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Optimizing Strategic Communications for the Office of the President at Montgomery College

Prepared by Widmeyer Communications, a Finn Partners Company, and C. Fox Communications

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In order to help Montgomery College truly understand the effectiveness of its existing communication efforts for the Office of the President, and make actionable recommendations that would optimize those communications going forward, Widmeyer Communications, a Finn Partners Company, and C. Fox Communications developed and executed a multi-faceted research and audit project.

Research was conducted between July and December of 2014 of a variety of audiences with varying perspectives, and the resulting recommendations can be found in this report. The research featured in-depth analyses of audiences both internal and external, from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative research, the team conducted deep dives into key policies and procedures, existing media presence, the current landscape in Maryland, and Montgomery College's digital imprint.

Each section contains recommendations on how to interpret these findings, with the goal of informing a fully formed communications strategy that has a maximum impact on Montgomery College's target internal and external audiences and gives the institution's communication efforts a handsome return on investment.

The external qualitative interviews, analyses of Montgomery College policies and procedures, media analysis, and analysis of the Maryland landscape were conducted by C. Fox Communications. The internal qualitative and quantitative interviews and the digital research were conducted by Widmeyer Communications, a Finn Partners Company.

I. INTERNAL QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Methodology
As an initial step toward understanding the current communications efforts underway and the challenges Montgomery College has hoped to solve, Widmeyer Communications conducted a round of qualitative research among key stakeholders between July 11, 2014, and August 7, 2014, as well as a survey of 320 students, faculty, staff and administrators in November 2014.

The qualitative interviews were mostly done in-person (though some were done by phone or over email) and were typically 45 minutes to an hour. Interviewees included:

- Dr. DeRionne Pollard, President
- Dr. Stephen Cain
- David Sears
- Meryl Governski
- Sharon Fechter
- Ed Riggs
- Susan Madden
- Kristin O'Keefe
- Patrick Johnson
- Beth Homan
- Brad Stewart
- Judy Ackerman
- Karla Silvestre
- Carolyn Terry
- George Payne
- Group of four current Montgomery College students

The 20-minute quantitative survey was conducted online between November 11, 2014, and December 3, 2014, with respondents invited to participate in the survey via Montgomery College's email lists. Ultimately, responses were received and tabulated for 134 staff members, 86 faculty members, 61 students, and 39 administrators, for a total N-size of 320. The margin of error for the full survey is +/- 5.4% and is smaller for demographic subgroups within the survey.

Note: For reference, please find the questionnaire and the moderator's guide used in the internal in-depth interviews as an appendix in the back of this report.

Recommendations

The individual interviews and the quantitative survey revealed that Montgomery College has much to boast about in terms of its reputation and the communication efforts to date both internally and externally. From executives, to VPPs, to staff and students, everyone agreed that Montgomery College had much to be proud of and that outsiders frequently leave Montgomery College extremely impressed at what the institution has to offer. To that end, the challenges to date have mostly been in the execution of communicating about the opportunities available at Montgomery College externally, and communicating changes and new initiatives internally.

The following recommendations are made based on internal quantitative and qualitative interviews, which are further explained in the body of this report.

- Dr. Pollard's communication talents are an extremely important asset to Montgomery College. Continue to have her participate in venues such as Town Halls, speeches, panels, and other engagements where she is interacting in person, as audiences respond very well to her warmth, compassion, directness, and natural ability to communicate.

- When Dr. Pollard cannot be communicating in person, and needs to instead communicate through written or more scripted means, prioritize the preservation of her unique "voice" in the messaging. Her voice is a very strong currency for Montgomery College. To do this, there needs to be a "keeper of the voice" in the communications office (be it a speechwriter or someone else), and that person needs reliable and timely access to Dr. Pollard and meetings in which she is involved.

- Develop a "rapid response" protocol for all communications that need to be approved more immediately. Several interviewees discussed the timeliness of key communications as being a major hurdle, which is hampered by the need for multiple departments to weigh in. Developing guidelines on the minimum number of people who need to review "fast-tracked" communications will help.

- Plan which speaking engagements, panels, and other opportunities to engage in more strategically, considering the return on the investment. Because Dr. Pollard's talents as a communicator and leader are so strong, she is heavily in demand. There needs to be a strategic plan for which types of engagements are worth the investment of her time in terms of exposure, fundraising potential, or recruitment potential, and which may be interesting or important but not strategic priorities.

- Practice consistent message discipline by sticking to one or two key topics. Interviewees and survey respondents noted a host of issues that Dr. Pollard and the office are likely to speak about with the public. However, given the difficulty of gaining press and the relatively low number of advertisements, it will be more difficult for target audiences to hear a consistent message if multiple topics are being discussed. Look for communications opportunities and engagements that reinforce Montgomery College's main message points.

- In terms of overall positioning, take advantage of the fact that Montgomery College functions in a completely different space than other higher education institutions do. Consistently, outsiders are surprised at just how elite Montgomery College is, and students describe it as the starting point for achieving their dreams, whether it be getting an associate's degree, getting a CPA, or earning pre-requisites for a 4-year college or advanced degree. While this is not quite the role that 4-year colleges like the University of Maryland, College Park serve, it is also different from other community colleges such as PGCC and HCC which do not have the same prestige. This unique positioning is something that should be highlighted.

- In terms of an external message, students are responsive to economic messages that discuss socioeconomic difficulties in education. The three top issues related to education that survey respondents thought Montgomery College should be talking about were keeping college affordable, narrowing the achievement gap, and increasing access to underrepresented groups in higher education.

- Focusing more on engagements that involve some of the external audiences (such as donors, legislators, and the business community) rather than direct interaction with students could be fruitful. Stakeholders believed that Dr. Pollard had great credibility with these audiences, so Montgomery College can maximize that good will by increasing exposure to these audiences.

- Internally, one consistent finding is that there is work to be done to foster relationships between the President's office and the staff and faculty (faculty especially). "Dedicated to staff" and "dedicated to faculty" were the 15th and 16th-ranked of 17 attributes associated with Montgomery College, and "addressing salary needs of faculty and staff" was one of the highest ranked internal challenges from survey respondents. Faculty tended to be the least enthusiastic on multiple measures asked. Additionally, several interviewees spoke to a lingering distrust or need to heal wounds from past experiences. Keep this in mind when navigating requests from internal audiences.

- There is a disconnect with social media efforts; students are only using Montgomery College's Facebook and Twitter properties for very basic information (such as school closures) despite the fact that they may be Facebook or Twitter users more heavily in their personal lives. Creating content that encourages dialogue or other forms of engagement between the school and audience can help increase the usefulness of social media.

- If possible, increase Montgomery College's advertising presence. Though 66% of internal stakeholders said they could recall at least one Montgomery College ad (unsurprising considering that all respondents are affiliated with Montgomery College), 61% could also recall ads for NOVA – a community college not even in the same state. The ability to leverage student voices in the advertisements – using their success stories as the best endorsements for what Montgomery College can do – can make them more memorable, heavily informing the College's key messaging and raise awareness.
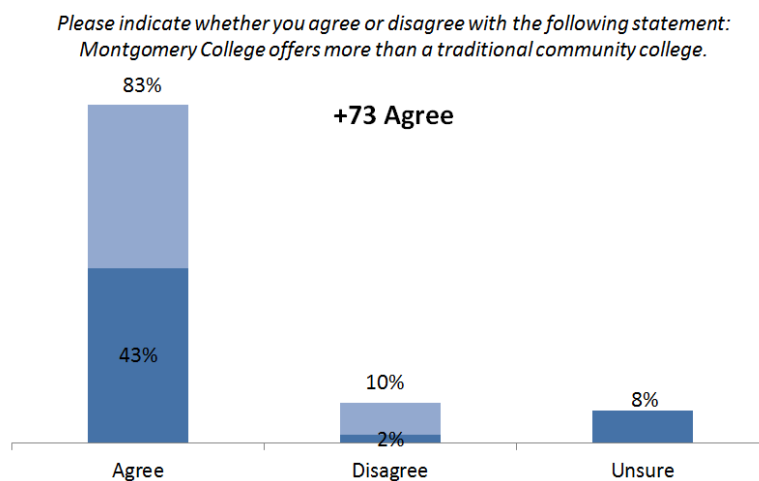
The State of Montgomery College
Shining a Light on the Program

Those who are familiar with Montgomery College know that there is something undeniably special about the institution, and that it delivers for its students and the community in ways that are often surprising. In internal interviews, stakeholders tended to imply that Montgomery College was something of a hidden gem. They noted that those familiar with Montgomery College knew what the institution had to offer, but newcomers were frequently surprised and walked away impressed at the opportunities available.

Some quotes from stakeholders illustrated this point:

- "The reputation is good, but there is some unawareness of the breadth of our programs and the excellence of what students go on and do in a variety of directions."

- "Folks consider Montgomery College to be like the best college, the most highly qualified college in the state of Maryland out of all the other community colleges."

- "For people who are familiar with the college, it is very good. I am always surprised by what people don't know about us."

This sentiment is overwhelmingly mirrored in the survey of students, faculty, staff and administrators, with 83% agreeing (and 43% strongly agreeing) that Montgomery College offers more than a traditional community college. This perception holds true especially among staff (87% agree), those working in Central Services (90%), African Americans (87%) and those who have been employed fewer than 5 years (89%).

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Montgomery College offers more than a traditional community college.

+73 Agree

The fact that Montgomery College is held in such esteem by those who know the most about it is helpful because it means that the communications challenge is not trying to fight a negative perception, but rather to simply illuminate the benefits of Montgomery College to new or less-engaged audiences.

Comparing Montgomery College's Reputation to Its Peers

The survey confirms what the students allude to with regards to the relative value of Montgomery College; MC is perceived to have as strong, or stronger, reputation than many other alternative institutions of higher learning in the area or online according to internal audiences. In particular, Montgomery College gets especially high marks among audiences compared to Prince George's Community College (70% say MC has a better reputation, 81% say better or equal), Strayer University (61%, 69%), the University of Phoenix (58%, 67%), and Howard Community College (35%, 68%). A majority also say that MC's reputation is at least as good as NOVA (64% equal or better), the Universities at Shady Grove (64%), and UMUC (61%). Only the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and the University of Maryland, College Park do not have a majority saying that Montgomery College has a better or equal reputation.

While the fact that all the survey respondents are all affiliated with Montgomery College should be kept in mind as the results are interpreted, it is still encouraging to see that the internal audiences do not perceive a reputational deficit that needs to be addressed in communication efforts.

How does Montgomery College compare to the following colleges and universities? (Top Tier)
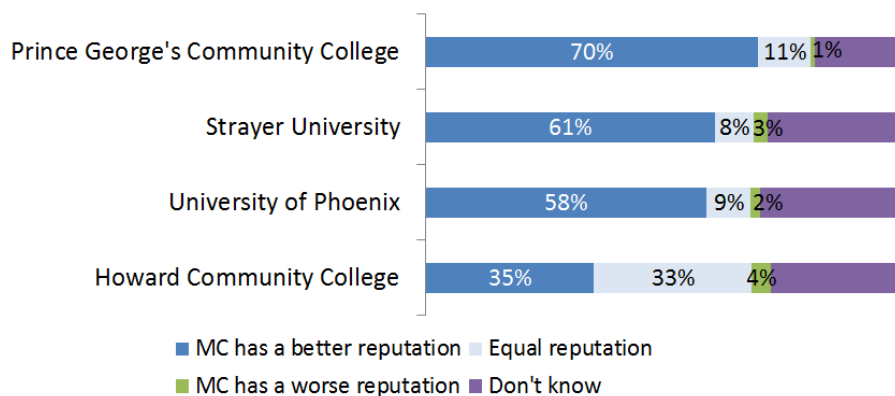
That said, though Montgomery College's reputation is in a strong position compared to that of its peers, the media and advertising presence is not always at the same level. This means there are greater opportunities to further differentiate from the competitive set with modifications in both earned media and advertising programs.

360° of Reputation: Internal and External

While internal audiences believe that Montgomery College's reputation is relatively strong, perceptions of the strength of that reputation does vary when looking at different audiences. Montgomery College's reputation tends to be perceived as strongest among key external stakeholders such as legislators, donors, alumni, business leaders, and residents of Montgomery County – between two-thirds and four-fifths of audiences believe that the relationship is at least good for all of these constituencies.

Just from your observation, what is Montgomery College's reputation among the following groups?
Top Tier (Out of 11)

	Excellent	Excellent/Good
Legislators*	35%	73%
Donors*	33%	67%
Alumni	31%	74%
Administration*	30%	74%
Business leaders in the community*	26%	72%
Residents of Montgomery County	25%	79%

*Ranked by % "Excellent." *Not asked of students*
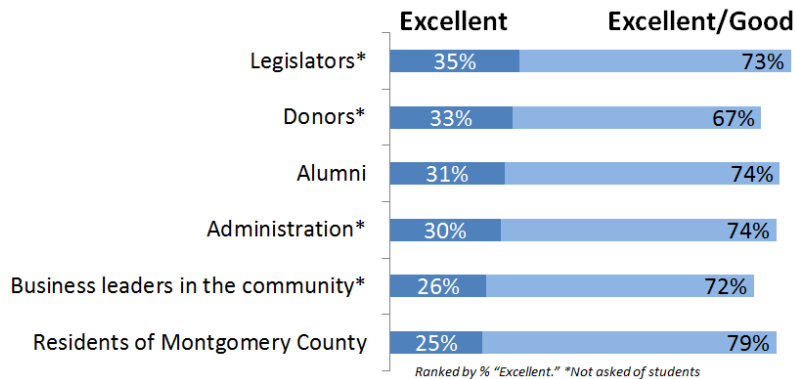
While some of these external audiences are perceived to think highly of Montgomery College, there is less intensity (i.e., perceptions of "excellent") among critical internal groups, such as staff, faculty, current students, and prospective students in the area. Indeed, throughout the data it can be seen that the staff relationship and especially the faculty relationship are the most tenuous. The challenge among these internal groups is bridging that gap between good and excellent.
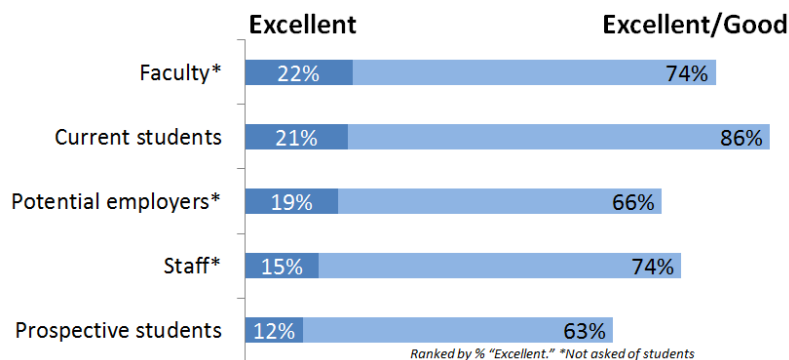
Just from your observation, what is Montgomery College's reputation among the following groups?
Bottom Tier (Out of 11)

	Excellent	Excellent/Good
Faculty*	22%	74%
Current students	21%	86%
Potential employers*	19%	66%
Staff*	15%	74%
Prospective students	12%	63%

*Ranked by % "Excellent." *Not asked of students*

The perceived reputation of current students is particularly interesting. Relatively few (21%) believe the reputation among current students is excellent, yet the most (86%) believe that the reputation is excellent *or* good. The students surveyed themselves were more optimistic – 33% said they thought the reputation among students was excellent and 89% said excellent or good. Reinforcing this, the student group interviewed (which may have been made up of particularly enthusiastic students) spoke about the schools' reputation in glowing terms, especially vis-à-vis other schools in the greater Washington DC area or online.

- "My classmate, she told me that Montgomery College is the best college in this area so that's why she came here."
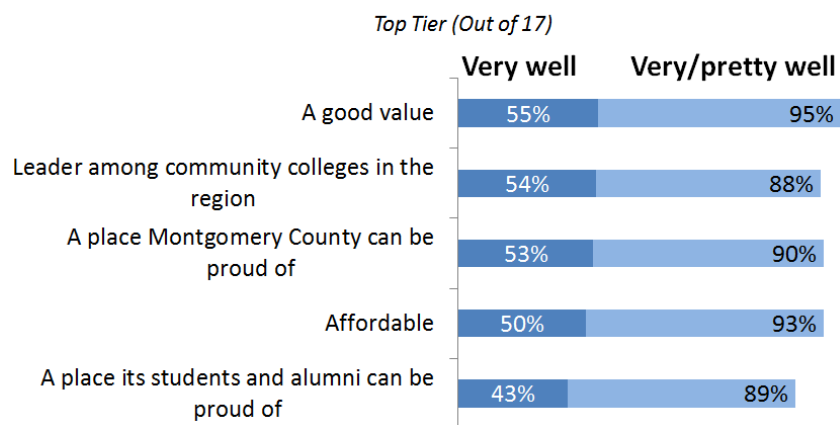
- "Montgomery College has an excellent reputation. People in other states know about Montgomery College, Maryland. Some people feel that this should be a university. Academically they're on point. When you look at the rate of graduates that graduate or transfer, it's higher than any of the community colleges that are in this area. Even people from PG County want to come to Montgomery College. D.C. wants to come to Montgomery College."

- "It does have a good reputation because if not, its students would not be trying to encourage other people to come to Montgomery College if they didn't see the good in why people should be coming."

As mentioned, the relatively low rankings of reputation by faculty and staff, however, do stand out as something that needs to be addressed in terms of communications. One interviewee noted "I'm seeing a lot of turmoil right now . . . with the restructuring." This sentiment that there was still lingering resentment around organizational changes was repeated more than once, and while most indicated that time was healing some of those wounds, this may be manifested in the fact that "dedicated to its faculty" and "dedicated to its staff" came in 15th and 16th out of 17 positive attributes tested.

Montgomery College's Current Positioning and Image

Looking overall at the more specific character of Montgomery College's current reputation, the core of the reputation focuses on being a smart choice in this economic climate (55% say "a good value" describes MC very well, 50% say "affordable" describes MC very well), a leader among community colleges in the region (54%), and a place of which Montgomery County residents (53%) and students and alumni (43%) can be proud. This positioning of Montgomery College as a high quality institution that is affordable, a good value, and inspires pride is ideal at a time when the need for a higher level education is mandatory but overall costs are driving many to seek out alternative solutions.

How well do the following words or phrases describe Montgomery College?

