

**To:** Montgomery College Community

**From:** Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President  
Office of the President

**Subject:** **Updated MC Resources around Coronavirus**

**Date:** March 18, 2020

As we move into our third day of a truly remarkable week, circumstances continue to change quickly so I would like to share some updates. In addition to the extraordinary work of transitioning to remote teaching and learning, the College is also working to address our students' basic needs: food, technology, internet access, and financial hardship are among our students' most pressing issues. Several support mechanisms have arisen:

#### Basic Needs for Students

The Seldin Haring-Smith Foundation has **contributed \$10,000 to the Montgomery College Foundation** for food assistance to students. I want to thank Abigail Seldin for her generosity and for her vision that philanthropists have a role to play in this crisis. This timely gift will help fill the gaps that so many MC programs were actively playing before COVID-19 imposed restrictions on face-to-face interactions. On a related note, we are all aware that students who normally work to pay for school expenses may be unable to continue under the current conditions, and risk financial insecurity. While there are several stop-gap measures in place for federal work study students and student employees of the College, the Montgomery College Foundation is also accepting requests for [emergency financial assistance](#). The Foundation has \$150,000 for student need during this crisis and will distribute it keeping with the parameters outlined on the Coronavirus webpage.

#### Commencement News

In keeping with this focus on student support—along with health guidance circulating widely—the College has made the decision to **cancel our commencement exercises** for this spring. Students will still graduate, receive degrees and certificates, and transfer to other institutions. Only the ceremony is being canceled, but students will be invited to attend the 2021 commencement. The Board of Trustees has endorsed this decision and more details about these adjustments will be forthcoming. In the meantime, the \$400,000 originally marked for commencement will be reallocated to the many urgent, evolving needs of students.

#### Parenting Resources

For our **students and employees with children**, we recognize that this moment is one of anxiety and even puzzlement. I, for one, am watching a unique home school experiment evolving in my own house, where I am also juggling video calls, emails, and phone calls at a rapid clip. There are many lessons to be learned about sharing space with a youngster who is suddenly out of classes, so the College is curating a list of suggestions and resources specifically for [parents](#).

### Extraordinary Efforts

Of course, all of this depends on being connected to the College, and I want to applaud the work of several divisions in securing this. The **Office of Information Technology has made** Zoom Web conferencing available to every MC employee for enhanced remote working and teaching. More than 300 employees have received newly configured laptops, mobile phones, microphones, and webcams to support students and College operations. Finally, in person and remote training/orientations on the use of this technology have been provided by MC personnel, who have been working around the clock. **ELITE** is supporting faculty in almost 3,000 sections and has managed 350 registrations for workshops on teaching remotely in the last few days alone. **Faculty** are working tirelessly to prepare for their own online instruction, while also helping colleagues adjust and sharing resources creatively. Employees in the **academic learning centers, assessment centers, libraries, ATPA, ACES, TRIO** and others are making fundamental changes to their traditional processes in order to serve students remotely. The **Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI)** has already transitioned many of its classes to the web, many of them serving older residents who are uniquely vulnerable in this environment. Classes in history, politics, technology, and personal finance are continuing, along with those such as Crazy About Embroidery and the Art of Quilting—giving a boost to folks who need to keep their spirits up! Kudos to instructors in the LLI who have enthusiastically embraced an opportunity to learn the new model for course delivery and keep mature students engaged during this difficult time. And since people of all ages are experiencing increased levels of stress, please remember that students can find **support for mental health** through [counseling](#), and employees, through the [faculty/staff assistance program](#).

### Staying MC Strong

Warding off insecurity—be it around food, technology, academic support, or mental health—is a high priority at the College. We are working tirelessly **to provide resources for vulnerable students** so that they can continue to engage in learning. At the same time, we are cognizant of special needs among our faculty and staff, who may be engaging in remote teaching or working for the first time or taking on duties that are new to them. We're all in this together. Each one of us is feeling some pangs of anxiety in this new world, and most of us are more isolated than usual. **Please, reach out to your colleagues and fellow students, and check in on them.** Offer support, encouragement, and even a word of praise during this time of high anxiety.

Montgomery College is an institution that is uniquely driven by mission. In this time of heightened insecurity, we will rely on the values we have always embraced: radical inclusion and equity in the service of academic excellence. I continue to be in awe of my colleagues. Thank you for your extraordinary work.