

**Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of**

**Montgomery College
900 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850**

**By an Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Prepared after study of the institution's Self-Study Report
And a visit to the campus on March 2-5, 2008**

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This report represents the view of the evaluation Team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Montgomery College. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

to

Montgomery College

March 2-5, 2008

Date when instruction began: 1946

Year of first graduating class: 1948

President: Dr. Brian K. Johnson

Chief Academic Officer: Dr. Mary Kay Shartle-Galotto

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Roberta F. Shulman

Executive Summary

Montgomery College (MC) was founded in 1946 as a comprehensive community college to provide educational opportunities to the community it serves. It is one of the oldest community colleges in Maryland and has grown to an enrollment of 27,700 making it the largest community college in Maryland. The College educates students in day, evening, and distance learning classes on three campuses and two sites. The Takoma campus founded was the original campus and was renamed the Takoma/Silver Springs campus. It has an enrollment of 6,100 students. The Rockville campus was established in 1965 and has an enrollment of 15,800. The newest campus, the Germantown campus was started in 1975 and has 5,800 students studying there. The College provides Workforce Development and Continuing Education programs for more than 46,000 students at all three campuses, two additional sites, Gaithersburg and Wheaton and at a number of other locations throughout its service area. More than 70,000 residents take either credit or non-credit courses at the College. Sixty-one percent of these students study on a part-time basis. Sixty percent of all Montgomery high school graduates who went to college in Maryland came to Montgomery College. The student body is diverse with no majority population. There has been significant enrollment growth in all areas, especially in recent years. The physical plants of all the campuses have need for more space to serve the ever-increasing student enrollment.

The mission of the College has four tenets: “changing lives; enriching our community; holding ourselves accountable; we will tend to our internal spirit.” The last tenet is more fully defined in “Our Spirit”, a list of seven guiding principles or core values. Both “Our Mission” and “Our Spirit” are displayed side by side throughout the campus. “Our Mission” is accomplished through the “College Goals and Objectives, 2005” which deals with access and retention, the learning environment, achievement, quality of life, capacity, and funding. More is being done to relate goals and objectives to the principles of “Our Spirit.”

The implementation of mission requires planning and resource allocation. Planning activities are embedded in “Montgomery College: A Learning College” and, more recently, in the revised Academic Master Plan and in the deliberations of the Academic Area Review (AAR). The budget process is tied to the planning process, however, more must be done to tie strategic planning to tactical planning. Efforts are under way to streamline the planning process and make it more understandable with goals and objectives that are measurable. The implementation of the TracDat system or other software that helps track assessment efforts will contribute to institutional renewal.

The operating budget is appropriately distributed. The College, however, is challenged by a lack of sufficient funding in both the operations and capital budgets. The operational budget is strained by ever increasing enrollments while the capital budget is not keeping up with the need for additional capacity and renovation of existing capacity. Recent mid-year reductions of County support further stretches already over-extended instructional and student services.

The Self-Study Report states that, “The president and the BOT set policy for the College, and decisions on procedures and implementation are made at the presidential and executive vice presidential level with input from other levels of management and from the formal governance

structures: the Academic Assembly, Faculty Councils, and Staff Senate.” Shared governance is fostered through the president and vice presidents meeting regularly with these groups. Despite this some that feel more communication is needed before major decisions are made.

The Academic Assembly has begun an important process of reviewing the shared governance processes at MC. This is an important task which should not be delayed. Increased communications within the College community will further improve the administration of the College.

The organization structure of the College functions effectively both centrally and at the campus level. Non-academic administrative tasks, in some cases, are performed by faculty members as administrative associates. The Board of Trustees, the president and the administrative team are highly committed and dedicated to “Our Mission” and “Our Spirit.”

The College is committed to integrity in all it does. Concern for integrity in the learning process is clearly evident.

Institutional assessment is occurring in several ways. The individuality of campuses is fully recognized in these processes. The College Area Review, the Administrative Area Review and the Academic Area Review processes have feedback procedures that have been used to better accomplish the mission of the institution. Again, the use of TracDat or similar software will facilitate more effective tracking of and communication about outcomes assessment.

The College is currently reassessing its enrollment management plan. Enrollment data is being collected and analyzed. More importantly the College has invested in a number of programs to ensure retention of the students it initially enrolls. While advisement is actively coupled with the registration process an assessment of the advisement process would benefit the institution and the students it serves. Students set goals upon entry to the College but these are not always updated in a formal manner. While retention is occurring there is concern that not all students succeed equally. Renewed attention is being paid to those groups whose success rate does not meet the college’s goals.

The College offers a wide array of student support services. The First Year Experience Program is highly effective in ensuring higher rates of retention. There are a number of effective programs that support students with special needs but a recent report supports the need for additional resources in this area. There is a need to increase electronic tracking systems for student services. As frequently happens in most colleges, the demand for student services is highest during peak periods of registration.

The faculty are an obvious strength of the institution. They are qualified and committed to the teaching/learning process. Although the hiring process is sometimes perceived to be long and cumbersome, it has yielded highly competent faculty. The institution is moving toward its goal of having 65% of its faculty full-time. It is currently at the 60% level. Inherent in the use of part-time faculty is a labor intensive hiring process. Faculty are actively engaged in curriculum revision and development. Full-time faculty have many opportunities for professional development through the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Center for Professional and

Organizational Development. These opportunities are not as readily available to part-time faculty. Newly hired faculty must participate in a structured orientation program. While there is a formal process for evaluating full-time faculty, there is the need to standardize the evaluation processes for part-time faculty. The evaluation of department chairs is not consistent.

The College confers Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Science (A.S.), Associate of Applied science (A.A.S.), Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) and Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.) degrees, Certificates and Letters of Recognition. Full and part-time students take courses at three campuses and at a number of off-campus sites in 109 different programs of study with 230 different specialized tracks utilizing multiple teaching modalities including in-class, distance and blended learning, as well as accelerated course offerings. Academic programs are available for multiple skill levels, including collegiate, pre-collegiate, and pre-developmental levels in its Workforce Development and Continuing Education division.

To ensure consistency, relevance, appropriateness, and academic rigor, the initiation, revision and elimination of all programs and courses are vetted through the College-wide Curriculum Committee (CCC).

