

MONTHLY OUTLOOK

A Meeting Preview with Data Insights and Strategic Topics

October 2021

October Meeting Highlights—What to Expect and Why

Your next meeting takes place on Monday, October 18. The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom. Following are major items and topics planned at this time.

FY23 Biennial Capital Budget. The proposed biennial capital budget request is presented annually to the Board of Trustees in October as an information item. The budget will be recommended as an action item at the November meeting and subsequently transmitted to the county executive and the county council. The FY23 request is part of the six-year FY21–26 capital improvements program (CIP).

Financial Reports. Two financial reports will be presented: the FY22 First Quarter Financial Summary Report, which examines the College budget for July–September, and a fiscal outlook report, which will focus on the College's financial outlook.

Award of Contract. A competitively bid contract for the replacement of boilers in the Charlene R. Nunley Student Services Center, as well as the Health Sciences Center on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, will be brought for your consideration.

Tribute. This recognition honors the service of a faculty member who passed away in September.

The following items are on your consent agenda.

Personnel Actions Confirmation Report. This report reviews the personnel actions taken during the month of August.

Recognition of Retirees. Each October, the Board receives resolutions to honor and appreciate the service of employees who retired during summer months.

Data Focus

Decision-making during COVID

The College is actively monitoring county and regional metrics on COVID transmission, hospitalizations, and vaccinations. The Return to Campus indicators (see *Figure 1*) are based, in part, on the county's primary indicators. On August 5, the public-facing [Montgomery County COVID-19 Dashboard](#) methodology for monitoring COVID-19 related metrics was altered to align more closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance released in July.

		OPERATIONAL STATUS			
Return Indicators		Remote (minimal exceptions)	Remote (limited exceptions)	Begin to Safely Return	Majority return onsite
External Indicators	Number of new COVID cases in Montgomery County per 100,000 residents (Source: County website)	100+	50 – 99.9 (Currently at 78.0)	10 – 49.9	Less than 10
	COVID-19 Test Positivity Rate (Source: County website)	Higher than 10%	8% - 9.9%	5% - 7.9%	Less than 5% (Currently at 2.2%)
	Percent of Montgomery County residents fully vaccinated (Source: County website)	Less than 50%	50-59%	60-70% (Currently at 67.2%)	Higher than 70%
Internal Indicators	Number of monthly reported internal cases (Source: Public Safety)	8 or More (Currently at 12)	4 – 7	2 – 3	0 – 1 (Currently at 0)
	Capacity for implementing MC's behavioral controls (Source: Facilities)	0 strategies	1-2 strategies	3-5 strategies but not consistently	5 strategies consistently
	Number of weekly reports on non-compliance with MC's behavioral controls (Source: Public Safety)	20 or More	10 - 19	5 – 9	Less than 5 (Currently at 0)
	MC's emergency situational response (Source: Public Safety)	No designated response plan or communication	Limited ability, uncoordinated effort.	Established plan, coordinated and currently in use.	Established plan, tested and ready at any time.

Figure 1. Return to Campus Indicators

In making decisions about COVID-19 restrictions county-wide, the county is focused primarily on two metrics: hospital bed utilization and ICU bed utilization. These two measures capture the strain on our local hospital capacity since COVID-19 and are central to decisions about re-opening. As of October 5, the county is in a “low transmission” category for these measures and no additional restrictions are needed. Internally, the College began monitoring and reporting any cases of COVID-19 on our campuses and other MC workforce development sites in March 2020. This reporting only includes students and employees who have been on-campus for instruction or work within the 14 days preceding their positive test. Infections reported by students or employees who are entirely remote are not included.

Montgomery College’s senior leadership, in consultation with the Return-to-Campus Advisory Committee, uses the metrics in *Figure 1*, in addition to guidance from the CDC, the Montgomery County Health Officer, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and MC’s Director of Public Health & Environmental Safety to develop the College’s public health protocol and operational status.

Strategic Topic of the Month



Academic Progress during COVID

Even with the distraction of so many COVID-related adaptations, the College continues to focus on its *Montgomery College 2025* goals. Deeply rooted in values that are intrinsic to our mission, the six goals of the strategic plan drive the College's work. This month explores time-to-degree and time-to-completion, important markers of the College's student success planning. These markers were also the foundation for the Academic Master Plan (2016–2021), which developed specific initiatives to address these goals. The challenges of the pandemic—including job loss and health problems—have likely slowed both of these variables, but their impact will not be seen for a few years. Within those constraints, there are certain notable patterns that speak to the consistent attention to degree and completion.

What were the most recent statistics in these metrics pre-pandemic? Completion had increased from 14.5 percent in Academic Year 2014 to 28 percent in Academic Year 2020. Time to degree had decreased from 5.4 years to 4.5 years over that same period. Both of these are strong indicators of major improvements.

How has the College used scheduling to mitigate potential time loss due to COVID? Flexible scheduling was another initiative of the Academic Master Plan. Adjusting the number of seven-week classes offered to students has been a primary strategy. Students appeared to have a marked preference for shorter intervals over the traditionally popular 15-week class. Thus, the College has made these shorter classes more available in order to help students make progress—increasing the number of sections of shorter classes from eight percent in 2020 to 23 percent in 2021.

How did the Alternate Placement Program help students progress during the pandemic? By permitting graduating high school students who completed specific courses with a grade of B or higher to be placed into college-level courses, this program allowed students to avoid standardized testing—another barrier—which was also difficult at the height of the pandemic. In 2019, the state approved the use of a 3.0 GPA for graduating seniors as a mark of college-readiness. By using this placement option, students of color attempted and passed at higher rates than those who tested into college-level classes.

How did embedded coaching help students' progress during the pandemic? Anecdotally, many students appreciated the facility of this program in its virtual version. Whereas students previously had to come to campus to meet with coaches, now they were able to meet via Zoom, many of them in the evenings when their work schedules permitted. Similar conditions were attributed to the virtual Achieving the Promise Academy program. The DFW rate in key gateway courses came down, evidence of increased engagement in academic material.

What role has the academic redesign played in shortening time to degree/completion? The redesign of developmental English made it possible to complete classes in one semester, rather than two, saving students time and money. Similarly, most students can now complete developmental math in their first semester. There has been an increase in gateway math completion for the first-time-ever-in-college (FTEIC) FY18 cohort from 23 percent to 34 percent, a 100 percent increase for African American males, and an increase from 19 percent to 31 percent for Hispanic students. The achievement gap has narrowed for African American students compared to White students, from 16 percent to 10 percent. For Hispanic students compared to White students it has gone from 11 percent to 7 percent.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlene".

Charlene M. Dukes, Ed.D.
Interim President

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