Top Tier (Out of 17)

	Very well	Very/pretty well
A good value	55%	95%
Leader among community colleges in the region	54%	88%
A place Montgomery County can be proud of	53%	90%
Affordable	50%	93%
A place its students and alumni can be proud of	43%	89%

On a middle tier of traits, attributes concerning Montgomery College's place in the community can be found: ("a major presence"; "well-respected") and ability to empower their students ("student-oriented"; "helps students achieve their dreams"; "adequately prepares students for their future careers"). While the intensity has diminished, noticeably at least 73% (and usually at least 80%) say that

these describe Montgomery College at least pretty well. Though it falls toward the bottom of the list, one particularly compelling trait here is "gives as good an education as most four-year colleges in the area"; there are likely few community colleges in the United States where 78% would say that statement describes the institution at least pretty well, and one-in-three say describes the institution very well.
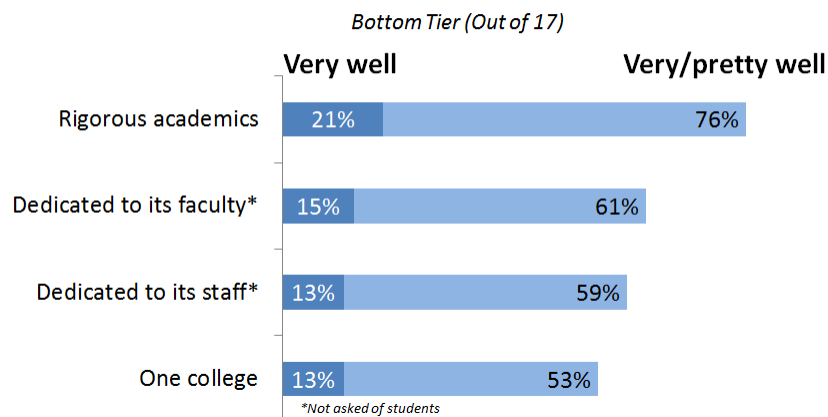
How well do the following words or phrases describe Montgomery College?

Middle Tier (Out of 17)

	Very well	Very/pretty well
A major presence in the community	39%	83%
Well-respected in the community	37%	85%
Student-oriented	35%	87%
Helps students achieve their dreams	34%	87%
Endless possibilities	34%	81%
Gives as good an education as most four-year colleges in the area	34%	78%
Adequately prepares students for their future careers or other education pursuits	31%	89%
A hidden gem	31%	73%
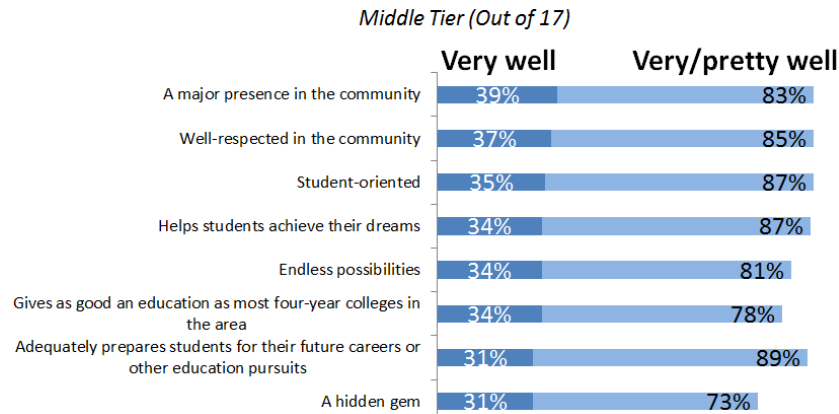
Continuing a theme, dedication to its staff and dedication to its faculty are currently in the bottom tier in terms of Montgomery College's reputation. Faculty members in particular are especially likely to downgrade "dedicated to its faculty"; while 61% of all audiences say this describes Montgomery College at least pretty well (15% very well), just 42% of faculty members agree (8% very well). There is also a regional component; just 43% of those from the Silver Spring/Takoma Park campus believe that Montgomery College is dedicated to its faculty, while those in Central Services (75% pretty/very well), Rockville (62%), and Germantown (51%) are more optimistic.

How well do the following words or phrases describe Montgomery College?

Bottom Tier (Out of 17)

	Very well	Very/pretty well
Rigorous academics	21%	76%
Dedicated to its faculty*	15%	61%
Dedicated to its staff*	13%	59%
One college	13%	53%

*Not asked of students

Perceptions of Dr. Pollard's Communications
Colleagues Have Faith in Dr. Pollard's Many Talents

First and foremost, it is clear from the feedback in these interviews that Dr. DeRionne Pollard is well-respected as a leader and communicator. Montgomery College is fortunate to have her as their top communicator. Consistently, she was praised for her personal style (which was described as warm, personable, and authentic), as well as her transparency and directness in the face of difficult decisions. Her natural acumen in this regard is a boon to Montgomery College, as she is often in the best position to "make the case" on one initiative or another to internal audiences such as staff and faculty as well as external audiences such as students and community leaders. Her colleagues describe her in the following ways:

- "Dr. Pollard has a good moral compass. She has a very strong sense of right and wrong."

- "If she makes a decision, she is willing to stand up and stand behind it. She is not afraid of confrontation. She knows how to manage confrontation."

- "She is smart, she's funny, she's clear – sometimes very direct. That may be a problem for some people; it's not a problem for me. She's a good communicator, I think."

- "She speaks from the heart. She uses her personal story to kind of relay whatever message she is talking about."

- "She is probably the most charismatic president I've worked for."

- "From what I've seen and being around her I think she is a spectacular person, and she loves to get right in there with the people."

- "I think she's an amazing speaker . . . She's just really nice and says hi to everyone she meets."

This sort of effusive praise is not necessarily common for public figures in or outside of higher education, so Dr. Pollard deserves much credit for leading the way with her communication style. The survey turned up similar sentiments; when asked what one word or phrase best describes Dr. Pollard's communication style, the top mentions were "Excellent/great/good" (17%), "Honest/Open/Transparent" (13%), "Friendly/Personable/Warm" (9%), "Clear/Direct/Straightforward" (8%), "Engaging" (7%) and "Passionate/Powerful/Strong" (6%). Staff were even more likely to mention her honesty (19%, compared to 13% overall) and warmth (14%, compared to 9% overall) than other audiences.

Playing to Dr. Pollard's Strengths

Given the time pressures on Dr. Pollard, it is critical that she participate in ways that allow these strengths to shine through and have an effect. Interviewees thought the following formats, that allowed Dr. Pollard's personality to be fully displayed, played perfectly to her strengths:

- "I think she does a really good job on her president's corner, her weekly president's corner, and her video blogs, and things like that, because her personality does shine through on those."

- "She's very good on video. I know the gang will write stuff like this and stick it in front of her and say, 'Go.' You should look at her video blogs. They are very personable. They feel intimate and not overly scripted. She can speak extemporaneously. She is good at that."

- "Her graduation speech was phenomenal. She gets folks going in a positive way. It was really impressive to everybody around, I think. I know this because I see all of these faces in my classroom, or they come through my department."

- "She really thrives when she is just able to speak. She is able to just be herself in the town hall meetings."

- "The fact that she has the town hall meetings—people appreciate the fact that she is willing to sit out there and deal with issues as they come up. Nothing is scripted in those settings."

. . . while other formats – such as in press releases, are less effective when that voice does not adequately emerge.

- "There is this idea that when she writes, everything has to be formal and in press-release form."

On Sounding "Presidential"

The critique that Dr. Pollard ought to sound more "presidential" – a vague term that stakeholders loosely understood to mean "formal" – was thought to be misguided to most that were interviewed. One stakeholder said, "I think people that want formality and gravitas might have said that, because she is a little down to earth, which I like." Another noted that her occasionally more informal tone was "refreshing – it's more in tune with her constituency, with the community"; still another reiterated that the tone was "presidential but not so stuck up." Dr. Pollard's tone, in short, is resonating extremely well as-is, so there is no need to attempt to be more formal or to try to achieve this mythical "presidential" tone.

Communicating Effectively with Internal Audiences
The Need to Lift Current Efforts from Good to Great

Because Dr. Pollard is such a strong leader, many stakeholders noted that the increased demands on her made Montgomery College particularly "president-centric." One stakeholder illustrated the demands on her time by noting: "Here, everybody believes that they should be able to interact with her or send her an email, stop her in the hall and say, 'Can you solve my problem for me?'" Obviously, this leads to a challenging environment for someone whose presence is so beneficial to the institution but does not have infinite time to devote to solving challenges.

Given this dynamic, it is not surprising that while presidential communications to the internal audiences are in good shape overall, there is room for improvement. Overall, 58% say Montgomery College's communications do at least a good job responding to their needs, with 28% saying they do a fair job, while only 9% say they do a poor job. However, the positive intensity is low, with just 14% saying Montgomery College's communications do an excellent job.

In your personal opinion, how good of a job do Montgomery College's communications do responding to your needs?

58% Excellent/Good

Excellent	Good	Just Fair	Poor	DK
14%	44%	28%	9%	5%
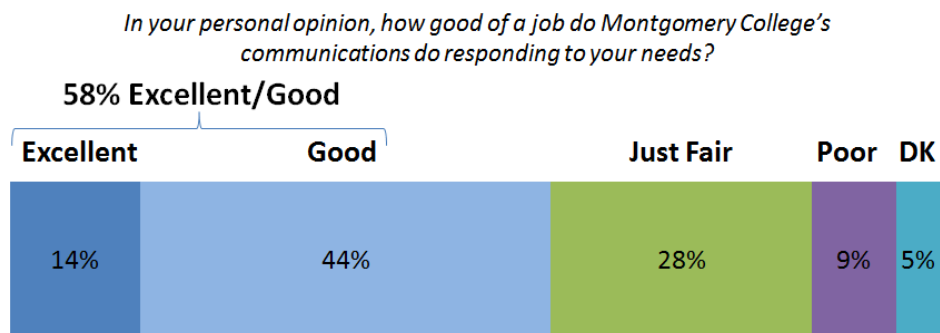
Staff are the most likely to say that communications are responding to their needs effectively (70% excellent/good, 19% excellent), but faculty are the major audience that needs more attention. Just 43% of faculty members say that Montgomery College's communications do an excellent or good job responding to their needs (with only 6% saying excellent), while 54% say they do a just fair (38%) or poor (16%) job.

Looking more specifically, while internal audiences react positively to many specific aspects of Montgomery College communications, their enthusiasm is tepid. Among other things, a majority agreed that the communications are "something I take the time to read or understand" (82% say this describes communications very/pretty well, including 27% very well), "clear" (68%, 12%), and "say what they mean and mean what they say" (55%, 11%). Still, while a majority feel this way, the lack of intensity around these attributes reflects the overall pattern of internal audiences thinking that Montgomery College's communications might be adequate, but have further to go before they reach the top tier.

Addressing Internal Communication Concerns

Potential improvements toward internal communications in the internal, qualitative interviews were explored.

Several stakeholders suggested the lack of timeliness of internal communications was one of the fundamental issues that needed to be addressed. Responding to this was critical, they felt, because the inability to execute all communications in a timely manner led to diminished credibility and a difficulty containing opinions before the communications were received. Though 57% said that "appear in a timely manner" describes internal communications "pretty well," noticeably only 14% said this describes internal communications "very well," reinforcing what we learned in the qualitative interviews.

Interviewees said:

- "It's a big problem. It's huge. It's very big. And again, it's things that might have other people's signature on it, but everything, I believe, goes through her office. Maybe not through her hands, or her eyes, but it's really been a problem for effective communication. If there is an issue, that's where I see it internally."

- "An example: there was a threat, and you may have—it was on the TV and things like that. It was scribbled in a hallway, in a stairwell. And so there was a preliminary communication. "We are taking it seriously," etc. Well, there was no communication to the faculty in the departments about what the college was doing about that. And so the faculty was learning from students that they were going to be excused from class, even if they had a test or whatever. And so that was on the news, and faculty were never informed."

- "So when there are college-wide communications, often they are very delayed because, for example, they have to go through many levels of approval, is my understanding."

Trying to balance timeliness with giving senior staff the opportunity to weigh in is, of course, a difficult needle to thread, since those weighing in on communications have expertise to impart a valuable perspective. However, the ensuing logjam seems to be doing more damage, and actually gives Montgomery College less control over the message because audiences seek other sources for their information.

Interviewees also recommended the communications staff do a better job of maintaining Dr. Pollard's voice throughout communication efforts. They worried that the power of Dr. Pollard's message was diluted by having too many people review important communications.

- "Having [the message] go through all of these people before Dr. Pollard even sees it would whittle down the message to just boring-ness."

- "We have a team talk, and when I write the talking points . . . I have to run it up and down six months from Sunday with the budget team before we come to closure and say, 'And here you go. Go say this.'"

- "It depends on the communications—speeches require more time/input; newsletter items that may be used in multiple places could be approved once by president and then sanctioned later by Chief of Staff or counterpart."

Two suggested organizational solutions to ensure Dr. Pollard's voice is adequately represented in all communications:

- "The solution should be to have the speechwriter allowed to [more] meetings, and not to have someone who doesn't have Dr. Pollard's voice write [correspondences]."

- "Spreading [the message] out a little and not having such tight control. And I understand the need to control communications . . . But . . . it hinders the core business."

The other perceptions to be aware of regarding internal communications is the notion that they are too lengthy (49% said this describes communications at least pretty well), have too much spin (46%), or are so frequent that they get tuned out (38%).

Ultimately, with Dr. Pollard's unique voice being such a powerful asset, and because audiences respond so well to her warmth, sincerity, directness, and experience, it is essential to preserve this voice in all communications. Organizationally, this requires a) someone in the communications office to be "keeper" of Dr. Pollard's voice and b) for that keeper to have greater access to internal meetings and regular contact with Dr. Pollard.

To address the amount of time it takes to send important internal communications, the communications team should develop a "fast-track" protocol for events that require a quick response. Ideally, this protocol involves as few people as possible, sets up exactly who needs to sign-off on these communications and sets up the exact route to publication. The "keeper of the voice" should be involved as well to maximize the positive attributes of Dr. Pollard's communication style.

Setting the Tone for External Audiences
The Message Environment

Prospective students and current students are obviously a prime audience, and the economic climate is top of mind in their current context. Internal audiences rank "keeping costs affordable" as the highest-ranking priority for Montgomery College in dealing with the community, with 38% of internal audiences saying it was one of their top two issues. "Keeping college affordable" is also listed as the clear top issue related to education that Montgomery College should be talking about (47%) as well. The students surveyed were even more likely to express this sentiment; a majority (56%) ranks this issue in their top two community issues, and 59% say it is the top education-related issue that should be discussed.

Beyond the cost of Montgomery College, the concerns are more disparate but still salient. One interviewee referenced the efforts to ensure enough students were attending Montgomery College by saying, "The most apparent [challenge] is the decline in student enrollment. But that's a cyclical thing. We expected it. But it's a challenge adjusting to it, you know, budgeting for it." In the survey, faculty and administrators are especially likely to say that "ensuring students successfully complete their time at Montgomery College" was a priority (44% of faculty and 51% of administrators say this). Other issues that emerged as important to students, faculty, staff, and administrators include publicizing the positive assets of Montgomery College that the public may not know about, the lack of space and resources for its population (this was especially important for staff and administrators), ensuring equitable access for Montgomery College, and recruiting students (which was a top priority for administrators).

When thinking about the priorities Montgomery College has in dealing with the community, which of the following two issues are the most important challenges faced by the institution? SELECT UP TO TWO.

Top Three Messages Per Audience

	Total	Students	Faculty	Staff	Admins*
Keeping costs affordable	38%	56%	28%	42%	
Ensuring students successfully complete their time at Montgomery College	37%	26%	44%	35%	51%
Publicizing the positive assets of Montgomery College that the public may not know about	23%	30%			
Lack of space and resources for its population				28%	26%
Ensuring that Montgomery College is accessible to everyone in the community			27%		26%
Making sure all campuses are treated equally					
Recruiting students and ensuring enrollment					28%

Caution: Low N-size (N=39)

When asked what issues stood out as something Dr. Pollard has spoken, written, or otherwise communicated about, closing the achievement gap (28%) topped the list, distantly followed by access to education (12%) and MC's One College model (12%). Internal stakeholders that were interviewed had a broader list of topics they typically have observed Dr. Pollard discussing, including the ACES program, accountability, affordability, access, the overall importance of higher education, the achievement gap, and scholarships. While these are all important topics, interviewees noted that the actual messages

being communicated could be more focused or limited to just a couple in order to gain a foothold in the public's consciousness. One interviewee noted that Montgomery College "doesn't recognize the value that sometimes using the same messages over and over again is essential to communication success."

Picking and Choosing Dr. Pollard's Speaking Engagements Strategically

Fully 71% of audiences said that at the time of the survey they had read, seen, or heard at least something about Dr. Pollard (with 35% saying they had read, seen, or heard a great deal). This may represent the high-water mark of awareness, given that the survey was conducted immediately after a Town Hall meeting (and more people – 27% - say that the Town Hall meeting is where they most recently observed Dr. Pollard than any other outlet), but it indicates that Dr. Pollard is a highly visible figure in the Montgomery College community.

With that in mind, some suggested that rather than spreading Dr. Pollard too thin by having her accept every invitation, speaking opportunities should heavily consider the return on investment. Specifically:

- "I would say that a lot of her speaking engagements that are in the community are associated with our office."

- "I think there ought to be more proactive scheduling to support and advance the college, and that moves us in strategic directions."

- "We should be more proactive in going out and getting opportunities . . . We are very reactive."

One example an interviewee cited of Dr. Pollard not speaking to an audience that would advance her goals or the goals of Montgomery College was the following: "She was on a panel at this place and they wasted her, because they put her on the last panel to talk about youth. There were some elected officials on the panel just before her, and it was an election year, and so after they spoke, half the room ran out to talk to them."

The solution to having a strategy that gives a better return on investment is, on one hand, having a more proactive plan, and on the other, ensuring simply that the communications team is aware of the opportunities out there. "I don't know what is on her calendar," noted one interviewee, while another said, "We can't necessarily rely on her to remind us what she has coming up. We have to do a better job underneath us."

Making an Impression Internally and Externally
Communicating with Different Target Audiences

Mirroring the themes seen elsewhere, internal audiences believe that Dr. Pollard's communications are most effective among legislators (50% excellent), business leaders in the community (48%), donors (43%), and current students (34%). Once again, the ability to reach staff (22% excellent) and faculty (20%) is relatively weaker. This perception is again most heavily driven by staff in Silver Spring/Takoma Park (just 14% say impact on staff is excellent compared to 22% overall, 14% say impact on faculty is excellent compared to 20% overall.)

From your observation, how would you assess Dr. Pollard's impact and influence through communications among the following groups?

Group	Excellent	Excellent/Good
Legislators*	50%	74%
Business leaders in the community*	48%	76%
Donors*	43%	65%
Current students	34%	64%
Administration*	31%	70%
Potential employers of graduates*	30%	59%
Alumni	23%	49%
Staff*	22%	64%
Residents of Montgomery County	22%	55%
Faculty*	20%	55%
Prospective students	19%	49%

Not asked of students

Many of the interviewees praised some of these external relationships, especially those that help the financial foundation of Montgomery College:

- "I want to focus on our donors, especially our individual donors."

- "I want to be really touching on the business leaders in our community, that they should be getting some kind of once-a-month communication from the president and from our office about what is going on and how they can be involved."

- "The relationship with the biotechnology community is pretty strong."

- "We have a foundation arm, and so they pretty much work with donors."

Additionally, many noted that Dr. Pollard's direct interactions with students are a bright spot:

- "Communications with students have been fairly effective. She's been out there at student gatherings and things like that."

The difficulty in reaching staff and faculty through communications is still largely framed around "repairing" a difficult relationship:

- "There was, for a good while there at the beginning of her tenure, a perceived anti-faculty bias."

