

INTERSECTIONS

The Academic Affairs Chronicles

A Message From Dr. Rai

As the semester comes to a close, I want to acknowledge and thank you for your passion for teaching and learning; your commitment to our students; and the remarkable efforts I have seen from you -- faculty and staff -- to address student success as we both anticipate and react to the changing times. You have shown concern and compassion for our students, while never losing sight of our goal to demand excellence of ourselves and our students. I have been humbled and inspired throughout this historic year.

Your efforts were on display as I joined colleagues from across the state at the **2016 Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) Completion Summit** on December 2. The College was very well represented with 30 people making nine presentations (out of a total of 24) highlighting the work that so many are doing.

Summit workshops addressed the issues on which we have focused: student success measures/pathways/acceleration; closing the distance education retention gap; non-academic dimensions of retention; transfer agreements; and the integration of credit and non-credit curricula/stackable credentials. Presentations brilliantly reflected the work you have done during the past year addressing *program success strategies* and *DFW reduction initiatives*: embedded tutoring in developmental courses; additional review opportunities; use of OERs as student success tools; use of data on gateway courses to inform student success strategies; embedded major field advising that includes the use of online student advising reports (SAR) and a student developed plan for completion; and development of a cohort program for culturally and linguistically diverse students. We also had presentations on addressing the distance education retention gap through synchronous online learning and on providing specific success interventions for English composition courses. What Montgomery College is doing to address these topics continues to generate interest across the state.

Enrollment in the extended winter term which begins December 19, is at 292 students, with wait lists in some courses. I am fascinated by the interest in online courses offered in this timeframe. We will carefully examine success rates and assess the experience of both faculty and students. Scheduling for program completion and student success is something that requires anticipation and reaction.

Our efforts to raise the average class or section enrollment to 85% is another data-informed scheduling strategy that will help us to effectively ensure that students have access to courses at times and in formats that promote program completion and student success (see article below).

I am excited that this spring, we will offer over 200 z-courses: zero textbook cost (see article below). These courses reduce the cost for students without reducing the content, rigor, or standards. Some of you who are teaching these courses have shared that the access to current and/or interactive content provides pedagogical and economic benefits.

In closing, I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season and ask you, please, to take the opportunity to nominate one of your colleagues for an outstanding faculty award (see next article). Let's celebrate our many outstanding colleagues.

Sanjay

Nominations for Outstanding Faculty Awards Due February 10th

We are very pleased to announce the nomination process for the Outstanding Faculty Awards for the 2016–2017 academic year.

The purpose of this program is to recognize individual full- and part-time faculty members who exemplify the excellence that characterizes the entire Montgomery College faculty. For the current year, each faculty member recognized with an Outstanding Faculty Award will receive a one-time payment of \$2,000. Awardees receiving the Full-Time Faculty of the Year and Part-Time Faculty of the Year awards will receive \$5,000 each. Two separate committees, one to evaluate the full-time faculty nominations, and one to evaluate the part-time faculty nominations, will review nominations and provide recommendations.

I encourage you to consider nominating one of our many outstanding College faculty members for this special recognition. All information pertaining to the awards, including guidelines, nomination process, and timeline can be found at <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/facultyawards/>. The entire nomination process has moved to an online format, so please review the website for details.

All nominations are due by the close of business on Friday, February 10, 2017.

Seat Utilization Supports Success and Sustainability

John Hamman and Margaret Latimer

Scheduling classes is a major focus of student success initiatives. Alternative scheduling and delivery is one of the six initiatives identified in the Academic Master Plan's 5+5 design. Building on that, options including pathway scheduling, long-term scheduling, and cohort scheduling will be explored. The teams working on the Middle States Self-Study and Achieving the Dream are examining scheduling, as well.

Building a schedule that fosters program completion must take into consideration the complex lives that many of our students lead. Taking into account students' goals and circumstances requires that we strike a balance between structure and options as we optimize College resources. Smart, data-informed scheduling will reduce class cancellations, making it easier for students and faculty to plan.

Class cancellations have a negative impact on faculty and most importantly on our students. By gaining a better understanding of students' needs (a survey is being developed) and using our data about the number of majors, we can determine much of the schedule for an upcoming three-year period, allowing students to see and plan their studies, balancing work and family commitments. In addition, this reduces uncertainties for faculty.

One scheduling effort, is to increase the seat utilization rate to 85%, on average. By setting a goal that is an average for the College, we maintain the flexibility to balance resources, structure, and options – to meet the needs of full-time and part-time students, daytime and evening students, and the many other parameters that define our students. Many classes fill (100% seat utilization) and some of you allow additional students into your classes. These highly enrolled sections allow deans and chairs to run sections that are below the target utilization rate, but serve a special need such as an evening population, collegewide access, or allow a program to grow – and still achieve the targeted average.

In Spring 2016, we offered a total of 94,500 seats and filled 74,200, leaving over 20,000 vacant seats. Enrollments have been declining and are projected to continue to decline through FY2020. Smart scheduling, aligned with available resources will allow us to continue to offer a wide range of courses and programs.

Our goal was to achieve an average seat utilization rate of 82.5%. We reached over 80% running over 4,500 classes. Almost 45% of sections had at least 90% seat utilization, with almost 65% between 80 – 89% seat utilization. The table shows seat utilization rates for Fall 2016.

Percent Filled (Range)	Number of Sections in Range
90 - 100	2090
80 - 89	960
70 - 79	520
60 - 69	380
50 - 59	280
40 - 49	180
30 - 39	110

Trend analysis is important. It is particularly important that we look at the number of majors in programs and use enrollment in prerequisite courses to predict enrollment in subsequent courses in a sequence. Lower enrollment is predicted this spring. The Spring 2017 schedule should reflect this. It will be an iterative process to optimize the schedule. The effort will serve students and faculty well. It will reduce the number of cancelled sections and ensure that courses are offered -- and run -- when and where students want to take them, smoothing the pathway to completion.