The *Montgomery College 2007 Performance Accountability Report* to the Maryland Higher Education Commission documents that relatively large numbers of students transfer to four-year institutions. Follow-up surveys show that these students perform at acceptable levels at their transfer institutions.

A college-wide syllabus template fosters uniform learning outcomes that are used in the Academic Area Review (AAR) process. Many courses and programs promote the acquisition of a broad spectrum of knowledge and academic skills.

The Academic Area Review made recommendations concerning the need for a revision of the College's General Education requirements. As a result of this, the General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Assembly's College-wide Curriculum Committee, is actively reviewing the General Education requirements for the College. This has led to the Proposal for Revision to the General Education Program to be vetted through the governance process.

The College assesses incoming students to determine their preparedness for college-level courses. There are programs and courses that address native speakers in mathematics, reading and English language courses who fall below cut-off scores in one or more of these areas. Non-native students who lack English proficiency are placed in the American English Language Program or in noncredit offerings administered in Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WD&CE).

Montgomery College offers 113 certificates which are published in the *Class Schedule*. In 2007, WD&CE division of the College offered 4,234 courses (46,892 enrollment) in adult education, health sciences, ESL, art and design (in conjunction with the recently created School of Art and Design), and business and information technology. The Gudelsky Institute for Technology Education (GITE)/Applied Technologies also has 13 articulation agreements with local high school and apprenticeship programs.

WD&CE offers a number of special programs that support the academic-credit mission of MC. These include Pathways to Success, The Challenge, The Graduate Transition, and the Information Technology Institute. Collaboration between WD&CE and academic departments has led to clearer communication to students about educational options in specific disciplines and more effective use of college resources. The WD & CE also offers third party non-credit courses through Education to Go, Condensed Curriculum, the American Management Association, and TravelLearn through appropriate contractual arrangements.

The College partners with the Montgomery County Schools through programs that include the Academy Capstone Experience, Gateway to College, and the College Institute. The College offers courses using Distance or Distributed Learning. Although the courses are evaluated often for improvement, there is a higher attrition rate in Distance or Distributed Learning courses than in classroom based instruction. The College gives credit for IB, CLEP, DANTES, and ACE-certified courses and through portfolio assessment.

The College has a course outcomes assessment process, Outcomes Assessment (OA). It is supported by discipline faculty, the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator(s), OA Faculty Cadre and OA Data Resource Team. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Handbook MC 2006 effectively outlines the planning, piloting, implementation and analysis of results.

The College Area Review Committee (CARC), consisting of faculty, staff and administrators, oversees the CAR, formerly the Academic Area Report (AAR), for academic programs and disciplines. The Administrative Area Review process (ADAR) reviews the institution's administrative units. A detailed format and questionnaire supports the CAR process. The Projected Master Plan Cycle indicates a five year rotation cycle for all academic programs and disciplines.

A proposed revision of the General Education plan would ensure assessment of all general education competencies and proficiencies while increasing faculty participation in the outcomes assessment process.

Each Montgomery College program has program outcomes linked to course outcomes. There is clear evidence that learning outcomes are communicated via the course syllabus to students. Students also indicate a keen awareness of student learning outcomes from faculty members as well as advisors. The development and implementation of a common course syllabus featuring measurable course outcomes is a standard college requirement. The assessment process has engendered extensive discussion among faculty about course content, methodology, and teaching strategies.

The team commends the institution for its forthright and comprehensive assessment of its policies, practices, and activities. The Steering Committee for the Self-Study deserves special praise and recognition for their job in preparing an all-inclusive Self-Study process that accurately reflects the care and concern that members of the entire college community have for its students; the accomplishment of its mission; and the commitment to "Our Spirit." The team especially commends and thanks the co-chairs for their attention to detail and for all the support

and assistance they provided to the team. The team thanks the Board of Trustees, the president, the administration, faculty and staff for their hospitality, cooperation, and openness during the visit.

The suggestions and recommendations included both in this report and the College's Self-Study provide the basis for adjustments and additions to the College's strategic and tactical plans that can only improve an already well-functioning and highly effective learning institution. It is in that spirit that the team shares this report with the college community.

1: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The institution's mission clearly defines the institution's purpose within higher education. The Mission has as its principle tenets "changing lives, enriching our community, holding ourselves accountable, and we will tend to our internal spirit." The goals and objectives that arise from the Mission are embedded in the strategic plans. There are some in the College who have expressed concern regarding the College's ability to realistically achieve every aspect of the plan.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The development of the mission statement was inclusive.
- ❖ "Our Mission" and "Our Spirit" are prominently posted throughout the College.
- ❖ A master plan is in place and is being followed according to the time table.
- ❖ College goals and objectives undergo periodic review to ensure continuing alignment with the mission.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **The College should continue to periodically review its goals and objectives to ensure their clarity and completeness.**

2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

While the planning and budgeting process in the past has not always been well understood, effectively communicated and participatory, recent changes have produced a much improved system.

A summary of the new planning process indicates an attention to previous weaknesses.

On August 28, 2007, administrators, faculty, staff, and students met to update the College's goals. As a result of that meeting, three college-wide goals for FY 2010-2012 were identified along with specific focuses for each goal. The draft goals were presented to a college-wide meeting on October 11, 2007 and, subsequent to some revisions, were endorsed by the college.

At a meeting on February 21, 2008, administrators, faculty, staff, and students met to propose, discuss, and vote on strategies to achieve the goals and outcomes. The group made their recommendations after reviewing data provided by the Middle States Self-Study report, the 2007 Performance Accountability Indicators Report, the 2007 SWOT survey results, Montgomery County demographic information and the 2007 Staff Senate survey results.

Those recommendations will be considered by the VPs, provosts, deans, and directors during an upcoming meeting designed to prioritize the strategies and develop a strategic plan.

During fall 2008, each campus and unit must develop a strategic action plan detailing three actions they propose to undertake to implement each college-wide goal. They may also indicate two local goals for action. Accessing information from their various constituencies the unit head is responsible for prioritizing requests and submitting the unit's proposal using a Strategic Planning Form which requires an indication of who will be responsible for the plan, resources needed, justification, and method of assessment.

Thereafter, a meeting of VPs and provosts will consider the various proposals and develop the college's strategic plan for the year and budgets accordingly. The decisions are then communicated to deans, directors and department chairs to share with their constituencies.

