

# FOUNDATION FOCUS

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FOUNDATION NEWS

SUMMER | 2022

# For Families and Our Community

*SHORT PROGRAMS WITH BIG IMPACT* **P.12**

*ALSO INSIDE*

## Driving It Home

*MONTGOMERY COUNTY MUSLIM FOUNDATION  
SUPPORTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS*

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Rockville  
Academy  
(circa 1880)



Not everyone in Montgomery County, or even in the Rockville vicinity, is familiar with the Rockville Academy or its place in the county's educational history. Opened in 1813, the academy on Jefferson Street initially served 30 to 60 young men annually, often when farm work was light. At the time, it was one of only two secondary schools in the county and tuition was just \$10 a year. In 1912, young women were admitted to the Rockville Academy.

The academy closed in 1916, but that is by no means the end of its story. The building was rented to a variety of educational entities for the next 30 years until it was sold to the Rockville United Methodist Church in 1966. The proceeds generated from the sale constituted an endowment used to finance scholarships at local schools from 1966 until last year, when the Rockville Academy made a transformational gift in support of the College's Presidential Scholars Program.

Developed in response to a call for equity in education, the goals of the Presidential Scholars Program align with the academy's mission to provide educational support for students in Montgomery County. As a board member for the foundation and a trustee for the academy, I am proud of the values both organizations share to improve lives through education and training.

As Rockville Academy Trustees, we wanted our final donation to support a program that has the potential to transform lives. We were drawn to the connection between the academy's historical educational values and the unlimited potential of future generations of African American male students who benefit from participating in this comprehensive education and mentoring program.

Through its gift to the MC Foundation, the Rockville Academy ensures its legacy remains very much alive by supporting the burgeoning Presidential Scholars Program. I hope that others in our community follow its commitment to creating lasting change for generations to come.

## FOUNDATION FOCUS

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Established in 1982, the Montgomery College Foundation is a 501(c)(3) institutionally related foundation and charitable organization governed by business, alumni, philanthropic, and community leaders. The Foundation's mission is to provide critical financial and nonfinancial resources in advancing the Montgomery College mission to transform student lives and enrich the diverse communities it serves.

Cover design by Joe Weyman

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# Transcendence

## Commencement 2022 Lauds Graduates Who Went Beyond the Limits

President Jermaine F. Williams officiated his first—and Montgomery College's 75th—commencement exercises May 19 and 20 at the Rockville Campus. Two days of 80-plus-degree heat did not deter nearly 1,200 of the 3,200 graduates and their families and friends from attending the ceremonies.



Dr. Williams' speech to graduates focused on transcending limits:

***"I believe this is what higher education is supposed to do: to show you what lies beyond your limits."***

Dr. Williams' poignant remarks resonated with so many members of the College's Class of 2022, but one graduate in particular epitomizes transcendence.

Shereika Chin is a 30-year-old single mother of a four-year-old daughter with autism. Born in Jamaica, she came to the United States after high school, and enrolled at Berkeley College in New York. She earned a 4.0 grade point average, but could not afford to continue. She went back to Jamaica. When she returned to the U.S. in 2014, she aspired to complete her education.

***Dr. Williams: "[Higher education prepares you] to journey beyond what you believed were the limits of your potential...."***

Chin began at MC in 2015. As an undocumented immigrant, she could only afford one semester. She dropped out, got married, and had a child. After three years in an abusive relationship, she left her husband, who burned all her

possessions. "When I was left with—literally—the clothes on my back, I went down on my knees and asked God to help me," she said. Chin re-enrolled at the College in 2021.

***"You have given more of yourselves in these extraordinary times than was asked of you in earlier years."***

"A lot of us are parents—providers," said Chin, who does not receive child support from her ex-husband. "The quicker we can get it [a college education] done, the better." Chin enrolled in six classes in fall 2021 and four more in spring 2022 to complete her degree in criminal justice. At the same time, she juggled full-time jobs at Amazon and then Home Depot, always working around her daughter's inconsistent sleep schedule. She took advantage of seven-week classes. "Although it's double the work, I liked the challenge," she said. She was grateful to her professors who recorded their classes.

***"You went beyond the limits of pride to ask for help when you needed it."***

During the pandemic, Chin reached out to the Montgomery College Foundation for COVID relief funding for mounting bills.



Shereika Chin '22 (pictured with her sister, brother, and her daughter, center-right) is first in her family to graduate from college. Originally from Jamaica, Chin was able to complete an associate's degree and transfer to the University of Maryland's criminal justice program at the Universities at Shady Grove with support from the MC Foundation. Her goal is to attend law school and become a criminal prosecutor.

