



# President's **FOCUS**

## *Monthly Report to the Board*

October 2016

### **Impacts: Organization at Montgomery College**

As the College looks back on its 70 years of serving students, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the evolution of its planning and organization. The powerful vision that created the College in 1946 with 186 students is sustained in 2016 with our nearly 60,000 students. Our seven-decade journey has traversed significant social, economic, and technological changes. The College's founders and those who led it before us made strategic and ambitious decisions about the direction of the College, its resources, and its leadership, which have led us to where we are today.

The distinguished author Ralph Siu captures three strategies in his guidance about organizational planning: "If you plant for a season, plant budgets. If you plant for a decade, plant reorganization. If you plant for a century, plant people." The College routinely does all three of these, usually simultaneously. This edition of *President's Focus* looks at reorganization. Our work in recent years has made fundamental changes in the architecture of the College—changes that have already produced some impressive results.

Reorganization in the College took root in earnest in 2012–2013, making transformational changes in Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and supporting foundations. The motivation for the changes was fulfillment of our mission—student success. Some of our older structures had become inadequate to achieving the ambitious goals that the College had established in the then-new strategic plan, *Montgomery College 2020*. The advantages were apparent: by reconfiguring some of our structures



in the One College model, we could ensure that improvements would impact students consistently and thoroughly across the College. Faculty could partner more effectively across disciplines, appropriate curricular changes could be accelerated, and student academic needs could be better addressed by a division singularly focused on them. In addition, the creation of a new foundation, the Montgomery College Life Sciences Park Foundation, would enable the College to partner in new ways with private industry and create new learning opportunities for students.

### *Academic Affairs*

Restructuring the administration of the College's academic units was done to create consistency in the student experience, streamline the process of administration, increase efficiencies, and maximize student progress toward completion.

First, leadership responsibilities were more carefully defined and more evenly structured across campuses: four academic units, each led by a provost and vice president, replaced the previous campus-based structure. Fourteen uniquely defined academic areas led by deans replaced the previous structure in which each discipline had up to three deans. And 39 department chairs with supervisory authority replaced 49 chairs. In the new model, all common disciplines were aligned under the same vice president and provost; chairs were defined as 12-month appointments, aligning responsibility with authority; content expertise was better aligned with leadership roles; and interdisciplinary collaboration was encouraged. Enhancing collegewide consistency and cooperation in supporting students' academic needs was the primary driver for these changes.

Streamlining administrative functions allowed for a number of valuable academic initiatives to progress. National research shows that well-defined benchmarked pathways along with consistent and regular advising improve student completion. The College was able to incorporate a pathways model into a revised general studies program—the largest program at the College—and meet the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's requirements to address noncompliance of the former general studies program. The changes were accomplished with input from all collegewide disciplines. Similarly, the faculty-led transformation of the general education requirements benefited from the new structure, which had a collegewide focus rather than a campus-based one. Streamlining the requirements of the general education requirements and eliminating those that did not serve transfer students well cleared the pathway to increased completion.



The One College approach to academics has also increased efficiencies in the use of faculty, time, and space. Having faculty teach on multiple campuses is a simpler process now with only one supervising dean. Academic Affairs leadership has been able to conduct improved long-term planning for all academic units, to collect data more efficiently, and to make more data-driven decisions. The ability to examine collegewide scheduling and budgeting have resulted in higher seat utilization. Enhanced communication across the College has improved with monthly Academic Advisory Council meetings including representation from faculty and staff councils as well as representation from the offices of chairs and deans; E-Learning, Innovation, and Teaching Excellence (ELITE); and Institutional Research and Analysis.

The restructuring of Academic Affairs has already produced several measurable results in the areas of grants, online degrees, and new partnerships. The grant funding won by MC faculty and staff has almost tripled over four years to \$11 million in FY16. The reorganization has helped build significant partnerships in support of workforce development. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant to create the CyberAdvantage program (\$15 million from the US Department of Labor, DOL) and the TechHire grant (\$4 million from DOL) are good examples of how increased collaborations have strengthened the College's ability to compete for highly coveted federal grants. Partnerships with the Universities at Shady Grove, along with dozens of other four-year transfer institutions, have enabled the College to create a pipeline from kindergarten to college. This saves students time and money by ensuring that classes transfer, and positions them for further achievement even beyond the College. The College has also been awarded grants to improve student success for which it would not have been positioned to win under the previous organization. A grant from Achieving the Dream (ATD) to implement open educational resources for students was won this year and can save students significantly on the cost of books.

The reorganization has also enabled the College to offer four degrees entirely online. Being able to respond to students' geographic limitations and scheduling needs with online courses makes our programs more accessible and increases enrollment. The reorganization has also impacted students at discreet places in the educational pipeline: introducing new placement policies and flexible assessment, for example, can help students save time and increase completion rates.



Strengthening connections between learning outcomes and transfer institutions' requirements supports the 5,000 students who transfer each year.

