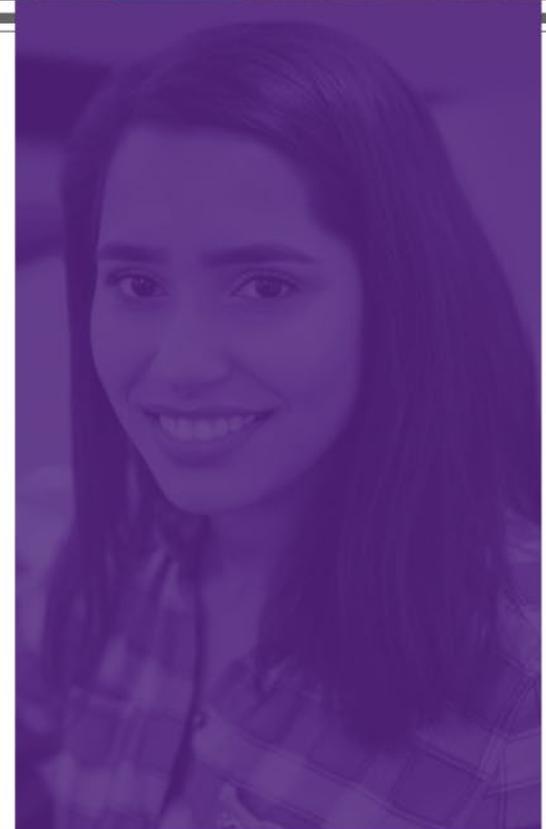




STUDENT MEDIA PREFS SURVEY

Qualitative Data Highlights



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MC Student Media Prefs Survey

QUALITATIVE DATA Highlights

Office of Communications

Fall 2024

Survey Audience and Completion

Some 1,246 MC students enrolled Fall 2024 completed surveys (194% of goal with 99% confidence level and no more than 5% margin of error based on fall credit student population of 18,8367). The respondents were primarily enrolled in credit courses (95%), with 62% attending to earn credits towards transfer, 33% attending to earn a degree at MC and start a new career, and 3 % to learn new skills for current careers, and 2% to take classes for personal enrichment.

Survey Timeline

September 23- October 18 (4 weeks)

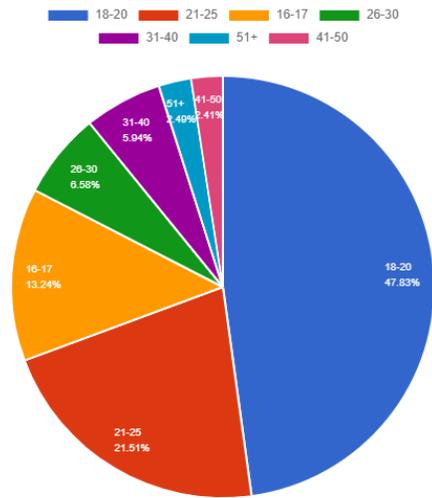
Promotion Campaign



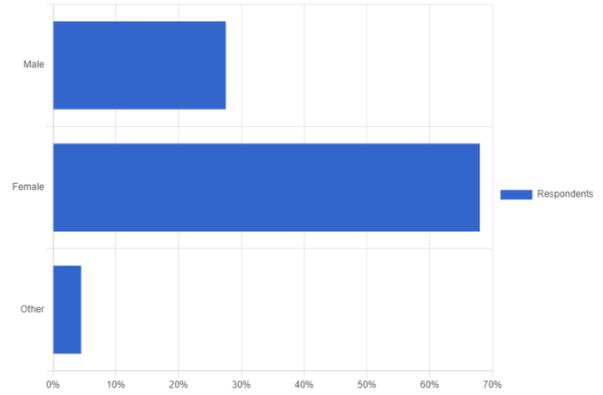
The Office of Communications promoted the survey to currently enrolled students attending classes in person at all locations and online with a fun and engaging multi-media campaign featuring our mascot weekly email campaigns, digital screen ads, table tent cards, and social media. Each week, a student winner was randomly selected for the weekly \$50 Amazon gift card incentive.