MC Awarded \$5.6M America's Promise Grant

Montgomery College is one of 23 regional workforce partners in 28 states to be awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's \$111 million America's Promise Job-Driven Grant Program.

The College will be the lead on the four-year "Capital Region Collaborative: Jobs in Technical Careers" (CRC), a regional partnership to offer tuition-free training and support services to students seeking employment in the information technology and cybersecurity fields.

The grant program is designed to increase the technical skills of American workers and decrease reliance on temporary visa programs.

Partners include Frederick Community College and Prince George's Community College. The \$5.6 million grant will allow the three colleges to offer intensive short-term trainings (boot camps) aimed at providing a pipeline of skilled IT and cybersecurity workers for local companies and helping employers and employees to both thrive in the global economy. The demand for workers in cybersecurity is critical, with almost 20,000 jobs in Maryland going unfilled for lack of qualified workers.

Additional partners include the three counties' workforce boards and economic development agencies; eight area employers; the Tech Council of Maryland, the Fort Meade Alliance, and the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region.

The boot camps will include real-world projects provided by local employers; intended participants are un- and under-employed adults with postsecondary education who have barriers to employment.

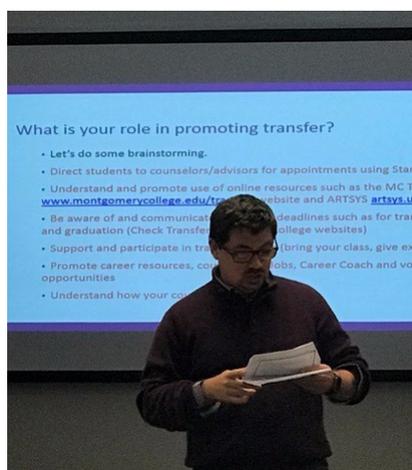
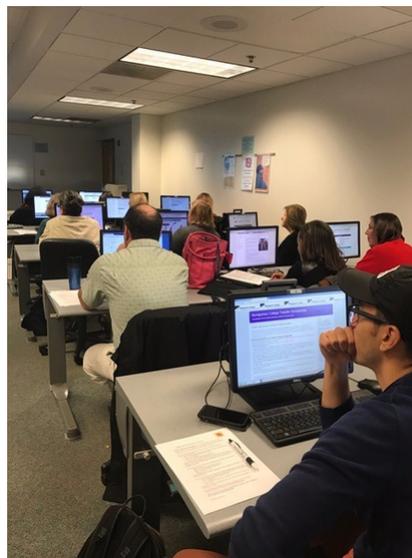
America's Promise is Montgomery College's third Department of Labor grant focused on the construction of the regional IT workforce pipeline and builds on our existing TechHire and TAACCCT grants.

Successful Transfer Ambassador Training

Approximately 30 faculty, staff, and administrators attended the inaugural Transfer Ambassador's Training, held on Thursday, December 1, at Rockville. During the two hour class, attendees were introduced to internal and external transfer resources for students, including the newly redesigned Transfer Planning homepage (www.montgomerycollege.edu/transfer), and learned about various partnership programs (MTAP, TSA, Hawkline) and articulation agreements that MC has with four-year partner institutions. Other issues affecting transfer, such as deadline dates, scholarship availability, transfer credit, choosing the right program of study, and career planning, were covered.

Upon successful completion of the course, attendees are considered Transfer Ambassadors; their purpose is to act as campus-based advocates for transfer students. They will share ongoing information with their respective departments and units, they will support transfer activities and events, and they will be able to better assist students in the advising and transfer process. This volunteer role will strength the College's goal to see more students complete their associate degree and successfully transfer.

Additional trainings are planned for the spring, one at Germantown and one at Takoma Park/Silver Spring. The session was presented by members of the Transfer Team, which includes Counseling Faculty and staff from the SVPAA office.



Reducing Costs to Students: Z Courses

Montgomery College is moving forward with providing students the opportunity to reduce the amount of money they spend on textbooks without faculty reducing the academic rigor.

Under the initiative MC Open, the College will offer more than 200 sections in the spring 2017 semester identified in Banner as Z courses. These courses do not have any cost associated with the textbook, potentially saving students hundreds of dollars each semester.

"Imagine making minimum wage and having to pay \$400 for textbooks each semester," Professor Samantha Veneruso says. "How many hours would you have to work just to pay for books?"

Veneruso is chair of the General Studies program and, along with Dr. Michael Mills, vice president of ELITE, a principal investigator in a \$100,000 grant from Achieving the Dream. The grant is designed to offer at least one section of courses in the General Studies degree using open educational resources by Spring 2018.

“We are excited about the opportunities OER, and this grant, will provide our students,” says Mills. “Not only will these Z courses save students money, but they also will help students be able to afford to take more courses with the money they’ve saved.”

“Additionally, OER offers faculty the opportunity to customize and adapt their courses to better meet the needs of a range of students, both from a learning style and an interest standpoint,” says Veneruso.

It is important to note, says Mills, that there is no intent to having faculty reduce academic standards or classroom rigor. “We expect faculty to hold students to the same standards they always have,” he says.

In addition, faculty members will not be compelled to use OER; instead, the decision to stop using a publisher-created text in favor of OER is one left up to the faculty.

It is expected that the Z courses offered in the spring will result in more than 2000 enrollments.

For more information on MC Open, go to <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/mc-open>

Intersections, December 2016