"That funding stopped me from being homeless," she said. "It paid rent for two months, put food on the table, and saved us from being out in the freezing cold."

***"Where you could have turned away or tuned out, you looked straightforward and leaned in."***

Though she believed the odds were stacked against her during the pandemic, she received unwavering support from professors. "Every single professor became my personal cheerleader," said Chin. "Each one of them played a role in me 'crossing the line.' You can see the humanity in each and every one of them."

***"You continued helping others to go beyond their limits, which is a sure sign of those who have truly transcended their own."***

While facing a seemingly insurmountable challenge to educate herself, Chin attended to the needs of her daughter, Zaraiah-Monae. "I knew something was wrong when she was about a year old," she said. She worked

***"Every single professor became my personal cheerleader."***

.....

with Montgomery County's Infants and Toddlers Program, which provides early intervention services to help families address their children's developmental and special needs. "She was nonverbal when she started last year. Now she can ask me, 'Are you okay?'" Chin said,

adding that her daughter's progress even astonished staff members.

***"Most of you also have an internal story: about rising above self-doubt or developing self-discipline. Each of you has a story of transcendence. And you will carry that into your next chapter, along with the valuable credential you will earn today."***

"I'm still battling the self-doubt," said Chin. "I'm this Jamaican girl from a third-world country. No one in my family has ever gone to college." With a 3.8 grade point average, Chin will transfer to University of Maryland's criminal justice program at Universities at Shady Grove. "I want to be a lawyer, a criminal prosecutor," she said. "I'm carrying an entire generation on my back," she said. "I've got a whole community that is depending on me to walk across that stage—and keep going." ■

# Caring for Caregivers

*By Katie Kumkumian*



Working as a chaplain for the past six years at the Washington Hospital Center, David Balto was continually impressed by the nurses he encountered. When COVID-19 hit, he was moved by nurses' work ethic and commitment to patient care. "They are the heartbeat of the healthcare system," he said. "Under extraordinarily painful circumstances, seeing how they put their hearts first was really touching."

After days at the hospital, David would return home and talk with his wife, Naomi, about all he had witnessed. Together, they investigated ways they could make an impact on area hospitals, as well as on the community. Both recognized the critical role of community colleges.

"Community colleges fill a gap by enabling young adults of diverse backgrounds and economic circumstances to gain a profession," Naomi noted. "We wanted to strengthen Montgomery College's trend-setting program for committed students who want to enter into nursing."

The Baltos reached out to Noah Saposnik, a major gift officer at the Montgomery College Foundation. Saposnik arranged a tour of the nursing labs on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus for them, led by Dr. Monique Davis, collegewide instructional dean of health sciences and director of the nursing program.

"We were impressed with the labs and the professionalism of the staff," David said, "but what really moved us was meeting with current nursing program students. We could feel the passion they have."

Following the tour, the Baltos made a

generous gift in support of the Montgomery College nursing program. They stipulated their gift help nursing students pay tuition, as well as other expenses required to pursue a nursing license. According to Davis, nursing students have costs associated with their degree that other students do not, including uniforms and testing fees that can reach \$2,500 or more.

"It is amazing to have the support from Naomi and David Balto," Davis says. "The funds they are providing can be life changing. Additionally, the personal engagement the Baltos have with the scholarship recipients is invaluable."

The David and Naomi Balto Endowed Fund honors today's nurses, including those with whom David works. It also helps ensure future generations of nurses will be trained and ready to begin caring for our community.



(top) Naomi and David Balto established a fund for MC nursing students. The couple wants to honor nurses, who they call "the heartbeat of the health care system," and help the community grow its health care workforce. (above) Nearly 80 nursing students participated in the traditional pinning ceremony held on May 19 at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus.

# President's Perspective

*"Most important to me is how successfully are we serving our students and meeting their needs. Those questions should drive every aspect of our work and be on everyone's mind."*

**—Dr. Jermaine F. Williams,  
Montgomery College President**

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Montgomery College welcomed Dr. Jermaine F. Williams as its 11th president last February. Williams, 42, brings 19 years of experience in higher education and a notable commitment to equity and inclusion that aligns precisely with the Montgomery College mission. Previously, he served as president of Nassau Community College in New York.

Williams' career has led him from Nassau to Montgomery College via stints in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City. He progressed from academic adviser to assistant dean of academic programs to vice president of student affairs to community college president.

He holds doctoral and master's degrees in educational administration (Temple University); a master's in sociology (St. John's University, Queens, New York), and a bachelor's in anthropology and sociology (Lafayette College). He is a first-generation college graduate and student athlete.



Dr. Jermaine F. Williams in his office at the Central Services Building.

JENNIFER LUST



Craig Eozzo

***"It's colleagues like Carmen and students like Isaiah who continue to push us to do more, work harder, and think more creatively..."***

.....