Periodic progress reports are submitted to the Office for Planning and Institutionalized Effectiveness for distribution to the VPs and provosts.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The College has established an Office for Planning and Institutionalized Effectiveness which brings together the academic and administrative planning and assessment under the leadership of a single VP.
- ❖ The college has a systematic, comprehensive, integrated process which closely links planning and budget decisions.
- ❖ The college has made substantial progress during the past several years to provide for better communication about and inclusion in the planning process.
- ❖ Manuals and planning documents are comprehensive, thorough, and readily available.
- ❖ The planning process involves an assessment component to ensure progress towards proposed initiatives.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The College needs to continue to explore ways to expand participation in and understanding of the planning process.**
- ❖ **The College needs to continue efforts to provide information consistently to all members of the college community concerning planning and budget considerations, decisions, and progress.**
- ❖ **The College needs to continue efforts to streamline the planning process.**
- ❖ **The College needs to establish a process to systematically update the Academic Master Plan and assess its effectiveness.**
- ❖ **The College needs to establish a process to systematically review College goals and objectives.**

3: Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an Institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The Self-Study Report, along with a multitude of supporting documents (i.e. the FY 2007 audit report, the Facilities Master Plan, the FY 2008 Operations Budget), all provide convincing evidence that the resources necessary to achieve the institution's principle mission and goals are available, accessible, and distributed by way of a credible process.

Importantly, the budget development process embraces the necessary institutional participation which assures that all major constituents have the opportunity to participate in the resource allocation decisions.

As with many public higher education institutions, Montgomery College finds itself in need of more operating and capital funds to support rising costs, expanded services for a growing and more diverse enrollment, and to restore and retrofit aging facilities. While the pursuit of increased resources remains a priority, competing internal needs appear to follow a collective process for the distribution of finite resources.

The exceptionally detailed analysis and frank narration included in the June 30, 2007 Management Discussion and Analysis (a vital component of the institution's year end audit report) present a clear and straight forward picture of the strong underlying financial structure at Montgomery College.

The audited financial statements (unqualified) are supported with twenty pages of highly detailed Notes to the Financial Statements, offering a high level of analysis in support of the requisite financial statements.

The independent audit report is supplemented with pre-GASB financial statements and a report of the independent auditor on internal control, all of which give the reader and every stakeholder a significant level of financial disclosure, underscoring the strong financial standing of this institution.

The Budgets for FY 2008 and FY 2009 are robust, seeking growth of 9.6% and 9.3% respectively, to support rising costs of ongoing operations and to add a substantial number of new positions (64.5 additional positions in FY 2008 and an additional 90.25 positions in FY 2009).

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ Montgomery College has developed a collective budgeting process, supported with critical planning tools, to achieve and sustain its principal mission and goals. The Facilities Master Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, Information Technology Strategic Plan are all utilized in helping to assemble the annual budget plan in order to continue essential operations and services and to accomplish agreed upon strategic initiatives.
- ❖ Financial administration and reporting at Montgomery College is highly professional. Moreover, senior management and the Board of Trustees have voluntarily adopted several key provisions of the Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2002, committing the college and the Board's Audit Committee to best audit practices. This further supports MSCHE's Standard 6 on Integrity.
- ❖ The Computerized Maintenance Management System, supported by a well documented facilities condition assessment, enables the college to plan and to address facilities needs in a priority order linked to availability of resources. The November 2007 Facilities Condition Assessment Report identifies \$66 million in backlogged renewal and restoration projects.
- ❖ The self-study report on Standard 9: Student Support Services confirms that significant resources are indeed committed to MC's key mission tenet that "Students are the center of our universe". A similar acknowledgement is recited under Standard 11: Educational Offerings, recognizing the comprehensive academic support center network to support and enhance student learning.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **In the current economic climate, public funding for new capital construction and renovation is rarely sufficient for the pressing needs of public higher education. Montgomery College should continue to use its well articulated planning protocols for linking high impact needs with available funding.**
- ❖ **Use of any portion of the unrestricted fund balance to support the annual operating budget should be limited in order to assure that reserves are not systematically reduced or depleted. The current underlying strength of the college's financial structure should be guarded by assuring that annual budgetary costs remain in balance with annually recurring revenues.**
- ❖ **Continue to monitor costs with due care that assures mission critical services are funded in balance with resource limitations.**

4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The Board of Trustees consists of nine members, each having a six-year staggered term, and one student member, who is appointed to a one-year term. The Montgomery College Board of Trustees is actively and appropriately engaged in the life of the College. It does so through policy adoption and budgetary oversight. The president and the College administration are effectively implementing policy and providing vision and leadership that have ensured that teaching and learning are taking place at a high levels.

The Self-Study Report states: “The principle of shared governance is fully recognized in the *College Policies and Procedures* (P&P): ‘It is important that all members of the College community recognize and understand the vital role played by the various campus and College organizations in the governance of the campuses and the College.’” The team found that shared governance opportunities are provided through councils, committees, and College procedures, i.e. formal governance structures: the Academic Assembly, Faculty Councils, and Staff Senate. The president and vice presidents meet regularly with these groups. Despite this there is still a feeling on the part of some that not all decisions have been made with adequate faculty input, e.g., the initiation of the Learning College. A review of the governance processes at MC has begun. This bodes well for the institution as it grapples with a changing environment and with changing institutional and student needs.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The Board of Trustees actively and appropriately promotes “Our Mission” and “Our Spirit.”
- ❖ The Board of Trustees and the president seek input from governance structures, faculty and students in regularly scheduled meetings.
- ❖ The College provides opportunities for involving faculty, staff and students to be involved in governance and decision-making processes.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The review of the governance processes by the Academic Assembly should continue and its findings should be carefully considered by the College community.**
- ❖ **The College should formalize a communications plan to improve the flow between and among faculty and staff and the governance structures.**

5: Administration

The institution's administrative structure and service facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement and support the institution's organization and governance.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The College functions within the complex administrative environment of a multi-campus community college. Over the past few years there has been considerable attention to the administrative structure of the institution with a focus on the achievement of institutional goals, administrative effectiveness, hiring, decision making, and communication. The College conducted a comprehensive participative search process in the selection of the College president Dr. Brian K. Johnson.

