



# President's **FOCUS**

## *Monthly Report to the Board*

March 2018

### **Integrated Strategic Planning: Community Engagement and Partnerships**

The work of community engagement and partnership planning touches people in all parts of the College, even when they don't realize it. Constructing a net that connects the College to willing partners in business, nonprofits, schools, and government is the essence of this work. In some ways community engagement is so integral to the way the College operates that it can be easily missed. But its efforts are purposeful, strategic, and outcomes-based. They require extensive planning well before formal master plans are created.

Successful engagement depends on the deepening important relationships with the community. An increasing focus on moving more students from noncredit to credit courses, for example, will grow out of more intensive collaboration between the Office of Advancement and Community Engagement (OACE) and the Office of Academic Affairs including its Workforce Development & Continuing Education unit (WDCE). Fields like health sciences and early childhood education are experiencing great demand locally, and are particularly ripe for students to transition from noncredit to credit. With a new capital campaign just two years away, the Office of Advancement and Community Engagement is already collaborating with offices at the College on their priorities for fundraising. By targeting a few high priority areas, planning for philanthropy allows the College to prioritize its most urgent needs, while incorporating the interests of donors.



Planning for philanthropy to support the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success program (ACES), for example, is already being strengthened by the creation of an ACES Advisory Council. Composed of 28 community leaders with interest in the program's success, the council allows for community input on the structure of ACES, while providing opportunities to volunteer with the program and even participate in advocacy. The addition of a fourteenth school to the current ACES pool, and the inclusion of coaches at the 9th and 10th grade levels, are significant steps planned for FY19. The ACES strategic plan is being finalized this month.

Expanding relationships is another strategy that requires careful planning in order to advance the College's community engagement work. Preliminary designs for a partnership matrix—shared across all divisions of the College—are already in the works. Such a matrix would identify the primary organizations that already have significant relationships with the College, articulate their history with the College and the nature of their relationship, and document current interactions underway. With real-time updates, such a tool would allow the College to better coordinate communications with partners and avoid duplicative requests or initiatives. Research on customer relations management software is currently underway.

Planning to make the College increasingly present and engaged in multiple sites in the community requires research, communication, relationship-building, and personnel. Understanding the real needs of communities means the College spends time and energy getting to know its neighbors. Since our communities are so diverse, linguistic accessibility is strategically managed with investments in multilingual publications, interpreters, and bilingual staff members. If county demographics shift, adjustments have to be made to outreach efforts, so planning for these services must track with demographics and immigration projections. Similarly, as communities are impacted by external variables such as economics (e.g., employment fluctuations) or politics (e.g., federal executive orders on travel), the College's community engagement teams strive to be informed and responsive. Having strong relationships already in place in diverse communities helps the College to respond in real time with nuanced awareness of community needs. Being in the right place with resources or information at critical moments builds trust that ultimately shapes communities' perceptions of the College.

More calls for community engagement services have inspired a plan for a roving community engagement staff member to provide advising and tutoring in different locations. The College has



drafted an MOU with the Ethiopian Community Center of Maryland to offer one-on-one advising, workshops, and enrollment support at the center. Given the large MC enrollment by Ethiopian students, particularly in Takoma Park Silver Spring—they are about 10 percent of our international students—this is an example of the College's ability to respond to needs as they arise.

Attention to local industries' changing needs is another way in which community engagement benefits from careful planning. A recent example of this was in meetings between the Marriott Corporation Foundation and WDCE to strategize about shared workforce goals. Since the hospitality industry changes with tourism, marketing and consumer demand, training students optimally for such positions means keeping careful track of such trends. These conversations grew out of the College's relationship with Marriott, which has been a supporter of the MC hospitality management program with the construction of the Marriott Hospitality Center funded by the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation. MC students have also participated in the prestigious Marriott Voyager leadership program. Opportunities such as these arise when the College plans carefully to cultivate ongoing relationships and pays careful attention to changing industry needs.

Integral to any planning processes at the College is real-time information. To keep current, the College deploys teams of faculty and staff, advancement officers, community engagement staffers, ACES coaches, and industry liaisons. Through forums such as community engagement roundtables, president's roundtables, and discipline-specific meetings, the College collects feedback about how its work is progressing. Engaging with the community at the level of its specific needs takes place through several mechanisms and with groups based on ethnic identity (e.g., the Ethiopian Community Center, the Asian American Youth Leadership Empowerment and Development, the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, among others), as well as on shared business interests (e.g., the Tech Council of Maryland, Leidos Health, Atlantech OnLine, United Solutions). College faculty and staff also participate in dozens of groups with liaisons from specific industry sectors, including the BiotechAdvisory group, the Maryland Center for Construction Education and Innovation, Worksource Montgomery, MCPS, Workforce Investment Board, and Maryland Economic Development and Business Climate Commission. These connections keep the College relevant and responsive. Investing appropriate time and energy in these gatherings is an important part of planning.



The collaboration of MC faculty and staff with community members advances the success of students already enrolled in multiple ways. Academically, such partnerships often allow industries to provide valuable guidance about instructional content so that classes match the content in evolving fields. Professionally, partnerships can result in internships, mentoring, and employment for students. Among their impacts, philanthropy efforts raise scholarships and grants that support needy students; College communications reinforce MC's branding and recruitment efforts; and consistent contact with industries benefits our academic programs, and such contact with local businesses strengthens the impact of the Pinkney Innovation Complex (PIC MC). The benefits of planning in these spaces cannot be overestimated. Community engagement continues to be a field in which thoughtful planning today reaps invaluable partnerships and alliances tomorrow.

