustained excellence in teaching or counseling.
- Excellence in Scholarly or Professional Accomplishments
- Excellence in Service to the Institution or the Community

One award will celebrate the Montgomery College Professor of the Year. This exciting addition to the annual recognition of faculty excellence and accomplishment will recognize the nominated individual whose work in each of the areas articulated above has been extraordinary.

In 2016, each recipient of the first 13 awards will receive $2,000, and the MC Professor of the Year will be awarded $5,000. All recipients will receive their awards from the President of the College at the Closing Meeting of the spring semester. In addition, the MC Professor of the Year will receive his or her award on stage at the annual Montgomery College Commencement to demonstrate the significance of faculty in student achievement and will accompany, follow, or precede the Mace Bearer in the Commencement procession.

In the next few weeks, the process, criteria, and timeline for nominations will be announced.

Flipped Classroom Symposium Promotes Active Learning

The Office of E-Learning, Innovation, and Teaching Excellence (ELITE) held its annual faculty showcase at the Rockville campus December 11 with almost 60 people hearing four different presentations on the flipped classroom model.

Jenny Hatleberg, Maisha Duncan, and Niyati Pandya, Montgomery College campus instructional librarians, began by describing how flipped library instruction sessions provide students the opportunity to develop information literacy skills through active learning.

Dr. Deborah Stearns, Rockville campus psychology faculty, contributed to the discussion by defining flipping in terms of an instruc-tional design mind-set and using a backward course design approach that incorporates insights from the flipped classroom model.

Dr. Leah Allen, biology professor at Rockville, offered a number of flipping strategies she used in her Anatomy and Physiology II course during Summer I. Her talk took away the mystery of flipping the classroom and answered questions such as why, how it worked, and lessons learned.

Drs. Susan Bontems and Don Newlin, chemistry and biology professors at Germantown, have been utilizing the flipped classroom format for several years. They shared valuable strategies for pre-class preparation required of students and best practic-es that have been identified in their flipped classroom courses.

Why so much interest?

The flipped classroom is a strategy that continues to make professors feel a bit scared and uncomfortable, and many just want to learn more. By definition, "flipping" a class means designing lessons in such a way that students learn content listening to lectures at home while classroom time is reserved for content application. It is a teaching strategy that allows instructors to engage more actively with students in the classroom by practicing the concepts to be learned using active and collaborative learning techniques. This practice leads to increased faculty and student satisfaction, while at the same time resulting in meaningful and lasting learning.

The 2015 ELITE faculty showcase had a strong and positive audience response. Faculty were inspired by the flipped classroom pioneers and presenters who offered their knowledge and expertise so that others could more easily follow in their footsteps. Link to the event https://youtu.be/8xZkjxS-bl4.

Making Assessment Matter

Higher education is experiencing increased scrutiny to provide evidence of student learning and skills acquisition. This scrutiny is exacerbated by concerns over the rising cost and quality of higher education, as well as the need to increase college completion rates for global competitiveness. We need to consider our assessment activities and how we can best utilize the evidence and results of these processes to inform current and future decisions for the success of our students and our organization. Too often, the assessment process overshadows the use of its findings to improve student success and educational effectiveness.

A recent article in Change Magazine, "Beyond Compliance: Making Assessment Matter," highlights that **assessment will matter more when we shift from an external compliance focus that reports to accreditors, governmental agencies, and educational associations to an internal focus that uses the assessment results to inform student success and institutional improvements**. The article emphasizes that for assessment to matter it must be consequential to continuous improvement. The article offers several suggestions to use evidence of student learning effectively:

1) **Assessment data must be actionable and focused** on the needs and interests of the end users. This requires involving faculty, staff, and administrators at the beginning of the assessment activity to craft the assessment questions and at the end to review assessment data results.

2) **Effective assessment is embedded** in the ongoing work of teaching and learning where results inform and improve the student educational experience.

3) **Assessment results should be made available** in understandable forms to a variety of audiences, thus addressing internal and external needs.

4) **Use assessment results to effectuate changes** in policies and practices that include all facets of academic disciplines, program reviews, student affairs initiatives, and co-curricular activities.

5) **Tailor assessment** work so that is it customized to the size and mission of your institution.

6) **Assessment requires leadership from all levels** of the institution, especially senior leadership who will use evidence of assessment outcomes to promote institutional improvements.

These suggestions inform our assessment activities at Montgomery College. When conducting any assessment activity, be it program assessment, student affairs assessment, or administrative assessment, all parties involved should be included in assessment planning to frame the questions and to examine critically any assessment results to inform institutional decision making that leads to institutional and student success.

Sources: Ku, George D., Stanley O. Ikenberry, Natasha A. Jankowski, Timothy Reese Cain, Peter T. Ewell, Pat Hutchings, and Jillian Kinzie. "Beyond Compliance: Making Assessment Matter." Change Magazine, Sept/Oct. 2015.