The College has implemented multiple assessment processes to determine the level of effectiveness of both administrators and their units. College administrators are held accountable for meeting their responsibilities through annual performance reviews based upon key performance indicators. The "One College" philosophy influences and guides administrative decision making across the College. The decision making process at the College is based upon the use of research and data provided by the Office of Institutional research and analysis.

It is noted that there are a number of unfilled positions within the Human Resource Department.

Significant accomplishment, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practice:

- ❖ Recruitment and hiring policies and procedures are well documented and comprehensive.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **There should be a continuing review of the administrative organization across the College including reporting capacity, the role and function of the academic chairs, and allocation of support staff.**
- ❖ **The importance and significance of the "One College" concept should be reinforced in particular with reference to the current and future allocation of resources throughout the College.**
- ❖ **The College community should be notified of changed or added administrative positions. This will strengthen the understanding and rationale of various administrative structures throughout the College.**
- ❖ **The institution should attempt to fill all vacancies within the Department of Human Resources.**

6: Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

Conflict of interest policies are in place and are being followed. An annual external audit by an independent firm ensures the financial integrity of the institutions finances. For the past seven years, the College has received audit reports without any qualifications. The College conducts internal audits of individual units. The College budgets are evaluated as they move through a prescribed path involving an evaluation of budgetary aspects of all academic and administrative services. Budgets are further reviewed by the Montgomery County Council and the State of Maryland.

The integrity of the academic process is ensured through the policies and procedures governing student complaints, concerns, and grade disputes contained in the *Insider's Guide*, in the *Student Code of Conduct* (SCC) and in Academic Regulations.

The College is addressing plagiarism in a number of ways including workshops given by librarians, a writing manual developed by the English department, and a Writing in the Disciplines Program.

The hiring, evaluation, and dismissal are fair and impartial with very detailed hiring procedures which are carefully monitored and controlled. Care and attention is given to diversity in these processes. The College complies with the terms of its labor contracts, as well its policies and procedures.

The College values the importance of academic freedom and carefully responds to external complaints that challenge this important right of the College and faculty.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The Board of Trustees, the president, and the administration fulfill their roles with integrity.
- ❖ For the past seven years, the College has received audits without any qualifications.
- ❖ There are conflict of interest policies in place which are being followed throughout the campus.
- ❖ To combat the rising trend in plagiarism the College has developed, among other initiatives, the Writing in the Disciplines Program.

- ❖ The College scrupulously adheres to its academic freedom policy.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **Members of the College community should continue to promote integrity in student research and scholarship by developing and publicizing both the definitions of plagiarism and the instructional techniques that will enable students to ethically meet College approved research standards.**

7: Institutional Assessment

That evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The College is moving toward the development of a comprehensive institutional assessment plan. The Office of Policy, Planning, and Research requires that every unit's goals and objectives strategically link with the goals and objectives of the College. The development of an Academic Master Plan that serves as a resource for the College to best understand the community, students and the needs of the workforce.

The implementation of assessment practices including the Trustee Information Program, College Area Review, Academic Area Review, Administrative Area Review, Community College Survey of Student Engagement are examples of an institution moving toward developing a culture of assessment that is consistent with the essence of Standard 7.

In trying to meet the goals of this standard the College has attempted to reach out and seek input from many groups within the college. As with any participative process some members of the college community have expressed concerns over not enough participation in this process.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The Board of Trustees has implemented a specific monthly review of the major areas of the institution in order to ensure that the College is meeting goals, objectives, and performance standards.
- ❖ The enhanced results of the CCSSE from 2004 to 2006 is a strong indication of a College paying close attention to improvement of assessment results.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The College needs to devote more attention to the coordination of assessment processes and practices.**
- ❖ **The goals, objectives, and results should be communicated in a manner that can be more fully understood by the entire college community.**
- ❖ **It is recommended that the College develop an institutional assessment plan document with periodic progress reports for distribution to the College community.**

8: Student Admissions and Retention

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The admissions policies reflect the mission of the institution. Montgomery College is an open access institution dedicated to serving its students and community. The college offers multiple points of access for students with diverse entry skills and has developed procedures to ensure appropriate academic assessment and course placement. The college is commended for ensuring that all students who take the Accuplacer Placement Test are required to attend an orientation session that explains the meaning of the test scores and the correlation between the scores and achievement through appropriate scheduling. Montgomery College is applauded for offering programs that build on the students' entry abilities ranging from skill building courses in writing, reading and mathematics and English as a Second Language, a second chance program for students who have not completed high school, programs that assist students to develop achieving behaviors to the college's highly acclaimed Montgomery Scholars Program that offers exceptional education achievers an opportunity to study at the University of Cambridge in England. Students validate the mission statement, "We are in the business of changing lives" by praising faculty and citing the warm, nurturing and supportive environment. Students enrolled in the Gateway to College Program were particularly vocal. Some described their experience as transformative which underscores the significance of the College's efforts to improve this program's outcomes.

The MC Catalogue and Website clearly outlines comprehensive information on the College's academic programs, Admissions, Registration and Financial Aid. Financial Aid operations are exemplary evidenced by its default rate, cross campus coordination, innovative tools such as the central phone system and use of document imaging and notable absence of student complaints. The College's website provides information on transfer and retention outcomes.

Enrollment trends show declining high school enrollments over the next few years, compounded by a steady decline in the enrollment of adult students. This suggests that the College would benefit from implementing the strategies outlined in the Enrollment Management plan that was included in draft form in the Self-Study documents. Montgomery College's enrollment efforts are significantly enhanced by the College's reputation for excellence which is widely evidenced in significant publications including the NY Times and by its substantial partnerships with prestigious institutions such as the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The college is commended for ensuring that all students who take the Accuplacer Placement Test are required to attend an orientation session that explains the meaning of

the test scores and the correlation between the scores and achievement through appropriate scheduling.

