



# Academic Coaching for Course and College Success at Montgomery College

Nik Sushka, Interim Director of the Achieving the Promise Academy

# WHAT IS THE ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY?



We'll help you *achieve* your goals. It's a *promise*.

MC's academic coaching program was created to ensure every student has the assistance, opportunities, and tools they need to succeed in college.

We offer embedded academic coaching for students in historically hard-to-pass courses, as well as personal academic coaching until students graduate or transfer.

## Our Core Services

- Embedded Academic Coaching for Course Success
- Personal Academic Coaching for College Success
- Drop In Coaching
- Student Success Workshops

# WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

- Instructional Faculty?
- MC staff?
- Academic coaches?
- Who else?

# HOW WELL DO YOU FEEL YOU UNDERSTAND ACADEMIC COACHING?

0

5

10

When the teacher asks a question and you're trying to avoid eye contact





## AN EMERGING STRATEGY

- Across higher education, academic coaching is emerging as an evidenced-based strategy to promote student success. While the scale, structure, and focus of academic coaching programs varies substantially across institutions, these coaching programs often share a common mission: to help students achieve their academic goals by developing the academic skills, knowledge, mindsets, and habits that contribute to success in college.

## AN EMERGING STRATEGY

- Importantly, some academic coaching strategies can be used by any faculty or staff member who aims to build trust with students, remove barriers to success, and promote educational equity by creating classroom and campus environments where every student is empowered to learn and thrive.

## PARTICIPANTS IN THIS WORKSHOP WILL:

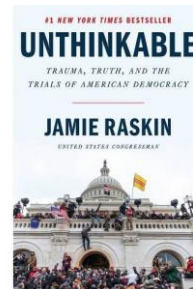
- Learn about specific evidenced-based academic coaching strategies that promote student learning, belonging, and holistic academic success
- Understand how academic coaching strategies are used at MC in targeted ways across various disciplines and within strategic program partnerships
- Identify how to connect students to ATPA's academic coaching services, as well as opportunities to collaborate with MC's academic coaches this year
- Explore ways to use coaching strategies within their own roles at MC

# A LITTLE ABOUT ME: NIK SUSHKA (PRONOUNCED NICK S-USH-KUH, SHE/HER)



- Worked at Montgomery College for 12+ years
- Interim Director of the Achieving the Promise Academy
- Master's English Language & Literature from Central Michigan
- Reading *Unthinkable* by Rep. Jamie Raskin
- Watching Lego Masters Australia
- Love Chinese and Thai Take-Out
- In another life, I'd be a singer songwriter

**MC** ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY  
**MONTGOMERY COLLEGE**





# MISSION OF THE ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY

We partner with MC students to achieve their academic goals by helping students develop the academic skills, knowledge, attitudes, and habits that contribute to success in college.

We empower students to reframe academic challenges and reach their full potential as they build on their strengths, target areas for growth, and access the resources they need to succeed.

We intentionally create an environment where everyone is welcomed and valued.



# WHAT IS ACADEMIC COACHING?



Hi! We're the Achieving the Promise Academy.



0:04 / 2:39



# ONE PROGRAM, FOUR SERVICES

## Personal Academic Coaching for College Success (~450 students)

- Personal coach until Graduation or Transfer
- Support across all classes to achieve long-term goals
- Regular coaching sessions focus on the skills, habits, and mindsets that support academic success
- Support for tuition, academic supplies, and laptops, if eligible

## Embedded Academic Coaching for Course Success (200 sections, ~4000 students)

- Specialized coach for that semester
- Support in specific classes that are historically harder to pass
- Weekly coaching sessions help students persist, prep for exams and assignments, and master specific academic content
- Support for academic supplies and laptops, if eligible

### Common Benefits

Academic Coaching for holistic success

Developing academic and life skills

Connecting to College resources

## Drop-in Academic Coaching

- ATPA Coaches available for drop-In, immediate support
- One-time or short-term student needs
- Focused on problem solving and action planning
- Support to request a one-on-one coach, find embedded support classes, or connect to college resources

## Student Success Workshops and Events

- Weekly Learning Community Hour (LCH) and Welcome Retreat
- Connections with MC coaches, staff, professors
- One-on-One students attend at least 2 workshops/semester