- "If you don't keep the regular employee communications, you're going to get disgruntled employees and they're going to feel like they have no leadership at the top."

- "It did seem like there was a great outreach to staff. I think that the repair strategies for faculty are just what I described."

- "I think there is this sense of upheaval that hasn't yet calmed, because it is still happening."

- "She should be addressing the needs of each individual department, such as space concerns, full-time to part-time faculty ratios."
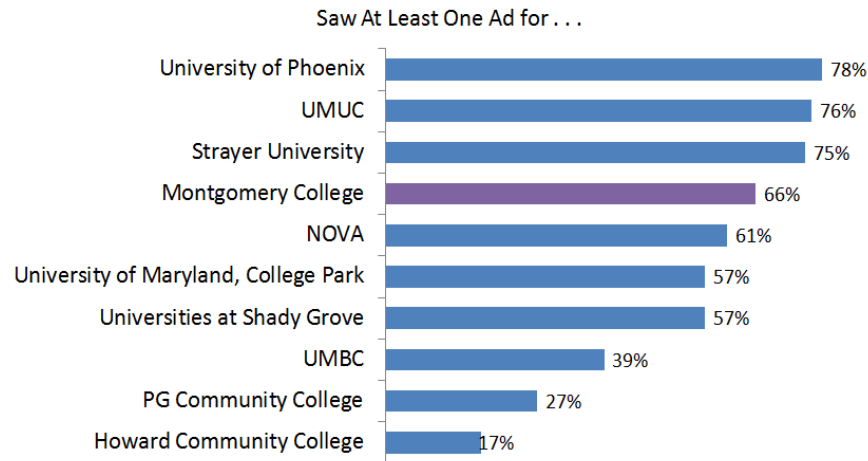
These shades of dissatisfaction among staff and especially faculty can also be seen in the fact that in the survey, the second-highest ranked internal challenge is "addressing salary needs of faculty and staff."

Advertising

Nearly all interviewees spoken with either believed Montgomery College should be advertising more or acknowledged that the institution was losing ground to competitors in this sector. Additionally, they noted that existing advertising could be more compelling or memorable.

Though two-thirds (66%) of the internal audiences reported seeing at least one ad for Montgomery College (ranking 4th behind only University of Phoenix, UMUC, and Strayer University), this audience is probably more likely to notice Montgomery College ads than the general public since those surveyed are all in some way associated with MC. Among the other community colleges, NOVA is leading the charge; 61% observed NOVA ads (compared to PGCC at 27% and HCC at 17%), which is impressive considering that this is a community college in another state. who have observed ads for a community college that is not even in the same state is impressive. Respondents who saw a Montgomery College ad were most likely to have observed a bus ad (31%), an ad on TV (26%), or an ad on radio (23%). Most internal stakeholders interviewed mentioned the bus ads as well.

Montgomery College students were less likely to see ads (48%) while nearly four-in-five staff members were familiar with ads (78%). Regionally, those employed in Central Services (75%) and Rockville (68%) were more likely to have seen ads, as were those who reside in Germantown, Gaithersburg and Potomac (77%).

Saw At Least One Ad for . . .

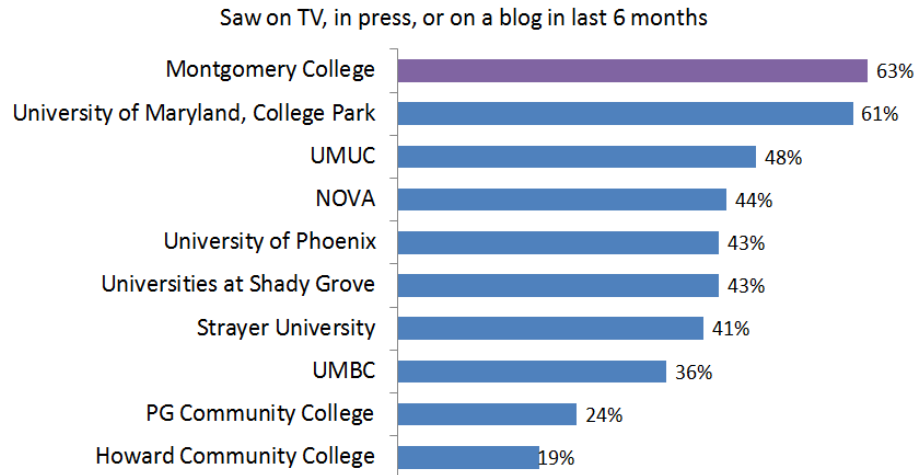| Institution	Percentage
University of Phoenix	78%
UMUC	76%
Strayer University	75%
Montgomery College	66%
NOVA	61%
University of Maryland, College Park	57%
Universities at Shady Grove	57%
UMBC	39%
PG Community College	27%
Howard Community College	17%

Despite the fact that two-thirds of Montgomery College audiences reported having seen ads (which was higher than most other institutions), they still recognize that Montgomery College is probably at a competitive disadvantage in this space. Just 16% believe that Montgomery College's advertising presence is larger than rival institutions in the area (and just 3% say much more); 48% believe that MC advertises less (20% much less).

Further, only 16% say that the ads for Montgomery College were very memorable (though another 46% believe the ads were somewhat memorable.) One stakeholder suggested that in order to make advertising and other communications more memorable, "bold, clear language is what gets heard . . . The clearer and more authentic the voice, the better." Others discussed the desire to incorporate more student success stories into advertisements, with one student saying, "You see the people with caps and gowns on and you're like, that could be me," and another saying more bluntly and in the same vein, "We are the advertisements." In fact, fully 69% said that one of the ways they would like to learn more about Montgomery College would be through the voices and stories of students who have succeeded – higher than any of the other options tested, which validates the approach of framing advertising and other messaging from students' perspectives to ensure that the issues resonate in a personal way.

Press Coverage

The internal audiences are more aware of press coverage around Montgomery College (63% report seeing or hearing a local news story, reading a report in the newspaper, or reading online news on a blog) than they are of other institutions, though again this is at least partially a function of Montgomery College being disproportionately on their radar. University of Maryland, College Park, UMUC, and NOVA follow. As with their estimations of the relative advertising presence, only 15% believe Montgomery College receives more press coverage than other competitors (and just 2% say much more), while 40% say Montgomery College receives less press coverage (13% much less).

Saw on TV, in press, or on a blog in last 6 months

Institution	%
Montgomery College	63%
University of Maryland, College Park	61%
UMUC	48%
NOVA	44%
University of Phoenix	43%
Universities at Shady Grove	43%
Strayer University	41%
UMBC	36%
PG Community College	24%
Howard Community College	19%

What Montgomery College does excel in when it comes to press coverage is ensuring that the press is of the right tone, which indicates that outreach efforts to press, when successful, result in a net benefit for the institution. Two-in-three (68%) noted that the tone of the press coverage is either more positive than negative (40%) or almost always positive (28%), compared to a scant 2% who say that press coverage toward Montgomery College is more negative than positive.

Social Media

Social media is described as something that could be useful but is currently under-utilized by students. Internal stakeholders saw the benefits, but believed the social media efforts need to be strategic. One said, "I'd love to see her engage in social media more, but I worry about saying the wrong thing at the wrong time." While some stakeholders thought students were the primary audience here ("The students really enjoy her messages, both on Twitter and in person"), in fact students were less likely to follow Dr. Pollard on Twitter (3% compared to 15% overall), Montgomery College on Twitter (10% compared to 15% overall), and Montgomery College on Facebook (25% compared to 33%). Some noted that they only use social media to learn about things like school closings, rather than any steady stream of information. So Montgomery College should not assume that students are necessarily disinclined to use social media to learn about the institution; rather, MC needs to reach out to them with reliable, timely, and compelling content that keeps them connected to the institution.

Currently, Facebook and Twitter rank among the least consumed communications produced by Montgomery College, with just 7% engaging with the Facebook page very much and 4% engaging with the Twitter feeds very much.

How much do you use the following communications to learn about Montgomery College? (% Very much, very much/somewhat)		
Use More Often	*Use Less Often*	*Use Least Often*
Inside MC (52%, 79%) Town hall meetings (27%, 51%) Speeches from Dr. Pollard to students, such as	Dr. Pollard's video blog (13%, 36%) MCTV (11%, 32%) Speeches from Dr. Pollard to the	**Facebook page** (7%, 23%) Speeches to interest groups (7%, 22%) Speeches to donors (6%, 17%)

commencement (25%, 54%)	business community (9%, 24%)	**Dr. Pollard's Twitter feed** (4%, 15%)
		MC's Twitter feed (4%, 12%)

II. EXTERNAL INTERVIEWS

Methodology
To better understand the external perceptions of Montgomery College and Dr. Pollard, as well as the ways in which presidential communications impact these perceptions, C.Fox Communications conducted a series of individual, in-depth interviews with key external stakeholders in Montgomery County. Between July 23, 2014 and August 11, 2014, the following business and community leaders were interviewed:

- Norm Augustine, Former Chairman and CEO, Lockheed Martin Corporation
- Richard Beall, President, Montgomery College Alumni Association
- Ken Becker, Principal, Rakusin and Becker Management Inc.
- Jeff Capron, President, Aronson LLC
- Brian Edwards, Chief Communications Officer, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Gigi Godwin, President and CEO, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Anne Gunsteens, Executive Director, J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation
- Debbie Jarvis, Group Vice President, Corporate Citizenship and Social Responsibility, Pepco Holdings, Inc.
- Esther Newman, CEO and Founder, Leadership Montgomery
- Theresa Testoni, Member, Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism
- Cliff White, Partner, SWaN & Legend Venture Partners
- Doug Wrenn, Partner, Rodgers Consulting

Note: For reference, please find the moderator's guide used in each of our in-depth interviews as an appendix item in the back of this report.

Recommendations
The external interviews shined a light on the overall positive perceptions external stakeholders have of Montgomery College and Dr. Pollard, echoing some of the feedback that was shared during the internal interviews. At the same time, these conversations with external stakeholders uncovered several ways in which communications could be improved in order to strengthen external understanding of the strengths of both the school and Dr. Pollard, especially among audiences that are not as closely linked to Montgomery College as the interviewees the team spoke with for this report.

Following is a high-level overview of the team's recommendations, which are based on the findings from the series of 12 external interviews. These recommendations are expanded upon in greater detail in the Maryland Landscape section of this report.
- Despite an excellent reputation among those who are familiar with Montgomery College, there should be a significant focus in the year ahead on increasing visibility of Dr. Pollard (and by default, the college) among a broader Montgomery County audience.
- That said, efforts to increase Dr. Pollard's visibility should be strategically focused on those opportunities with the greatest potential return on investment for the school—whether that be increasing its donor base or attracting prospective students. In doing so, Dr. Pollard's public

visibility efforts can achieve the best possible results for Montgomery College by using her time more efficiently, rather than simply using more time.

- As found in the series of internal interviews, external stakeholders were impressed with Dr. Pollard's personable, down-to-earth communications style. Whenever possible, it is recommended that Dr. Pollard pursue visibility opportunities that allow her style to truly shine— such as delivering keynote remarks or TED-style talks, or seeking out broadcast television interviews.
- While priority issues and initiatives tend to shift over time, it is important for Dr. Pollard to emphasize her commitment (and that of Montgomery College) to those issues that will always resonate with key audiences, particularly the excellent economic value of Montgomery College.

Perceptions of Montgomery College

Overall, external stakeholders hold Montgomery College in high regard and consider it to be an **exceptional community college**. When asked to describe the school, interviewees used phrases such as:

- First-class entry point to higher education
- Reasonably good—maybe the best—alternative to University of Maryland
- One of the best [community colleges] in the country
- A hidden gem in the Greater Washington area

When asked to comment on how perceptions or awareness of Montgomery College have changed since Dr. Pollard became president in 2010, almost all interviewees recognized that **Dr. Pollard has made significant strides in increasing the profile of Montgomery College during her tenure as president**. In addition to Dr. Pollard's visibility within the Montgomery County community through her involvement in boards, leadership organizations, clubs, and other groups, interviewees noted her national honors (including being named a 2014 White House Champion of Change and one of the American Association of University Women's Women of Distinction) as being instrumental in increasing the school's profile on the local and national level.

Despite sharing positive perceptions about the school and its heightened profile since Dr. Pollard's tenure began, multiple interviewees raised a concern that **people outside of Montgomery College's "inner circle" are generally not aware of its high-quality educational programming**. To use a direct quote from one of the interviewees: "I don't see a lot about Montgomery College unless I am purposely researching it. I'm not sure how they get the word out [about the school], but **they should find a way to promote themselves more**—especially within the public school system."

Dr. Pollard's Communication Style

Similar to the feedback received about Montgomery College at large, interviewees were overwhelmingly complimentary of Dr. Pollard and her communication style. Across the board, interviewees noted Dr. Pollard as being an **effective leader** who comes across as **energetic, smart, engaged, and impressive.**

On a personal level, interviewees described Dr. Pollard as being a **"rockstar"** and someone who is **"likeable, approachable, down to earth, and respectful."** Dr. Pollard was commended time and again for her ability to be **inspiring and persuasive**, and someone with whom an audience can easily connect. She was described as being a **great communicator** who is **"very effective, passionate, and committed,"** and one interviewee even went so far as to say that **Montgomery College could not ask for a better ambassador than Dr. Pollard.**

To summarize takeaways of perceptions of Dr. Pollard's communication style: interviewees had ample opportunities to share constructive criticisms, concerns, or general ways in which Dr. Pollard could improve her style—and **not one interviewee shared anything less than glowing feedback**.

Identifying Dr. Pollard's "Signature" Issue

The large majority of interviewees felt they did not know what Dr. Pollard's "signature" issue or initiative might be; or in some cases, interviewees felt they could not narrow her priorities down to one specific item. From the few confident responses received in this line of questioning, interviewees perceived that Dr. Pollard's "signature" issue is: **to ensure access to high-quality higher education for all individuals who want to pursue it, whether they are high school graduates who can't afford/can't get into/aren't ready for a four-year university, or professionals who are interested in pursuing continuing education courses.**

Several interviewees also noted that **Dr. Pollard and Montgomery College should be doing more to promote the economic value of the school**. Whether a student's end goal is to transfer to a four-year university or to pursue continuing education credits in order to advance their career, Montgomery College provides exceptional educational programming at a comparatively low cost. Rather than expect the general public to make this assessment on its own, interviewees suggested that **Montgomery College should outright own the "best bang for your buck" message.**

In a few of the conversations where the economic value of Montgomery College was discussed, respondents also pointed directly to competing schools, specifically Northern Virginia Community College, as doing a superior job of leveraging this argument in their paid media efforts (via radio and other advertisements). Per one respondent: "I don't even live in Northern Virginia but I completely understand what they [Northern Virginia Community College] are promising. They don't apologize or say they are less than a four-year school. They're making a case that any astute parent would understand: I can send my kids to this lower cost community college for two years, and then they'll be accepted to any state school in Virginia."

While it's often difficult for external stakeholders to express the priorities or mission of an organization (or its leadership), the fact that most of the interviewees actually have fairly close and ongoing relationships with Montgomery College and/or Dr. Pollard shines a light on the need to better message the school's priorities—particularly to this "close" external audience. **If the influential business and**

community leaders who dedicate their time, money, and expertise to Montgomery College aren't able to speak articulately about the school's top priority issues or initiatives, it's not likely that these messages are resonating with members of the general public.

For recommendations on streamlining Dr. Pollard's (and Montgomery College's) messaging efforts, please see the Maryland Landscape section of this report.

Dr. Pollard's Visibility

All interviewees were generally aware of Dr. Pollard's significant visibility in the Montgomery County community, and most were able to name at least one organization she is affiliated with, including:

- Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Leadership Montgomery
- Impact Silver Spring
- The Community Foundation
- The Universities at Shady Grove
- Kiwanis groups, Rotary clubs, and the boards of various local organizations

When asked to identify specific organizations or events that Dr. Pollard should be involved with (but isn't already), none of the interviewees were able/chose to put forth a recommendation. In fact, many interviewees made a very important observation here: that **Dr. Pollard should prioritize her time very strategically, and be careful not to stretch herself too thin**. Rather than accepting every invitation she receives, interviewees noted that Dr. Pollard should purposefully align her speaking opportunities, board roles, and other public (but time consuming) activities with her strategic goals and those of Montgomery College.

To better protect Dr. Pollard from spending her time on worthy, but less strategic public visibility opportunities, interviewees also pointed to the need for Dr. Pollard to have a stronger cast of representatives who can accept some of these invitations on her behalf. **By building a passionate group of speakers at the level right below the president's office, Dr. Pollard can free herself up to dedicate more time to the issues and initiatives that matter most to her—and that can be most impactful for the school.**

Interviewees also noted that while she "has what it takes to be a great national face of the value of community colleges," **strategic visibility within Montgomery County is absolutely a higher priority than building a rigorous portfolio of national visibility opportunities**. Rather, Dr. Pollard should only pursue those national opportunities that can be directly tied to potential positive outcomes for Montgomery College.

Above all, interviewees cautioned against filling Dr. Pollard's with so many public visibility opportunities that she can't reasonably fulfill her commitment to Montgomery College's students, staff, faculty, administration, alumni, boards, and other key groups.

For recommendations on prioritizing Dr. Pollard's time across many competing demands and invitations, please see the Maryland Landscape section of this report.

Dr. Pollard's Peers

Interviewees varied in their responses to the questioning about who Dr. Pollard's peers are, either because of their unfamiliarity with the education space or because they perceive her as being on a different playing field than the other education leaders they are familiar with. For those respondents who did offer a specific answer to this question, many of the same (expected) names were heard repeatedly:

- Steward Edelstein, President, The Universities at Shady Grove
- Freeman Hrabowski, President, University of Maryland Baltimore County
- Charlene Dukes, President, Prince George's Community College
- Wallace Loh, President, University of Maryland
- Bob Templin, President, Northern Virginia Community College

Beyond these usual suspects, a thoughtful insight from one interviewee was noted: that **Dr. Pollard is similar to the CEO of a fairly large nonprofit organization**. Specifically, this interviewee stated that rather than focus on a specific industry when looking for peers and others who could serve as a role model or mentor, it's best to look to people with specific leadership characteristics to emulate for personal growth and development.

Montgomery College/Presidential Communications

Somewhat surprisingly, most interviewees did not have much feedback to share on Montgomery College's communications efforts. Because interviewees generally have very close, specific relationships with Montgomery College and/or its faculty and staff, it was discerned that they don't tend to receive the typical public communications from Montgomery College. For example, rather than joining a general e-newsletter mailing list, most interviewees rely on more personal communications from Dr. Pollard, members of various boards, etc.

For recommendations on improving communications with key external audiences, please see the Maryland Landscape section of this report.

III. Montgomery College Policies and Procedures

Methodology

The assessment and analysis of Montgomery College Policies and Procedures 62003 and 620003CP (PandPs) included an extensive review of the PandPs for gaps, weaknesses, omissions, errors, oversights, challenges, and opportunities based on the expertise of the review team.