- ❖ Montgomery College is applauded for offering programs that build on the students' entry abilities ranging from a second chance program for students who have not completed high school to the college's highly acclaimed Montgomery Scholars Program.
- ❖ Montgomery College's enrollment efforts are significantly enhanced by the College's reputation for excellence which is widely evidenced in significant publications including the NY Times and by its substantial partnerships with prestigious institutions such as the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.
- ❖ Financial Aid operations are exemplary as evidenced by its default rate, college-wide coordination and innovative use of tools such as the central phone system and document imaging.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **The College should finalize and implement its Enrollment Management plan.**

9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for the students.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

Montgomery College is commended for developing a college-wide, sustained focus on student learning. The mission commits the College to “the business of changing lives” and states that the College will hold itself “accountable for key results centered around learning.” The mission statement is prominently displayed college-wide. The mission statement is supported by the Student Success Credo which defines student success and contributing college attributes and actions. The Learning College reaffirms the college’s emphasis on learning and provides an operational structure to guide and support college-wide learning objectives. The Learning College emphasizes the development of retention strategies that meet the standard of best practice. The First Year Experience helps students to develop their educational plan and assist them in developing achieving behaviors. The Learning Communities strive to fully engage students in their own learning and helps them to develop an ability to integrate and synthesize ideas from a number of subject areas. Service Learning provides opportunities for students to learn experientially and through reflection, consider the impact of their work on their communities.

Montgomery College provides well developed on-line student support services. Academic support services offered through tutoring and the learning labs are widely used. Students report satisfaction with these services as evidence by the CSSEE. Student support personnel are appropriately credentialed. It is important to note that the tutoring Center is largely staffed by faculty.

Student records are appropriately maintained and secured. Policies on student privacy rights are published in appropriate college documents. The College should ensure that policies and procedures for the Code of Student Conduct, student grievance procedures, and the statement of the college’s educational contract with its students be clearly written and easily accessible to current and prospective students. The College should maintains records of student complaints and the resulting resolution of these complaints.

Some assessment has occurred in student support areas. It includes a review of Student Development courses conducted in 2004 and the Financial Aid Customer Service Survey. Additionally, the Master Plan Cycle for the College Area Review indicates that the Career and Transfer Center and the DSS Support Centers are scheduled for review in 2009. The 2006 CSSEE report yielded low scores for the frequency of student interaction with academic advising, a finding that remained from the 2004 CCSSEE report. The August 2007 Counseling and Advising Outcomes Assessment Survey found that most student respondents “seemed aware of the availability of the College’s counseling and advising resources” and reported that “they [students] can attain their education and career goals without counseling and advising assistance.” Moreover, an interview with a number of students revealed significant frustration

with the advising system citing errors in scheduling recommendations. Students also expressed discomfort with student-success courses, such as DS107, a credit course which transfers only as an elective and not as a requirement.

The College acknowledges the concerns about advising. It stated in the Self-Study that there should be “an examination of the college-wide advising system to ensure that students who need advising receive it appropriately and that advising practices are assessed in relation to current national advising pedagogy. The team strongly supports this recommendation.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ Montgomery College is commended for developing a college-wide and sustained focus on student learning.
- ❖ Montgomery College provides well developed on-line student support services.
- ❖ The Learning College emphasizes the development of retention strategies that meet the standard of best practice.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The College should more prominently and widely publish its existing statement regarding student complaints or grievances to ensure that they are easily accessible to students.**
- ❖ **Examine the college-wide advising system to ensure that students who need advising receive it appropriately and that advising practices are assessed in relation to current national advising pedagogy.**

10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

Montgomery College faculty hold appropriate credentials for their teaching positions as evidenced by the self-study report in that 95% hold a masters degree or higher.

Faculty qualifications are kept in line with standards that are outlined in the self-study. The cited standards are used in full-time and adjunct faculty assignments. Due to many sections taught by adjunct faculty and turnover there is a need to recruit part-time faculty. This process is less structured and approval is granted quicker than full-time faculty. This is normal in most institutions.

Curriculum is developed with input from a process that involves faculty administration and staff for all campus locations. Curriculum development is an aspect of faculty development.. The curriculum manual is kept current.

A process for full-time faculty evaluations is in place but the review of adjunct faculty should be reviewed. Department chairs hold faculty status and serve as colleagues rather than supervisors.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The college has highly qualified and very dedicated full and part-time faculty.
- ❖ Full and part-time faculty plays a significant role in curriculum development.
- ❖ Faculty takes part in college provided professional development opportunities.
- ❖ There are procedures for evaluating full-time faculty.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **A plan for utilizing more full-time faculty should be developed to address the difficulty in finding adjunct faculty in some departments.**

11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The College offers a wide array of subjects in over 100 different non-credit, certificate, and degree programs. While these programs may be taught on one or more of the College's three campuses, the institution assures that all curricula are commonly planned, and that they share commonly developed and well articulated objectives. Regular and periodic meetings of faculty from common disciplines across the College focus on continuing considerations of shared planning and mutually-agreed commitments to common student learning outcomes while ensuring a respect for legitimate pedagogical differences. In addition, the College has established a long-term plan for the development and full implementation of a systematic approach to the assessment of student outcomes.

Consistent with its mission as an open-access institution, the College provides coursework and other educational services covering the entire range of abilities, pre-collegiate/developmental through honors. A decentralized array of academic support programs and services for students is available, and it appears that students across the entire ability spectrum make effective use of these initiatives. An impressive array of instructional modalities are available to meet the interests and needs of individual students including traditional classroom instruction, Internet-based, asynchronous teaching; blended modalities, and accelerated courses. College policies and established practices exist that provide for collaboration between faculty and teaching/learning resources personnel (e.g., library, instructional technology, tutoring). A College-wide Curriculum Committee exists to ensure consistency, relevance, and appropriateness, as well as to monitor the academic rigor of all educational programs. Individual academic/professional program accreditation has been granted by seven different recognized external specialty accreditation organizations.

The academic program of Montgomery College is supported by attractive, effective, well managed, ably staffed and richly resourced libraries and learning centers that contribute meaningfully to the success of the academic program. In addition, the College has made a significant investment in technology to support its general educational activities. These technologies include open and departmental computer labs; smart classrooms, and technologically enhanced language, math, and science labs. There appears to be a widely-shared cultural acceptance of the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning at the College.

Surveys of College alumni who have gone on to four-year colleges and universities indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the adequacy of academic preparation to conduct higher-level academic work. The validity of these satisfaction reports is supported by historical tracking data which verify the overall academic success of Montgomery College students after they transfer to

a four-year institution. Similar evidences of the satisfaction and success of alumni from career-oriented programs also exist.

