



MCRPA Member Spotlight

MCRPA Rides the Wave of Innovation...

Reflections from the Innovation Conference

with Dr. Christine Crefton



May 2024



I had the privilege of attending the League for Innovation in Community College 2024 Innovations Conference in Anaheim, CA, from March 17 to 20, 2024. I have so many takeaways from meeting over a hundred community college educators throughout the conference to attending innovative sessions on AI, preparing online learners, and how caring for one another can transform our educational experience. I connected with my colleagues from the ACES program at MC and learned from my own colleagues about supporting one another.

On Sunday, March 17th, I presented “Bridging the Gap: Microcredentials Unleashed for Workforce Empowerment.” The description called out the significant shift in the job market with an astonishing 77% of global employers challenged in identifying candidates with the ideal combination of technical and behavioral skills. Yet, simultaneously, there are about two open jobs for every job seeker, highlighting a pronounced disconnect between the existing skill supply and industry demand.

Microcredentials become a potential way to bridge the divide. During the session, we explored the bond between microcredentials, skill enhancement, and shaping a future-ready workforce.





The room was standing room only. I attribute the interest to community colleges nationwide, seeing the potential for microcredentials as a way to help employers find the right combination of talent while empowering students with the employable skills they need for post-graduation success.

From the conversations that I had with attendees in this space, most community colleges are just starting their microcredential journey. Many had basic questions to ask and concepts like competency-based learning models and the difference between time spent in seat learning versus demonstrating skills remained. This made MC a standout innovation in the area of microcredentials.



Dr. Paul Miller presented on the very successful Student Training and Resource (STaR) Network program that provides professional development and career readiness opportunities to degree-seeking students at MC. The STaR Network was made possible by a 2023 Foundation Innovation Grant.

The program aims to provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their current roles at MC and future careers while supporting the College's mission to provide students with a high-quality education and prepare them for the workforce and post-graduation success.

"The Innovations Conference was a great way to show the wonderful things that we do at Montgomery College," said Dr. Paul Miller. "It's clear from the sessions that I attended that Montgomery College continues to be at the forefront of student innovation and success."



Kristina Little and Terré Thomas, MCRPA members, presented with Dr Minjote Mekonen at the conference on the topic of “Advocacy with Intent: A Qualitative Approach,” highlighting the ACES program or Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success.

Participants engaged in conversations and the presentation was so lively and well attended for first thing in the morning on the first day of the conference! The energy was palpable in the room, and it was clear that other community colleges in the nation were excited by the opportunities that Montgomery College has been able to do connecting with high schools to get students on the pathway to a college degree.





Presenter:
Kristina A. Little, MBA (she/her/hers)
 Montgomery College

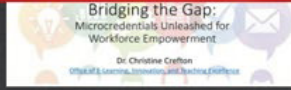


Presenter:
Minjote Mekonen, MS EdD (she/her/hers)
 Montgomery College



Presenter:
Terré Thomas, MA (she/her/hers)
 Montgomery College

Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) is an innovative high school to associate degree to bachelor pathway program that provides intentional advocacy. It stands out in the community college field by offering a holistic, student-centered approach that prioritizes inclusivity, community building, and collaboration. This model recognizes the diverse needs of students and actively works to support their success while fostering innovation and adaptability in community college education. Participants will leave the session with a deeper understanding of how to implement innovative strategies to advocate intentionally for students in their own institutions, ultimately leading to enhanced student success.



10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Room: Salon VI, 2nd Floor, North Tower

Bridging the Gap: Micro-Credentials Unleashed for Workforce Empowerment

Session Type: Forum



Presenter:
Christine Crefton, EdD
 Montgomery College

A significant shift is apparent in today's job market, with an astonishing 77% of global employers challenged in identifying candidates with the ideal combination of technical and behavioral skills. An intriguing conundrum further complicates this dynamic: For every jobseeker, there are two available positions, highlighting a pronounced disconnect between the existing skill supply and industry demand. However, hope emerges in the form of micro-credentials, a potential catalyst for bridging this divide. Immerse yourself in this interactive workshop as we unpack the revolutionary role of micro-credentials in mending this skills rift. We'll uncover the intricate bond between micro-credentials, skill enhancement, and shaping a future-ready workforce. We aim to chart a course toward an accessible, empowered, and skill-aligned future where learning and industry needs seamlessly converge.