***"Looking back on the last 18 months and my time at Montgomery College, I have a deep sense of gratitude."***

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First, I am grateful to my colleagues who show their commitment to the College's mission in countless ways. In so many interactions with my colleagues, I've seen a tireless work ethic and abiding belief in the unlimited potential of our students. Many of our faculty and staff have demonstrated their investment in our students, often through payroll deductions, in support of the College's mission. Others have given their time volunteering at the food bank hosted by the College to help provide our students—and community members—with access to nutritious food.

Carmen Poston-Travis is an example of a colleague for whom I am particularly grateful. In her role as director of student affairs and initiatives, she works directly with students to help ensure they have access to the support systems they need to focus on their education and their academic and professional goals. She also is the acting director of the Presidential Scholars Program (PSP), which supports African American male students with wraparound services. In both roles, Carmen applies a sense of urgency to her work. Recently, Carmen established an endowed scholarship in support of the Presidential Scholars Program, taking her commitment to student success one big step further.

At a meeting in April, Carmen invited a PSP student, Isaiah, to meet with board members to share his experiences in the program's pilot semester this spring. Isaiah had been laid off from his job due to COVID and was collecting

unemployment. He intended to simply take classes online. Then he heard about the Presidential Scholars Program and his plans changed. He felt welcomed, and benefited from exposure to opportunities he would have otherwise missed. When he received a call from his previous employer asking him to return to work, Isaiah declined, noting that his future will be much better if he stays in college and completes a computer science degree.

It's colleagues like Carmen and students like Isaiah who continue to push us to do more, work harder, and think more creatively about ways in which we can ensure an MC education is available to all who seek it.

Thinking about all of this, it's no wonder I feel grateful.

**Craig Eozzo is acting vice president of development and alumni relations, and acting executive director of the Montgomery College Foundation.**

# MARIANNE BRACKNEY JOINS FOUNDATION BOARD

In her new role as board member, Marianne Brackney hopes to encourage more members of the community, including Asian-American families, to consider the benefits of community colleges. "I want to be part of this foundation and try to help someone who is in need," she says.

Brackney came to the United States via Canada at age 29. Originally from South Korea, she enrolled at MC in 1984. She recalls an MC campus that was far less diverse than it is today (Montgomery College now welcomes students from more than 150 countries).

Brackney and her husband, who is deceased, served on numerous boards and in community organizations.

"We always wanted to contribute to the community, to give back something," she says. "I think it's the American way."

Brackney earned an associate's degree at Montgomery College and a bachelor's degree in business administration from University of Maryland. She built a successful career in the federal government/U.S. Social Security Administration. Her MC



PHOTO COURTESY MARIANNE BRACKNEY

education included English classes taught by former MC professor and U.S. Representative Connie Morella.

"We are delighted Marianne has joined our board and has begun contributing her experience to this role as a proud alumna and very engaged community member," says Craig Eozzo, acting executive director of the Montgomery College Foundation.

## FUNDRAISING UPDATE

### Presidential Scholars Program

100+ donors      \$69,000 from  
                      faculty and staff  
**\$1.152 million**

The spring 2022 semester saw Montgomery College's first cohort of 18 Presidential Scholars Program (PSP) students.

Fundraising for this program began in July 2020. This fall, the program will expand to provide 75 scholars

with access to the academic and wrap-around services this program provides.

**MORE INFO:** [montgomerycollege.edu/presidential-scholars](http://montgomerycollege.edu/presidential-scholars)

## Dogfishing for \$cholarships

The MC community showed its support for students at the annual Dogfishing for MC Scholarships event held on May 3. The one-day event held at the Dogfish Head Alehouse in Gaithersburg, brought in **\$12,000** in scholarship support for students—the largest amount in its history. In addition to receiving a portion of that day's restaurant sales, the Alumni Association hosted an on-site auction for patrons to bid on prizes and buy raffle tickets in support of students. Thanks to all who participated.

# Pepco Scholarship Builds Workforce Diversity, Opportunity



JENNIFER LUST

Victoria Adjei '22 returned to college as an adult student. The Pepco scholarship helped her complete an associate's degree and successfully transfer to University of Maryland Global Campus, where this fall she will begin working on a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Working in conjunction with area businesses, Montgomery College responds to the needs of today's—and tomorrow's—employers. In collaboration with area businesses, the College helps provide economic opportunity for our students, county residents, and the many businesses who hire MC students and alumni.

Originally from Ghana, **Victoria Adjei '22** graduated high school in Montgomery County, enrolled at a four-year college, but dropped out. Years later, encouraged by her daughter, she enrolled at Montgomery College to complete an associate's degree in business. She received a Pepco Community Scholars Program scholarship and, thanks to that financial boost—as well as care and support from her MC faculty and advisers—she is graduating from MC this spring.