Montgomery College appears to offer well planned, comprehensive academic programs that prepare students to meet their personal college transfer or career employment goals. These programs can be characterized as rigorous and relevant to the College's stated mission.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ While providing for an appropriate degree of pedagogical flexibility, the College systematically engages faculty and administrative/professional staff in order to ensure that educational offerings across all three campuses are consistent with respect to objectives, intended outcomes, and major learning assessments.
- ❖ The College offers an unusually impressive array and number of high-impact learning opportunities such as learning communities, linked courses, internships and cooperative education, service learning, and a structured first year experience; many of these effectively challenge students to integrate knowledge and engage in higher-level cognitive thinking.
- ❖ Course expectations/requirements and intended student learning outcomes are clearly delineated in all course syllabi.
- ❖ The College provides a robust honors program that is held in high esteem both internally and by external College constituents.
- ❖ Career curricula in the health-related sciences have responded to emerging local and regional needs by offering new, creative programs (e.g., professional training programs for English-language learner nurses who had previously been trained in other countries/languages), and have demonstrated success through exceptional pass-rates on licensure and certification exams.
- ❖ The library program fully supports all three campuses and distance education courses demonstrating an institutional commitment to a strong library program for all Montgomery College students.
- ❖ The library provides a strong array of traditional and electronic resources in the collection that support the curriculum of the College. The collection is made accessible to users 24/7 regardless of location via up to date technology installed and ably supported by the IT department. The library staff is a dedicated, well qualified group of professionals committed to the success of the Montgomery College mission.
- ❖ Information literacy is recognized by the faculty of Montgomery College as an integral part of the general education initiative in curriculum planning.

- ❖ The learning labs and tutoring centers are technologically advanced support systems for the learning and teaching processes in several subject areas on all three campuses. They are attractive, well equipped, and staffed with personnel dedicated to student success at Montgomery College.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The College should investigate whether creative applications of class scheduling, distance education, and/or College calendaring could relieve some of the educational programming constraints being experienced because of physical capacity limitations.**
- ❖ **When the General Education curriculum revision is completed, the College may wish to consider whether to expand learning communities or linked-courses offerings in the delivery of general education in order to increase the likelihood of student success.**
- ❖ **It is suggested that the organization and reporting structure for the libraries be reviewed to determine whether some organizational modification could facilitate integrating the library's instructional support function into the academic mainstream of the College.**
- ❖ **The College should review operating policies and procedures in the tutoring/learning center programs to ensure consistency of operation across all three campuses.**

12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The General Education Program at Montgomery satisfies each of the different credit and distribution requirements for this characteristic, established by both the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the Middle States Association – Commission on Higher Education (MSA-CHE). The Gen Ed Committee, which reports to the College Curriculum Committee, is close to finalizing a revision of Montgomery's 1996 General Education Program. The proposed revision is the result of broad input, via open forums and web dialogue, from all sectors of the faculty across the three campuses. Three remaining issues will be decided by full faculty vote in late March 2008, with implementation of the new Program to begin in the fall 2008 semester.

A comprehensive assessment process of Gen Ed competencies is scheduled to begin immediately after the new Program is finalized. The assessment timeline covers five years of assessment activities, in which it is expected that at least two cycles will have been completed. Montgomery actually made a commitment to assess Gen Ed in 2004 when the College submitted a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report to the MHEC describing the methods, instruments and analysis that would be used to assess Gen Ed competencies.

The Self-Study includes among its concerns that not all relevant publications identify approved Gen Ed courses, most notably in course registration schedules and some course syllabi. This will be addressed although all of the required information is in the College catalog and is thoroughly discussed in new student orientation, advisement and counseling.

Another concern was a lack of formal interaction between the Outcomes Assessment and Gen Ed Committees. There are competing views about where the Outcomes Assessment Committee belongs in the organizational structure, an issue that should be resolved so that the Committee can function most effectively.

Entries in the General Education website clearly demonstrate the inclusive nature of the College-wide conversation on this topic and every interview validated the website as an accurate reflection of the enormous broad based effort devoted to the revision process. Interviewees also verified that there has been a significant increase in the number of faculty across disciplines that have gained a better understanding of how general education is a fundamental component of all programs.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The General Education Program revision process has been open and inclusive; the number of individuals on campus that are knowledgeable about the process is truly commendable.
- ❖ An overwhelming majority of faculty are committed to the Gen Ed concept.
- ❖ Faculty in major program areas are willing to assess student proficiencies in Gen Ed competencies in upper level courses.
- ❖ The Center for Teaching and Learning has made the proliferation of assessment strategies and methodologies a major priority.
- ❖ Montgomery exceeds Maryland Higher Education Commission Gen Ed minimum requirements.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **Montgomery should make every effort to adhere to the Gen Ed Assessment Plan timeline.**

13: Related Educational Activities

The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

The institution meets this standard.

Basic Skills

Summary of evidence and findings:

Montgomery College has appropriate procedures and tests to determine preparedness of entering students in mathematics and reading and writing in English and for non-native English speakers. Those students who are not adequately prepared to enroll in college-level academic courses are directed to courses appropriate to their current abilities in basic skills. The college offers a wide range of such courses designed to address basic skills across a broad spectrum of remediation, from students whose scores do not qualify for the traditional developmental courses to those whose scores are very close to the cutoff scores. Using assessment data, both English and Math faculty have made changes in developmental course structure and content to focus on material relevant to the students and to enable students to move more quickly through remedial courses. In addition, the use of math software for student homework is increasing student mastery. All these strategies are designed to increase student retention and success in the developmental courses themselves and in college-level courses which follow. WD&CE participates in serving students in need of developmental courses through the Pathways program for lower scoring students.

MC has an especially strong array of programs for non-native speakers, reflecting the high percentage of students at the college for whom English is not their first language.