Currently Academic Affairs has several initiatives in place to reduce the number of students failing or withdrawing from a class. This is highlighted through a focus on decreasing the number of students who receive grades of D or F, or who withdraw—our “DFW” efforts. The data on collegewide retention show the impacts: a 10 percent increase in fall-to-spring retention for the 2013–2014 cohort. The division has also created the College's first academic master plan, which could not have been imagined without the current structure in place, and the College is able to offer more honors courses. Finally, the reorganization has enabled Academic Affairs to work more closely with business and industry to align curricula with their needs in a timely manner. Not only do these changes impact the student experience in positive ways, but they strengthen the voice of the entire College in the arenas of local government. Our progress in Academic Affairs has shown that the College is responsive to the needs and vision of the community to which we belong.

### ***Student Affairs***

Student Affairs has also undergone some significant restructuring, moving from a campus-based function to a collegewide division. Where student services were formerly combined with academic affairs, their separation and reorganization as a new division has strengthened a number of important student processes. Creating a sustained commitment to support services is essential to closing the achievement gap, and an independent student affairs division accomplished this focus. Operating learning centers, mentoring programs, and extra-curricular experiences—to name just a few activities—requires trained personnel and a sophisticated understanding of student development and community building. By housing student affairs as a separate unit with its own resources, the leadership was empowered to invest more strategically in programming that supports learning and completion.

One of the most impactful changes in Student Affairs has been the establishment of a comprehensive developmental advising program. Combining academic advising with personal life-coaching allowed the College to address what has long been considered a hurdle to achievement among community college students: managing life circumstances that often interfere with achievement. Whether it is financial aid needs, work schedules, transportation, or choosing a major



without a clear vision for a professional life, students without proper guidance in these areas are considerably less likely to complete. The holistic advising approach combines an education plan—a requirement of the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013—with more personal guidance to help students navigate the complexities of student life. Currently the College is bringing instructional faculty into the academic advising process—sometimes called “program advising”—which helps to create more productive, efficient pathways to academic achievement. Close collaborations between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have enabled this process to succeed.

Another result of the Student Affairs reorganization has been the creation of Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) program. With 1,700 students now enrolled across 11 high schools, the program includes features that were designed with Student Affairs strategies in mind. Coaching is the critical element of the program. High school students from disadvantaged backgrounds frequently face obstacles that must be addressed long before they arrive at a college. Such students may not have a family member who has attended college, may be unaware of financial aid resources, or they may not have seen themselves attending college. By starting early while students are still in high school, ACES prepares students to strengthen their academic skills so that they are college-ready, to find funds to pay for college, and to apply for college. Once at MC, the support continues with individual coaches working closely with students to support their needs, and groups of ACES students bonding together for mutual support.

Another product of the reorganization of Student Affairs has been the creation of a collegewide athletics program. This move has strengthened the One College sentiment significantly, bringing together students, faculty, and community members around a larger, single program with its own unique colors and a new mascot. Not only has this created a focus on shared teams among the three campuses, but it is a feature that attracts high school athletes who are considering the College. Since the new program was created, the grade point average of student athletes at the College has risen. With mandatory orientation for student-athletes, required study halls, and an increased emphasis by coaches that athletes are “students first,” student-athletes are excelling. The creation of collegewide athletics has fed the growth of a shared culture among the campuses and a common school spirit that research has shown can be a factor in student persistence.



### ***MC Life Sciences Park Foundation***

Another element of our recent Montgomery College reorganization was the creation of a new foundation: the Montgomery College Life Sciences Park Foundation Campus in 2014. At that time, a decision was made to create this entity distinct from the existing Montgomery College Foundation, as an educational—rather than a philanthropic—foundation. This decision enabled the College to merge several components: academics, business, and research in the formation of the Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology at MC (PIC MC), which is now managed by the Life Sciences Park Foundation. (The foundation has recently applied to change its name to the Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology at MC Foundation.) This new foundation has allowed the College to attract investment in the construction of the Bioscience Education Center, an \$88 million construction project tailored to providing state-of-the-art STEM education. The foundation also helped to attract our anchor tenant, Holy Cross Germantown Hospital. The hospital provides unique learning opportunities for our health sciences students, who work with the latest medical technology and provide patient care in the only hospital in the nation situated on a community college campus. This year \$146,000 was given in scholarships to health sciences students, a joint award from the Montgomery College Foundation and Holy Cross Health. The College was also recognized with the American Association of Community College's Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership Award this year for the benefits of the partnership. As the PIC MC grows, the College's presence will likely attract more science and technology ventures in search of young talent and entrepreneurs in search of collaboration.

### ***Conclusion***

The work that the College has done over the last five years to embrace the One College ethos has been transformational. It has brought us to the point where substantive changes in our metrics are now possible. Many of the essential conditions for equitable outcomes are either in place or moving towards it. The College has worked tirelessly to put in place an architecture of achievement. I am convinced that if we continue our strategic work to craft policies, procedures, and practices in keeping with our values, we can, indeed, create an educational ecosystem that serves our students optimally.



**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Which of the accomplishments achieved by the reorganization stand out to you?
2. Are there strengths to recent reorganizations that were not highlighted in this report?
3. Are there ways in which the reorganization may be beneficial to the College's partnerships with industry?