The team's insights are based on years of experience in communications best practices and through its comparison of the PandPs against those of similar/relevant institutions, notably Northern Virginia Community College and the Virginia Community College System. To enhance the assessment process and to aid in increasing the adoption of the findings, a quantitative scoring system (Scorecard) was incorporated into the analysis. Additionally, the Scorecard was designed to:

- Establish the *dimensions of evaluation* (Comprehensiveness, Clarity, Efficiency, Impact Potential) for the PandPs.
- Balance the relative importance of each dimension of evaluation through a weighting system built into the Scorecard.
- Assign a quantitative score to each *component of the PandPs* relative to the dimension of evaluation so as to convert otherwise qualitative analysis and feedback into a more meaningful, comparable, and actionable format.
- Aid in more rapid understanding of which PandPs present the greatest opportunities for improvement and which are stronger in their current form.

The Scorecard

Through the Scorecard, each component of the PandPs was given a score of 1 (below average), 2 (average), or 3 (above average) for each dimension of evaluation. As the review team evaluated a component of the PandPs such as 'Advertising', team members assessed it in terms of each of the four dimensions of evaluation and assigned a 1, 2, or 3 for each of those dimensions.

So as not to overvalue Efficiency or undervalue Impact Potential for example, each dimension of evaluation carries with it an assigned, relative weighting.

Once each component of the PandPs had received a score of 1, 2, or 3, each was then multiplied by the weighting for that dimension. The product of those calculations yielded a valuation for each dimension of evaluation within a PandP component. When added together, each component of the PandPs generated a total score with a maximum score being 3 and the lowest possible score being 0. PandP components with scores below 2 are in most need of improvement and those 2 or above are the components that are strongest at the present time.

The effectiveness of the PandPs can also be examined through the lens of the dimension of evaluation alone regardless of the PandP component. By simply adding up each score within a dimension of

evaluation and dividing by the number of components an average score can be generated. This enables an overall assessment of the strength of the PandPs against these dimensions.

Recommendations

In the creation of the list of recommended adjustments to the PandPs, the review team focused primarily on those components with the lowest Scorecard scores. In most cases, components that received a score of 1 or 2 for a particular evaluation dimension ended up receiving multiple recommendations for improvement. And even though a component may have received a 3 for a particular dimension of evaluation it is possible and likely that the team still offered recommendations for enhancement. The recommendations were provided at the specific sub-section level of a PandP component and in cases where a PandP was in need of a new sub-section that need is noted in the recommendation with a 'NEW' indicator.

PROCEDURE 62003CP (Overall score 20.20 out of 30.00)

General (Score 2.00 out of 3.00)

Impact Potential

Recommend taking the opportunity in this section to establish that while it may not be the intent of the individual communicator, comments/messages can often be perceived as being the point of view of the College if shared or stated by someone identified as being associated with the College. Individuals affiliated with the College, athletes, faculty, staff, administrators, etc. should be reminded that "the optics" of what is being said and by whom, regardless of intent, can be a significant factor in protecting or damaging the College's image and reputation.

The benchmark assessment of competitor Northern Virginia Community College illustrates this quite clearly within their Social Media Guidelines (April 2013) through the following:

"These guidelines are for you if you are NOVA faculty, staff or administrators; students; contractors or others creating or contributing to any of NOVA's official websites or services including:

- Social media and social networking tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, NOVA on iTunes U and any additional social media and social networking tools as they become available
- Blogs (both official College-wide NOVA blogs and blogs external to NOVA)
- Wikis, such as Wikipedia and other similar sites, where text can be posted
- Virtual worlds

Please be aware that violation of these guidelines may result in disciplinary action."

Responsibilities (Score 1.85 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- NEW: I. Recommend adding a responsibility to the Vice President of Communications to serve as the official spokesperson of the College and of the Office of the President. (a.) There should never be ambiguity as to who that official person is which seems to be the case in the current Procedures via silence on the topic and (b.) it would serve as another means by which to elevate senior staff and lessen the marginalization of the President commenting on matters below him or her.
- NEW: J. Recommend more clearly delineating the specific review process for each form of communication that would come from the Office of the President. For example:
  - Public facing speech: Speech writer, Strategic Communications Director, Functional/Area Subject Matter Expert (i.e. Admissions in the case of a speech to newly enrolled), and Vice President of Communications.).

Clarity

- H. This should be more specific as to what is meant by "who are so qualified." The review team believes it is meant to be specifically media trained and as such should then go on to indicate who is required to provide the training.
- B. Responsibilities for various functions are scattered throughout this procedure i.e. Visual Identity and the Vice President of Communications' responsibilities. There should be a jurisdictional view of responsibilities inside of "Responsibilities" that covers the various sections of the Procedures.

Efficiency

- Recommend realigning (a.) ultimate communications responsibility resting with the President and shifting that to the senior most person reporting to the president who oversees the function and (b.) changing the person who oversees the function from SVP of Advancement and Community Engagement to Vice President of Communications. Note: Local competitor Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) does have a similar organizational structure to Montgomery College presently wherein the head of Institutional Advancement oversees an Associate Vice President of Internal Communications and an Associate Vice President of Marketing and Media Relations, but NOVA's President's responsibilities do not specifically call out that "the President has the overall responsibility for public information activities of the College" as is the case with Montgomery College. Further, additional benchmark, North Dakota University System, states in its procedures: "a president may delegate duties and responsibilities as necessary or appropriate."
- B. It is incomplete to assert that the Vice President of Communication has only "staff responsibility". Review team recommends that be expanded to be full and complete content creation and approval as well.
- NEW: Recommend a callout for the interaction between the Office of Communications and the Emergency Management and Planning Office as noted under Electronic Communications under Impact Potential.

Impact Potential

- Explore the current process in place for on-going/standing meetings whereby the Office of Communications engages with each key functional areas of the college (a.) about what is going on from a communications standpoint from the Office of the President and whereby (b.) each key functional area of the college can communicate needs, opportunities and challenges with the Office of Communications. If such processes are absent, the recommendation is to establish them to help facilitate a two-way communications mechanism with key stakeholders.

Visual Identity (Score 2.70 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- It is recommended to add a directive on how a person can go about formally requesting an enhancement, adjustment, or general change to the official brand style guide of the College.
- It is the recommendation to add a descriptive statement as to how changes to the brand style guide are communicated to the college community.

Clarity

- B. It would seem beneficial for users/implementers of brand identity elements to have access to more than just the brand standards guidelines, but a regular, periodic informational webinar that can be used to share best practices and updates regarding uses of brand assets.

News Releases and Media (Score 1.65 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- General comment: In the case of a crisis or emergency situation, if both the Director of Media Relations and VP are unavailable, who is next in line? Review team recommends a more descriptive succession plan for next in line communicators.
- C. "Work in the community" should be directed to the Office of Communications "for consideration". Add "for consideration."
- J. Given the nature of citizen journalism recommend broadening the first sentence to be: "Anyone not in a formal communications capacity at the school must seek permission from the Office of Communications if they want to enter classrooms, laboratories, or similar facilities for reporting, photography, or video/audio recording purposes."

Clarity

- D: The following sentences should be moved to be the first sentence in this section:

"Inquiries from all media representatives must be referred to the Office of Communications."

It should be followed by:

"No interview should be granted without first informing a member of the Office of Communications."

- E. The "emergency communications team" should have clearly identified representatives who are aware that they are representatives of the team, what their roles are, and when and how the team becomes activated.
- F. Recommend adding to this item: "unless required to do so by law or requested to do so by law enforcement. All requests to do so must be approved by the Office of Communications and the General Counsels Office."
- G: Clarify by stating: "personnel appointments at a director level or higher." will be subject to this level of scrutiny.
- I: Recommend adding: "and will abide by the latest guidance provided in College's brand style guide."

Efficiency

- B. Rather than calling out that the press release should be "prepared by the Director of Media and Public Relations or Vice President of Communications.", it should be broadened to say "by the Office of Communications." A director should review it, but doesn't necessarily need to be the one who prepares it.

Impact Potential

- E. The procedure is too light on possible negative/emergency situations. It is recommended to enhance this according as suggested in Clarity E above and in Electronic Communications, Impact Potential below.

Advertising (Score 1.80 out of 3.00)

Clarity

- It is unclear how different departments within the College (i.e. Admissions) would work with or without the Office of Communications Marketing Department in the execution of advertising needs. Such guidelines would foster greater clarity of roles and preferences.
- B. It appears to convey that it is possible for departments to place their own advertisements so long at standards are followed and content is created and approved by the Marketing Department. If that is true, the procedures should outline the process to be followed to obtain approval by the Marketing Department within the Office of Communications.

Efficiency

- B: It would be beneficial for the procedure to describe in some detail the preferred lead times of the Marketing Department in carrying out institutional advertising development and placement.

It is worth noting that the Virginia Community College System frowns upon mass mailings as a tactical advertising element:

> "Mass mailings are generally prohibited; however, either mass mailings or newspaper inserts, but not both, may be used if other methods of distributing permissible information are not economically feasible in the college's local service area."

Impact Potential

- B. It would seem beneficial for the Office of Communications to be empowered with knowledge of all advertising in market across the College to be able to determine whether certain messages can or should be deployed (over-saturating lists, conflicting/competing messages, seasonal priorities in market).

Alumni Affairs (Score 2.35 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- New: There should be a process whereby the Office of the President or Office of Communications on behalf of the President can engage and work collaboratively with Alumni Affairs to proactively communicate with this important audience in the right way at the right time. The collaboration should include helping plan relevant and worthwhile speaking opportunities and helping to frame the messaging for such sessions.

Impact Potential

- It is recommended that The Vice President of Communications or other identified party within the Office of Communications have review and approval authority over any content that could be ascribed to the President of the College.

Speakers Bureau (Score 1.70 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- It is the strong recommendation that this procedure include some mention of preferred advance notice when a request is made for a speaker through the College website Speaker's Bureau page, the standard response time that a requestor should expect to hear back on their request and the typical form of that follow up, i.e. email, letter, phone call.
- From a proactive standpoint, vs. the current reactive mechanism driving this procedure it is recommended that the College include in its procedures some mention of College priority areas and/or how it goes about procuring/sourcing its list of Bureau participants from the College community to aid in transparency of the process.
- It is suggested that the procedure address situations in which a desired speaker is unavailable. Organizations should be told to select an alternate presenter should their first choice be unavailable, or the Office of Communications may select a replacement for them. Additionally,

the policy should include instructions for organizations about who to contact or how to proceed if their topic of interest is not covered at all.

Clarity

- It is recommended that clarification be provided for:

    "Selected topics may use Montgomery College students as co-presenters."

    Is that to suggest that Montgomery College students may be among the presenters on a given topic? Currently reads that the topics are using the students, which seems unnecessarily confusing as to what use means. Further, the policy should go on to provide common examples or topic areas in which students may be or are often involved.

- The policy should clarify whether there would ever be a situation when the organization may incur charges for hosting a speaker, such as parking or travel expenses, printed materials, etc. Some of the presenters require visual aids, so the policy should clarify that organizations are responsible for the setup of any projectors, monitors, or other display materials in accordance with the presentation.

Efficiency

- The current offering of allowing organizations to make up to 7 requests per year for speakers is too generous resulting in excessive taxing of the Speaker's Bureau while also setting expectations to high relative to the College's ability and desire to fulfill that many requests per requesting organization. Recommend this be reduced to no more than 5 requests per organization unless extenuating circumstances warrant such as the requesting organization is within a strategic topic area of the College. (Circumstances to be approved by Office of Communications.) In arriving at this recommendation, the balance between meeting College objectives and competitor approaches was evaluated, i.e. Northern Virginia Community College placing no cap on their speakers bureau.

Impact Potential

- The current procedure attempts to be everything to everyone. Recommendation to enhance impact would be to narrow the list of potential topics and more importantly create a short list of areas critical to the President's agenda and highlight them as Presidential Imperative Topic Areas. The President will of course likely want to be the voice on several of these, but it could be a way for her to anoint speakers on her behalf in key areas for her and the College. It could also be built into performance objectives of the Office of Communications to make sure a certain number of speaking opportunities occur annually/semi-annually within the Presidential Imperative Topic Areas.
- In order to measure the success of the bureau, including an evaluation process is recommended. Currently, there is no way to collect feedback from the organizations requesting and hosting

speakers. A simple evaluation form from each host organization would give the Office of Communications a tool to measure and evaluate the impact of the Speakers Bureau. Speakers could be changed or provided additional training and coaching based on their evaluation, new areas of focus may be included or modified, and the request process may be altered based on feedback.

Publications by Administration, Faculty, or Staff (Score 2.15 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- D. Recommend getting more specific with examples regarding how a successful publication might be promoted for the advantage of the one published and for the College itself. For instance:
    a. consider adding the person and topic to the Speakers Bureau
    b. consider outlining a basic media strategy to promote a published author and work (media list creation, media advisory, base social media plan, etc.)

Clarity

- C. It should be more clearly stipulated who can sign a contract related to a publication vs. simply saying what steps need to be taken prior to signing.

Impact Potential

- Rather than have the Office of Communications receive notice when a submission for publication results in a publication, it is recommended that copies of submissions be sent to the Office of Communications for tracking and reporting purposes. This would provide the College with a true line of sight into the volume of submissions, where they are or are not originating from, success/placement ratios, quality of publications being pursued, alignment with College strengths and priority areas, assessment of activity by faculty/staff/administrators, and would allow for goals to be set around number and type of submissions with a built in recording/tracking process.

Electronic Communications (Score 2.15 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- It will be important for the College and Office of the President to quickly move forward with the intended social media guidelines discussed in this section. This will aid in making the procedures truly comprehensive in today's communications landscape and will lift the College to be in line with its peers like Northern Virginia Community College who have well-crafted procedures for social media which contemplate official and unofficial uses of the channel as well as the more basic procedural aspects of permissions and general guidance.

Impact Potential

- C. It is recommended that the following be included: the role of educating users (students in particularly) about the importance/reliance upon email communications at Montgomery College as a communications tool, how to get started with their account, what types of College communications to expect via email, etc.
- B. Should include an established and signed code of conduct for anyone controlling content distribution on branded Montgomery College social platforms and among all administrators, staff and faculty regarding their personal use of such platforms. This is particularly vital in light of the times where everyone can be perceived as an instant spokesperson rightly or wrongly for good or bad.
- B. Regarding Montgomery College's official Emergency Response procedures, the Emergency Management and Planning Office should develop an established code of conduct for anyone controlling content distribution on branded Montgomery College social platforms (Twitter and Facebook, at minimum) during a breaking campus emergency. This department should also determine what constitutes a "breaking campus emergency" (i.e., an emergency happening in real time, such as an active shooter situation, bomb threat, etc.). In addition, the "Communications" section of the Montgomery College Emergency Procedures document should be updated so that Montgomery College's Facebook page and Montgomery College's Twitter feed are included as items 12 and 13 in the list of platforms to which emergency news must be published.

Web Presence (Note: This section is identified in the revised P&Ps as IX. In its current form, this should be X.) (Score 1.85 out of 3.00)

- It is recommended that this section be folded into IX. 'Electronic Communications D.'

POLICY 62003 (Overall score 8.40 out of 9.00)

Base Recognition (Score 2.70 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- It is the recommendation that the Board consider broadening this statement beyond, "development of the public understanding" to include: "For the College to remain competitive with similar institutions, properly position itself as a leading academic institution, prepare itself to manage the rapidly changing world of communications it is necessary for the College to maintain a comprehensive and detailed set of communications policies and procedures that are updated regularly."

College responsibility (Score 3.00 out of 3.00)

- N/A

Presidential Authority (Score 2.70 out of 3.00)

Comprehensiveness

- iii. It is the recommendation that the Board consider broadening this to be:

"The President is authorized to establish procedures necessary to implement this policy, which includes empowering his or her senior leadership in the Office of Communications to do so." This is consistent with other Junior College and University System language identified in the background research during this assessment process.

IV. Media Analysis

Methodology

To ensure that Montgomery College's key messages are truly being heard and carried forth by reporters, recent media coverage was analyzed for tone, messaging, effectiveness, and overall quality of placement. Included in this analysis were 31 news articles mentioning Montgomery College and Dr. Pollard. These articles came from online outlets, including earned media placements, Montgomery College-issued press releases, and posts to Dr. Pollard's Huffington Post profile, broken down as follows:

- 8 earned media placements across 3 media outlets (*The Gazette*, *The Washington Post*, and Patch.com)
- 11 Huffington Post blog posts
- 12 press releases (9 authored by Montgomery College, 3 authored by outside groups)

While the Huffington Post clips go back as far as November 27, 2012 (e.g., Dr. Pollard's first post), the earned coverage and press releases analyzed are from the four-month period of March 1 to June 30, 2014. (Note: This four-month selection of articles is shorter than originally intended because of Montgomery College's limited access to older media clips. Recommendations for preventing this issue in the future can be found in the Maryland Landscape portion of this report.)

Recommendations
Knowing how well-respected and sought after Dr. Pollard is as an expert on education and issues affecting college-age students, it is important that she sustain a strong presence for herself in earned media and across self-managed platforms like Huffington Post and Montgomery College-authored press releases. By doing so, Dr. Pollard will expand her credibility among those who already know her, as well as grow the size of her existing supporter base. That said, and knowing the limitations on Dr. Pollard's time, media efforts should be balanced between Dr. Pollard and a suggested cadre of appointed Montgomery College spokespeople (as recommended in the Maryland Landscape section, below).

- Stories are an incredibly powerful tool for connecting with an audience and increasing the resonance of key messages. Knowing that Dr. Pollard has a compelling personal story, not to mention the stories of current and former Montgomery College students, at her disposal, it is recommended that she leverage these in media appearances and interviews to help contextualize her key messages and priorities.
- When using self-managed platforms like Huffington Post, a press release, or even Montgomery College's website, Presidential communications should be written in such a way that key messages are delivered clearly, consistently, and in a positive tone.
- Specifically for Huffington Post blog posts and other media interviews, a strong closing should always contain a clear call-to-action for the reader/viewer/listener. Whether it's an ask to visit the Montgomery College website or to sign a petition on behalf of The Dream Act, this encourages the audience to go from passive receivers of information to active participants in working toward a desired endpoint.

Earned Coverage

The earned media stories analyzed—whether a feature story or simply a mention of Dr. Pollard or Montgomery College—to be fairly neutral in tone, not necessarily painting an overtly positive (or negative) picture of Montgomery College. Rather, coverage tended to stick to the facts about the topic being covered, such as financial investment needs from the county ("Pollard: Montgomery College needs $8 million more from county") or Dr. Pollard's institutional goals for the year ahead ("Montgomery College examines ways to cut cost, streamline student success"). Although there is no way to guarantee every reporter who covers Montgomery College will write a glowing piece, there are two key ways in which Montgomery College could improve the likelihood of this happening:

Make the Most of Anecdotes

As expressed in the earned media recommendations in the Maryland Landscape portion of this report, implementing a robust proactive media strategy is recommended to ensure ongoing, positive coverage of Montgomery College—especially by reporters like Lindsay Powers at *The Gazette*, who covers the college fairly frequently. Not only does this help to ensure that prospective students and their parents are learning about Montgomery College, but it is also important for key external constituents (like those spoken to in in-depth interviews) to see Montgomery College get recognized as the leading community college that it is. As part of this proactive earned media strategy, regularly feeding positive stories or tips about Montgomery College and its students to the media is recommended, even if the end goal is not an immediate story placement. In doing so, Montgomery College will remind reporters of its positive impact on the community, and also arm them with good anecdotes they may revisit when they get assigned to write a story about science building renovations, for example. A great example of the kinds of anecdotes that can help turn a story from just neutral coverage of news to a really positive story about the school is "Montgomery College celebrates 2014 graduates," in which reporter Lindsay Powers relays the personal stories and challenges several commencement speakers—including students—had to overcome to be where they are today. People love stories because they help them visualize a big concept or the impact a person or institution—like Montgomery College—was able to have. The students' stories are Montgomery College's most valuable asset, and should be elevated as often as possible to help people understand and connect with the school's impact.