Grant-funded noncredit ESOL/ESL courses including English language and life skills are the first entry points for non-native speakers. These courses are offered at multiple sites in communities throughout the county. Students interested in academic pathways start with pre-academic noncredit ESL courses, continue with credit ESL (American English Language Program) classes and enroll in credit academic courses when they have successfully completed the appropriate sequence. Intake and testing for the pre-academic and AELP courses are coordinated between WD&CE and AELP. The ESOL grant-funded program has very strong performance measures and there is ample evidence that they have used assessment results to improve the program. The AELP program has developed common learning objectives across the three campuses but has not yet developed college-wide measures to assess outcomes.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ Outcomes of Basic Skills courses are regularly assessed by college-wide committees of English and Math faculty using data that track student success in remedial programs and in academic courses which follow. Assessment results are used to make course changes that lead to improved student success.

- ❖ Academic departments and WD&CE collaborate to offer a broad range of courses to meet the basic skills needs of both native and non-native English speakers for life skills, workforce entry and enrollment in academic programs.

Certificate Programs

Summary of evidence and findings:

- ❖ The college offers 113 certificate programs. Most are credit certificates that closely align with the appropriate degrees. Each certificate is listed in the course catalog with the corresponding academic degree making the connection between the certificate and the degree very apparent. Certificates must go through the same approval process as degree programs and they are reviewed at the same time as the related degree program review. Certificates are typically offered on the campus that hosts the related academic degree. Faculty often take an active role in counseling students in certificate programs. While outcomes for certificate programs have been developed and now appear on the college website with plans to include them in the next printed college catalog, appropriate measures for those outcomes have not yet been developed.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **The College should develop measures for the assessment of certificate program outcomes.**

Assessment of Prior Learning and Other Award of Credit

The college offers many options to earn credit through prior experience, by examination, through placement tests and through portfolio assessment. Each of these options is approved and evaluated by college faculty, assuring that the credits earned meet the same standards and result in the same outcomes as the comparable standard credit courses at MC.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ An Assessment of Prior Learning web site provide comprehensive information for students considering or seeking options to test out of or use prior experience in place of credit courses.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **The College should consider organizing information about Assessment of Prior Learning in the college catalog in one place, perhaps cross-referencing appropriate departments as needed, for ease of understanding by staff and potential students.**

Noncredit Offerings

Summary of evidence and findings:

Through its Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WD&CE) division, the College offers a wide array of courses and programs to meet the professional and personal development needs of Montgomery County residents. Courses and programs are developed through needs assessments conducted with business and industry, by the participation of WD&CE staff in a wide range of community organizations and professional associations and on college advisory boards and through surveys of students as part of course evaluations. While WD&CE does coordinate its business outreach with other college departments, the Center for Entrepreneurship for instance, there is not a college-wide mechanism to assure a coordinated approach to local businesses.

Collaboration between noncredit and credit departments appears to be strong as evidenced by the joint administration of credit and noncredit programs and courses through the Gudelsky Institute, Health Sciences Institute and School of Arts and Design and through credit and noncredit ESL/AELP collaboration regarding testing, placement, and transitions. Program and course assessment varies from surveys of students through end-of-course evaluation sheets to several levels of pre and post-testing in developmental courses to national certifications for selected workforce development programs. Although challenging due to the very varied nature of WD&CE programs and services, a more consistent approach to outcomes assessment is part of the college-wide assessment plan.

WD&CE is an enterprise operation within the college, covering all of its own operational and capital costs and providing an annual targeted financial contribution to the general operating fund of the college. State aid and grant funding help support the full scope of WD&CE programs.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The scope and quality of WD&CE programs serving the professional and personal needs of county residents and the economic development needs of local businesses is commendable.
- ❖ An administrative structure that supports coordination of noncredit and credit offerings provides students with one point of entry to and appropriate advisement in three major program areas.
- ❖ Collaboration between WD&CE and academic departments is generally strong, strengthening the College's effectiveness in meeting community needs and contributing to a more efficient use of resources. An example of this collaboration is the co-listing of academic courses in WD&CE publications.
- ❖ Credit/noncredit integration is further supported by inclusion of a specified number of noncredit hours as part of faculty load.

Suggestion:

- ❖ **Develop a regular opportunity for individuals in the college with responsibility for business outreach to meet and exchange information and plans to better coordinate college's relationships with area businesses.**

High School Partnerships**Summary of evidence and findings:**

The college's partnership with the Montgomery College Public Schools (MCPS), under the Office of Academic Initiatives, has resulted in multiple programs that connect the college with high school students, including college courses offered on site at the high schools, the enrollment of high school students in courses on MC campuses and a program for students at risk. MC courses delivered at the high schools are identical to those taught on MC campuses, implement the same placement/prerequisite criteria, are taught by MC faculty and use the same student learning outcomes and grading procedures as campus-based classes. In addition to tracking student retention and success for the courses offered at high school locations, the Office of Academic Initiatives surveys students and parents to assess its effectiveness in serving them, sets measurable goals for department performance, collects and reviews data regarding those goals and makes changes in its operations based on the data results.

Credit courses delivered at employer sites through WD&CE have the same content, student learning outcomes, tests and grades as the courses taught on the campuses. These courses are taught by college faculty and students have access to student services facilitated by WD&CE staff.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ The MC/MCPS Partnership is an exemplary example of two public education entities working together to develop and implement initiatives across multiple program areas to benefit the students, residents and businesses of the county.
- ❖ Having one office at MC that is the point of contact and information about MCPS strengthens the opportunities for effective collaboration between the two entities.
- ❖ The range of programs serving high school students who are at different levels of academic performance, the connections between MC and high school faculty and counselors to improve student performance, and the connections between the Partnership and the business community are commendable.

Distance Learning**Summary of evidence and findings:**

DL courses, both online and hybrid, are developed and delivered by MC faculty and meet the same content and assessment standards as face-to-face classes. Faculty receive extensive, required training in development and delivery of online courses. An online Student Success

Center offers a full range of student services, including application, advisement, registration, financial aid and payment options, career testing and counseling. Academic support online includes testing and library services. Students and faculty in online courses have access to a 24/7/365 Help Desk for technical support.

