

MONTHLY OUTLOOK

A Meeting Preview with Data Insights and Strategic Topics

September 11, 2020

September Meeting Highlights—What to Expect and Why

Your first meeting of FY21 occurs on Monday, September 21, 2020. Following are major items and topics planned at this time.

Oath of Office. The chief deputy clerk of Montgomery County circuit court, Karen Bushell, will administer a ceremonial oath of office to start the year.

Conversations with Constituents. The Constituent Conversations have been reimagined this year to take place during the public meeting, when you will engage with a faculty member, a staff member, and a student to hear about their resilient MC experiences and challenges while remotely teaching, working, or learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My Monthly Written Report. This year my *President's Focus* written reports will focus on the theme, "COVID-19: Higher Ed Disruption or Dismantling?" COVID-19 has certainly been disruptive in some negative ways, but, in other ways, it may help higher education institutions embrace practices with positive potential. Adapting to COVID has required some changes to make MC more competitive, such as marketing to compete within the online space successfully, and more disciplined decisions about hiring and class scheduling. *President's Focus* will explore some of these changes, including ones around on-boarding, finances, the employee experience, and student outcomes.

Tributes. In recognition of three deceased employees, resolutions will pay tribute to their service to the College.

FY20 Fourth Quarter Financial Summary Report. This report will examine the College's financial activity during the fourth quarter of last fiscal year, which ended on June 30, 2020.

The following items are on your consent calendar:

Personnel Actions Confirmation Report. This review of personnel actions documents actions taken during May, June, and July.

Ratification of Summer Graduates. Before student graduations become official, the Board must ratify their completion status. Fall and spring graduates are ratified in advance, but summer graduates must be ratified after the fact since the Board does not meet during July and August.

Hospitality Management Certificate Change to Online Delivery. This is a request to approve a change in program modality to both on-campus and online delivery options for the Hospitality Management Supervision and Leadership Certificate program. If approved, a request for change will be sent to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

FY20 Operating Fund Functional Transfer. This is an annual request for action to align the previous year's actual expenditures with their correct budget functions. During FY20, the College reallocated resources for emergency student financial aid to support the technology needs of our students for remote learning due to COVID-19. If approved, this action is submitted to the county executive and council for approval.

Data Focus

Achieving the Board's Student Success Goals



At its June 2018 meeting, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution setting student success goals to be reached by June of 2022. This was the first time that the Board articulated specific achievement goals, which were designed to build on and increase student success levels in the College's historical patterns.

Board goals focus on completion. The adopted goals apply to what is called the "PAR cohort," meaning the "first-time-ever-in-college" (FTEIC) students who will be tracked through the state of Maryland's Performance Accountability Report (PAR). The College prepares—and the Board reviews and accepts—the PAR every year. The student success goals are as follows, where Goals 1 and 2 gauge progress four years after students have begun. Goal 3 is focused on the 2014 cohort with an eight-year window for observation.

Goal 1: At least 30 percent of the fall 2018 PAR cohort attain an associate degree or certificate from Montgomery College by June 2022.

Goal 2: At least 50 percent of the fall 2018 PAR cohort transfer from Montgomery College to a four-year institution by June 2022.

Goal 3: At least 38 percent of the fall 2014 PAR cohort attain a baccalaureate degree from a four-year institution by June 2022.

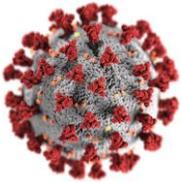
The fall 2018 PAR cohort will have about 3,000 students. PAR cohorts are officially set two years after the FTEIC students begin their studies. By state definition, only those students who have attempted 18 credits in that two-year period remain in the cohort. That standard is used in Maryland to reflect that such students are earnestly pursuing a credential. Of the 4,033 students who started in fall 2018, about three-quarters of them—more than 3,000—have met this benchmark. At this point, roughly halfway to the observation point of June 2022, 287 students in the cohort have earned an associate degree and an additional 12 have earned a certificate!