Focus on the Positive; Don't Lead with the Negative

Whether it's a simple concern about tuition increases affecting enrollment rates or a statement about how outdated classroom facilities were before a recent upgrade, leading with a negative sentiment puts a thought in the reader's head that may not have been there originally. For example, in "College celebrates science building renovation," the story should have been about the great things that Montgomery College can now achieve that are above and beyond the excellent STEM program already in place. By making a comment that the college had been challenged to teach "the workforce of tomorrow" because the building was constructed "so many yesterdays ago," Dr. Pollard risks putting a doubt in the reader's mind that perhaps Montgomery College hasn't been the STEM leader they

previously thought it was. Further, if the STEM buildings were so outdated, what other college facilities are in desperate need of an upgrade? Similarly, in "Montgomery College tuition to increase in fiscal 2015," Dr. Pollard is quoted as expressing her concern that tuition hikes might deter students from attending Montgomery College. Rather than leading with this very natural concern, Dr. Pollard should have focused on the positive of what tuition increases mean for the school and the education it can provide, as well as the types of aid Montgomery College provides for those students who do need financial assistance.

Huffington Post

Overall, Dr. Pollard's Huffington Post blog posts are well-written, relevant, and make a strong case for the topic at hand, whether it be increasing enrollment rates or supporting local food recovery efforts in Montgomery County. In analyzing pieces like "A Maryland Dream That Needs to Become a National Dream" and "Making a Stronger Case for Your Cause by Being Civil and Well-Informed" (following the Newtown shooting), Dr. Pollard's ability to present herself as a thought leader on issues that were timely and that much of the nation felt strongly about was noticeable. Further, the passion Dr. Pollard feels for her work, not only at Montgomery College but also in spurring community action, is evident in each piece she has written.

However, the team's analysis did uncover several recurring areas in which these posts could be improved to strengthen the delivery and resonance of Dr. Pollard's key messages:

Solid connection to Montgomery College

In some cases, Dr. Pollard clearly and deftly ties a broader commentary back to Montgomery College and its efforts to address a specific issue, such as "Owning the Achievement Gap in Higher Education." Yet in other instances, the opportunity to elevate Montgomery College is missed. For instance, "600,000 Fewer Students at California's Community Colleges" is a great piece about enrollment trends—but makes no mention of Montgomery College. While Dr. Pollard's instinct to stay largely focused on the situation in California was right, more effort should have been made to make this piece relevant to Dr. Pollard's most important constituents: the people of Montgomery County. The references to Maryland and Governor O'Malley's efforts are well-placed, but a few specific examples of challenges Montgomery College was able to avoid thanks to the action of county officials and state policymakers would have helped cement this as an excellent piece that portrays Dr. Pollard as a thought leader on national issues, and Montgomery College as a shining example of what a community college can and should look like in America.

Anecdotes

Similar to the comments in the earned media analysis above, it is important to include powerful anecdotes in Dr. Pollard's Huffington Post blog posts. These great stories have been seen in pieces like "Words of Wisdom From a Community College Commencement," and heard in Dr. Pollard's TED talk.

However, many of Dr. Pollard's Huffington Post blog posts don't include that personal anecdote that grabs a reader's attention and get them to truly connect with the piece. For example, in "Owning the Achievement Gap in Higher Education," including the personal example of a student who is benefiting from "The Mentoring Project for Women" or "On RAMP to STEM" would have helped show that not only is Montgomery College creating programs to address the achievement gap, but that these programs are working. Students and parents reading the piece would have a better understanding of what they can and should expect from their community colleges, and other education leaders might be inspired to replicate some of these ideas at their own schools.

Strong Closing

Every blog post or commentary Dr. Pollard authors is a chance for her to ask her readers to do something. While she nails the closing call-to-action in some of her pieces, such as urging California to revisit its Master Plan for education (in "600,000 Fewer Students at California's Community Colleges") or encouraging colleges and universities not to be afraid of difficult conversations and debates (in "Making a Stronger Case for Your Cause by Being Civil and Well-Informed"), other closings just summarize what's already been stated and don't provide a clear action item for the reader. Rather than simply restating the value of community colleges in "An Educator-Activist Praises the Community College Movement," why not ask the reader to spread the word about community colleges to the people they know who might benefit from an institution like Montgomery College—whether that's an entrepreneur, a high school graduate, a dislocated worker, or someone else entirely. Similarly, "Listen Up, High School Students and Families: This College President Is Going to Be Intrusive!" could have closed with a call to action to readers to find out if their community college offers a program like ACES (and to push for the creation of one if the answer is no).

Length

While Huffington Post is a great platform for longer-form pieces since the editorial constraints for traditional op-eds aren't applied as stringently to Huffington Post, it is still important to recognize that readers have a limited attention span. Dr. Pollard's many 800+ word blog entries all convey great information, but using more succinct language could help reduce that word count greatly. As a rule of thumb, it's best to keep these posts to 600-750 words maximum, thereby improving the chances that the reader will read all the way through to the call-to-action at the end of the piece.

Press Releases

All of the press releases reviewed as part of the assessment were generally positive in tone, announcing grants and awards, such as Dr. Pollard being honored as a 2014 Champion of Change or Montgomery College being selected to participate in the "Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM" initiative. When comparing these releases against Dr. Pollard's FY14 messaging themes, every press release (authored by Montgomery College or an outside group) focused primarily on the theme of "students." While not surprising given how central students are to all that the school—and Dr. Pollard—

does, it is reassuring to see this number one priority front and center in all of the press release coverage analyzed.

Overall, the Montgomery College-authored releases were messaged fairly well and did an adequate job explaining the "news" of the release. To improve the effectiveness of press releases in the future, it is recommended to strengthen the following areas:

Quotes

In general, Montgomery College's press releases make fairly good use of quotes, both authored by Dr. Pollard and by outside parties relevant to the news at hand. In instances where Montgomery College is announcing an award or grant of some sort, MC should consider giving additional weight to the quote from the awarding party, either by placing that quote above Dr. Pollard's or by ensuring it is in the top two-thirds of the press release. This can be done by employing journalism's "inverted pyramid" metaphor, which puts the most newsworthy information first, followed by important details, and lastly general background information. To the extent that Montgomery College is able to control the content of quotes by external parties, making them as specific as possible is recommended, to offer a clear explanation of why Montgomery College received a Bank of America Charitable Foundation grant, for example.

Data/Examples

It is also important to offer data or examples to back up news whenever possible. For example, the press release about Aronson Foundation award (["Aronson Foundation Awards $25,000 Grant to the Montgomery College Foundation for Honors Business Scholarships"](#)) explains the MBI program and the types of opportunities its students have after completing the program, but it never tells the reader how many students have completed the program since 1999, what the completion rates are for the program, or any other metrics to show the program's impact.

Multimedia

Of the nine Montgomery College-authored press releases reviewed, only three included any multimedia assets (in all three cases, a photo). Industry best practice is to include photos or videos with press releases whenever possible in order to increase engagement. While the cost of doing so on a traditional newswire (like BusinessWire, PR Newswire, etc.) can be cost-prohibitive, there is no reason why these multimedia assets could not be included with a press release that lives on the Montgomery College website or that is distributed by "free" tools such as personal email to reporters, e-newsletter, and so on.

Hyperlinks

Strategic use of links in a press release is considered industry standard for providing a positive reader experience, and also for driving traffic to a website or a specific page within a website. While some of the press releases reviewed included URLs in the boilerplate at the end of the release, links were found to be very rarely embedded in the body of a press release—and when links were present in the body of

the release, they were shown as a full URL rather than hyperlinked text. To optimize Montgomery College's press releases in the future, it is recommend to embed 2-3 strategic links (through hyperlinked text) that take readers to more information about the topic at hand. For instance, the June 4, 2014 press release on Montgomery College's implementation grant awards ("Montgomery College Awarded Two Implementation Grant Awards for EARN Maryland Workforce Training Initiative") could link to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation website, as well as to more information about BIOTrain and to the *MOVE* Montgomery webpage on MontgomeryCollege.edu.

Aside from the broader trends detailed above, consideration should be given to the press release that was used to announce Dr. Pollard as a White House Champion of Change ("Montgomery College President Honored as One of the White House's Champions of Change") as a big missed opportunity was noticed with this particular release. In the press release, the messaging about the honor and about Dr. Pollard is on target, but the amount of press release "real estate" given to the other honorees is far greater than it should be for a Montgomery College-authored release. While it's absolutely important to note the other honorees, the purpose of Montgomery College putting out its own release on this award is to elevate Dr. Pollard specifically. By giving her just as much space as all of the other honorees, and using the same language as is on the Champions of Change webpage (and nothing more), the opportunity was missed to give added context, personality, and credibility to Dr. Pollard herself. For Montgomery College, a more impactful version of this press release would have expanded more on Dr. Pollard's credentials and reason for being named an honoree, with a list of other honorees at the bottom of the release and a link included for readers to learn more.

Based on the analysis detailed above, as well as comments shared in the series of in-depth interviews with external constituents, comprehensive paid and earned media recommendations have been developed, which can be found in the Maryland Landscape portion of this report.

V. External Recommendations: Maryland Landscape

Based on what has been learned from in-depth interviews, as well as conversations had with Montgomery College about Dr. Pollard's external visibility, the following communications strategies and techniques are recommended to improve presidential communications and better promote awareness of Dr. Pollard and Montgomery College on a public scale:

A. Strategically prioritizing Dr. Pollard's time
B. Building the credibility of the next level of Montgomery College spokespeople
C. Implementing a robust, proactive earned media strategy for Dr. Pollard

The following pages detail recommendations within each of these three areas, including concrete steps for making them actionable.

Strategically Prioritizing Dr. Pollard's Time

One of the biggest takeaways from external in-depth interviews is that Dr. Pollard's public visibility within the Montgomery County community is well recognized among key stakeholders. Everyone interviewed was able to name at least one organization, in addition to Montgomery College, that Dr. Pollard is affiliated with. Many had seen her speak at conferences, roundtable events, and in other public settings. At the same time, interviewees clearly recognized the potential for Dr. Pollard to stretch herself too thin and be taken away from her daily responsibilities to Montgomery College and its students, staff, faculty, and other key groups. This sentiment echoes what has been heard in conversations with Montgomery College staff, and even from Dr. Pollard herself: that strategically prioritizing Dr. Pollard's time is an essential first step in improving presidential communications.

Audiences

To kick start this prioritization, begin to take stock of where Dr. Pollard is spending her time. Knowing that the majority of Montgomery College's students (and donors) are within the Montgomery County community, this audience is a clear top priority. Immediately following the county-level audience are state-level leaders, specifically policymakers and business/nonprofit leaders who have the ability to impact Montgomery College's bottom line. Only when the opportunity can truly benefit Montgomery College should Dr. Pollard focus on a broad, national audience. For example, the White House Champions of Change honor was a perfect opportunity to elevate Dr. Pollard (and thus, Montgomery College) as a national thought leader, as would be an award like Aspen Institute's [Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence](#).

Generally speaking, it is recommended that Montgomery College split Dr. Pollard's communications initiatives across these three key audiences as follows:

- Montgomery County – 45% of Dr. Pollard's time
- State of Maryland – 35% of Dr. Pollard's time

- National – 20% of Dr. Pollard's time

Formats

Dr. Pollard is by and large perceived as a powerful communicator, with a few specific platforms rising to the top of the in-depth interview findings and media analysis as formats in which she really shines:

- TED-like talks
- Opinion/commentary pieces
- Intimate, one-on-one (or small group) conversations

The common thread across all of these platforms is that Dr. Pollard has the opportunity to speak in greater detail than she might in a panel discussion or when being quoted for an earned media story, thereby giving her room to tell some of the great success stories she's so familiar with—including her own and those of her students.

Montgomery College should elevate these types of opportunities as the top priority communications activities for Dr. Pollard to participate in, with other valuable (but less important) opportunities being delegated to the next level of Montgomery College spokespeople. (See Section B below for the recommendations on building up this next class of spokespeople.)

Planning

Knowing that Dr. Pollard's time, and that of her team members, is limited, it is recommended that the media team create an editorial calendar and coordinated message map at the start of each fiscal year that maps Dr. Pollard's messaging priorities across the coming 12 months. While some messaging priorities (such as students) will carry over from one month to another, others will naturally make more sense to be elevated at specific points in the year. For example, education-specific legislative issues in Maryland will have a lot of resonance over the next two months as this year's mid-term elections inch closer. Similarly, the spring is Dr. Pollard's advocacy season, so advocacy issues related to enrollment, for example, would be best received during this time.

To streamline this planning process, the following steps in the 6-8 weeks prior to the start of a new fiscal year are recommended:

- **Employ a message board strategy to identify Dr. Pollard's messaging themes for the year ahead.** The more focused these themes can be, highlighting just 3-4 high priority areas (as opposed to the 14 areas seen for FY14, for example), the more likely it is that Montgomery College's key audiences will hear, understand, and connect with the school's messages for that year. MC is recommended to hold a Message Strategy Summit with key internal stakeholders—including MC's four senior vice presidents—to develop these message boards. In doing so, Dr. Pollard will ensure she has the

perspective and buy-in of those she will call on to help deliver her messages in the year ahead.

- **Conduct research on existing visibility opportunities to elevate messaging themes**, such as at a recurring event or meeting held by Montgomery County Public Schools, or an annual event that draws key policymakers from Annapolis. These opportunities should prioritize the formats and audiences detailed above, and should fit seamlessly into the expected ebbs and flows of Dr. Pollard's schedule. For example, knowing summer is a busy planning time for Dr. Pollard, it may make more sense to look for speaking opportunities in the fall when her schedule is a bit lighter.

- **Build a monthly editorial calendar, assigning messaging themes to the months in which they are most likely to be relevant to an outside audience** (e.g., community engagement messages should be elevated in months when Montgomery College has large-scale community engagement initiatives taking place). Similarly, the visibility and speaking opportunities uncovered in the research step above can help guide which messaging themes should be elevated in which months. While this calendar will need to be flexible to accommodate for unforeseen priorities that may come up during the course of a year, it's an important framework to have at the start of each year.

- **After messaging themes have been determined and plotted on the calendar, map the platforms by which Dr. Pollard will advance these themes each month.** For example, while she may want to write a Huffington Post blog post on the theme she is focusing on most months (with a timely news hook to ensure its relevance), she may prefer to seek a more high-profile, traditional earned op-ed placement in months where she knows she has something truly unexpected and relevant to say. Similarly, podcasts may take more of a priority in some months, whereas she may want to hand the microphone over for guest podcasts by students in other months (such as during graduation season, when their many success stories are all the more relevant).

- **Create a timeline and ownerships for each item in the editorial calendar.** To ensure Dr. Pollard and her staff are able to deliver on the items detailed in the editorial calendar, building a timeline and assigning ownerships for each piece at the start of each year is recommended. This way, staff knows what to expect on a monthly basis, and can plan their time accordingly to ensure the process runs smoothly and that messages are delivered well and in a timely manner. By assigning these ownerships early, Dr. Pollard can also shift some of the writing and big picture brainstorming off her plate and onto those of the staff members who support her communications efforts.

As with the editorial calendar itself, it's important that the timeline have flexibility built in to accommodate for new and changing priorities as the year progresses. The measure of success here is not that every item in the editorial calendar be completed by the end of the fiscal year, but rather that Dr. Pollard is able to elevate each of her priorities using a framework and process that makes the process run smoothly and effectively.

Building the Credibility of Additional Montgomery College Spokespeople

To further free up Dr. Pollard's time for high priority, impactful communications activities, FY15 should be focused heavily on building the credibility of a surrogate cast of spokespeople who can act as stand-ins for Dr. Pollard when important (but lower priority) opportunities arise. As a starting point for this process, Dr. Pollard's four senior vice presidents and her chief of staff should be first prioritized, including:

- Dr. Stephen Cain, Chief of Staff and Chief Strategy Officer, Office of the President
- Dr. Gwendolyn Jordan Dungy, Interim Senior Vice President for Student Services
- David Sears, Senior Vice President of Advancement and Community Engagement
- Janet Wormack, Senior Vice President for Administrative and Fiscal Services
- Dr. Sanjay Rai, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

To ensure these five key staff members are prepared to act as spokespeople on behalf of Montgomery College (both to internal and external audiences), MC should hold a mandatory Media & Message Training Session with them prior to the start of each fiscal year (following the Message Strategy Summit detailed above). In doing so, these spokespeople will have the opportunity to practice delivering the messaging themes agreed upon during the Message Strategy Summit, as well as to strengthen their media and presentation skills over time. It is important that Dr. Pollard participate in this session as well to ensure consistency of message delivery across Montgomery College spokespeople.

In addition to providing media and message training to these surrogates, Dr. Pollard should make a concerted effort to present them as the go-to experts on topics within their area of focus at all times. As often as possible, this means Dr. Pollard needs to direct questions and inquiries to her senior vice presidents on the topics about which they are experts. Similarly, she will need to begin putting these individuals forth as public spokespeople to the media, event organizers, and others—again, when the topic being discussed is within their area of expertise. Not only will this alleviate stress on Dr. Pollard's schedule over time, but it is also a great professional and personal development exercise for the next level of Montgomery College leadership. The more these individuals are seen as the experts they are, the more inbound requests will go straight to their desks, and the more internal Montgomery College audiences will respect their authority as the leaders in these areas.

Once these senior vice presidents are comfortable in their new role as spokespeople, it is recommended that they are mapped into Dr. Pollard's editorial calendar, or perhaps even through developing a dedicated editorial calendar for the senior vice presidents. This way, all communications activities are

tightly aligned (even across departments) and the school can institutionalize a process that keeps the entire cadre of spokespeople publicly visible, efficient, and on message at all times.

Proactive Earned Media Strategy

Dr. Pollard speaks eloquently about the needs and potential of the community college system here in Montgomery County and across Maryland, and she has been seen, when appropriate, inserting herself into the national conversation on the future of higher education and the workforce of tomorrow. As such, the team's earned media strategy centers upon raising Dr. Pollard's profile as a convener of important conversations—primarily within the Washington, D.C. metro area, where she is situated at an interesting nexus of important issues– from her work to ensure that young people within the foster care system in Montgomery County have equal access to education, to her work in support of the Maryland Dream Act.

