

MONTHLY OUTLOOK

A Meeting Preview with Data Insights and MC 2020 Progress

October Meeting Highlights—What to Expect and Why

Your next meeting occurs on Monday, October 19. Following are major items and topics planned at this time.

Constituent Conversation. The second constituent conversation of the year will be held with the Faculty Council. Our discussion on the theme of Achieving the Promise will again be facilitated by Dr. Tacy Holliday.

Planetarium Upgrade. This competitively-bid contract is for the upgrade of the 30-year-old planetarium projector equipment in the planetarium on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. The modernization of the equipment will enable the planetarium to expand its program support of numerous STEM disciplines including astronomy, geology, meteorology, biology, mathematics, and physics.

Shuttle Bus Transportation Services. This competitively-bid contract is for the continuation of the intercampus shuttle bus service piloted in FY15. Revenue from the College's Transportation Enterprise Fund will be used to pay for the service. This fund was established by the board in 2004 to pay for transportation-related projects using revenue from the transportation fee.

Biennial Capital Budget. The biennial capital budget request is presented annually in October to the Board of Trustees as an information item. The budget will be recommended as an action item at your November meeting and subsequently transmitted to the county executive. The FY17 request is the first year of the biennial capital budget and is part of the six-year FY17–22 capital improvements program (CIP).

Banking Services. PNC bank provides full banking services to the College via a contract with Montgomery County. The county has extended its banking services contract through April 2017. This action is required to maintain continuity of banking services for the College through a "procurement through other agency" contract.

Life Sciences Park. This action will authorize the creation of a new condominium unit west of the Holy Cross Germantown Hospital site, including all necessary signatories, and authorize the Life Sciences Park Foundation to serve as the Board of Trustees' agent on behalf of the College, with signatory power authorized in the president, in submitting the appropriate preliminary plan application and other associated applications necessary to secure the Planning Board's approval for development of this newly created condominium unit at the Hercules Pinkney Life Sciences Park at the Germantown Campus.

Retirement Recognitions. As I did last year, I plan to bring retirement resolutions to you at three times. Those for your consideration in October are individuals who retired over the summer. In February, we will bring fall semester retirements and spring semester retirements will come for your consideration next June.

Data Focus of the Month

Retention: Keeping Students on the Road to Completion



A paraphrase of a conversation between Alice and the Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* has the Cat advising Alice that, “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” That’s followed by Alice’s caveat, “so long as I get *somewhere!*” And the cat rejoins, “Oh, you’re sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.”

Students’ retention—their return-rate from semester to semester—is likewise viewed by College faculty and administrators as critical. Success and completion are closely tied to a student’s staying on the road and walking long enough. Retention is viewed by many as one of the key metrics in assessing student behavior and an institution’s success in helping student attain their goals.

What is “retention” according to the federal government? Most measurements of student retention are the calculation of an entering cohort of new-to-college students in a given fall semester and the rate at which they return for the subsequent spring semester and the next fall semester. The federal government’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects and publishes retention rates for new full-time degree-seeking students and new part-time degree-seeking students who return the next fall semester, and those rates become the official national data on student retention.

MC’s full-time students have a 68.8 percent retention rate. Through this federal lens, Montgomery College’s new full-time students in fall 2013 returned for fall 2014 at a rate of 68.8 percent (compared to 68.2 percent for the new students in the previous year). For new part-time students, the rate was considerably less: 48.0 percent of fall 2013 part-timers returned in fall 2014 (and the rate was 47.2 percent in the prior cohort).

Feds also look at the three-year point for retention. You may recall with the federal view of the three-year graduation for students; it is the rate most often cited for community colleges. Additionally, NCES, also reports the number of students from an entering cohort who were *still enrolled* three years later. For MC, new full-time degree-seeking students in fall 2011 had the following rates: 14 percent graduated, 22 percent transferred, and 27 percent were still enrolled—that is, this 27 percent was retained.

What is the retention rate for all MC students? In addition to the federal definitions, we also track the return rates for *all* students from fall-to-spring and from fall-to-fall. For new students who were first-time in college in fall 2014, for example, 81 percent returned in spring, and 68 percent returned the following fall. Unsurprisingly, the retention rates were higher for students who were attending full-time in the fall: 89 percent returned for spring, compared with 70 percent of part-time students.

How do retention rates compare by race? One aspect of examining baseline data for the College’s Achieving the Promise objective is to look at retention by ethnicity and race. For all fall 2014 new students, return rates for spring were 75 percent for Asians, 73 percent for Hispanics, 73 percent for Blacks/African-Americans, and 69 percent for Whites. Return rates in the following fall semester were 54 percent for Asians, 56 percent for Hispanics, 52 percent for Blacks/African-Americans, and 47 percent for Whites. These findings are suggesting to us that retention rates by race/ethnicity alone do not explain “achievement gaps” in terms of measures of “success” such as eventual graduation or transfer—there are apparently additional factors at work.

Montgomery College 2020 Update of the Month



The *Montgomery College 2020* strategic plan is a seven-year effort that began in Fiscal Year 2013. The preferred future envisioned under Theme I, Educational Excellence, stated that “by 2020, academic affairs at Montgomery College will have a renewed leadership structure that affirms the one College model and supports faculty, staff, and student achievement, innovation, and scholarship.” From 2013 through 2014, the Academic Affairs division underwent a process of “Academic Restructuring.”

Why did Academic Affairs restructure? Our academic structure must be agile to respond to the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. The previous academic structure was campus-based, which often hindered processes to implement changes. As a result, students experienced varied educational opportunities at the campuses. The primary goal of restructuring was to develop a One College model that provides all students with a common student experience—consistent curriculum standards, independent of mode of delivery—and regardless of which campus they attend.

What was the process to design the new structure? Starting in September 2013, nearly 200 faculty and staff representatives worked with academic leadership to define the model for a new academic structure. All governance councils heard presentations, and individuals could provide feedback in campus forums. Members of the College community reviewed materials, attended information sessions, and communicated with the senior vice president for academic affairs during a review period. After consideration of broad input, the structure was approved and launched on July 1, 2014.

What were the major changes? The new structure is a hybrid of both campus-based and collegewide leadership. Each vice president/provost and collegewide dean with content expertise lead specific disciplines and programs. The programs have specific graduation and retention targets. Through a side letter with AAUP, department chairs—who are faculty members—serve as 12-month, non-bargaining faculty members who manage department matters. Curriculum development processes are streamlined to reflect the leadership structure. Some disciplines are re-aligned into new departments to support program coherence. Learning centers have collaborated to develop a common collegewide website, tutoring resources and training, and hours of operation.

How has the new academic structure been evaluated? In the fall of 2014, an external evaluator was invited to the College and interviewed 50 faculty, staff, department chairs, administrators, and senior leadership to assess the implementation of the new structure. The assessment was issued to mark the first 100 days of the new system. After one full year, successes of the new structure have included a revised general studies degree program—the College’s highest enrolled program—to comply with Middle States recommendations; a revised general education program—courses required of all students—resulting in a fewer institutional and program requirements for graduation; and three fully-online degree programs: business, computer science and technologies, and general studies. Most importantly, the new structure will be measured by graduation rates, transfer rates, reduction in time-to-completion, cost efficiencies, and alignment with four-year universities and with industries.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeRionne".

DeRionne P. Pollard, PhD

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