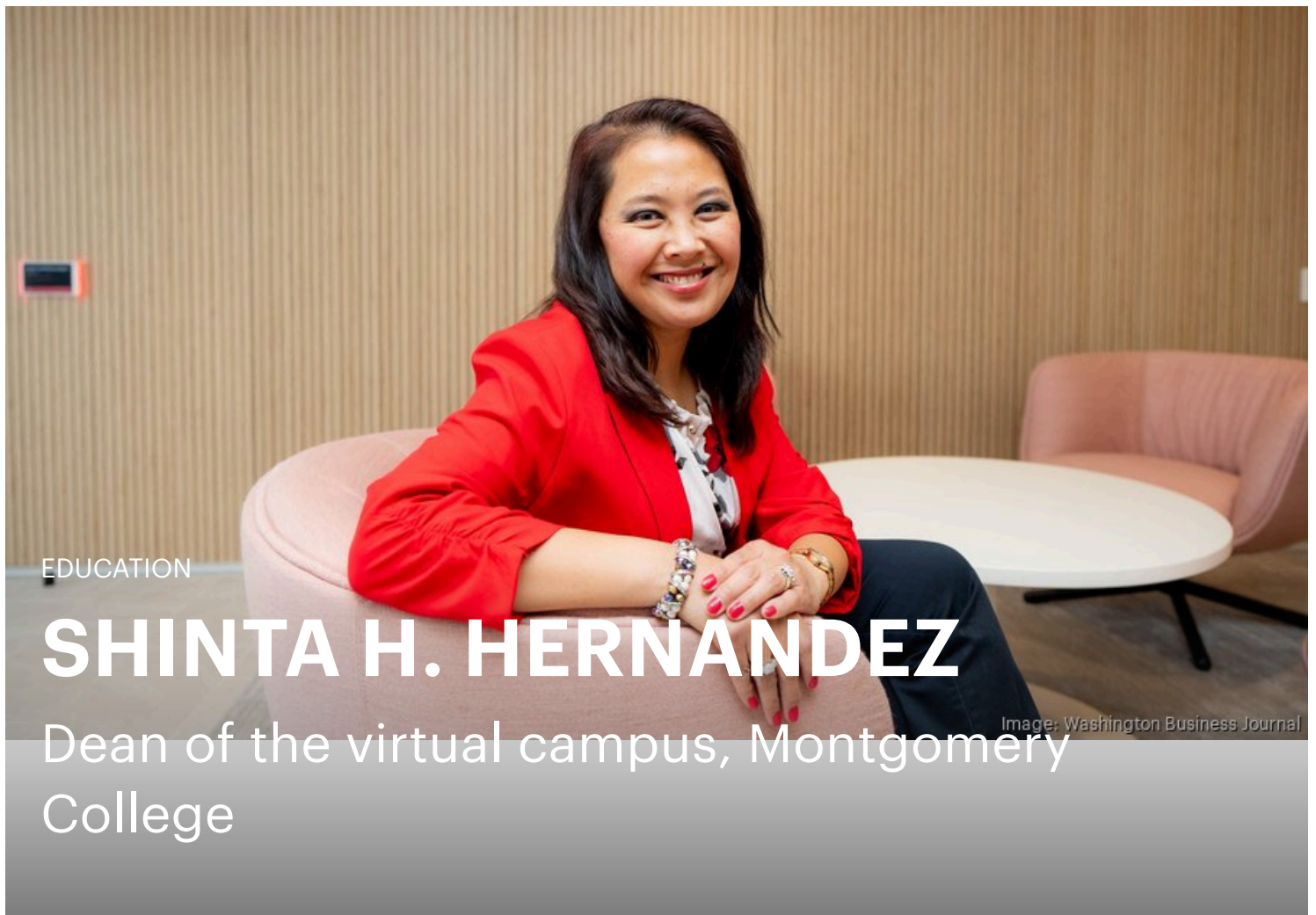


From the Washington Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2024/03/21/shinta-hernandez-montgomery-college.html>

< DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS AWARDS



EDUCATION

SHINTA H. HERNANDEZ

Dean of the virtual campus, Montgomery College

Image: Washington Business Journal

Shinta H. Hernandez is the dean of the virtual campus for Montgomery College.

ABDULLAH KONTE / WBJ

By Lisa Rabasca Roepe – Contributing Writer
Mar 21, 2024

Editor's note: We select 25 outstanding business and nonprofit leaders of color from around Greater Washington to spotlight each year with our Diversity in Business Awards. Read on to find out more about their personal journeys to the C-suite and their thoughts on the current DEI environment.

As the first dean of Montgomery College's virtual campus, Shinta H. Hernandez wants to set the record straight: The virtual campus was in the works long before Covid hit in 2020. However, because of Covid, the college had to put those plans on pause until January 2022 while the college focused on transitioning all its students and faculty to online learning during the pandemic.

Since then, the virtual campus has taken off with the college's online enrollment at 20,000 students annually, including students coming from Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, North Carolina, Puerto Rico as well as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Last year Montgomery College's revenue was \$274.5 million.

What do you think people misunderstand about virtual education? That it's easy and lower-quality because there isn't a live person in front of them. But that is a very traditional mindset. I think institutions like Montgomery College are fully invested in online teaching and put in the resources, support and leadership to ensure that online education offers online support for libraries, tutoring, mental health services and virtual space for the success of our students.

Has there ever been a time where you felt you couldn't show up as your

authentic self at work? I've been in Montgomery College for 17 years and earlier I probably felt like I couldn't come as my authentic self because I was younger and less experienced in higher education. I was also one of the very few racial ethnic minority faculty members in my department, so I probably didn't express everything that I was thinking or feeling. However, I think my mentors and their advice on how I can be who I am at work allowed me to show up as my true self.

What about your personality makes you good at your job? I'm a very collaborative person. I've always been the kind of person who talks to people, wants to learn from people, and wants to work with people, even people who don't agree with me. While there may be differences in perspectives or differences in approaches, I think one of the things I like doing is working through the processes to get to a shared goal. I think that process is worth it because it really stretches us as a team, and it makes us more open minded.

What was the biggest turning point in your career? I started in academia as a sociology professor in the classroom and when you're in the classroom you think no one is really watching. About 10 years ago, administrators at Montgomery College started to come to me with opportunities because, I'm guessing, someone was watching the things that I was doing in the classroom and the committee work I was doing outside of the classroom. I began getting opportunities that allowed me to showcase my leadership.

Is there a book or a podcast that you would recommend to a friend? Yes, in fact, I assign it at the Maryland Online Leadership Institute that I'm a

director of. The Prepared Leader: Emerge from Any Crisis More Resilient Than Before by Erika H. James and Lynn Perry Wooten.

Shinta H. Hernandez, dean of the virtual campus, Montgomery College

- **Age:** 44
- **Residence:** Germantown
- **Education:** Bachelor's in psychology/pre-law, Brandeis University; master's in public policy, Georgetown University; Ph.D. in sociology, University of Maryland College Park
- **Family:** Husband Rafael Hernandez; daughter Kylie Hernandez and son Mason Hernandez; dog Leo
- **First job:** A high school internship with the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda