

Data Focus of the Month - June 2019

Peer Institutions Offer Comparison Benchmarks



The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is operated by the Institute of Education Statistics, which describes itself as the independent and non-partisan “statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the US Department of Education.” IPEDS collects institutional data on a variety of measures used by state and federal government for policy analysis and development. In addition, the data can be used for institutional peer analysis and benchmarking. Seventeen community colleges across the country are considered “peers” to Montgomery College due to similarity on factors such as enrollment, location, and budget. For example, MC’s FY17 unduplicated headcount was 32,747 and the average of our 17 peers was 33,880. This report looks at comparisons on three factors: completion, retention, and student aid.

MC is slightly lower on graduation, but significantly higher on transfer. Recall that IPEDS graduation looks at new, full-time, degree-seeking students and measures how they do in three years. For MC, 23 percent of new full-time students who entered the College in fall 2014 graduated within three years compared to an average of 25 percent at peer institutions. However, the transfer rate for MC students was 10 points higher than that at peer institutions: 23 percent at MC and 13 percent at peers. Data disaggregated by race/ethnicity show comparable rates to peers for Black, White, and multi-race students; higher graduation rates for American Indian and international students; and lower graduation rates for Asian and Hispanic students (see *Figure 1*).

	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi Race	International	Overall
MC	33%	27%	15%	18%	27%	17%	37%	23%
Peers	17%	38%	15%	22%	28%	18%	33%	25%

Figure 1. Graduation rates at MC and IPEDS peer institutions for students entering in fall 2014.

MC excels in student retention. As you have heard in our Constituent Conversations this year, MC’s new, full-time, degree-seeking students returned to College at a higher rate than students from peer institutions. The MC fall 2014 IPEDS cohort returned the following fall at 75 percent compared to peers’ average of 67 percent.

Student aid is similar, though MC provides much more in institutional grants. A combination of financial aid resources is key to financing a college education. During the 2016–2017 reporting period, the “any grant aid” and state or local grant categories awarded aid to a smaller percentage of MC students than to students from peer institutions. In contrast, notably higher percentages of MC students than students at peer colleges were awarded institutional grants—including Montgomery College Foundation scholarships—and loans (see *Figure 2*). With the exception of institutional grants, MC students received lower award dollars in grants, but higher award dollars in “any grant aid” and “any loan” compared to students at peer institutions (see *Figure 3*).

	Any Grant Aid	Federal Grants	Pell Grants	State/Local Grants	Institutional Grants	Any Loans	Federal Loans
MC	57%	45%	45%	19%	33%	14%	13%
Peers	61%	44%	44%	28%	3%	9%	9%

Figure 2. Percentages of students receiving aid at MC and IPEDS peer institutions in 2016-2017.

	Any Grant Aid	Federal Grants	Pell Grants	State/Local Grants	Institutional Grants	Any Loans	Federal Loans
MC	\$5,017	\$4,437	\$4,351	\$1,513	\$1,810	\$4,969	\$4,901
Peers	\$4,704	\$4,631	\$4,543	\$1,803	\$1,510	\$4,357	\$4,357

Figure 3. Average amount of aid provided to students at MC and IPEDS peer institutions in 2016-2017.