"I am not stopping after Montgomery College," Adjei says. "This fall, I will be starting to pursue my bachelor's degree in business administration at University of Maryland Global Campus."

The Pepco Community Scholars Program provides gap funding for limited- and moderate-income community members pursuing degrees in energy-related fields, including engineering, mathematics, chemistry, physics, computer science and technologies, or business. In addition, credit and noncredit students taking classes in IT and cybersecurity, CDL truck driving, automotive technology, green technology, and building trades technology are eligible to receive this scholarship. The goal is to increase equity, diversity, and opportunity.

across the community while building a strong local workforce and increasing the presence of women in STEM careers.

"For Pepco, the work needed to build a smarter, stronger, and cleaner power grid would not be possible without a high-caliber workforce," says Rodney Oddoye, senior vice president, governmental, regulatory and external affairs, Pepco Holdings. "Much of the talent we need to develop and maintain the infrastructure that supports the communities we serve—now and into the future—is already right here."

During the past two years, Pepco has provided the MC Foundation with \$175,000 in scholarship funding through the Pepco Community Scholars Program; to date, 60 MC students have benefited. Pepco also established current-use and endowed scholarships for Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) participants (2015-2019), in addition to sponsoring the Montgomery College 75th Anniversary.

"Partnering with local community agencies, organizations, and companies strengthens our workforce and creates a robust pipeline of talent from the communities we serve, expanding opportunities overall," Oddoye says. "We look forward to continuing this work with our local partners, including Montgomery College."

**To learn more about how your business can contribute, contact Stuart Tart, corporate and foundation relations director, 240-567-7494 or [stuart.tart@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:stuart.tart@montgomerycollege.edu)**



## In Memoriam

### **George Payne (1951-2022): Montgomery College Vice President/Provost, Applied Technologies, Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education, and Workforce Development and Continuing Education**

George will be remembered by the Montgomery College community for his kindness, knowledge, and skillful leadership. He successfully guided the College's Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WDCE) unit through change and growth for more than two decades, following a long tenure as an instructor, then dean.

He joined Montgomery College in 1976 as a part-time faculty member in the construction management program. After years of increasingly challenging responsibilities, he ultimately ascended to WDCE vice president/provost in 2012. George was part of the leadership team that developed the Homer S. Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education, becoming its inaugural director in 1997.

During George's four-decade career, WDCE's reach grew significantly. As cybersecurity,

biotechnology, and IT industries came to the forefront of the county's economic development, the College received several large Department of Labor grants to support noncredit curriculum development in these areas. George represented the College to a number of state and county organizations.

He was the face of Workforce Development to many in Montgomery County, and he led the unit with a gentle sense of humor and generosity of spirit that will be greatly missed.

**Donations welcome to the George and Mary Payne Endowed Scholarship, which supports students in continuing education programs (noncredit). [montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving](http://montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving)**



# For Families and Our Community

## SHORT PROGRAMS WITH BIG IMPACT

“Montgomery County is expensive to sustain a basic quality of life. The \$9-per-hour pay I was receiving was not sufficient to support my two children, who attend Montgomery County Public Schools, and my wife. I had to find a better way for my family.” – Oluseyi Ilupegu, MI-BEST graduate, Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education

When Oluseyi Ilupegu moved to the United States from Nigeria, he learned quickly that his on-the-job training was inadequate for him to support a family of four in Montgomery County. He needed formal training and an industry certificate.

Likewise, Christine Kigonya, 46, struggled to support herself and her 11-year-old son on her office coordinator pay. Originally from Uganda, she had a college degree and previous work experience, but neither seemed to open doors to financial security.

Emily Maxwell, a Towson University graduate, earned a bachelor’s degree in community health science with a minor in gerontology, but after graduation she lacked an entry point into a rewarding career.

All three Montgomery County residents turned to Montgomery College’s Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WDCE) programs for training and credentials that accelerated their careers and boosted their self-confidence.

***"I had been trying to find some financial assistance but had honestly given up."***

.....

Ilupegu earned an apartment maintenance technician certificate that resulted in a promotion from handyman to building maintenance technician. Kigonya completed a project management certificate program in May; she has already received calls from interested employers. Maxwell participated in a clinical trial project management bootcamp that jump-started her career in the pharmaceutical industry.

Each year, nearly 25,000 county residents like Ilupegu, Kigonya, and Maxwell enroll in WDCE programs held online and at various sites across the county—on MC campuses, off-site training facilities, community engagement centers, and via contract at individual business sites. People with limited English-language ability can attend career and personal skills seminars, as well as workshops and short courses.