Capitalizing on her strengths as a speaker and the unique position of having national media outlets as somewhat "local" outlets given Montgomery College's geographic location, Dr. Pollard should leverage opportunities to weigh in on key issues affecting Montgomery County (and likely elsewhere in the United States), when news breaks. In doing so, Dr. Pollard will raise her profile and underscore her influential position at the intersection of these issues critical to the community, the state, and the country.

To advance a successful earned media strategy, the following tactics are recommended, all of which should be designed to fit within the annual message board and editorial calendar process.

Note: On an as-needed basis, Dr. Pollard might also consider deploying a targeted paid media strategy that allows her to relay a given message in a controlled way. Any larger paid advertising campaigns should be explored under the auspices of Montgomery College, not Dr. Pollard's dedicated presidential communications plan.

Ongoing Media Appearances

Once core messages are finalized and Dr. Pollard is comfortable with the featured themes of the editorial calendar, she can begin to put her narrative forth to the community in a cohesive way. To maintain a consistent presence on influential local media programs, a series of meetings with journalists and producers is recommended at the following outlets as an entrée to an ongoing series of appearances. The objective of these meetings will be for Dr. Pollard to get to know these individuals and prove her credibility as a regularly featured education expert.

The following list prioritizes those outlets—primarily local or regional outlets, as well as a few national and industry outlets—that are perceived to be receptive to cultivating source relationships, and to serve as valuable platforms for disseminating Dr. Pollard's key messages:

Radio	Television
Kavitha Cardoza, education reporter, WAMU-FM	Bruce DePuyt, host, "NewsTalk with Bruce DePuyt," Newschannel 8

Tara Boyle, managing producer, Metro Connection, WAMU-FM	Barbara Harrison, host, "Midday with Barbara Harrison," NBC4
Justine Love, host, "Reel Talk with Justine Love," WPGC-FM	Doug Buchanan, planning editor, WTTG
Gregg Miklos, news director, WNEW-FM	Jim Handly, News4 This Week
Ebony McMorris, Community Affairs Director, Radio One	Rehema Ellis, education correspondent, NBC News
Askia Muhammad, news director, WPFW-FM	Tavis Smiley, host, Tavis Smiley Show
Darci Marchese, news director, WTOP-FM	
Eric Westervelt, education correspondent, NPR	
Print	
Sara Lipka, senior editor, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*	Lindsay Powers, staff writer, *The Montgomery Gazette*
Donna St. George, Montgomery County/education reporter, *The Washington Post*	Dorothy Rowley, education writer, *The Washington Informer*
Dorothy Boulware, editor, *The Afro American*	Chris Jenkins, *The Washington Post*
Robert Terry, managing editor, *Washington Business Journal*	

Better "Care and Feeding" of the Media

Increasing opportunities for Montgomery College to receive more ongoing, positive media coverage involves a combination of both "care and feeding" of the media. This means both implementing more streamlined processes for rapid response to incoming media requests as well as a conscious, proactive effort to feed tips and "news you can use" stories about the College to reporters, even when the end goal may not be media coverage. (For more on the latter, please refer to the Media Analysis portion of this report).

To improve Montgomery College's capacity for handling incoming media requests, following are several tips to implement immediately for a more coordinated, timely approach to managing interview requests:

Think like a Reporter

Remember that Montgomery College has control over much of the information the reporter needs, and the office knows what it want to say and how to say it. Whenever possible, provide fresh, up-to-date content including fact sheets, graphics, current photos, and video links.

Educate the Media

It is essential for the MC media team to educate reporters. They should think of their role as that of a teacher. Educate the news media about the issues they are interested in. Provide them with clips, background materials, and chronologies of events if appropriate. Journalists are always collecting information; meet them where they are by positioning the media team as a valuable resource to help them achieve their goals.

Be Responsive

Reporters are hungry for information now. In a 24-hour a day news cycle, opportunities can come and go within the hour. If staff fails to provide the reporter with key information in time to make his or her deadline, the organization has lost the best opportunity to get its message out and show itself in a positive light.

Create and Distribute an Expert Source Sheet

Communications staff should be ready to deal with ongoing news coverage immediately. For those stories the media team knows are coming its way, it is critical for communications staff to have prepared talking points, statements, key messages, questions and answers, news releases, and recent op-eds or white papers prepared and ready to go. Reporters have most likely visited the Montgomery College website and may have a clear idea of what they want to report. In particular, an Expert Source Sheet that outlines Dr. Pollard's areas of expertise, topics about which she is particularly interested in speaking, and after-hours contact information can be a helpful tool that reporters can file away for when news breaks.

Leverage Op-Eds to Advance Key Messages

A proactive op-ed strategy that includes placing commentaries by Dr. Pollard in both the Huffington Post and other more traditional op-ed venues should be included as a key component of the editorial calendar recommended earlier in this report. Mindful of the demands on communications staff time and resources, in important option to consider is the development of a set of evergreen op-ed "abstracts" that can be quickly customized to the appropriate news outlet or breaking news situation. These topics could include issues relevant in the "life cycle" of a community college student: Considering community college in a student's higher education search (placement timing: before high school graduations); Tips for financing a community college education (placement timing: college acceptance period); Why STEM literacy is critical for tomorrow's workforce (placement timing: back to school); or others.

Leveraging Media Coverage After a Story Hits

Additionally, the following process (or one similar to it) should be implemented to leverage all future earned media coverage (commentaries, bylined articles, press releases, Huffington Post blog posts, etc.) in order to increase the visibility of Montgomery College and raise greater awareness of Dr. Pollard's leadership.

After an article is secured, carry out **AT LEAST FIVE** of the following tasks:

- Send a copy of the article (if it runs in print) enclosed with a personal, handwritten note from Dr. Pollard to top-tier donors. Similarly, share a link to any TV or radio coverage via email to key audiences.

- Circulate the article in an e-blast to Montgomery College donors with a note from Dr. Pollard and a direct call out to the relevance of the issue to Montgomery College's future.
- If there is a relevant business link to the story, circulate the article in a letter from Dr. Pollard to target business/corporate prospects.
- Post the article on the Montgomery College website.
- Post earned media piece to Montgomery College's Facebook page.
- Post earned media piece to Montgomery College's LinkedIn profile.
- Post earned media piece to Montgomery College's or Dr. Pollard's Twitter account (with a thank you to the author, if relevant, for helping raise awareness of the school).
- Request that board members post the article on their own social media feeds.
- Request that staff post the article on their own social media feeds.
- If relevant, share the news story with other news outlets for potential additional coverage. (For example, a *Washington Post* piece may be of interest to NBC Nightly News for a future story idea on financing higher education, or a *Washington Examiner* op-ed may be of interest to NewsChannel 8's "Let's Talk Live" for a follow up interview on their show.)

Better Utilizing the MontgomeryCollege.edu "News" Page

As the first point of entry for journalists or others searching for the most recent news about Dr. Pollard and Montgomery College writ large, the "News" page on MontgomeryCollege.edu should be more regularly and comprehensively maintained and updated.

A number of specific steps toward this objective are recommended:

Better alignment of the main "News" page and the "In the News" section of the President's page.

While there is value in calling out news coverage and commentary specific to Dr. Pollard on the President's page, the current set-up feels disjointed. In addition, Dr. Pollard's "In the News" section is very outdated. A merger of the two is recommended, so that "Dr. Pollard in the News" becomes a section of the main news page, and the current "In the News" link in the left-hand column of the President's page navigates back to the main news page, to a Dr. Pollard-specific section.

More intuitive organization of the "Top News Stories" section.

In its current form, the section featuring press releases wastes a lot of valuable space, especially on a date when a press release hasn't been issued and the only message visitors see is: "There are no Press Releases for today." This section should be reorganized so that it features the most recent 3-4 press releases so people can easily see recent news, plus a link to access the archive of all Montgomery College press releases.

"Build and maintain a database of all Montgomery College media coverage to live on the 'News' page."

As a leading community college, Montgomery College should take advantage of its Cision (media monitoring) membership so that all members of the communications team can have constant access to a more comprehensive, updated array of coverage about Montgomery College. By collecting and sharing articles about Montgomery College with key stakeholders, the Communications office can not only keep in touch with key audiences but also develop important processes for regularly tracking and saving coverage for future uses. (For example, during C.Fox's engagement on this project, only four months of media coverage were able to be analyzed because older clips had not been saved).

A direct link to Dr. Pollard's Huffington Post blog.

While it's not technically college news, the Huffington Post is a platform that Dr. Pollard can and should use to promote her (and by extension, Montgomery College's) position as a thought leader, so it should be very easy to find. While it is currently featured in the left-hand column of the President's page, it should also be made available on the "News" page.

VI. Digital Research

Methodology
The digital research conducted comprised of several in-depth exercises. These include analyses of the organic search traffic of Montgomery College and competitors, paid search, social media properties, and keywords on relevant topics. Additionally, the research highlights a number of recommendations around optimizing the website to ensure that the Dr. Pollard's communications were more intuitively and easily available.

Organic Search
Montgomery College is attracting nearly 200K organic website visits per month, which includes about 9.5K keywords and 14K backlinks. This is solid organic performance and visibility in a vacuum. However, assessing performance in relation to competitors is critical to understanding visibility to key audiences and to identifying the best opportunities for improvement.

Over the last two years, organic search traffic to "montgomerycollege.edu" has continued to grow steadily (1st graph, below). However, the number of keywords and the organic search result positioning has remained more or less stagnant (2nd graph, below).
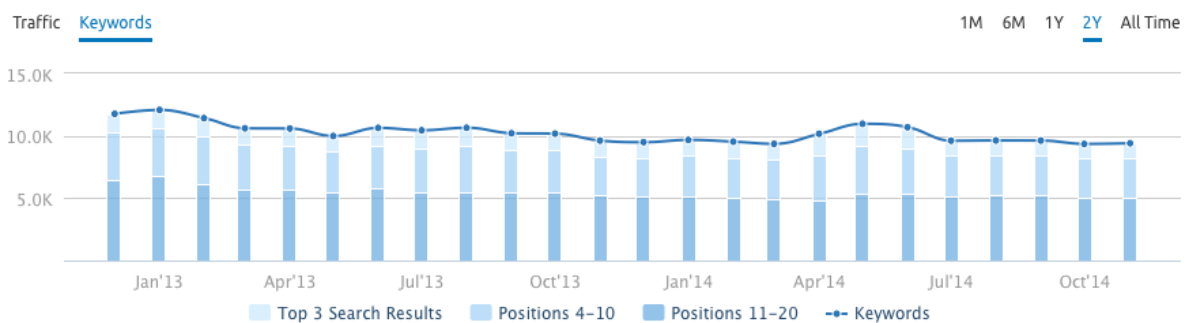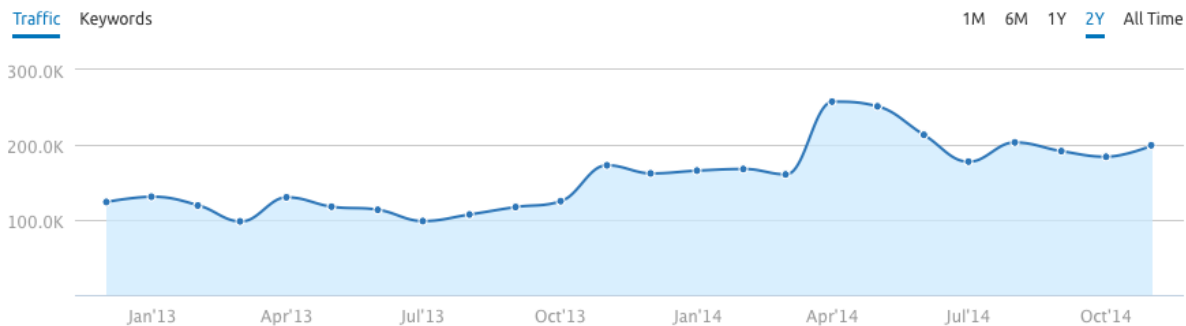
Looking more specifically, the vast majority of organic search traffic is generated by searches for branded terms: "Montgomery College" or terms related to "My MC". This is typical, but also indicates there is an opportunity for MC to attract new audiences by building organic visibility for issue and topic

area keywords. The top non-branded terms driving traffic include: "montgomery", "pre algebra test", "esol classes", and "diagnostic medical sonography."

With regards to its competitors, Montgomery College is far outperforming regional peers in terms of organic search traffic and number of keywords. Prince George's Community College and Anne Arundel Community College are essentially tied for a distant second place, garnering less than half the monthly traffic and with fewer than half the keywords.
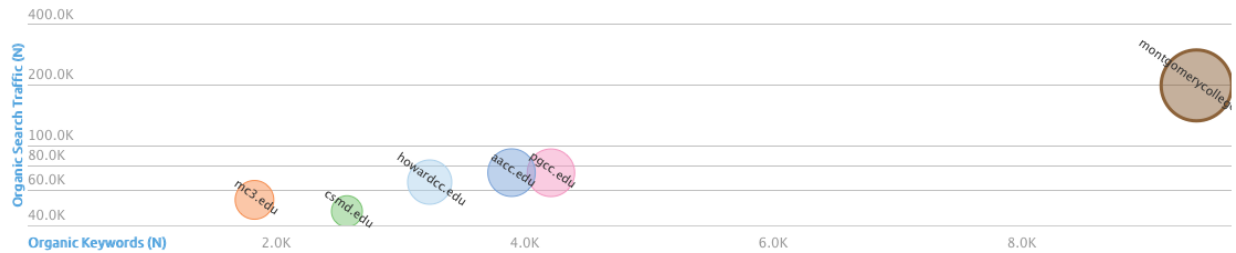
While Montgomery College's organic search performance and overall organic visibility are strong, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities are best identified when performance is compared to competitors. Looking at the nearest competitors (NOVA, HCC, PGCC, and UMUC), organic search compares in the following ways:

- These four institutions only share one organic keyword phrase: "community colleges Washington DC". Currently, NOVA appears in the third search result position for this term followed by PGCC (16), MC (17), and HCC (20).

- Among Maryland Community College competitors, MC is performing the worst for terms related to "Maryland Community College."

- Among Community College competitors, MC is only behind NOVA for the number of organic keywords.

- There is high competition between MC, NOVA, and HCC for terms related to "college math placement tests" with HCC performing the best for these terms.

Digital Paid Media

As expected, the big competitors are aggressively advertising in search. Though they follow a different business model, it is worth noting that the University of Phoenix garners nearly three times as many website visits through advertising than through organic search.

Notably, UMUC is advertising against many community college terms and phrases; all of the big names are advertising against terms related to online courses and degree programs. However, NOVA is the only local community college currently running search ads (which helps further explain why so many respondents were familiar with NOVA ads in the quantitative research).

This indicates there is still an opportunity for MC to efficiently advertise, although careful selection of key terms and the focus of the campaign will be critical to keeping bid rates affordable.

Looking specifically at the search ads by institution, the following insights were found:

- As mentioned, NOVA is the only regional community college competitor that is currently running search advertising. This is a small campaign that focuses on three regional terms, which appears to have started in November 2014. The campaign is estimated to cost less than $1.5k/month.

- UMUC has a robust paid search program, which has been running steadily since October 2012. It is difficult to estimate the current spend levels, but a sense of the range can be determined; $1m is the high estimate and $225k is the low estimate based on the number of keywords. Many of the paid keywords are related to online schools, degrees, and programs; they are also advertising heavily for community college terms.

- UMD is also running a robust paid search campaign, but it is running at much lower levels than last summer and fall. They are currently advertising against nearly 2,000 keywords, many of which focus on online MBA and finance degree programs and summer courses. The low end estimate of UMD's Adwords budget is $25k and the high end is $46k per month.

Social Media Analysis
Social media received a deep dive, looking at the social media performance, engagement rates, and focus of content across all major channels for Montgomery College and its competitors. Consistent with findings from the quantitative survey, there was moderate performance on social media channels with room for improvement in social media engagement to create a more consistent dialogue with followers. Several recommendations follow:

- Building relationships with influencers within the Montgomery College community (i.e. president/board of trustees, key alumni, student body officers) and shared connections. It is an efficient way to build greater visibility and brand awareness, increase the resonance of content and messaging, and reach a greater number of target audiences.

- Creating tailored content to share with these individuals so they will be more likely to be brand ambassadors on MC's behalf.

- To improve the institution's position as a thought leader within the community, develop a social media content series with student/alumni testimonials using social graphics and small digestible videos to tell their story.

As expected, MC's social media performance is most comparable to the regional community colleges. Currently, UMUC and NOVA are out-performing MC in terms of followers, tweets, and Facebook likes. The regional community colleges including MC all have low engagement levels on Twitter; however, Howard and UMUC have better engagement levels (higher frequency of sharing and comments) on Facebook.

Montgomery College's content over social media could be improved to increase connections. Currently, the content that is being broadcast does not encourage dialogue or other forms of engagement between the school and audiences. While social channels are useful for pushing information to large groups efficiently, there is still an opportunity to harness the inherent social nature of the platform to build two-way engagement.

Looking specifically at Montgomery College's Twitter performance, the overall Twitter conversation has been steady with a few spikes in mentions that occurred during the year. The spikes in activity were mainly due to school driven events, such as graduation, new student orientation, and speakers who visited the college.

Total Retweets (554) Total Replies (67) Total Mentions (2,740)

Montgomery College - Twitter — Total Engagement from 1/1/14 to 11/1/14
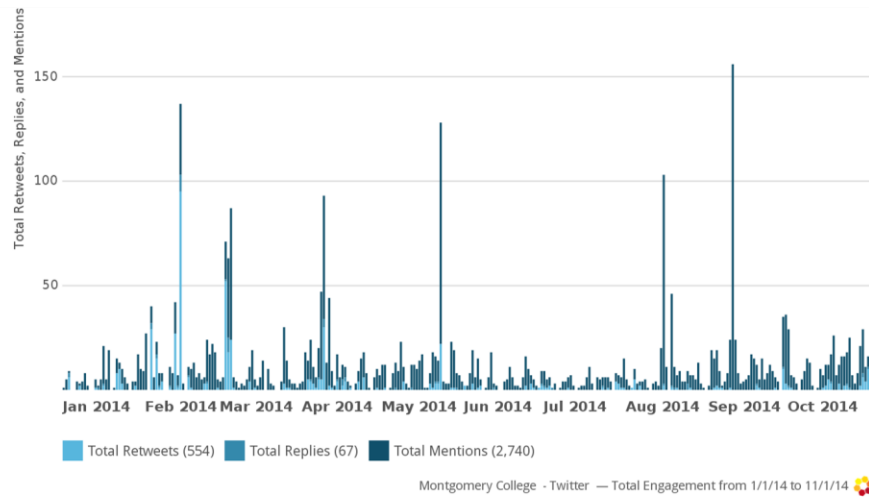
There has been a 51% increase in potential impressions during that period and a total of 1.1 million total impressions. Additionally, there has been a 33% increase in followers since the beginning of the year. This bump in followers that occurred during March could be due to Miss America visiting Montgomery College to promote STEM education.
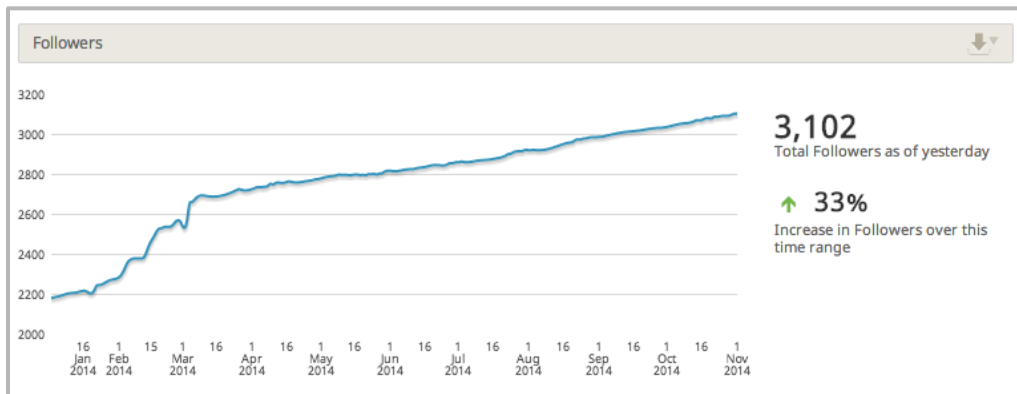
Looking at content, the majority of tweets from the @montgomerycoll handle include school and education related updates. Below are the top tweets based on total potential impressions. The tweets that received the highest impressions are related to weather and traffic updates, graduation announcements, PR and news about the university, speakers and other school events.