Survey Demographics

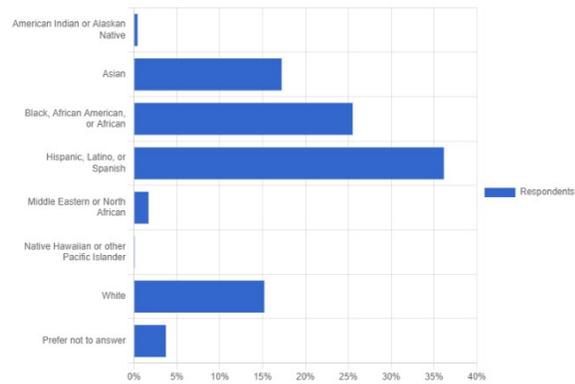
Age



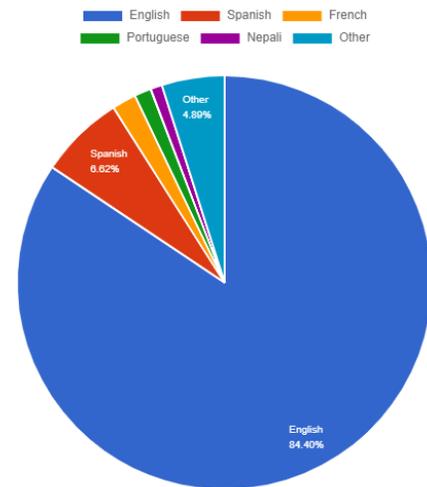
Gender



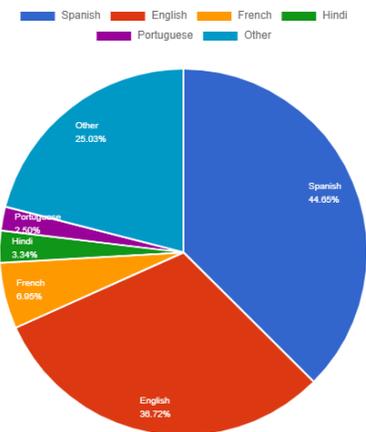
Ethnicity



Primary/Native Language



Language Fluency



Student Perception Patterns

Reasons for Recommending Montgomery College: Some **338 positive testimonials** were captured in the survey responses, with 143 of these related directly to **student success** and a **sense of belonging**. Many students who provided reasons emphasized positive experiences and support from the college. Specific themes include:

- Quality education
- Supportive faculty and staff
- Opportunities for personal growth

Reasons for Not Recommending Montgomery College:

While the majority of students did not share any concerns, some students reported barriers or dissatisfaction, with comments ranging from administrative issues to specific challenges in accessing resources.

Testimonial Highlights

These testimonials capture the heart of Montgomery College's impact, highlighting the **college's strong academic support, welcoming environment, and commitment to access and affordability**. Students consistently share how **MC has empowered them**, offering academic resources, personal growth, and a sense of belonging. These authentic endorsements are ideal for college marketing, recruitment, and outreach, showcasing the value and support that make Montgomery College an exceptional choice for students from all walks of life.

Affordable and Friendly Environment:

- "It is a good college, it has good times for classes, easy to transfer to another school, people are friendly and it is affordable."
- "It saves you money and helps ease students into college life before transferring to university."
- "Choosing Montgomery College was a no-brainer for me financially. The affordability allowed me to focus on my studies without the burden of student debt. I'm grateful for the scholarships and financial aid that made my education accessible."
- "Great school, affordable tuition, and close to home."

Supportive Community:

- "For its great and cheerful environment, its calm environment, and its great and diverse faculty."
- "It's a great school. They offer many majors and programs. I really love the Raptor Central building and I go to it very often. The professors are kind and so are the counselors. Everyone here helps one another out."

- "Attending Montgomery College has truly empowered me. I used to doubt my abilities, but with the encouragement of my professors and peers, I've gained the confidence to pursue my dreams and take on challenges I never thought I could handle."

Caring Faculty and Staff:

- "It's a really great environment, there's a good teacher to student ratio, there's a lot of help continuously offered throughout your time there."
- "The faculty at MC genuinely care about their students. My professor took the time to help me understand complex topics, and their support made all the difference in my academic journey. I felt like I had someone in my corner every step of the way."
- "It's a nice college and professors care for you to pass."
- "It has great opportunities for its students and very supportive faculty."
- "It's got a positive reputation, supportive staff, and helpful resources."