Paying for programs can be a challenge for many noncredit students who do not have access to federal financial aid. Kigonya, for example, pursued the project management program only when she received a Life Transition Scholarship through the MC Foundation.

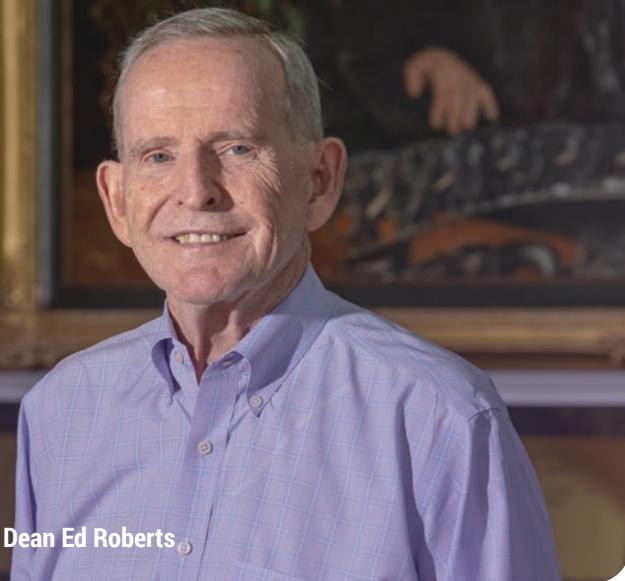
"I was so blessed to receive that scholarship," Kigonya says. "It was divine intervention—I had been trying to find some financial assistance but had honestly given up. Then, a friend told me about the scholarship and who to contact at Montgomery College. ... I feel more confident now. I'm psyched to take the next step."

(top left) Students in the Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education's automotive lab. (right, from top to bottom) Students in hospitality management program, cybersecurity, physical therapy, bioscience education, and construction management.



To make a gift and support students enrolled in technical education programs, please visit [montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving](http://montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving) and select "Workforce Development and Continuing Education" from the Scholarships drop-down menu.





Dean Ed Roberts

# Dean Creates Lasting Legacy

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## FOR TRADES STUDENTS

Supporting technical education students has been Ed Roberts' avocation at Montgomery College for more than 30 years.

As an instructional dean, Roberts has taught and overseen programs in the Gudelsky Institute for Technical Education at the Rockville Campus. He also has contributed financial support to the Montgomery College Foundation through the planned giving options for College employees to contribute to student scholarships.

Recently, Roberts designated the Montgomery College Foundation scholarship he established in December 2021, the Edward Roberts Endowed Scholarship, as the beneficiary of his retirement fund.

"I believe so much in these programs and the opportunities they present," Roberts says. The work—and the potential to make good money—is out there. Anything I can do to help students, especially those who don't have the resources, is what I want to do. I want to make it happen for them. It will change their lives."

Inside the Gudelsky Institution for Technical Education, a 55,000-square-foot-facility housing auto bays, laboratories, and classrooms, the College offers

training for people with differing career needs and goals in automotive technology, building trades technology (carpentry, electrical, HVAC, and plumbing), welding, and computer repair.

Some people want to earn a degree, some take only the courses needed for career advancement, some want industry-recognized certifications or apprenticeships. Many are already working in the trades. By co-listing courses (making the same course open to both credit and noncredit students), the College ensures it serves everyone's needs.

Gudelsky faculty, like Roberts, are industry experts who frequently design new classes and programs in response to industry needs, market conditions, technology advances, and policy changes. Across the region, Gudelsky-trained workers have access to positions that offer job security, above-average wages, employee benefits, and opportunities to advance.

"Supporting students in the trades as they learn is a win-win for everybody," says Roberts.

**GIFTING YOUR RETIREMENT ASSETS** "Making the Montgomery College Foundation the beneficiary of your retirement plan assets, IRA, life insurance, or commercial annuities is easy," says Craig Eozzo, acting executive director, Montgomery College Foundation. "It usually requires just filling out a form with your retirement institution to set it up." For more information, contact [Craig.Eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:Craig.Eozzo@montgomerycollege.edu) or 240-479-1300.

# Why We Support Students

*"I am thrilled to support an effort that is in perfect alignment with my grandfather's moral pillars. Supporting students of my alma mater was an added bonus. My donorship will go toward impacting students who are most deserving."*

—Kristopher Nabors '11

## In Memory of a Family Member

Karla and Derrick Nabors established the *John E. Green, Sr. Endowed Educational Scholarship* in memory of Karla's father, who passed away in early 2021. This scholarship provides tuition and fees assistance for students with developmental disabilities in the Graduate Transition Program or Challenge Program classes. Karla's daughter, Kristina Little, contributes regularly to one of these scholarships, as does her son, Kristopher Nabors. They requested memorial donations in conjunction with Mr. Green's funeral.

