

News and Views

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Academic Planning Retreat March 2006



A Special Communication from the EVP for Academic and Student Services



Welcome to the spring 2007 semester! The Intersession was successful, thanks to the hard work and diligence of faculty and staff, and in no small part to the unusually mild weather. Enrollment is strong for the spring, and we are looking forward to welcoming our new president, Dr. Brian K. Johnson, to our college community. It's hard to say goodbye to Dr. Nunley, who literally changed the landscape of

Montgomery College during her brief eight years as president, and who was always a passionate and committed supporter of academic excellence and programs of vision and substance. As we move forward together into a new realm of opportunities to build on these traditions of excellence, I look forward to continuing to engage issues that are important to Montgomery College faculty and staff.

Usually, *New and Views* presents several academic and instructional topics and announcements. **I have decided, however, to devote this issue to summarizing for you how the Montgomery College administration has responded to the concerns raised in a recent faculty survey.** My goal is to address the issues that were raised as directly as I can, and to set the stage for continued and increased collaboration between faculty and administration in the months ahead.

In the fall and spring of the past academic year, a survey was administered to full- and part-time faculty. The survey seemed to underscore reservations that some faculty had expressed regarding the learning college initiative. Results indicated concern about several areas. These included:

- ***Concern about having the Fall Opening Meeting embedded in the fall semester rather than during Professional Week;***
- ***Concern about faculty involvement in decision making at the campus and central academic administrative levels; and***
- ***Concern about the need to improve communication throughout the College community.***

These concerns were immediately taken very seriously by Dr. Nunley, by my office, by the vice presidents and provosts and by the deans. The Academic Assembly devoted several meetings to addressing these concerns and strategizing ways to engage faculty and to improve communication. As part of these discussions, I immediately announced to the Academic Assembly that the Fall Meeting would be returned to professional week, as indeed it was this past September.

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The other two issues, faculty involvement in decision making and communication issues, were more serious and required immediate attention and action at several levels. In a large multi-campus environment, true involvement of faculty in planning and decision making is a huge challenge, as is the flow of communication and ideas. **However, it is clear that we need to do a better job of respecting and soliciting faculty input prior to moving ahead in new academic directions.** The Academic Assembly worked with the academic administrative leadership to begin to address these issues immediately. The following efforts were made to increase faculty involvement in academic decision making:

- **The Academic Assembly devoted a full meeting to clarifying the mission of the learning college initiative and brain-storming ways to involve faculty and staff on all campuses in efforts to incorporate the learning centered culture and a commitment to learning outcomes into programs, disciplines, labs and classrooms.** Members of the Academic Assembly agreed to continue the discussions on individual campuses and this is ongoing.
- **A collegewide academic planning retreat was held in early March 2006 to begin strategic planning for FY07.** Beginning the cycle in March enabled over 100 faculty and staff, including all department chairs, Faculty Council and Academic Assembly officers, deans, vice presidents and provosts and members of the planning office to participate and begin the process of developing a campus vision and campus priorities.
- **This year the academic planning retreat on February 22nd and 23rd will be held at the Universities at Shady Grove.** Over 150 faculty and staff have been invited to participate.
- **Working with David Sears, Clarice Somersall and a small group of faculty and staff, this office developed the Learning College *Make It Happen* innovation grants.** These grants provided money and resources to individuals to develop ideas for improving instruction, building the culture of learning and continuing to demonstrate learning outcomes. Some 42 faculty and staff have been awarded *Make It Happen* innovation grants over this past year.
- **Clarice Somersall's office planned a series of Learning College retreats.** Over 200 faculty and staff have participated in these retreats and the excitement, creative energy and idea generation has been astounding. As the ideas build, Clarice has taken the concepts to groups like Academic Assembly, Faculty Councils, Chairs and others to get commitments from these groups to adopt and promote those creative initiatives.
- **Coffee Conversations, What's On Your Mind campus sessions, Brown Bag Lunches and Department and Unit visits have been ongoing by Clarice Somersall, the vice presidents and provosts, Faculty Councils and members of my office.** These activities are all designed to promote and deepen the level of faculty involvement in academic and student services issues.

As for communication, we continue to strategize to improve both the timeliness and effectiveness of communication. I have always believed in using our structures to communicate, and therefore rely on the Academic Assembly and the Faculty Council Chairs, who are Assembly members, to

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distribute accurate and important information. The Chairs' groups and the Collegewide Deans are also critical in keeping information flowing. This newsletter, *News and Views*, is another vehicle for disseminating information about academic and student services issues, and the Executive Vice President Web site, the Learning College Web site and the Collegewide Curriculum Committee Newsletter are all other ways we strive mightily to keep people informed.

As I have said on many occasions, I continue to regret that our collegewide newsletter, *Inside MC*, was discontinued. In an effort to bring back the sense of community that publication provided, I have been working with IT representatives, and the Director of Communications, Steve Simon, to use technology to achieve community. **A group of faculty and staff will be looking at the best way to implement "Post It" software, a package we have purchased and that we hope will provide daily communication with every member of our college community.**

I know this has been a long missive, but I want you to know that your concerns and issues are my concerns and issues. A great deal of time, listening, reflecting and concerted action has gone into addressing the issues of greater faculty involvement in academic decision making and improved communication among the members of the college community over the past year.

I continue to work on these issues, as do the vice presidents and provosts, the deans, and every individual of good will at the College. I wanted you to hear from me how seriously these issues are being taken by administrators, chairs, program coordinators, faculty and staff. **As we prepare to welcome our new president, Dr. Johnson, I hope you will join with me in trusting that we can build on a foundation of excellence and reach for greatness.** We have a truly creative family of excellent and talented faculty and staff. I am grateful to have been witness to the development and implementation of so many academic and instructional successes.

I hear you, I care about you, and I look forward to working together with you as we strive to make Montgomery College a model of excellence for our students and a source of pride for all of us.

Have a truly productive and rewarding semester. I would welcome your comments and thoughts at evpacademic@montgomerycollege.edu.

Mary Kay Shartle-Galotto, Ph.D.

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