Comparing use of social media to other community colleges, NOVA and UMUC tend to be the most engaged, with Montgomery College following. PGCC and HCC have lower numbers of Facebook likes and Twitter followers than Montgomery College.

	Montgomery College	HCC	NOVA	PGCC	UMUC
Twitter Followers	3.1K	1.5K	**4.0K**	1.7K	3.6K
Tweets	2.3K	1.0K	4.3K	4.3K	**7.0K**
Twitter Engagement (High=3, Medium =2, Low = 1)	1	1	1	1	1
Facebook Likes	9.7K	6.1K	11.6K	1.7K	**12.6K**
Facebook Engagement (High=3, Medium =2, Low = 1)	1	2	1	1	2
Social Media Voice	Primarily school and student updates; utilized to push out content; 5-7 times during work week	Primarily school and student updates; utilized to push out content; typically 3-4 times daily	Primarily school and student updates; utilized to push out content; typically 3-4 times daily	Primarily school and student updates; utilized to push out content; post frequently per day	Primarily school and student updates; utilized to push out content; post frequently per day
Other Social Media Channels	LinkedIn (3,369), Instagram (55), YouTube (2,251)	LinkedIn (1.4K), YouTube (103)	LinkedIn (4.3K), Instagram (23), Pinterest (173), YouTube (1.1K)	LinkedIn (1.4K), YouTube (103)	LinkedIn (10.5K), Instagram (322), YouTube (911)

Turning to Dr. Pollard's social media presence, there is an opportunity to build Dr. Pollard's thought leadership visibility through focused and strategic outreach and engagement around priority issues and topics. Social media can be a powerful thought leadership tool, and university presidents often have the chance to be strong voices in promoting their institutions' work in this area. Since January 2014, Dr.

Pollard's Twitter handle has seen a steady growth in followers and several large spikes in activity, which were mainly related to large school events such as graduation and the fall semester opening address.
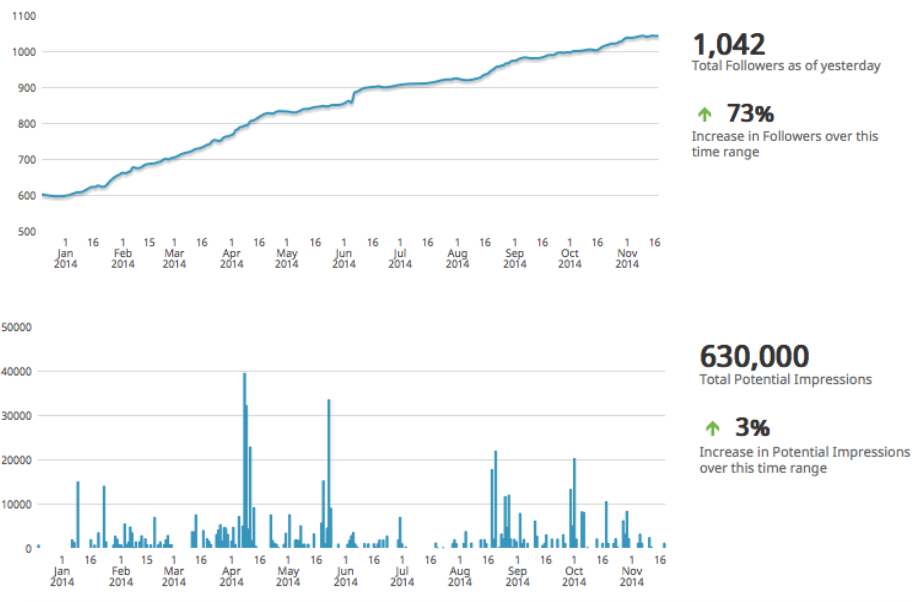
Looking specifically at Presidents who are active on social media, Dr. Pollard lags behind Wallace Loh of the University of Maryland, but has more followers than the presidents of the University of Phoenix and of PGCC.

	Dr. DeRionne Pollard, President, MC	Wallace Loh, President, UMD	Dr. Charlene Dukes, President, PGCC	Tim Slottow, President, University of Phoenix
Twitter Followers	1.0K	16.8K	462	34
Tweets	1.7K	2.1K	182	5
Twitter Engagement (High=3, Medium =2, Low = 1)	1	2	1	1
Social Media Voice	Tweets include discussion of school, education, sports, and local media	Tweets include discussion of school, education, leadership, politics, and music	Limited tweets; posts mainly discussing activities with students and school updates	Limited tweets with only 5 tweets to date; all about school related updates
Other Social Media Channels	LinkedIn (43)	N/A	LinkedIn (35)	N/A

Keyword Research

In order to determine the demand for information about certain topics on which Dr. Pollard has spoken, as well as more institutional terms having to do with upper education in general, search traffic data was analyzed based on related keywords. This data is an excellent indicator of audience interest in specific topic areas, because a large percentage of internet sessions start with a search engine. Search trend analysis also provides insight into the exact words and phrases people are using to find information. Finally, search data includes information that can guide search advertising and provide insight into the competitiveness of topic areas.

To conduct the keyword research analysis, terms having to do with the institution (such as tuition, continuing education, and degree programs) and thought leadership topics that Dr. Pollard had discussed previously (achievement gap, diversity, and the Maryland Dream Act) were examined.

With regards to the institutional terms, there is a regional/geographic aspect to many of the highest volume search terms in the continuing education and degree program categories, indicating that audiences are looking for programs in their area or city; this is particularly true for community college searches. While there is more competition for the institutional keywords, these terms also garner high search volume. This presents a good opportunity for Montgomery College (MC) to improve search visibility for these terms. Specific areas of opportunity include geo-specific search terms (e.g. MD community college) and highly searched programs that MC offers or specializes in (e.g. nursing).

While MC has a solid digital footprint and a well-optimized website, they are not performing as well as they should be against competitors for certain key terms. For example, MC is appearing behind Howard and PGCC for the term "Maryland community colleges." None of the competitors, including MC, are currently visible in organic search results for thought leadership terms. Additionally, looking at the Presidential level, Dr. Pollard's top search results consist of mostly social and Montgomery College website content. However, other Presidents have results from larger publications and news outlets.
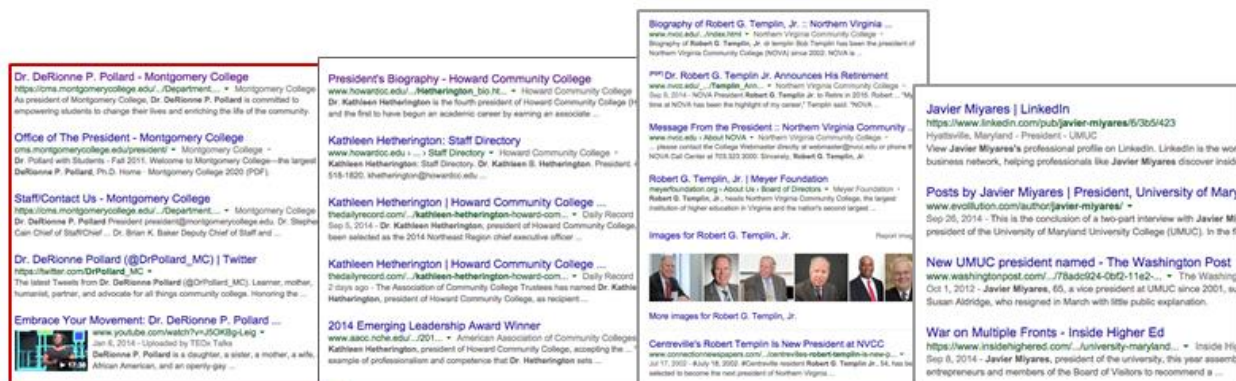
When optimizing search, it is important to keep in mind that many of the institutional terms - particularly those in the continuing education and degree program categories - have very high bid rates indicating robust advertising activity for those terms. In contrast, with the exception of terms related to immigration and the Dream Act, the thought leadership keywords generated less search activity than institutional terms; the thought leadership terms also have much lower bid rates. The low search

volume for many of the thought leadership terms means that building visibility and authority on these issues will require a broad range of complementary activities.

Website Analysis
In addition to the social, keyword, and search research, there were a handful of remaining recommendations for optimizing the main Montgomery College website.

- To highlight Dr. Pollard, minimize the number of click-throughs required to receive information on her. MC requires at least 4 clicks to reach information about the president. Other sites have fewer clicks. For example: both UMD and UMBC only require one click from a drop down menu to access this information.

- Reduce the number of calls to action on the homepage. Too many calls to action can be confusing, clutter up the page, and make it difficult to find information about leadership.

- Montgomery College's website could use an "about" section linked to from the main drop-down bar. It currently does not have one, while most of its competitors do. This is where information about the President is typically found and where website visitors expect to go.

<u>APPENDICES</u>

Questions for Discussion, Montgomery College

Guidelines for discussion

- Feedback will remain confidential. Will not be tied to any individual.
- We are recording today, strictly for Widmeyer notes and an accurate record of the conversation
- Interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour

I. Intro

1. To start, I would like to hear just a bit about your background. How long have you been at Montgomery College? What is your role here? Where did you work prior to coming to Montgomery College?

2. What types of projects do you typically work on and what are your responsibilities?

II. Reputation

3. Looking broadly, what is Montgomery College's reputation and standing in the community? How would you describe it?

    a. What is its reputation among students? Alumni? The business community?

    b. What about internally, among staff and faculty?

4. What are the biggest challenges faced by Montgomery College today?

    a. What is being done to address those challenges?

    b. How is that being communicated?

5. Are there any misperceptions about Montgomery College?

III. Structure of Department (For those disseminating messages only – skip for certain individuals who do not have internal knowledge of the working of the department)

6. Let's talk about how your department is organized. What is your role in the disseminating Montgomery College's message?

    a. With whom do you coordinate? What other individuals or departments are involved?

  b. Is this the right process? How could it be improved? **(PROBE:** Too many people involved? Takes too long? Not enough access?)

7. How do you make sure that communications have the right voice or the voice of Dr. Pollard? How do you make sure that voice is consistent across departments?

8. With Dr. Pollard's time at a premium, what is the best way for her to approve communications?

  a. Who should have access, what type of access should they have, how often?

  b. Who should report directly to the President?

  c. Is Dr. Pollard usually the originator of the message, or does she usually approve and edit the message? How should it work?

  d. **PROBE if it hasn't come up:** How should the following roles be involved in communicating the message? Speechwriter, communications director, those involved with advertising, those involved with MCTV, liaisons to external groups like the business community, government, alumni, or donors.

IV. Style and Message

9. Can you describe Dr. Pollard's tone and style? Where is her tone and style currently effective, and where is it less effective? **(Probe:** speeches, state of Montgomery College addresses, town halls, President's Corner emails, etc.)

  a. Is there a difference between Dr. Pollard's tone and style, and the tone and style of other communications coming out of Montgomery College? What is that difference?

10. We have heard it said that some think Dr. Pollard's tone should be "Presidential." Do you agree? What does that mean to you?

11. What are the main themes/messages that the office has been speaking about?

  a. What else should the office be speaking about?

  b. What opportunities are being missed – that is, what SHOULD the office be communicating about that it isn't currently communicating about?

12. It has been said that Montgomery College is "president-centric." Do you agree? What does that mean to you?

a. Should it be president-centric, and if not, what should it be instead?

b. How should senior leaders be communicating Dr. Pollard's vision?

13. Can you give an example of communication from MC that was particularly effective? What worked well about it?

14. Can you give an example of communication from MC that was particularly ineffective? What was ineffective about it?

V. Timing

15. **FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** How do you consider timing of when a message is delivered?

a. Time of year, time of week, time of day?

b. Does it change by audience? How should it change by audience?

c. How do you measure whether it is the right timing? (**PROBE:** Do you use optimization data, leverage trending topics, use the news cycle, etc.)

16. **FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE:** When are you most likely to pay attention to something you see, read, or hear from or about Montgomery College?

a. When are you more likely to miss a message, or be preoccupied with other things?

b. Time of year, time of week, time of day?

VI. Audiences

17. **FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** Which audiences are Dr. Pollard most focused on reaching? **FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE:** Which audiences does Montgomery College pay most attention to—that is, who does it seem like the college is most trying to communicate with?

a. Are these the right audiences, in your opinion?

b. How is the feedback MC gets from these audiences? Is it positive, negative?

18. **FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** Where has the office been most effective reaching out? That is, who is responding well to the message?

a. Internally vs externally?

     b.   To students, to other staff, to faculty?

     c.   To external stakeholders like the business community, alumni, donors?

19. What about external stakeholders? What do the following groups need to hear to stay engaged?

     a.   Business community?

     b.   Alumni?

     c.   Donors?

VII. Types of Media

20. **FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** What communication tools do you work with directly when promoting Montgomery College? **FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE:** From what sources do you hear about Montgomery College? **(SPEND TIME ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING)**

     a.   Social media

          i.   **FOR THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** Who should be writing tweets, blog posts – should that be one person?

     b.   Communications directly from the President

     c.   Advertising

     d.   MCTV

21. What communication tools have been most effective? What hasn't worked? What makes them effective or ineffective?

22. What should Montgomery College do more of to reach its audiences?

Montgomery College
Online Survey among Internal Audiences, November 2014

Thank you for participating in this important survey. Widmeyer Communications, a Finn Partners Company - an independent research firm - was recently hired by Montgomery College to implement this survey to explore a variety of issues related to Montgomery College.

We are inviting all members of the College community to participate in this survey and your participation is completely voluntary. At no time will your individual responses ever be released publicly, and any release of data would only be reported in the aggregate. After the survey, there is a chance you may be contacted by Montgomery College and given the opportunity to follow-up on your responses.

The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. Please attempt to answer all questions and only choose "not sure" when necessary. You are not expected to be an expert – your opinion is needed and valued.

You may decide at any time not to complete the survey. If you agree to participate in this study, please continue. Thank you for cooperation.

1. Which of the following best describes your status at Montgomery College:

    A student 1
    A member of the faculty 2
    A member of the staff 3
    An administrator 4

2. To make sure you are marked off the list correctly and not contacted again, what is your name?
    _____

Just from your observation, what is Montgomery College's reputation among the following groups?

[RANDOMIZE 3 – Q13]	Excellent	Good	Just fair	Poor	DK/NA
[ASK ALL Q3 – Q6]					
3. Current students 1	2	3	4	5
4. Prospective students in the area 1	2	3	4	5
5. Residents of Montgomery County 1	2	3	4	5
6. Alumni 1	2	3	4	5
[ASK ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q7 – Q13]					
7. Faculty 1	2	3	4	5
8. Staff 1	2	3	4	5
9. Administration 1	2	3	4	5
10. Business leaders in the community 1	2	3	4	5
11. Donors 1	2	3	4	5
12. Legislators 1	2	3	4	5

13. Potential employers of graduates 1   2   3   4   5

How well do the following words or phrases describe Montgomery College?

[RANDOMIZE Q14 – Q28]	Very well	Pretty well	Not too well	Not well at all	DK/NA
14. Affordable..1	2	3	4	5
15. A good value 1	2	3	4	5
16. Rigorous academics 1	2	3	4	5
17. Well-respected in the community.........................1	2	3	4	5
18. Endless possibilities 1	2	3	4	5
19. Student-oriented 1	2	3	4	5
20. One college...1	2	3	4	5
21. A hidden gem 1	2	3	4	5
22. Helps students achieve their dreams 1	2	3	4	5
23. A place its students and alumni can be proud of 1	2	3	4	5
24. A place Montgomery County can be proud of 1	2	3	4	5
25. Gives as good an education as most four-year colleges in the area 1	2	3	4	5
26. A major presence in the community 1	2	3	4	5
27. Leader among community colleges in the region 1	2	3	4	5
28. Adequately prepares students for their future careers or other educational pursuits 1	2	3	4	5
[ASK ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q29 – Q30]				
29. Dedicated to its faculty.......................................1	2	3	4	5
30. Dedicated to its staff 1	2	3	4	5

How does Montgomery College compare to the following colleges and universities – does it have a much better reputation, somewhat better reputation, an equal reputation, a somewhat worse reputation, or a much worse reputation than these institutions?

[RANDOMIZE Q31 – Q39]

	Much better	Somewhat better	Equal reputation	Somewhat worse	Much worse	Dk/Na
31. University of Maryland, College Park	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. University of Maryland University College (UMUC)	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Universities at Shady Grove	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. NOVA (Northern Virginia Community College)	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Howard Community College	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Prince George's Community College	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. Strayer University	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. University of Phoenix	1	2	3	4	5	6

40. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Montgomery College offers more than a traditional community college.

> Strongly agree 1
> Somewhat agree 2
> Somewhat disagree 3
> Strongly disagree 4
> Unsure 5

41. When thinking about the priorities Montgomery College has in dealing with the community, which of the following two issues are the most important challenges faced by the institution? SELECT UP TO TWO.

> **RANDOMIZE**
> Lack of space and resources for its population 1
> Promoting the idea of "One College" 2
> Making sure all campuses are treated equally 3
> Keeping costs affordable 4
> Recruiting students and ensuring enrollment 5
> Publicizing the positive assets of Montgomery College that the public may not know about 6
> Ensuring that Montgomery College is accessible to everyone in the community 7
> Raising money for the institution 8
> Ensuring students successfully complete their time at Montgomery College 9
> Other (specify) 10
> None of these 11

ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS
42. And thinking now about the priorities Montgomery College deals with internally, which of the following two issues are the most important challenges faced by the institution? SELECT UP TO TWO.