"I was thrilled to participate as a presenter at the Innovations Conference alongside my esteemed colleagues, Ms. Terré Thomas and Dr. Minjote Mekonen," said Little. "The conference provided platforms for meaningful dialogue and idea-sharing that will undoubtedly inform and enrich our practices as educators. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to such a dynamic community of professionals dedicated to advancing community college education."

"I am deeply honored and still filled with excitement following the opportunity to present at the Innovations Conference," said Thomas. "Collaborating with my esteemed colleagues, Dr. Minjote Mekonen and Mrs. Kristina Little, added immense value to the experience. The energy and insights exchanged have left me even more inspired to persist in the impactful work we are collectively engaged in."



As a bonus opportunity, Dr. Paul Miller and I presented a poster session on MCRPA. We used the opportunity to speak to those interested in furthering a sense of belonging at their colleges through the formation and maintenance of an employee resource group (ERG). We also got to meet in person, Robin K. Minor, Editor in Chief of the Teaching and Learning Excellence through Scholarship (TALES) Journal, of which we published an article on the role and impact of ERGs in Higher Education in 2023.

The conference was a vivid reminder of the power of collaboration and the importance of continuing to foster a community where educators and professionals can share knowledge and push the boundaries of what is possible. As members of the MCRPA, we are uniquely positioned to lead this charge, leveraging our collective expertise to enact change and make a lasting impact on our students and the broader community.



Room: Grand Ballroom E-F, 1st Floor

Unlocking Potential: Transforming Community at Montgomery College Through MCRPA

Session Type: Poster Session



Presenter:
Christine Crefton, EdD
Montgomery College



Presenter:
Paul D. Miller, EdD
Montgomery College

Join us for an immersive experience designed to provide you with a blueprint for cultivating your institution's leadership, organizational skills, and community impact through creating an employee-led network. Participants will learn about the Montgomery College Rising Professionals Association (MCRPA) and the benefits and significance of employee resource groups in higher education. Through interactive activities, real-world case studies, and discussions, you will discover the unique elements that set MCRPA apart and acquire the practical knowledge for creating and nurturing an employee-centered group that fosters a sense of belonging and community among all employees.



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E-Learning, Innovation, and Teaching Excellence (ELITE) MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE: THE STaR NETWORK

Dr. Paul D. Miller
Professional Development Director

29 Slides

Tuesday, March 19

3:15 PM - 4:15 PM

Room: Salon II, 2nd Floor, North Tower

Empowering the Future Workforce: STaR Network

Session Type: Forum



Presenter:
Paul D. Miller, EdD
Montgomery College

The presentation showcases Montgomery College's Student Training and Resource (STaR) Network, a cutting-edge professional development program tailored for community college students. This program addresses diverse student needs, from advising and admissions to retention and accessibility. The session aims to share innovative, proven methods for enhancing student success across academic and professional spheres. Participants—educators, administrators, and student development staff—will gain insights into holistic approaches for serving the complex, multifaceted needs of their student communities. The STaR Network serves as a model for integrating academic support and professional development, setting students on a path to career readiness.



Montgomery College Rising Professionals Association (MCRPA)

MCRPA was established in 2011 as an employee resources group. We collectively seek out opportunities to learn and grow as individuals and as burgeoning professionals. Our members are enthusiastic supporters of Montgomery College's mission and community. If you have a desire to get involved and participate in hands-on personal and professional development activities, networking, and community service, you are a perfect fit for MCRPA.

Each MCRPA member plays an important role in our structure. Because our activities directly result from our members' shared interests, we encourage our members to engage with MCRPA programming. Members determine the intensity and time commitment of their involvement. We realize that members have other commitments, both personal and professional. Explore our committees, events, membership and leadership team. MCRPA always welcomes suggestions for new roles and/or committees.

Join MCRPA - <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/offices/mcrpa/>

Contact Us - mcrpa@montgomerycollege.edu





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