# THE ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY STAFF



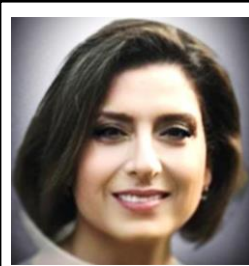
**Nik Sushka**  
Interim  
Director



**Marie Arthus**  
Personal  
Academic  
Coaching  
Coordinator



**Evan  
Blanpied**  
AmeriCorps  
VISTA



**Dr. Soheila  
Ebrahimian**  
Embedded  
Coaching  
Specialist  
(Biology &  
Chemistry)



**Dr. Raymond  
Fermo**  
Embedded  
Coaching  
Specialist  
(Physics &  
Engineering)



**Andrea  
Herman**  
Embedded  
Support  
Coordinator



**Karen  
Malaska**  
Program  
Assistant



**Gigi Papillero**  
Executive  
Associate

# OUR COACHES: ATPA'S GREATEST RESOURCE

## Who can be ATPA Coaches?

- Part-time Faculty
- Full-time College Staff able to serve as PTF
- ATPA Staff

## Minimum Qualifications

- Master's Degree or Higher
  - Embedded Coaches
    - College-level teaching experience
  - Most in the sections they are coaching



# WHAT IS ACADEMIC COACHING?

## Academic coaching **IS**:

- Distinct from but complementary to teaching, tutoring, mentoring, or advising
- A partnership between coach and student
- A powerful and evidence-based strategy to empower students to grow and achieve their full potential

## Academic coaching **IS NOT**:

- Academic advising or counseling
- Only useful for students in crisis or on academic probation
- Doing it *for* the student
- A crutch (or is it...? What's wrong with crutches?)

# FROM AN ACHIEVEMENT GAP TO AN ACHIEVEMENT PROMISE

- Pre-2010: Interventions proposed for “underprepared” students. “Barrier courses” identified, including math, English, accounting, biology, and chemistry. Many are gateway, first-level courses.
- 2013: Efforts to “close MC’s achievement gap” formally announced
- [2014 Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force Report](#) and Implementation Groups
- 2015 Achieving the Promise “Bold New Steps”

# ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY BY THE NUMBERS

- **2016:** Year ATPA is established as a result of the Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force Report
  - **2018:** Year embedded Academic Coaching is launched
- Courses selected were those with highest DFW rates at the College
- **13,000:** Number of students with Academic Coaches in FY21
  - **86%:** Of those served are students of color, primarily African-American & Latinx, Latina, and Latino students
  - **70%:** Of students with a personal and/or embedded Academic Coach pass their courses
  - **44.4%:** Percent of students passed Accounting courses prior to embedded support
  - **80.2%:** Percent of students pass Accounting now, after four years of embedded support

## How does an Academic Coach provide embedded support for course success?



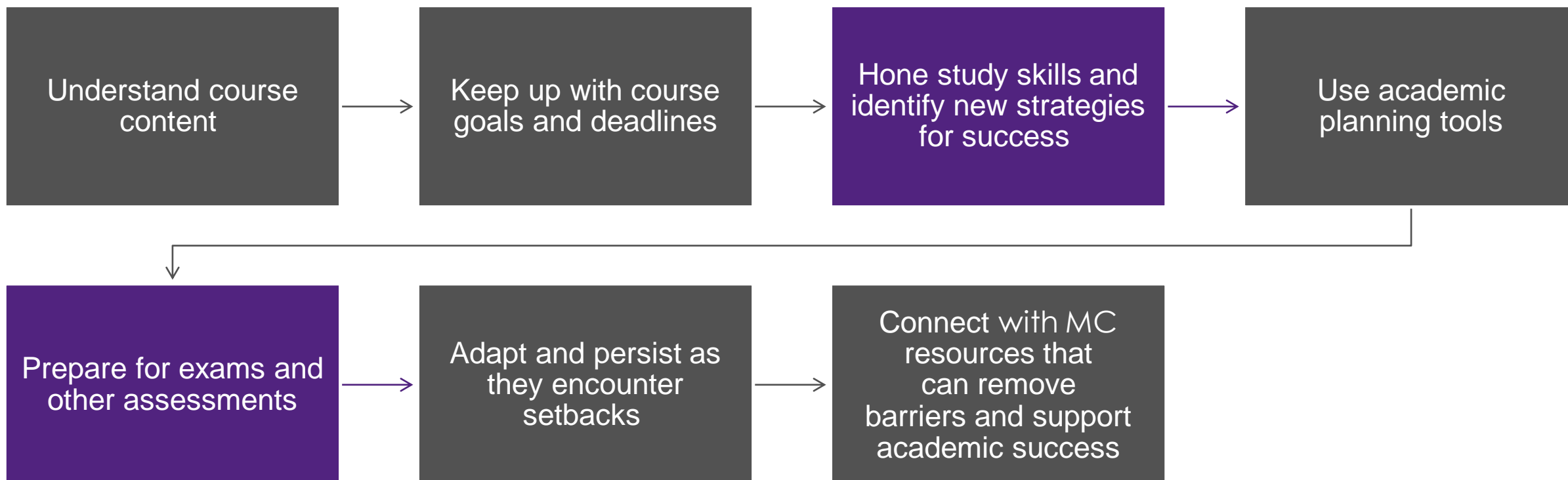
Attends class and engages with students in collaboration with host faculty

