



Montgomery College Rising Professionals Association (MCRPA) Member Spotlight - January 2020

Colleen Dolak

1. How long have you worked at Montgomery College, and what is your current role?

I've been at MC for nine years. I was recently promoted from Alumni Relations Manager to Annual Fund Manager.

2. Who inspires you?

Aside from Dr. Pollard? I have been reading a lot of Brené Brown. Her social science work around courage, vulnerability, shame and empathy is powerful, insightful and necessary.

3. What is your favorite thing about working at MC?

My favorite thing is the impact we make on our students and our community. My work helps students with scholarships to achieve their dreams. What could be better?

4. How long have you been in your current profession?

Officially- two weeks. It's been seven years training in advancement, and have been taking on new task as a development officer since July.

5. How do you define success? What does success look like?

Success is finding balance in your life. Some days you get it and some you don't!

6. What do you enjoy most about Montgomery College students?

Our students have such gratitude for the opportunities that are presented to them.

7. What are you currently passionate about?

Since we're in the midst of a pandemic, I've started baking bread like so many others. Sourdough has always been a favorite of mine, but I've learned so much about the science behind it. I've found some amazing bakers through social media – some bake loaves that look like landscapes- complete art!

8. What is one goal you hope to achieve this year?

Great question! This year I am keeping my goals small- I just want to achieve a maintenance of last year. With so much pivoting and changing, from our stay at home order, to online

school for my children, and a new role at work- staying safe and on track with my work and personal life will be a huge accomplishment.

9. What is your favorite quote?

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. ~ The Dalai Lama

10. What hobby would you get into if time and money were not an issue?

SCUBA diving. I learned how to dive in Belize when I was 23. My family and I got an underwater certification in one of the most beautiful places I've ever been.

11. They say that everyone has a book in them. What would be the title of your book?

Discovering Your Light Within. I think we all are all on a journey of discovery and improvement. Often, we focus on the external for changes. Those are important, and my own experience is that when we shift our perceptions slightly we generate a ton of energy and power for change.

12. What do you want to be remembered for?

Positive change. In my current job, as a mom, as a community member and leader and as a health coach, I hold the chance to make a positive impact for others. I think change in life is inevitable, so working for positive change is important.

13. When people come to you for help, what do they usually want help with?

I think it all boils down to perspective. My kids usually come to me for expertise, but that comes with experience. Professionally, or as a leader, it's usually a need for perspective and looking at the big picture.

14. Who has impressed you most with what they've accomplished?

There's an author Rachel Hollis- she's 37 years old, the mother of four kids who left her poor mid-western roots for LA after graduating from high school. With no higher education, she's a social media icon, lifestyle blogger, podcaster and motivational speaker. She started an event planning company that snowballed into a communications and branding company and has written three novels, two cookbooks and two non-fiction best sellers.

15. What are you interested in that most people haven't heard of?

Sound baths- I've recently begun to explore this as a form of meditation. It makes sense to me that we should tap into our senses to explore meditation.

16. What is something you think everyone should do at least once in their lives?

Work in the service industry. A coffee shop, slinging burgers, or restaurant server. I think it offers a level of humility that every single person should know.

17. Who was your idol growing up?

I don't know that I had one. I've always taken wisdom from lots of different places and people.

18. What profession did you want to work in when you were younger?

I think it changed every year- I wanted to be a teacher, a lawyer, an ambassador, a hairdresser, a stay at home mom, and a chef. I don't think anyone thinks to be a fundraiser when they grow up- can you imagine at 5 years old thinking "I want to grow up and ask people for money!"

19. Where do you see yourself in 10 or 20 years?

In 10 years, my kids will be old enough to be living on their own and possibly finished with college, so I would like to be working, but living by a lake. I love the water! In 20 years, I'd love to have the option to be retired! My father retired in his early 50s, and I would like to have the freedom to travel comfortably by then.

20. Who are some of the biggest supporters in your professional career(s)?

Aside from my spouse, each of my "bosses" have been advocates for me- I've been clear about my hopes and dreams and my affinity for the College, and they have been very supportive. In my opinion, the best way to advance yourself at any organization is to find the alignment with your goals and your supervisor's goals. Have candid conversations and be genuinely curious. Ask them what they want to achieve and find ways to support them and they will mirror those actions back to you.

21. What do you enjoy the most about MCRPA?

The people. Ultimately, I think all of our work and lives comes down to relationships and the bonds we form with other people. I have had some of the most profound and transformative conversations with some of the leaders of MCRPA. I love being able to "unplug" with peers who are familiar with some of the nuances of our MC culture and have some real talk.