

MONTHLY OUTLOOK

A Meeting Preview with Data Insights and Strategic Topics

March 12, 2021

March Meeting Highlights—What to Expect and Why

Your next meeting takes place on Monday, March 22. Following are major items and topics planned at this time.

Conversations with Constituents. The guest speaker this month is County Executive Marc Elrich, who will engage the Board on the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic rebound and recovery plans, and the College's role in these matters.

Conference Session. A conference session will be held to discuss proposed next steps for the Board's engagement in antiracism work.

My Monthly Written Report. My March *President's Focus* explores how COVID-19 has impacted student outcomes in terms of enrollment, academic performance, and student perceptions of the College as measured by the SENSE survey.

Workday Implementation Update. A status report will be provided on the implementation of the College's enterprise resource planning system, Workday.

Tribute. A tribute is a recognition of an employee who has passed away while on the job. This month, a faculty member will be honored for his service to the College.

Supplemental Appropriation for the FY21 Capital Budget. This is a request for approval of a supplemental appropriation to fund the innovation hub located in the Mannakee Building.

Renewal of Award of Contract. This action is for a one-year renewal of the contract for operation and management of the Montgomery College bookstores, in accordance with existing contract terms.

Sole Source Awards of Contract. Two sole source awards of contract will be presented for your consideration. The first is for the continuation of cloud-based hosting services for asset management software license and the second is for the continuation of Workday Enterprise resource planning solution subscription.

The following items are on your consent calendar:

Personnel Actions Confirmation Report. This is a review of personnel actions taken during January.

Board's Schedule of Meetings for FY22. The calendar of FY22 Board meetings will be presented for adoption.

Data Focus

Labor Markets during COVID

This year has been an extraordinary one for volatility in employment nationwide. The College is watching local labor markets closely so see how we can best prepare students. Creating new programs, like the Biotech Bootcamp for displaced workers, is one piece of the puzzle. Another is continuing to invest in areas where the pandemic has created more need, such as the health sciences and nursing. Still another is watching disciplines for which markets may be diminishing—hospitality services, for example.

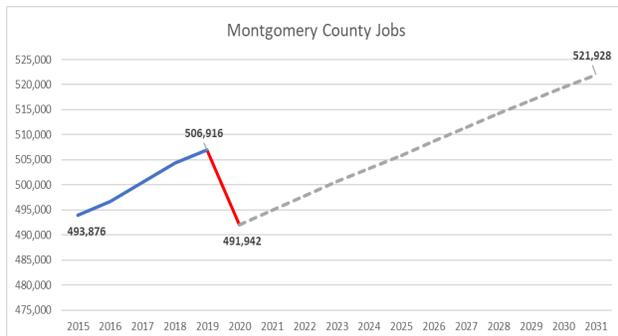


Figure 1. Montgomery County jobs projections.

How has the county fared? As depicted in *Figure 1*, 13,041 new jobs were added in the county during the period 2015–2019, representing three percent growth. In this now yearlong pandemic, 14,794 jobs were lost—three percent of total workforce—thus erasing the previous four-year gain. Projections show that it will take another five years to recover all those lost jobs. Predicting which jobs will return and how quickly is a factor that goes into planning for course offering and curricula.

What about individual job sectors? The county’s health care sector lost 681 jobs, one percent of this workforce, since the start of the pandemic. With health care companies making up four of the top 10 employers in the county—employing just over 20,000 people—and the population of the county aging, it is likely that this sector will rebound quickly when COVID conditions improve. Childcare services are another area that was hit during COVID, but should see predictable rebound. This past year, 274 jobs were lost, (three percent of the workforce), but an increased county push for such services—and MC’s expansion of early childhood education programs—will likely serve these needs. Hospitality is an area that has suffered dramatic losses this past year, with 3,865 jobs lost or 11 percent of its workforce. The rebound in this sector is less predictable and depends on vaccines and wider tolerance for socializing and travel after vaccination. Marriott International is one of the top four employers in the county with 5,800 employees. One of the more stable sectors during the pandemic has been the biotechnology sector, bolstered by the increased need for vaccine research and production.

What lies ahead? A lesson from this pandemic was that not all jobs were impacted equally: Middle and higher waged jobs were much less likely to be impacted. As we know from our working students—one third of whom lost their jobs in March and April of 2020—work in service industries that were especially unstable given the advisories to avoid public gatherings. Like most of the country, the College is watching several dynamics carefully: how job markets respond to vaccines; whether consumers rebound to their pre-pandemic practices; and how many small businesses survive (small business revenue in Montgomery County is down 42 percent since January 2020). All of these will impact demand for workers in different sectors and the guidance we provide students on their professional pathways.

Strategic Topic of the Month

Survey of Entering Student Engagement Results



The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is an initiative of the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE). SENSE is a national survey of institutional practices and student behaviors during the earliest weeks of college targeting students who are entering college, as first-time-ever-in-college students.

When is this survey conducted and how? MC has conducted this survey twice, in fall 2018 and fall 2020 to determine changes to the student experience. Our 2018 SENSE survey was completed via paper and pencil during class time. Due to the pandemic, the 2020 version was conducted online.

How is the survey designed? SENSE benchmarks are groups of conceptually related survey items focused on institutional practices and behaviors that promote engagement among entering students. Benchmarks are used to compare each institution's performance to that of similar institutions and with the SENSE cohort. The benchmark scores are computed by averaging the scores on survey items over the previous three years and standardizing them to a mean of 50. The six SENSE benchmarks are early connections, high expectations and aspirations, clear academic plan and pathway, effective track to college readiness, engaged learning, and academic and social support network.

How has our work with "early connections" changed? The results of the 2018 SENSE showed early connections was our lowest score at 39.6, well below the national norm of 50. This score is composed of questions like "the very first time I came to this college I felt welcome" and "at least one college staff member learned my name." The College used these results to discuss with the entire College community the importance of establishing connections with our students. Since that time, several tools have been introduced—Raptor Central, increased financial aid, increased social media outreach, phone campaigns in academic departments. In the 2020 SENSE results, our score rose to 50.2, whereas similarly sized institutions had an average of 46.2. Our score exceeded the national average of 50.

How has our work with engaged learning changed? The benchmark for engaged learning, which is composed of questions such as "how often did you ask questions in class or contribute to class assignments" and "how often do you use the writing, math or other skill lab," was an area of strength for MC in 2018. We scored above the national average with a score of 50.2 and well above similar-sized institutions, which had an average of 47.6. Despite the pandemic and remote instruction, our score in this benchmark rose dramatically to 62.4. The incredible efforts of faculty and staff to make sure that our students were engaged with their learning in this new remote format worked very well for our entering students. Virtual tutoring increased academic support while chats and zoom appointments with counselors improved contact.

The College continues to focus on improving the student experience, especially the entering class of first-time-ever-in-college students. The results of this most recent survey show that we have been able to make significant improvements in several key areas. We are analyzing the survey more deeply in the coming weeks to find ways to bolster student engagement and success.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DeRionne".

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.