

### III. VISION OF A LEARNING COLLEGE

Montgomery College's mission statement has been enthusiastically embraced and frequently quoted with passion throughout the institution. A mission statement, according to one scholar, states the basic purpose of an organization, defines its relationship to external and internal constituencies, and proposes general objectives. A vision statement, in contrast, grows out of this mission. A vision statement "describes the future size, shape and texture of the organization (that is, one should be able to get a good feel for the future organization from the vision statement); it sets specific goals and, more importantly, drives and guides action to achieve these goals." (Wilson, 1996. p. 3)<sup>1</sup>

The new vision of the Learning College at Montgomery College is built on its student-centered mission of caring, commitment to quality, and service to community that holds us "accountable for key results centered around learning." This vision identifies clear priorities for the future: continued access, retention, achievement, and collaborative learning. These priorities need to be achieved within a framework that recognizes the challenges of shrinking capacity and a continuing need to maintain affordability. The College can achieve this by keeping learning—continuous, creative, and compelling learning—at the core of its collective vision.<sup>2</sup>

The College has dedicated its energy and resources to bringing positive change into the lives of its students, the College community, and the larger community. The College has heard the message of "Greater Expectations," which emphasizes how the intentional learner is "empowered through intellectual and practical skills," "informed by knowledge and ways of knowing," and "responsible for personal actions and civic values";<sup>3</sup> and the College is preparing to engage intentional learners of the new global environment with rigorous yet relevant educational challenges. Montgomery College will continue its tradition of a strong commitment to learning and will affirm this new focus on the measurable, tangible, and rewarding outcomes of its endeavors. It is the College's challenge and pledge to its students, to fulfill the learning college vision.

Terry O'Banion, a leading proponent of the learning college movement, lists several of its core characteristics: (1) learning is collaborative and offers many options; (2) learners are full partners and assume responsibility for their own choices; and (3) the process focuses on the needs and requirements of the learner.<sup>4</sup> The defining characteristic of the learning college, however, is the central focus on the *outcome*, not the *process*. This emphasis on the outcome and the assessment of the outcome is the core of the learning college model. It is not only what we do, but the ability to demonstrate that what we do results in a change for the learner.

To integrate the learning college concept into the daily framework at Montgomery College, the College created five teams to address concerns during a planning retreat in September 2003. At this retreat, the seeds of the formal learning college initiative were planted in discussions of what learning means to our students, faculty, and staff. Teams embraced specific charges in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Ian. "The Practical Power of Vision." *On the Horizon*, March/April 1996.

<sup>2</sup> See Learning College Diagram in Appendix C.

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery College. Greater Expectations, Chapter 3. 2004. [Online] Available at: [www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studev/GreaterExpectGenEd.doc](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studev/GreaterExpectGenEd.doc).

<sup>4</sup> O'Banion, Terry. *Learning College for the 21st Century*. Oryx Publishers, 1997.

implement strategies and fulfill learning objectives. The teams, composed of representatives across the College, addressed the following pillars of learning:

**Teams**

**Pillars of Learning**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Learning Communities (Blue Team)</li><li>▪ First Year Experience (Red Team)</li><li>▪ Service Learning (Orange Team)</li><li>▪ Student Achievement &amp; Retention (Green Team)</li><li>▪ Outcomes Assessment (Purple Team)</li></ul> | <p>To develop learning communities within college wide instructional programs</p> <p>To develop a pilot program that provides required orientation opportunities for appropriate incoming students</p> <p>To develop strategies that incorporate service learning for students and learning-centered professional development for faculty and staff</p> <p>To explore and develop strategies and models for focusing our resources on student achievement</p> <p>To develop an evaluation strategy that will assess the impact of the focus on learning and will provide the information needed to demonstrate the level of effectiveness of initiatives to promote greater student learning</p> |
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These teams, led by the vice president, provosts, and deans of student development, have worked together to address their individual and shared charges. At academic retreats held in 2004 and 2005 and in individual work groups, the teams have created plans to bring each critical pillar of the Learning College into College campuses and classrooms. These Learning College teams are moving forward in an organized, goal-oriented way to share their goals and objectives with the College community. The pillars are becoming part of the College's culture as well as an integral part of its strategic planning and budgeting.

Updates on Learning College activities and pillar initiatives can be found on the Learning College Web site, [www.montgomerycollege.edu/learning](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/learning).