Connects with students during scheduled out-of-class coaching sessions

Sends weekly email to students: recapping course content, reminding about deadlines, referring to resources

Creates and shares coaching session reports with host faculty to coordinate ongoing support

# What Does Embedded Coaching Help Students Do?





# Hi! I'm your Biology 150 Academic Coach.

## How do I help students like you succeed?



Dr. Soheila Ebrahimian  
PhD, Medicinal Chemistry  
& Biochemistry

soheila.ebrahimian  
@montgomerycollege.edu

- ☐ circulate through the lab and offer my **support**
- ☐ hold academic **coaching sessions** outside of class/lab
- ☐ demonstrate **critical reading** and **note taking skills** for biology
- ☐ make **connections** across course topics
- ☐ suggest time management and academic planning **strategies**
- ☐ model healthy academic **habits**
- ☐ share my **passion** for learning and biology
- ☐ review important course concepts for **exams** and other assignments



We've got your back.

# WHY ACADEMIC COACHING WORKS: PROACTIVE, PERSISTENT, PERSONALIZED SUPPORT



[Student] came for an in-person individual appointment. They expressed disappointment about their grade on Exam 1. I talked about general exam preparation and problem-solving strategies on their exams. We went over one of the long problems on 1-d kinematics.

Later, [student] returned for an informal session, since I did not have any other appointment at that time. We discussed more generally how to study. Since she was not using the proper textbook, I encouraged her to either obtain Young & Freedman or use the free OpenStax textbook. I also gave her some advice on how to use the textbook well, to find practice problems for conceptual problems, etc.

*-ATPA Physics Embedded Coach*

# What can you work on with a personal Academic Coach?



Creating a personalized academic success plan

Balancing school, work, home, and other commitments

Setting goals and developing better habits to achieve them

Making the most of MC by getting more connected to other students, your professors, and departments

# When's the right time to get an academic coach?

- ☐ When you're struggling and want to make some changes?
- ☐ When you're succeeding and want to continue?
- ☒ All of the above.



**MC**

ACHIEVING  
THE PROMISE  
ACADEMY

*We've got your back.*

# COACHING STRATEGIES ANYONE CAN USE

- Using strategies that \*explicitly\* promote:
  - Student Goal Setting & Self-Efficacy
  - Ongoing Reflection
  - Powerful Questions
  - Meaningful Conversations
  - Authentic and Appropriate Relationships
- Course Assignments
- Group Projects
- Office Hours
- Student Organizations
- Student Experience Project Library Resources
- Partnering with ATPA



# COACHING OUTCOMES WE ALL NEED TO STRIVE FOR

- Student Sense of Purpose
- Student Belonging
- Identity Safe Classrooms
- Culturally-Sustaining Pedagogy
- \*Practices\* that Promote Learning Mindsets

**How do you currently support these outcomes in your role at MC?**

## FURTHER RESOURCES AND TRAINING

- [Creating Student-Centered Policies](#), e.g. for [financially stressed students](#)
- [Establishing Growth-Minded Policies and Expectations](#)
- [Ensuring Student Identity Safety](#)
- [Encouraging Student Connections](#)
- Online Training Module ["Your Syllabus as a Tool to Promote Student Equity, Belonging, and Growth"](#)

# HOW YOU CAN PROMOTE ACADEMIC COACHING

- Promote Academic Coaching to all of your students
- Invite us to present to your class
- If your discipline offers embedded support, collaborate with your part-time colleagues to coordinate support in your sections
- Promote ATPA events and workshops to students
- Ask Department Chairs about opportunities to work with a coach or be a coach
- [Refer specific students to the program via the ATPA website](#)
- Respond to requests from ATPA Coaches for academic progress reports
- Remind students they can register for ATPA embedded support courses, which are searchable on the schedule
- [Visit montgomerycollege.edu/atpa](https://montgomerycollege.edu/atpa) to learn more

# LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ACHIEVING THE PROMISE ACADEMY



Text @atpaupdate to 810-10



atpa@montgomerycollege.edu



montgomerycollege.edu/atpa



linktr.ee/atpa