Strong Programs/Career Connections:

- "It has great programs and the transfer benefits are also great."
- "Because MC has great programs and a great support system."
- "Strong programs, helpful faculty, overall, a safe and good experience."
- "The career services at Montgomery College have been invaluable. Through internships and networking events, I've developed connections in my field and learned essential skills that have prepared me for my future career in healthcare."

Comprehensive Resources and Flexibility:

- "I would recommend Montgomery College for its strong academic programs, supportive faculty, and diverse community. The college offers a range of resources, including academic advising and career services, which help students succeed. Additionally, its convenient location and flexible course options make it accessible for various lifestyles. Overall, it's a great place for personal and professional growth."
- "It has a variety of choices when it comes to location and professors."

Welcoming Campus Life:

- "It's a great way to enter into college life and it's very good campus."
- "It's just very nice and has some kind of community."

Student Barriers Analysis

While student testimonials reflect overwhelmingly positive experiences, some respondents shared areas where improvements could enhance their experience even further. Feedback highlighted a few key barriers, primarily around **financial aid processes, registration, and communication**. By addressing these common pain points, Montgomery College can streamline support for students and ensure an even more inclusive, welcoming environment for all.

Common Barriers During Application:

- A significant number of students (119) reported **no barriers**. Others mentioned issues related to **financial aid** (6) or **lengthy processes**, although these were less frequent.

Common Barriers During Registration:

- Comments varied widely but included issues like **class timings** and **understanding prerequisites**, which could be addressed through better communication and resources.

Common Themes of Dissatisfaction:

1. **Financial Aid Issues:**
 - "The financial aid process was overly complicated and took too long."
 - "I found it difficult to understand the financial aid options available to me."
2. **Administrative Processes:**
 - "The registration process was confusing and frustrating."
 - "I had a lot of issues with the online systems; they were not user-friendly."
3. **Lack of Support:**
 - "I felt that there was insufficient support when I needed help with my classes."
 - "The advisors were often unresponsive and didn't provide the guidance I needed."
4. **Communication Problems:**
 - "There was a lack of clear communication about important deadlines and processes."
 - "I didn't receive timely responses to my inquiries, which added to my stress."
5. **Overall Experience:**
 - "The campus environment felt overwhelming and not very welcoming."
 - "I didn't feel like I belonged or that the college cared about my success."

Enrollment planning ideas to address noted student barriers:

- **Streamline Financial Aid Processes:** Simplify the financial aid application and provide clear resources to guide students.
- **Improve Communication:** Establish regular updates for students regarding key processes and deadlines, utilizing multiple channels.
- **Enhance Support Services:** Ensure that academic advisors are accessible and responsive, potentially through additional training and resources.

- **Foster a Welcoming Environment:** Create programs and events that emphasize inclusivity and community building among students.

Communication planning ideas to address noted student barrier issues:

1. Clear and Consistent Messaging

- **Regular Updates:** Establish a routine for sending updates about important deadlines, events, and resources through email newsletters and announcements. Consistency helps build trust and ensures students are informed.
- **Transparent Communication:** Use straightforward language to explain processes, such as financial aid applications or registration steps, making sure all communication is jargon-free and accessible. Develop concise videos explaining complex processes (e.g., financial aid, registration) enhancing students' understanding.

2. Comprehensive Resource Guides

- **Develop Resource Tools:** Accompany print resource guides with video guides that visually outline available services, making it easier for students to navigate college resources. Develop “how-to” videos on using various college systems, such as the online registration portal, academic advising appointments, and accessing mental health services. Record workshops on topics like study skills, time management, and financial literacy, making them accessible for students to watch on-demand.
- **FAQs and Help Centers:** Maintain an updated FAQ section on the college website addressing common concerns, such as financial aid, registration processes, and support services. Create a series of FAQ videos where common student questions are answered, providing quick and accessible solutions to their concerns.

3. Utilize Multiple Channels

- **Diverse Communication Platforms:** Use various platforms (email, social media, text messaging) to reach students where they are most active. Tailor the message format to suit each platform for maximum engagement. Share video content across various platforms (social media, website, email) to engage students in the formats they prefer, ensuring accessibility and visibility.
- **Webinars and Info Sessions:** Host regular webinars to explain key topics and processes, allowing students to ask questions in real time and reducing feelings of confusion or frustration.