*This scholarship provides tuition and fees assistance for students with developmental disabilities ...*

*For the past seven years, this scholarship has helped 22 students complete the program ...*

## In Support of Health Care Workers

Sandy Kursban, founder of Family & Nursing Care (FNC), a home health care company in Silver Spring, Maryland, directed her company's foundation to establish a scholarship for Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) students in 2015. To date, this scholarship has helped 22 students complete the program and enter this high-demand health care field. The FNC Foundation recently renewed its commitment through 2024-2025.

## In Honor of Her Father

Donor JoAnn Goedert established the Michael Grozczak Scholarship, in honor of her father. The scholarship supports immigrant students enrolled in noncredit courses that lead to new certifications and employment in high-demand career fields.

*This scholarship supports immigrant students ...*

**MORE ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN CAREER TRAINING** Learn how the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation is helping underrepresented people gain access to training programs and career credentials (page 16).

# Driving It Home

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY MUSLIM FOUNDATION  
SUPPORTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS**

*By Katie Kumkumian*

As the head of household and father of four, Tsehay Mosisa was looking for a career that would allow him to provide for his family. With a goal in mind and the work ethic to pursue it, all that was missing was access and opportunity. Mosisa wanted to be a professional truck driver. He knew he could make a good living and he liked being on the open road. What held him back was access to a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

*"To get a CDL was my vision,  
but it can cost \$3,000 to \$10,000."*

**—Tsehay Mosisa, MCMF scholarship recipient and commercial truck driver**

.....



***“The scholarship helped fulfill my vision and created an opportunity for me to get a job to support my family.”***

.....

Without a CDL, Mosisa worked as a driver but earned far less. Then things got worse. As a result of the COVID pandemic in 2020, he was laid off. Fortunately, Mosisa found a way forward through a big-hearted community group offering the support he and his family only dreamed of during this rough time.

#### *Enter MCMF.*

In response to events across the country that heightened racial tensions, a group of men in our community struggled when considering how to make anything good come from a pain felt so deeply. Members of the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation (MCMF) were determined to lift others up through scholarships that directly, and in a short time, lead to jobs that pay a true living wage. Since 2008, the organization has been committed to getting community members—regardless of race, color, or religion—into careers that provide a sustainable wage.

“We wanted the scholarship to support students enrolled in programs leading to an industry recognized credential that is intended to lead to immediately beneficial employment in the technology/trades or health sciences,” says Dr. T. O. Shanavas, MCMF chairman.

Mosisa was the MCMF’s first scholarship recipient. And it changed his life.

“To get a CDL was my vision, but it can cost \$3,000 to \$10,000,” Mosisa says. “The scholarship helped fulfill my vision and created an opportunity for me to get a job to support my family.” ■

**Organizations or individuals interested in supporting students in workforce training programs are invited to contact [montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving](http://montgomerycollege.edu/onlinegiving) and select “Workforce Development and Continuing Education” from the Scholarships drop-down menu.**



# Family Friendly MC

## New Fund Provides Help for Student Parents



JENNIFER LUST

**Rocelyn Alvarado** returned to Montgomery College after becoming a mom at age 20. Her first attempt at MC, at 17, was unsuccessful; she failed every class and lost the financial aid that made it possible for her to attend. “I gave up,” she says. Somehow, while navigating the challenges of new motherhood—swaddling, feeding, and changing a baby—she developed a new appreciation for higher education.

“My mentality changed,” Alvarado says. “I wanted a better life—for both of us.”

Alvarado took a babysitting job to pay for one class at MC—an English class and student fees costing \$900. After

earning an A in the class, she was eligible to apply for financial aid again. She has been on the dean’s list every semester since. Her goal is to become a registered nurse, working in a hospital pediatric or maternity unit.

Alvarado is among a significant contingent of students—15% to 20%—who are parenting young children while attending Montgomery College. These numbers align with the national average. At MC, the percentage

**Rocelyn Alvarado and her daughter, Jazmin, at the Germantown Campus. A single parent, Alvarado received funding from the Foundation to help her pursue an associate's degree as a pre-nursing major. She will graduate fall 2022. She hopes to become a registered nurse working in a hospital pediatric or maternity ward.**

translates to approximately 5,000 to 6,000 students annually.

"Student parents have proven to be extremely resilient," says Ja'Bette Lozupone, Montgomery College director of student affairs. "On average, they earn higher GPAs than students who are not parenting. But we need to make sure they are able to complete what they start—and that involves providing more holistic support for them as parents."