RANDOMIZE
Disseminating information in a timely manner 1
Lobbying the state legislature for funding and influence 2
Making sure college-wide communications are clear and concise 3
Adhering to regulations and complying with rules . 4
Promoting the idea of "One College" 5
Fighting declining enrollment 6
Addressing salary needs of faculty and staff.......... 7
Making sure communications speak with the same voice 8
Ensuring all communications actually reach their intended audiences 9
Providing ongoing training and certification for faculty and staff 10
Ensuring all faculty and staff are highly qualified ... 11
Value and reputation of an MC education in the workplace 13
Other (specify)... 14
None of these... 15

RESUME ASKING ALL.
43. What are the two most important issues related to education that Montgomery College should be talking about? SELECT UP TO TWO.

Narrowing the disparity between students of different races or groups on things like graduation rates and test scores, known commonly as the "Closing the Achievement Gap" 1
Increasing access to education among groups that are typically underrepresented in higher education 2
Promoting diversity in education........................... 3
Understanding how Montgomery College graduates can use their education to benefit the community 4
Empowering graduates to achieve their dreams.... 5
Keeping college affordable.................................... 6
Integrating existing and new technologies into the curriculum and classroom (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs, open education resources or OER, etc.) 7
Other (specify)... 8
None of these... 9

ASK OF ALL (OPEN ENDED; CODE AT THE END OF INTERVIEW)
44. What one word or phrase best describes Dr. Pollard's communication style?

_____

And again, from your observation, how would you assess Dr. Pollard's impact and influence through communications among the following groups?

[RANDOMIZE Q45 – Q55]	Excellent	Good	Just fair	Poor	DK/NA
45. Current students...	1	2	3	4	5
46. Prospective students in the area..........................	1	2	3	4	5
47. Residents of Montgomery County	1	2	3	4	5
48. Alumni	1	2	3	4	5
[ASK ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q49 – Q55]					
49. Faculty	1	2	3	4	5
50. Staff	1	2	3	4	5
51. Administration..	1	2	3	4	5
52. Business leaders in the community.......................	1	2	3	4	5
53. Donors	1	2	3	4	5
54. Potential employers of graduates	1	2	3	4	5
55. Legislators...	1	2	3	4	5

56. How much have you recently seen, read or heard specifically about Dr. Pollard?

Great deal...	1
Some..	2
Not too much	3
None at all	4
Unsure	5

(AMONG THOSE WHO SAY "A GREAT DEAL" OR SOME" IN Q56, ASK Q57-Q58) (CODE AT END OF INTERVIEW)
57. Being as specific as possible, what did you recently see, read or hear about Dr. Pollard?

_____

58. What stands out as the one main issue you have heard Dr. Pollard speak, write, or otherwise communicate about?

_____

RESUME ASKING ALL
59. What one thing would you like to hear Dr. Pollard speak, write, or otherwise communicate about?

_____

How much do you use the following communications to learn about Montgomery College?

[RANDOMIZE Q60 – Q70]	Very much	Somewhat	Not too much	Not much at all	DK/ Nev.heard
60. Dr. Pollard's video blog	1	2	3	4	5
61. Dr. Pollard's Twitter feed	1	2	3	4	5
62. Montgomery College's Facebook page	1	2	3	4	5
63. Montgomery College's Twitter feed	1	2	3	4	5
64. Town hall meetings	1	2	3	4	5
65. MCTV, or Montgomery College television	1	2	3	4	5
66. "Inside MC"	1	2	3	4	5
67. Speeches from Dr. Pollard to students, such as commencement	1	2	3	4	5
[ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q68 – Q70]					
68. Speeches from Dr. Pollard to the business community	1	2	3	4	5
69. Speeches from Dr. Pollard to potential donors	1	2	3	4	5
70. Speeches from Dr. Pollard to non-profits or interest groups	1	2	3	4	5

[RESUME ASKING ALL]

71. In your personal opinion, how good of a job do Montgomery College's communications do responding to your needs?

> Excellent 1
> Good 2
> Just fair 3
> Poor 4
> Don't know 5

72. How would you want to learn more about Montgomery College? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

> **RANDOMIZE**
> Through the voices and stories of students who have succeeded ... 1
> Through Dr. Pollard's personal story 2
> Through statistics about Montgomery College's graduation rates and what graduates go on to accomplish 3
> Through showing what Montgomery College has done in the community
> 4
> By highlighting Montgomery College's economic value 5
> By showcasing the teachers and staff 6
> By highlighting the classes, majors, and programs available 7
> Other **(OPEN END)** 8
> None of these 9

Please indicate how important you believe the following channels are to communicating <u>internally</u> about Montgomery College.

[RANDOMIZE Q73 – Q77]

	Very Imp.	Somewhat Imp.	Not too Imp.	Not at All	DK/ Nev. used
73. Texts directly from Montgomery College	1	2	3	4	5
74. Direct email communications from Montgomery College	1	2	3	4	5
[ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q75 – Q77]					
75. The President's Corner email	1	2	3	4	5
76. Staff-wide memos or emails discussing new policies	1	2	3	4	5
77. In-person or group meetings with Dr. Pollard and/or senior leaders discussing new initiatives	1	2	3	4	5

[ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS Q78 – Q91]

Thinking about internal communications you may receive that discuss initiatives or announcements at Montgomery College, please indicate how well the following words and phrases describe those communications.

[RANDOMIZE Q78 – Q85]

	Very well	Pretty well	Not too well	Not well at all	DK/NA
78. Clear	1	2	3	4	5
79. Concise	1	2	3	4	5
80. Well-explained	1	2	3	4	5
81. Give the opportunity to have my input heard	1	2	3	4	5
82. Transparent	1	2	3	4	5
83. Appear in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5
84. Say what they mean and mean what they say	1	2	3	4	5
85. Something I take the time to read or understand	1	2	3	4	5

Now for a slightly different list:

[RANDOMIZE Q86 – Q91]

	Very well	Pretty well	Not too well	Not well at all	DK/NA
86. Blunt	1	2	3	4	5
87. Too lengthy	1	2	3	4	5
88. Watered-down	1	2	3	4	5
89. Too much spin	1	2	3	4	5
90. Not believable	1	2	3	4	5
91. So frequent that I tune them out	1	2	3	4	5

RESUME ASKING ALL
For each of the following institutions, please indicate the formats for which you have seen advertising in the last six months. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

[RANDOMIZE Q92 – Q101]

	Ad on TV	Ad on Radio	Online Ad	Bus Ad	Metro Ad	Other Type of Ad	Saw No Ads
92. Montgomery College	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
93. University of Maryland, College Park	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
94. NOVA (Northern Virginia Community College)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
95. Howard Community College	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
96. Prince George's Community College	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
97. University of Maryland, University College (UMUC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
98. Universities at Shady Grove	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
99. Strayer University	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
100. University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
101. University of Phoenix	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

IF MONTGOMERY COLLEGE (Q92)=6

102. You said you saw another type of ad for Montgomery College. What type of ad was it?
_____
OPEN ENDED; CODE AT THE END OF INTERVIEW

IF MONTGOMERY COLLEGE (Q92)=1-6

103. How memorable were the ads for Montgomery College?

> Very memorable..1
> Somewhat memorable..2
> Not too memorable...3
> Not memorable at all 4
> Don't know...5

RESUME ASKING ALL

104. How does Montgomery College's advertising presence compare to that of other colleges and upper education institutions in the area?

> There is much more advertising..............................1
> There is somewhat more advertising.....................2
> The same amount of advertising 3
> There is somewhat less advertising 4
> There is much less advertising 5
> Unsure 6

For each of the following institutions, please indicate other formats in which you've heard about them in the last six months. SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

[RANDOMIZE Q105 – Q114]

	Local news reports (such as TV or radio)	News-paper article	On a blog or website for that institution	On a blog, website, or online news site outside of that institution	None of these
105. Montgomery College	1	2	3	4	5
106. University of Maryland, College Park	1	2	3	4	5
107. NOVA (Northern Virginia Community College)	1	2	3	4	5
108. Howard Community College	1	2	3	4	5
109. Prince George's Community College	1	2	3	4	5
110. University of Maryland, University College (UMUC)	1	2	3	4	5
111. Universities at Shady Grove	1	2	3	4	5
112. Strayer University	1	2	3	4	5
113. University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)	1	2	3	4	5
114. University of Phoenix	1	2	3	4	5

115. How does Montgomery College's media and press coverage compare to that of other colleges and upper education institutions in the area?

        Receives much more coverage than others............1
        Receives somewhat more coverage than others....2
        Receives the same amount of coverage as others .3
        Receives somewhat less coverage than others 4
        Receives much less coverage than others 5
        Unsure 6

116. Thinking about media and press coverage toward Montgomery College, what is the tone?

        Almost always positive..1
        More positive than negative 2
        Neither positive nor negative 3
        More negative than positive 4
        Almost all negative..5
        Don't know 6

117. Do you follow Montgomery College on Facebook?

        Yes, and engage with it often..................................1
        Yes, and engage with it sometimes........................2
        Yes, but usually do not engage with it 3
        No 4
        Unsure 5

118. Do you follow Montgomery College on Twitter?

        Yes, and read the tweets often 1
        Yes, and read the tweets sometimes......................2
        Yes, but usually do not read the tweets 3
        No 4
        Unsure 5

119. Do you follow Dr. Pollard on Twitter?

        Yes, and read the tweets often 1
        Yes, and read the tweets sometimes......................2
        Yes, but usually do not read the tweets 3
        No 4
        Unsure 5

(ASK AMONG THOSE WHO FOLLOW ON FACEBOOK, Q117=1-3)
120. What is the main reason you follow Montgomery College on Facebook?
_____

(ASK AMONG THOSE WHO FOLLOW ON TWITTER IN EITHER TWITTER QUESTION, Q118 OR Q119=1-3)
121. What is the main reason you follow either Montgomery College or Dr. Pollard on Twitter?
_____

The following questions are for statistical purposes only.

STUDENTS ONLY (Q122-Q127)
122. On which campus are most of your classes held?

Germantown 1
Rockville 2
Silver Spring/Takoma Park 3
Workforce Development and Continuing Education
in Wheaton...4
Workforce Development and Continuing Education
in Gaithersburg..5

123. Are you taking workforce development and continuing education classes?

Yes 1
No 2

124. Which best describes your intent in taking classes at Montgomery College?

I intend to get an associate's degree from Montgomery College and not pursue further
higher education 1
I intend to get a licensure or certification from Montgomery College ..2
I intend to take classes I need for my career without getting a degree 3
I intend to take classes that are pre-requisites for a program at another institution and
transfer without getting the associate's degree 4
I intend to take classes, get my associate's degree, then transfer to a four-year college
....5
I intend to take lifelong learning classes for personal enrichment and not associated with a
career path 6
Other 7

125. Are you the first in your family to attend college?

Yes 1
No 2
Not sure...3
Prefer not to say...4

126. We want to categorize students into broad groups for statistical purposes only. Which of the following best describes your family's income last year?

Less than $20,000 1
$20,000-$34,999 2
$35,000 – $59,999 3
$60,000 – $99,999 4
$100,000 – $149,999 5
$150,000 or more 6
Prefer not to say 7

127. What is your age?

18-24 1
25-29 2
30-39 3
40-49 4
50-64 5
65+ 6
Prefer not to say 7

ALL EXCEPT STUDENTS
128. On which campus do you primarily work?

Germantown 1
Rockville 2
Silver Spring/Takoma Park 3
Workforce Development and Continuing Education in Wheaton 4
Workforce Development and Continuing Education in Gaithersburg 5
Central Services – Mannakee Building 6
Central Services – 40 West Gude Drive 7
Central Services – OITB 8
Central Services – Standish Place 9

129. How long have you been employed by Montgomery College?

Fewer than 2 years 1
2-5 years 2
6-10 years 3
11-20 years 4
20+ years 5

RESUME ASKING ALL

130. Which of the following social media channels do you use regularly? **RANDOMIZE, SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

        Facebook 1
        Twitter 2
        Instagram 3
        LinkedIn 4
        Pinterest 5
        Reddit 6
        The new Myspace 7
        Quora 8
        Tumblr 9
        YouTube 10
        Vine 11
        Snapchat... 12
        None of these.. 13

131. Which of the following best describes where you reside?

        Silver Spring or Takoma Park 1
        Rockville, Bethesda, or Chevy Chase....................... 2
        Germantown, Gaithersburg, or Potomac 3
        Wheaton, Kensington, Colesville, Burtonsville, or Olney
        4
        Elsewhere in Montgomery County 5
        Maryland, outside of Montgomery County 6
        Outside of Maryland, in the US.............................. 7
        Outside the US 8

132. What is your race or ethnicity? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

        White.. 1
        Black/African American.. 2
        Latino/Hispanic 3
        Asian.. 4
        Native American.. 5
        Other 6
        Prefer not to say.. 7

133. Gender:

        Male 1
        Female.. 2
        Prefer not to say.. 3

Thank you. This concludes the survey.

Montgomery College
Moderator's Guide for External In-Depth Interviews, July 2014

Purpose: Obtain key external stakeholders' perspectives on Montgomery College and Dr. Pollard to help inform recommendations for an improved external communications strategy. Through 15 planned in-depth interviews, we expect to learn more about how external audiences perceive Montgomery College and Dr. Pollard, who these audiences believe are the College and the President's competitors and peers, and how Dr. Pollard can boost her visibility—and that of Montgomery College—among influential or strategically important audiences.

C.Fox Interviewers: TBD (Some mix of Eileen Collins, Don Foley and Carrie Fox)

Interviewee: TBD (Include name, current employer/title)

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. This is [insert name of primary interviewer], and I'm joined today by my colleague [insert name of other C.Fox representative]. We appreciate your time.

As Colleen Dolak previously explained, Montgomery College has engaged our team to assist them in a variety of ways, including an examination of their external communications efforts. To do that, we are conducting a series of interviews with important individuals like you – people Montgomery College identified as essential to offering insight into how well the organization is communicating with key members of the community. Today's conversation will help us examine Montgomery College's existing communications efforts so we can provide recommendations for how the College can better reach people like you.

Please know that we are treating your comments today in a confidential manner. You are not being recorded and your feedback will not be attributed back to you to any member of the staff or faculty at Montgomery College. We're more interested in discovering themes and insights in the answers we hear. So we look forward to your candid answers to the questions we have for you today. We have a series questions for you and this interview should take about 30 minutes of your time. Before we start with our questions, do you have any for us?

    If yes, answer and validate all questions have been addressed.

    If no, continue to Question 1.

Part 1: General Level-Setting Questions

1. How would you describe your relationship with Montgomery College? How long have you been affiliated in this way with the College?

2. What are your general perceptions of Montgomery College? How do you think it compares to other colleges in the local area? To other community colleges at large?

3. How often and in what capacity do you as a [donor, Foundation Board member, alumni, etc.] typically receive communications from Montgomery College? Is there a particular vehicle by which you prefer to receive updates from Montgomery College (e.g., email, phone, social media, etc.)?

4. What was your last interaction with Montgomery College? (e.g., a communication from the College, interaction with an individual, etc.) How would you describe that interaction?

Check in to see if the interviewee has questions.

Part 2: Questions Specific to Dr. Pollard's Style and Impact

5. To what extent do you have direct engagement with Montgomery College president, Dr. Pollard?

6. What are you perceptions of Dr. Pollard's communications style based on your direct engagement with her as well as any indirect engagement you may have had with her (e.g., hearing her speak at events, media coverage referencing/quoting Dr. Pollard, etc.)?

7. How familiar are you with Dr. Pollard's top priorities as president of Montgomery College? Do you believe she has a "signature" issue or initiative?

8. Can you comment on how Dr. Pollard has changed perceptions and/or awareness of Montgomery College since assuming the role of president in 2010?

Check in to see if the interviewee has questions.

Part 3: Dr. Pollard in the Community

9. Can you think of an event or organization that Dr. Pollard is associated with in Montgomery County, or in the state at large?

10. In your view, what are some of the most important or high-profile events in Montgomery County and/or the broader Maryland community, that perhaps Montgomery College and/or Dr. Pollard should consider getting more involved with?

11. Who do you consider to be Dr. Pollard's peers? (e.g., presidents of other local colleges or universities, presidents of community colleges, community leaders in Montgomery County, etc.) You can be as specific (e.g., name of an individual) or as general (e.g., broad category of peers) as you would like.

Part 4: Wrap-Up Questions

12. I'd like to return to the beginning of our conversation quickly. Do you have any additional insights or perspectives to share about Dr. Pollard and/or Montgomery College that didn't occur to you earlier in our call?

13. Is there anything that you would like to add about Dr. Pollard and/or Montgomery College that did not come up in our discussion today?

If yes, document feedback.

If no, thank and end interview.

Montgomery College
Policies & Procedures Scorecard, July 2014

POLICY 62003	Comprehensiveness -- Does the policy address communications needs in a complete manner, with no important information missing?			Clarity -- Is it clear what key stakeholders should do to take action, and when?			Efficiency — Does the policy support the efficient development and deployment of messages?			Impact Potential -- Does the policy foster successful outcomes for the College and the President?			Total
	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	
i. Base recognition	2	30%	0.60	3	20%	0.60	3	15%	0.45	3	35%	1.05	2.70
ii. College responsibility	3	30%	0.90	3	20%	0.60	3	15%	0.45	3	35%	1.05	3.00
iii. Presidential authority	2	30%	0.60	3	20%	0.60	3	15%	0.45	3	35%	1.05	2.70
	2.33			3.00			3.00			3.00			8.40
Legend													
3 = Above Average											Out of a potential:		9.00
2 = Average													
1 = Below Average													

PROCEDURE 62003CP	Comprehensiveness -- Does the procedure address communications needs in a complete manner, with no important information missing?			Clarity -- Is it clear what key stakeholders should do to take action, and when?			Efficiency -- Does the procedure support the efficient development and deployment of messages?			Impact Potential -- Does the procedure foster successful outcomes for the College and the President?			Total
	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	Score	Weighting	Valuation	
GENERAL	2	30%	0.60	2	20%	0.40	2	15%	0.30	2	35%	0.70	2.00
RESPONSIBILITIES	2	30%	0.60	2	20%	0.40	1	15%	0.15	2	35%	0.70	1.85
VISUAL IDENTITY	2	30%	0.60	3	20%	0.60	3	15%	0.45	3	35%	1.05	2.70
NEWS RELEASES AND MEDIA RELATIONS	1	30%	0.30	1	20%	0.20	3	15%	0.45	2	35%	0.70	1.65
ADVERTISING	2	30%	0.60	1	20%	0.20	2	15%	0.30	2	35%	0.70	1.80
ALUMNI AFFAIRS	2	30%	0.60	3	20%	0.60	3	15%	0.45	2	35%	0.70	2.35
SPEAKERS BUREAU	1	30%	0.30	2	20%	0.40	2	15%	0.30	2	35%	0.70	1.70
PUBLICATIONS BY ADMINISTRATORS STAFF OR FACULTY	2	30%	0.60	2	20%	0.40	3	15%	0.45	2	35%	0.70	2.15
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS	2	30%	0.60	2	20%	0.40	3	15%	0.45	2	35%	0.70	2.15
WEB PRESENCE	1	30%	0.30	1	20%	0.20	2	15%	0.30	3	35%	1.05	1.85
	1.7			1.9			2.4			2.2			20.20
Legend													
3 = Above Average											Out of a potential:		30.00
2 = Average													
1 = Below Average													