4. Enhanced Support Services

- **Dedicated Support Teams:** Establish dedicated support teams for financial aid, academic advising, and registration that students can easily contact. Ensure these teams are responsive and well-trained to address student concerns. Introduce video introductions for academic advisors and support staff, allowing students to see and hear from the people who can assist them, making the process feel more personal.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Implement peer mentoring programs where current students can help incoming students navigate challenges and provide insights based on their experiences. Create

videos featuring current students who share their experiences in peer mentoring programs, illustrating the benefits of connecting with others for support.

5. Feedback Mechanisms

- **Regular Surveys:** Conduct regular surveys to gather feedback from students on their communication preferences and experiences. Use this feedback to continuously improve communication strategies.
- **Suggestion Boxes:** Create anonymous suggestion boxes (physical or digital) where students can submit concerns or ideas for improvement. Publicly acknowledge and address these suggestions to show responsiveness.

7. Highlight Success Stories

- **Share Positive Experiences:** Regularly share success stories of students who have benefited from support services, illustrating the impact of available resources and encouraging others to seek help. Regularly produce video testimonials of students who have benefited from college resources, showcasing their journeys.
- **Engagement through Student Stories:** Feature student and alumni testimonials and stories in newsletters, on social media, and website, including videos that highlight diverse experiences, enhancing community and encouraging prospective students to envision themselves at the college.

8. Personalized Communication

- **Tailored Messaging:** Use segmentation to send personalized messages, including video messages, based on students' demographics, interests, or needs. This can make communications feel more relevant and engaging.
- **Targeted Outreach for At-Risk Students:** Identify at-risk students and initiate targeted outreach to provide additional support and resources, making them feel valued and cared for.

Student Media Preferences

Top Favorite Music Genres:

- The most popular music genre is **Pop** (43 responses), followed by **Rap** (26), **Everything** (22), and **R&B** (21). Other genres like **Gospel**, **Rock**, and general terms like **All** also appear frequently.

Favorite Online News Sources:

- The top online news source is **CNN** (46 responses), followed by **New York Times** and **Washington Post** (16 each). Other sources include **BBC**, **Instagram**, and several mentions of variations of CNN.

Favorite TV Shows:

- Students like a variety of legal dramas, comedies, fantasy, and animated shows. **Suits**, **Brooklyn 99**, **Gilmore Girls**, **Supernatural**, **One Piece**, **Emily in Paris**, **Grey's Anatomy**, **Dexter**, and **From** are among the favorites, indicating trends that could be highlighted in promotional content.

Recommendations to engage students based on their TV/pop culture preferences:

- **Content-Related Events:** Host watch parties or discussions around popular shows, particularly those that resonate with student life or themes relevant to the college experience.
- **Collaborative Content Creation:** Encourage students to create content (like blogs or vlogs) discussing their favorite shows and how they relate to college life, which could foster community.
- **Promote Relevant Programming:** If there are events, workshops, or classes that align with the themes of these shows (e.g., writing, law, healthcare), highlight these connections in communications.

Website Usage

- The primary reasons students say they access the College's website included **Blackboard access** (34), **general information** (20), and to **register for classes** (5). This highlights the importance of the online learning platform in students' engagement with the college.

How Students Think We Could Improve Website

While most students rated MC's website better than other colleges in the quantitative survey responses, their feedback indicates enhancements in accessibility, functionality, and design would make their website experience even better. Suggestions to streamline the user experience, improve platform integration, and provide multilingual support reflect the need for a more modern and user-friendly website. Addressing these areas could significantly enhance student engagement and satisfaction.

1. Language Options:

- "Add more languages."
(This highlights the need for greater accessibility for non-English speaking students.)

2. Functionality Improvements:

- "It would be better if it was way less glitchy."
(Students are looking for a smoother user experience without technical issues.)

3. More Modern Design:

- "Make it look more modern."
(A refreshed design could enhance usability and appeal.)

4. User Experience:

- "Make Blackboard easier."
(Improving the integration or access to learning platforms is important for student success.)

5. **Login Improvements:**

- "Login information is used once (always logged in)."
(Students prefer a more convenient login process.)

6. **Class Search Feature:**

- "Streamline class search feature."
(An easier-to-navigate class search can improve course registration efficiency.)

