

# MONTGOMERY COLLEGE RISING PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

MEMBER MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT

MAY 2023

## Nik Sushka, Director of the Achieving the Promise Academy



Nik has over 20 years of experience in higher education, nonprofit, and advocacy work, including teaching English Composition and Women's Studies, coordinating community-engaged learning, and steering grant-funded efforts to promote 2020 Census completion, expand student voter engagement, and create pathways into living wage careers.

Currently, Nik is the Director of the College's academic coaching program, the Achieving the Promise Academy (ATPA). Created in 2016 following recommendations of a collegewide "achievement gap" taskforce, ATPA remains focused on ensuring every student, especially those historically marginalized and underserved in higher

education, has the assistance, opportunities, and tools needed to succeed in college.

Today, ATPA serves over 12,000 students annually with embedded academic coaching in high-priority, historically challenging courses, as well as more than 450 students each year with personal academic coaching for college success.

To help students achieve the promise of their full potential and MC make good on the promise of higher education, academic coaches are trained to use culturally-responsive, evidenced-based strategies. Through proactive and personalized support in and out of the classroom, coaches



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

In addition to providing leadership for ATPA, Nik has also served as an embedded academic coach in English courses. As an embedded coach, Nik partners with each course's host faculty, providing additional in-class support on writing workshop days and out-of-class coaching sessions for students.

She shares, "Serving as an embedded coach has been an unexpected opportunity to return to the classroom, in a role where I get to apply modern-day research on the science of the brain and social and emotional learning."

"When I meet with students, we have powerful conversations about their goals and past academic experiences. I help them connect what they're learning in class to what they want to do in the future. And as we unpack the challenges they're encountering, I help them make plans and try new learning strategies."

"It's fantastically rewarding to see a student's perception of their abilities shift as they conquer each challenge and move one step closer to their ultimate goals."

The oldest of three daughters, Nik was born and raised in Central Illinois, where she credits her commitment to public service to her parents, a firefighter and a special educator, and her early love of learning to the public library's "Bookmobile" service in rural communities. Nik enjoys traveling, watching movies, and playing board games with her spouse, Dave, and their child, Parker.

