

From: [Stephen D. Cain, Acting President, Montgomery College](#)
Subject: Our People—Nurturing a Culture of Engagement, Equity, Inclusion, and Ethics
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Memorandum

To: Montgomery College Colleagues
From: Dr. Stephen D. Cain, Acting President
Subject: Our People—Nurturing a Culture of Engagement, Equity, Inclusion, and Ethics
Date: September 6, 2018

As I have shared in College meetings this fall, I am in my 30th year at Montgomery College and have had the privilege of working with many fine colleagues across the College during that time. Including my current role as acting president, I am in my 11th position, and have reported to 12 different people who were my supervisors. In seven of my roles, I have been a supervisor, so numerous people have, at one time or another, reported to me. It is in this context that I want to revisit the College's ongoing work to nurture a culture of engagement, equity, inclusion, and ethics.

In my many roles at the College, I have served on countless teams of people. Each of us is a team member. Some of us are team leaders. Some of us stay in one role for an entire career, while others change roles, seeking new career opportunities.

Forming a team puts people together—people who were most likely strangers just the previous day. Many teams work wonderfully together and are focused on accomplishing their goals. Every team has ups and downs. Hopefully, we bring our best selves to our team work every day, but sometimes issues arise. Some teams have more “people issues” than others.

This became apparent when we surveyed College employees last year three different times—the Employee Engagement Survey, the Ethics Survey, and the Equity and Inclusion Survey. Some people may have felt we surveyed too much, but we did it because we care about the employee experience and we want to know more about employees' perspectives. Some people felt too few employees participated—across the board, it appears that about one third did so.

No matter what you thought of the surveys, they presented us with important feedback. You may know that Dr. Pollard and the senior leadership team wrestled intensely with the survey data and understanding the meaning of the feedback. Dr. Pollard sent two personal notes to the College community in addition to three memoranda addressing the results. She asked all employees to meet in groups to discuss the results, take them seriously, learn from them, and make Montgomery College the best possible institution it can be.

Dr. Pollard also assembled a group of College leaders involved in “people stewardship” roles to analyze the survey results and consider how she might address structural issues at the College. She and I met with the group several times in the spring and heard its ideas about how to learn from the surveys and advance the College.

Perhaps the most important element in this discussion, the best guidance for all of us—whether team member or team leader—is what is found in the [Employee Code of Ethics](#). The Code, which originated as a governance proposal, is now an official policy of the College, adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2017. Its expectations embody what it means to be an employee, a team member, a team leader, and bear repeating here:

- accountability
- civility and collegiality
- compliance
- fairness
- honesty
- respect
- stewardship

These are powerful expectations and set a high standard for us all. To that end, all MC employees are participating in ethics training this year. I completed it myself, along with all administrators, during the summer. I found it to be a well-crafted and engaging training that informs and deepens our awareness about our ethics, how we are to work, and how we can be our best selves. The College's [ethics webpage](#) is an excellent resource for information and reflections on these topics.

Do surveys make an organization of people better? Does a code of ethics alone make an organization better? No. It's what we do and how we treat each other that make the organization better. Treating one another with **respect** and **honesty**, being **civil and collegial**, and **fair** is the minimum standard for us all, team member and team leader alike. In addition, we are also expected to **comply** with College policies and procedures, be prudent **stewards** of College resources, and fulfill our roles **accountably**, to the best of our abilities. Those bold words reflect our Code of Ethics.

If you do not already know, the College has mechanisms to help us get back on the right path when one of the code's values has been breached. If that has happened to you, don't be afraid to talk. Honest conversation is how we make ourselves better. If you're a team member with a concern, talk to your team leader. If you're left unsatisfied after that, or if you're not sure how to resolve an issue, then

- check out the [Roadmap for Employees to Address Issues](#), and/or
- talk to the College [ombuds](#).

The ombuds is a person who specializes in advising people on how to solve problems—both interpersonal and institutional. The ombuds provides confidential advice on the options you have. If you are aware of something happening at the College that is illegal, report it immediately to our [EthicsPoint service](#). Clearly the College has created a number of resources and tools which can strengthen us all in our evolution, and I encourage everyone to refer to them regularly.

In addition, the College will be moving ahead with several initiatives that will improve equity and inclusion and strengthen ethics. We are exploring how to enhance Human Resources practices, particularly in the area of hiring. We are working to identify best practices in civility so that we can promote them more consistently throughout the College. Additionally, we will work to develop a standard set of expectations for high-functioning departments and recommendations for how leaders and employees can cultivate them.

In my 30 years at the College, I've seen so many wonderful employees doing their best to fulfill our mission. I have also seen the good days and bad days that come with any team. We all must recommit every day to being our best selves using our Code of Ethics as our guide. We will continue to survey, we will continue to grapple with issues, and through our commitment to the Code of Ethics and to one another, we will grow as an organization.

Thank you for all you do every day to empower our students to fulfill their dreams of changing their lives.