Last fall, a donor who wishes to remain anonymous established a fund through the Montgomery College Foundation to help student parents. "This donor's gift established the Parent Student Support Fund, which provides assistance to single parents of children under 17 who are attending MC full or part time," says Francene Walker, development and alumni relations specialist. "Students must be pursuing degrees and/or non-degree certificates that lead to living wage jobs."

By design, recipients may use funds for tuition or anything else they need to stay on track with education (e.g., housing, child care, food, transportation). "Their lives are complicated," says the donor. "If these student parents can get the support they need to get through their program... it opens the door to getting a better job, so they can make a livable wage. This helps the county. It helps everybody."

For her part, Alvarado used funds last semester for tuition, transportation, and child care on campus. She makes time to give back to the MC community: she is

president of the newly formed student club, Student Parent Alliance, and a member of the Ascend Parent Initiative Taskforce at Montgomery College, and she volunteers with College events, such as Alternative Spring Break and PeaceJam Mentoring for high school students. Rather than hold her back, her status as a parent motivates her to do well, give back, and keep moving forward.



JENNIFER LUST

"I want my daughter to know she can do whatever she wants in life. Because I did," Alvarado says. "I want to prove people wrong—I want my daughter to see that I didn't give up."

**For more information on the Parent Student Support Fund, please contact [Francene.Walker@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:Francene.Walker@montgomerycollege.edu)**

*"These students are amazing. Their courage and determination to get an education while trying to care for their family and keep a roof over their heads is nothing short of inspirational. Their stories eliminate any question about the need for a program like this [Parent Student Support Fund]. ... It's very much about giving them the underpinning they need to succeed."*

**-Anonymous Donor**

# The Science of Giving

## Berg Family Scholarship Supports STEM Education



DAVID ASCHE

**Vince Berg's** father, Milton, was the first person in his family to earn a college degree. The son of immigrants from Eastern Europe grew up in New York, then moved to Washington, D.C., after graduating college in 1939. "My father became a top marine engineer—thanks to a college scholarship," he says. "Without it, he probably would have worked in a store or the post office, like many of his generation."

The scholarship that changed Milton Berg's life created a lasting impact for his descendants. Vince attended University of Maryland (UMD), earned bachelor's and master's degrees, and built a 40-year civil

engineering career in Montgomery County. His twin daughters, Megan and Leighann, are third-generation college graduates working in environmental/civil engineering and the bioscience industry.

Both graduated from Montgomery College.

Last November, the Bergs established a scholarship for Montgomery College science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students. Their vision for the Berg Family Scholarship for STEM Students is to remove barriers for students seeking technical education, including those who are new to the country and/or first in the family to attend college.

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**(above)** Vince Berg and his daughter, Megan, along with Megan's twin, Leighann Berg (not pictured), established a scholarship for STEM students last year. Megan and Leighann are MC graduates and third-generation science/engineering professionals.

The Bergs' gift to the Foundation comes at a time when nearly 30% of all degree-seeking students at MC are majoring in STEM programs: science, engineering, computer science and technology, cybersecurity, and general studies with a STEM concentration (as of fall 2021)\*. Many will seek transfer scholarships and other support to continue on at four-year institutions.

"It doesn't matter where you come from," Vince says, "when you get here [America], your greatest potential is reached by going to school—and then going further in school!"

Megan '05, '06 and Leighann '05 both enrolled at Montgomery College because they were undecided about their majors. After graduating from MC (Megan earned two degrees), they transferred to four-year schools and went on to earn master's degrees. They now have affiliations with four higher education institutions in Maryland: MC, UMD, UMBC, and Johns Hopkins University, but Megan says Montgomery College is the one that set them up for success.

"My sister and I had a great experience at MC," Megan says. "By trying out different courses and keeping costs down, we were able to figure out where our interests would take us. Our professors were invested in helping us learn. And other students were collaborative, not competitive—I didn't always have that at other schools."

In addition, Megan says she received a scholarship that helped her avoid student loan debt. "All of that gave me a huge leg up in life. ... I'm in the position I am today because I went to MC."

After establishing the named scholarship, Vince plans to make annual contributions to the fund using the required minimum distribution (RMD) from an IRA, something he suggests to others who are retired and not dependent on RMD income: "This is a great way to reduce taxable income while supporting a good cause."

***"It doesn't matter where you come from ... when you get here [America], your greatest potential is reached by going to school—and then going further in school."***

In terms of investment, students with associate's and bachelor's degrees tap into a stream of higher future earnings that continue to grow throughout their working lives. Their improved skills benefit themselves, their employers, their families, and their communities. "That is why America is great," Vince says. "You can start off really small and go big. It just takes a little help."