Fall-to-fall retention is important for success. The proportion of FTEIC students who return to MC in the fall of their second year has been consistent for the past few cohorts, generally running at about two-thirds. That rate is higher than the national average of 54 percent. The MC rate of students returning in the fall of their third year has typically been about 45 percent for most cohorts...before the pandemic. It has dropped to 41 percent for the fall 2018 cohort. The pandemic is the most likely explanation for this drop, given the job losses students have suffered and expanded family-care circumstances. The insecurity of the pandemic has created a general reluctance to commit to long term enrollment.

Taking gateway courses early makes a difference. Our data, and that of other colleges, has shown that students who complete college-level English and math courses early have a higher success rate. At Montgomery College, the proportion of FTEIC students completing English courses has consistently risen over the last three years. More than half of the fall 2018 cohort completed gateway English in their first year and one-third completed gateway mathematics—two strong indicators for success. Nearly 1,200 students in the cohort, that is, 30 percent, completed both gateway English and math in their first year. The significance of these gateway courses is so striking that we are making it a major focus for all MC students.

Strategic Topic of the Month

Through the Pandemic, Montgomery College Strives to Be True to Its Mission



Despite the upheaval of the coronavirus pandemic, the College has worked diligently to remain faithful to its core principles of radical inclusion, academic rigor, equity, and service to community. The demands of responding to COVID-19 have required adaptation. This year in *Monthly Outlook*, we will explore the ways in which the College has remained focused on its core values even in the midst of many operational and fiscal changes this year.

Decisions focus on supporting students. One of the very first decisions made at the College—after the decision to convert to remote teaching, learning, and working, and before the county announced restrictions—was to cancel commencement and redirect the funds to emergency student support. This decision not only served our most vulnerable students but it inspired gifts by many outside the College. Gifts of food, technology, and living expenses came in through the Montgomery College Foundation and enabled us to support students in their time of need.

Hope Survey documented our students' struggles. As the College witnessed the soaring requests for assistance from students, we decided to participate in the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice's survey of students basic need security. The results were telling: 41 percent of our working students had lost employment and 33 percent had lost wages. The 3,500 MC students who participated helped to paint a picture, not only of the national landscape of community college responses, but of where MC support should be delivered and how.

Spring scheduling formats respond to students' needs. After assistance with basic needs, supporting students in their academic success required a novel approach to the spring semester. Offering a majority of seven-week classes—as opposed to the traditional 15-week majority—was a direct response to student needs for planning, predictability, and flexibility with employment. The shorter course format allows for all of these, while keeping rigorous academics at the fore, with faculty well-trained in structured remote teaching.

Services and planning continue through the pandemic. Even as the College remained in remote format during the summer and fall, outreach to the community and planning for the future have continued. With remote offerings of workshops in job-searching, resume writing, and an overview of WorkSource employment and training services, the College's Community Engagement efforts continued to serve as a vital resource in multiple languages. In this same vein, the College continued its exploration of a possible fourth campus, determined to expand its value to broader communities in Maryland. The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), a national survey of institutional practices and student behaviors during the earliest weeks of college will again be a part of the fall. An initiative of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, SENSE will have a special COVID-19 module this year. The instrument will help us assess trends in successful student engagement and their links to promising patterns in retention and completion.

Commitment to our mission prepares us to best serve in the future. Despite the additional burdens that the pandemic has placed on employees, the College's operations have been resilient and forward-looking. We have pivoted quickly in our responses and returned to our focus on long-term goals once some firm processes in our remote teaching, learning, and working were established. Undoubtedly, the future of work has evolved light years through our required remote status, creating new topics for exploration. That the College has successfully held on to its core values in the past six months is a sign of incredible commitment and agility. Advancing our mission regardless of the external circumstances will serve our students and our communities well in the long run.

Be well,

DeRionne P. Pollard, Ph.D.

We empower our students to change their lives, and we enrich the life of our community. We are accountable for our results.