7. **General Satisfaction:**

- "I'm not sure, it functions pretty well in my opinion."
- "Nothing."
- "I wouldn't change anything. It's easy to guide yourself around the website."

MC Competition

Top Mentions of Where Students Where Students Were Considering Other than MC:

- None (127)
- UMD (112)
- UMBC (31)
- Towson University (34)
- PGCC (8)

The responses indicate that a significant number of students (127) were not considering other colleges, suggesting a strong commitment to Montgomery College, and the opportunity to show the value for going to college. Among those who did consider other institutions, the University of Maryland (UMD) and UMBC were the most frequently mentioned, reflecting local preferences.

Why Students Open MC Emails

The most common reasons for opening emails revolve around the subject line and the perceived importance of the content. Students are motivated by clear and relevant notifications that indicate useful information or opportunities. The responses suggest that crafting compelling and informative subject lines is crucial for increasing email engagement.

- The Subject of Subject Line
- Notifications or Important Information
- If it Seems Important
- Opportunities
- News

Recommendations to Improve Student Email Engagement:

1. Craft Compelling Subject Lines:

- Use clear, concise, and engaging subject lines that highlight the email's content. Incorporate keywords that signal importance, such as "Important Information" or "Opportunities Available."

2. Prioritize Important Notifications:

- Ensure that important announcements and notifications are highlighted in the subject line or at the beginning of the email to grab students' attention immediately.

3. Provide Valuable Content:

- Focus on delivering essential information and updates that directly impact students, such as deadlines, events, and resources. Clearly communicate the benefits of opening the email.

4. Segment Email Lists:

- Tailor emails to specific groups based on interests, demographics, or academic programs. Personalized content can increase relevance and engagement.

5. Create Consistent Messaging:

- Establish a regular schedule for sending emails so students know when to expect communications. Consistency helps build trust and anticipation.

6. Incorporate Visual Elements:

- Use visuals, bullet points, and clear headings to make emails more visually appealing and easier to skim. A well-organized layout encourages reading.

7. Engage with Interactive Content:

- Consider incorporating polls, surveys, or links to videos within emails to make them more engaging and interactive, prompting students to click and explore further.

8. Highlight Opportunities:

- Regularly feature opportunities such as workshops, internships, and events that can benefit students. Position these prominently to increase interest.

What MC Students Wish College Recruiters Knew Regarding the Mindset of Prospective Students

Key Insights for Student Recruitment and Onboarding:

1. Fear of Mistakes:

- "Some students are afraid and ashamed to make mistakes."
(This highlights the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment during the recruitment process.)

2. Desire for Guidance:

- "What is the best course of action to take to keep me on the path to success?"
(Students are looking for clear guidance on their educational journey and next steps.)

3. High Levels of Stress:

- "That they are stressed."
(Recognizing that prospective students may be overwhelmed can help faculty and staff approach them with empathy.)

4. Questions About Course Load:

- "Most of their questions are probably about how many classes they have to take."
(Addressing academic expectations early on can alleviate concerns.)

5. Negative Stigma:

- "There's kind of a negative stigma about community colleges."
(MC should counteract stereotypes and promote the value of community college education.)

6. Engagement in Learning:

- "Interesting stuff keeps you focused."
(Showcasing engaging programs and courses can capture students' interest.)

7. Concerns About Cost:

- "They want what's the least expensive."
(Emphasizing financial aid opportunities and affordability is crucial.)

8. Understanding Registration:

- "Understanding how to sign up for classes."
(Simplifying the registration process and providing clear instructions can help ease anxieties.)

9. Late Awareness of College Options:

- "They should know that a lot of students get zero information on colleges until senior year, and that's when they have to rush to apply."
(This underscores the need for earlier outreach and education about college options.)

Turning Points or Moments that Led to Decision to Enroll at MC

These responses illustrate a range of **motivating factors, including academic success, financial incentives and peer influences, along with relatable experiences**—from personal challenges to significant life transitions—that can resonate with prospective students. Highlighting such stories in outreach efforts can create a connection and inspire others to consider enrolling at Montgomery College.

Personal Motivation:

- "I didn't want to disappoint my mom."