Expanded Distance Learning courses are a significant factor in providing increased capacity to meet future growth. To support expansion of this modality a Distance Learning Task Force has been formed, including faculty and administrators, to deal with issues of load, scheduling, and evaluation. A strategic plan for DL is in development and should be completed by Fall 2008. Software is being piloted to track student retention and success in DL courses, hybrid and fully online. Current data indicate the need for additional strategies to bring rates of student achievement and retention in line with those of students in face-to-face classes. This is a priority for the faculty and staff engaged in DL.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary/innovative practices:

- ❖ Training for faculty in design and delivery of online courses is thorough and follow up includes support of distance learning course developer for those developing new courses.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **Continue to build faculty and counselor engagement with Distance Learning.**
- ❖ **Develop a better assessment tool to determine student readiness for online learning.**
- ❖ **Strengthen outreach to students who demonstrate difficulties with online learning early in the courses.**
- ❖ **Develop outcomes and assessment for Office of Distance Learning.**

Contractual Relationships/Affiliated Providers

Summary of evidence and findings:

The college has appropriate contracts with affiliated third-party providers and organizations, ensuring that there is college oversight over any programs offered under its umbrella.

14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution's students have knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate skills.

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

The faculty at Montgomery College have begun to participate with a student learning assessment process. A course outcomes assessment process, Outcomes Assessment (OA) has been implemented during the past two years. In addition to discipline faculty, the OA initiative is supported by the Outcomes Assessment Coordinator(s), OA Faculty Cadre, and OA Data Resource Team. Currently, only the most popular classes have been assessed – twenty courses and 512 sections. The self-study indicates that “every section of the participating courses uses the same assessment tool.” This method provides assessment outcomes “planning, piloting, implementation, and recommendations.” Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Handbook MC 2006. At least three outcomes must be assessed for each course. One or two of the outcomes are required to be based on general education assessment.

Montgomery's College Area Review Committee (CARC), consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators, oversees the CAR, formerly the Academic Area Report (AAR), for academic programs and disciplines. The Administrative Area Review process (ADAR) reviews the institution's administrative units. Faculty workgroups coordinate the benchmarks provided by Institutional Research and other information for the Academic Area Review. A detailed format and questionnaire supports the CAR process. The Projected Master Plan Cycle indicates a five year rotation cycle for all academic programs and disciplines. A variety of recommendations have resulted from the CAR. These recommendations are reviewed, prioritized and approved by key college administrators and the College Area Review Committee. According to the Self-Study, “Resources are identified and entered into a strategic plan by the lead vice president/provost, and brought forward to the budgeting process.” Additionally, status reports are submitted to verify the implementation of recommendations.

Maryland's Commission on Higher Education suggests five competencies for general education programs. Montgomery College is considering a revision of their general education program that meets the five recommended competencies and includes three, college recommended, proficiencies. The pending proposal would ensure assessment of all general education competencies and proficiencies and increase faculty participation in the outcomes assessment process. Additionally, students will be provided with a detailed syllabus featuring learning outcomes and activities related to the general education competency(ies) and proficiency(ies) addressed in the course.

There is clear evidence that learning outcomes are communicated via the course syllabus to students. Students also indicate a keen awareness of student learning outcomes from faculty members as well as advisors. The development and implementation of a common course syllabus featuring measurable course outcomes is a standard college requirement.

Each Montgomery College program has program outcomes linked to course outcomes. However, the institutional outcomes have been recently revised to improve alignment with the College's major initiatives.

Based on the review of the Self-Study report, supporting documentation, documents provided by Montgomery faculty and administrators, and interviews with faculty, students and administrators, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard 14.

The assessment approach at Montgomery is based upon the Outcomes Assessment process. This approach must encompass every Montgomery course offering. Plans are underway to accomplish a complete assessment of all courses.

Information was inconsistent regarding syllabi student learning outcomes for all courses. As the OA process expands it will be necessary to rectify this situation.

The Outcomes Assessment process is supported with a comprehensive training guide, and numerous committees; however, there are additional training opportunities for department chairs and deans involved with this process.

Outcomes Assessment represents a viable formative assessment process. There is no evidence that direct measures of student learning are incorporated in the academic portion of the College Area Review. The AAR is based upon indirect measures of student learning. It is necessary to incorporate direct measures of student learning into this process for appropriate summative assessment.

In order to enhance the assessment process and utilize faculty time more productively, the calendar rotation for Outcomes Assessment and AAR need to be logically synchronized. For example, the OA rotation for a discipline should occur several years before the AAR. The current calendars for OA and AAR make it more difficult to achieve a coherent assessment process.

External review and advisory committees serve a key role for the curriculum and assessment processes in terms of offering students relevant curriculum and outcomes. Montgomery College employs external review and advisory boards on an inconsistent basis. Minimally, all career programs (letters of recognition, certificates, AA, AAS, AAT, and AS) need employer and/or academic outside review on a regular basis.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and/or exemplary innovative practices:

- ❖ There has been a proposed revision of the general education assessment program to provide for assessment of all areas of general education.
- ❖ Comprehensive Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Handbook-2006, including a "Cliff Notes" version on the website is commendable.

- ❖ Formative outcomes assessment implemented via the Outcomes Assessment Process is occurring..
- ❖ The assessment process has encouraged greater discussion about course content and methodology across and within disciplines.
- ❖ CAR (College Area Report) and CAR Plan Status Report forms provide an appropriate outline of relevant issues for the area report.
- ❖ The College has a consistent syllabus template which includes measurable student learning outcomes.

Suggestions:

- ❖ **The Outcomes Assessment process for all courses should be expanded.**
- ❖ **Course syllabi should be audited to ensure that student learning outcomes are formally communicated in all courses.**
- ❖ **Assessment training opportunities should extend to discipline chairs and deans.**
- ❖ **Direct measures of student learning should be incorporated within the Academic Area Review process. Outcomes Assessment results should be utilized in conjunction with direct assessment of discipline outcomes.**
- ❖ **By synchronizing the timing of OA with AAR in a logical manner, assessment processes will be implemented more effectively and efficiently.**
- ❖ **The College should incorporate regular external review in the AAR.**
- ❖ **A section regarding student learning assessment should be included in the *Montgomery College Faculty Handbook* and the college catalog.**
- ❖ **The College 2005 Assessment Plan should be updated to include the proposed general education, OA and CAR processes.**
- ❖ **The College should review tracking and communication processes for student learning assessment results via TracDat or a similar program for possible improvements.**
- ❖ **The inclusion of a student representative on the College Area Review Committee should be considered.**
- ❖ **The College should develop measures for the assessment of discipline/program outcomes.**