Milton Berg

COURTESY BERG FAMILY

\*SOURCE: [https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/\\_documents/offices/institutional-research-and-effectiveness/special-reports/2021-emsi-mc-execsum.pdf](https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/_documents/offices/institutional-research-and-effectiveness/special-reports/2021-emsi-mc-execsum.pdf)

# *“Scholarship support is changing my life.”*

LISA USHER



José Hernández works as an electrician apprentice while pursuing an associate's degree in electrical wiring at Montgomery College. Scholarship support helps him accrue training and experience needed to become a licensed journeyman electrician.

**José Hernández**, 23, immigrated to Maryland from El Salvador at age 14. He attended Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and learned English while navigating high school. Unable to afford tuition at four-year schools, he worked for a cleaning company, then he enrolled at Montgomery College. Currently, he works as an apprentice electrician and attends classes at MC. With scholarship assistance, he is pursuing a degree in electrical wiring. His goal is to become a licensed master electrician.

“I like electrical work,” Hernández says, “because it’s complicated. You have to know wiring and safety, how to read blueprints, and estimate costs. ... Each job is different. There is a lot of technology to it. I like that I need to think about how to make it all work.”

As a kid, Hernández broke open his own toys to see how the electronics worked. Once, he took apart an RC car he had just received for Christmas. “I played with it for two days, then opened it up with a screwdriver and took out the engine,” he says. A few years later, he could not resist opening his cell phone; his mother wasn’t happy when he was unable to get it back in working condition.

“I need to keep up with my electrical studies,” Hernández says. He works full time and helps his brother (also an electrician) on side jobs after work and on weekends. “I still have a lot to learn,” he says. “I want to keep going at MC. I love studying and I want to learn carpentry, so I can do more than one job. I also am interested in engineering.”

# Breaking Down Language—and Financial—Barriers for Students

*By Jill Fitzgerald*

As far back as when he was in middle school, Ray Gonzales remembers feeling a connection to those who, like his father, immigrated to the United States. "Although I don't have a strong ethnic identity, I've always wanted to help people who weren't born here feel more at home in the United States."

In his 20-plus-year career at Montgomery College, Gonzales has helped countless students become more fluent English readers and writers through the English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP) curriculum. And throughout his tenure, he has generously supported student scholarship funds.

*"ELAP is composed of students who need a bit of work on their English skills to succeed in their future classes. They're very driven—and always so appreciative."*

Gonzales provided gifts for such initiatives as Hurricane Katrina Relief, the Global Humanities Institute, and the Ike and Catherine Leggett Scholarship. His most recent \$10,000 pledge, a special benefit for employees through payroll deduction, names the Raymond Gonzales Scholarship, for students in ELAP or communications studies.

"ELAP is composed of students who need a bit of work on their English skills to succeed in their future classes," says Gonzales. "They're very driven—and always so appreciative." They are recent and long-term immigrants, some of whom face challenges—financial and otherwise. Gonzales notes many of these students possess bachelor's and master's degrees, even Ph.D.

After earning a bachelor's in political science from Rutgers University and a master's from American University in international affairs, Gonzales embarked on his own international journey. He taught English in Damascus, Syria, and South Korea. When he returned to the states, he pursued another master's in teaching English to speakers of other



**Ray Gonzales, ELAP, Linguistics, and Communications Studies Department Chair, Rockville Campus**

languages at American University. He started teaching at the College in 1999, earning a full-time position in 2000.

"Montgomery College is a wonderful place to teach," he says. "There are so many opportunities to get professional development, to join committees, and take leadership roles." Gonzales is the department chair for ELAP, Linguistics, and Communication Studies at the Rockville Campus. He co-authored (with two other MC professors) *The Word Combination Card*, which helps students develop fluency, precision, and clarity in their academic writing. And, as co-investigator on a Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grant, he conducted workshops on culturally responsive teaching at national, regional, and local conferences.

Alla Webb, department chair at the Germantown and Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campuses who served as principal investigator on the TIDES grant, says, "Ray is an exceptional professor—and is so passionate about his students. We developed a very good friendship while helping others implement important strategies in their classrooms. He represents everything that makes Montgomery College great."

## CONGRATULATIONS, MONTGOMERY COLLEGE CLASS OF 2022!

*"We need more nurses and biologists to improve health care. We need data scientists and IT professionals to protect our networks. We need humanists to serve as diplomats and journalists and educators. In all of these fields—among many others—there is more urgency than ever.*

*Our communities need your knowledge to fill the gaps that have opened in our safety net.*

*We need your skills to drive the engines in our economy that have stalled."*

—Dr. Jermaine F. Williams, Montgomery College President,  
Commencement Address 2022 (story inside, page 4)



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