Cultural Transition and Access:

- "I arrived in the United States last year and was approved to attend university upon arrival. I had to find a university to attend very quickly because deadlines were approaching, and it was my first time in the United States."
- "Recently migrated to the country, so I have the access to education that I didn't have in my home country."

Academic Achievement:

- "Me getting straight A's throughout high school."

Scholarship Opportunity:

- "Getting the MC board of trustees scholarship."

Early Academic Goals:

- "Associates degree as an 18-year-old."

Financial Considerations:

- "Financial struggle."
- "It came down to the cost. I was able to get my tuition covered with MC scholarships rather than paying my full tuition from UMD."
- "The lack of scholarship money."

Peer Influence:

- "Everyone in my grade was doing it, and I didn't really want to be left behind, so I just decided to enroll in dual enrollment."

Life Reflection:

- "Yeah, I hit age 25 and had a quarter-life crisis."

Academic Pathways:

- "When I realized I could get an associate's degree in sonography and realizing MC has an agreement with my dream school."

High School Alternatives:

- "When I decided to get a GED instead of finishing high school."

How MC Has Made a Positive Difference in My Life

These responses illustrate the **significant impact Montgomery College has had on students' lives**, emphasizing the importance of **education, social connections, personal growth, and diverse learning opportunities**. Highlighting these positive outcomes can be effective in marketing efforts to attract prospective students.

1. Accessibility and Affordability

- "Choosing Montgomery College was a no-brainer for me financially. The affordability allowed me to focus on my studies without the burden of student debt. I'm grateful for the scholarships and financial aid that made my education accessible."

2. Opportunities for Education:

- "MC opened its doors for me to study and get a better life after I finish my studies."
- "Helped me continue my education."

3. Social Connections:

- "I made a lot of new friends and developed better social skills."
- "I feel more open to engage in conversation amongst my mature classmates."

4. Personal Development:

- "I have met people who now have a big role in my life."
- "I've been able to meet a lot of cool people and learn a lot from my professors— as well as the chance to explore a new environment."

5. Diverse Learning Experiences:

- "Providing opportunities to learn from different fields & subjects."
- "It has allowed me to expand my educational abilities as a high school student. MC also has a very good learning environment, making it easy to learn because we're

surrounded by other people who also want to learn."

6. Skills and Knowledge Acquisition:

- "I've learned more applications."

7. Empowerment and Confidence

- "Attending Montgomery College has truly empowered me. I used to doubt my abilities, but with the encouragement of my professors and peers, I've gained the confidence to pursue my dreams and take on challenges I never thought I could handle."

8. Career Preparation

- "The career services at Montgomery College have been invaluable. Through internships and networking events, I've developed connections in my field and learned essential skills that have prepared me for my future career in healthcare."

9. Supportive Faculty

- "The faculty at MC genuinely care about their students. My professor took the time to help me understand complex topics, and their support made all the difference in my academic journey. I felt like I had someone in my corner every step of the way."

10. Cultural and Personal Diversity

- "Montgomery College is a melting pot of cultures. Engaging with classmates from different backgrounds has broadened my perspectives and enriched my learning experience. I appreciate the diversity that makes our campus feel welcoming and inclusive."

How MC Students Think MC Could Better Support Them

Motivation and Support:

- "Keep me motivated to come to college, and keep me always in mind."

Tutoring Opportunities:

- "By helping me to find tutor opportunities to be taught in classes I've been struggling with where it's aligned with my schedule."

Financial Aid Assistance:

- "Financial aid."

Engaging Events:

- "Keep doing the free events 😊."

Clarity of Information:

- "Make information clear."

Resource Awareness:

- "Pointing out available resources, e.g., Are there people to assist with finding scholarships? If so, who and how can they be reached?"

Pathway Guidance:

- "If they tell me what I need to do to be on the right path to my degree."

Faculty and Staff Connections:

- "I don't even know who the dean is. Make the apparent??"

Dual Enrollment Awareness:

- "Talking more about dual enrollment and its benefits. Not just early college."

Top 5 Actionable Insights

1. Strengthen Visibility of Student Support and Resources to Drive Access and Completion

Insight: Supportive faculty and accessible resources significantly enhance students' experiences, with many students highlighting academic advising and tutoring as essential.

Action: Increase the visibility of support services across marketing channels, including online platforms and orientation events. Invest in training for faculty and staff to ensure they can provide empathetic, proactive guidance, reinforcing the college's commitment to student success and retention.

2. Leverage Student Testimonials to Build Trust and Appeal

Insight: Students frequently share positive testimonials about MC's strong academic programs, inclusive environment, and diverse community.

Action: Integrate student stories and testimonials into marketing and recruitment materials to authentically highlight MC's strengths. Showcase these testimonials across social media, websites, and recruitment events to build trust and appeal among prospective students.

3. Simplify Key Processes to Improve Student Onboarding and Persistence

Insight: Complexity in financial aid and registration processes poses barriers, frustrating students and impacting satisfaction.

Action: Streamline processes and improve clarity of instructions in multiple languages. Simplify resource access by enhancing digital tools and ensuring students understand how to navigate essential services. These improvements support enrollment and retention by reducing barriers to successful engagement.

4. Guide Students with Consistent, Tailored, Multichannel Communications

Insight: Students value clear, consistent updates on deadlines, resources, and opportunities, with many expressing a preference for video content.

Action: Implement a regular, multichannel communication strategy, including engaging video tutorials, email, and social media, to keep students informed and empowered. Clear, transparent messaging can increase engagement, reduce confusion, and support retention efforts by helping students feel connected and informed.

5. Build Community and Foster Belonging to Boost Retention and Student Satisfaction

Insight: Students expressed a desire for a stronger sense of belonging, with social connections and cultural events enriching their college experience.

Action: Host regular cultural and social events that celebrate diversity and create opportunities for students to connect with each other. Feature diverse student and alumni success stories in outreach materials to reinforce a welcoming, inclusive community that promotes retention and satisfaction.

Conclusion

Montgomery College can take pride in knowing that students value the resources and support available, as evidenced by numerous positive testimonials. At the same time, there are valuable opportunities to further enhance student experiences by refining communication, streamlining key processes, and fostering a stronger sense of community. Addressing these areas will build on the college's strengths, improving both student satisfaction and success.

This report provides a summary of the qualitative insights from the MC Student Media Preferences survey. For any questions regarding the data or further insights, please reach out to the Office of Communications.

Survey's Demographic and Qualitative Data Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Which best describes your gender identity?
3. How do you prefer to be identified? (Optional)
4. Which best describes your ancestral background?
5. Which best describes your ancestral background? (Other)
6. What is the zip code of your primary residence?
7. Which best describes you as a student?
8. Why are you primarily attending Montgomery College?
9. Which type of classes do you typically take?
10. What is the structure of most of the classes you take?
11. How many credit hours are you taking this semester/term?
12. How many credit hours are you taking this semester/term? (Other)

13. Do you work while attending school?
14. Which best describes your military service status?
15. How do you pay for college? Check all that apply.
16. How do you pay for college? Check all that apply. (Other)
17. What is your primary/native language?
18. What is your primary/native language? (Other)
19. If you fluently communicate in any additional languages, please list them here:
20. If you fluently communicate in any additional languages, please list them here: (Other)
21. Are you a primary caregiver for any children under 18 years of age?
22. What is your certificate or degree program?
23. What type of music do you like to listen to?
24. What is your favorite AM/FM radio station?
25. Which shows or series are you currently watching via television or streaming services?
26. If you're taking online classes, how can Montgomery College make the learning experience better?
27. What makes you want to open and read an email from Montgomery College?
28. Which other colleges or non-college pathways were you actively considering before deciding to attend Montgomery College?
29. Please share if there was a specific turning point or moment in your life that led to your decision to enroll in college.
30. Why wouldn't you recommend Montgomery College?
31. Why would you recommend Montgomery College?
32. What is one thing college recruiters should know about the mindset of prospective students they talk with?
33. Was there a particular ad or message you saw that made you decide to enroll at Montgomery College? If so, what was it?
34. How can Montgomery College better encourage or support you on your student journey?
35. Please share if there was a barrier you faced when applying to Montgomery College.
36. Please share if there was a barrier you faced when registering for classes at Montgomery College.
37. What is the top reason you access Montgomery College's website?
38. What would you change about Montgomery College's website to make it better for students to use?
39. Which printed newspaper or publication is your favorite?
40. Which online news source is your favorite?
41. What kind of video content would help students like you?
42. How has MC made a positive difference in your life?