

OPENING SPEECH
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The Mission's Mission

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
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Good morning!

At our closing meeting, I went through a *number* of goals for the College.

Today I want to focus on one we have *checked off* our to-do list. I am proud of the fact that we have new *uplifting* and *memorable* mission, vision, and core values statements, statements that will form the basis of our strategic planning process.

But before the drum roll moment when we officially unveil them, watch this video that I think shows a pitfall we avoided that so many companies fall into during this process.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/dan-heath/switch/writing-mission-statement-doesnt-suck>

We created statements that say something- that encapsulate who we are in an inspiring way.

THANK YOU to the mission task force who spent much of last year absorbed in this process.

Let's give them a round of applause.

Our New Statements

Without further ado.

Listen to our students reading our new mission, vision and core value statements.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FX37BBW_cJU&feature=channel_video_title

While I could spend a substantial amount of time on each of these statements, I want to focus on the mission.

We empower our students to change their lives and we enrich the life of our community. We are accountable for our results.

It is specific, uplifting, and has the added benefit of being 100 percent true! Moreover, it reflects the amazing complexity and significant responsibility of this College in the lives of our students and the community we serve.

Mission Sentence 1

I want to break down our mission.

We empower our students to change their lives.

Students like Dennis, whose first attempt at College resulted in what he calls a “hiatus from my scholarly adventure.” A decade later, driving down Rockville Pike kickstarted, in his words, “Phase 2” of his life. Now, Dennis works at a local hotel and conference center while pursuing a degree in hospitality management. Hoping to graduate in a couple years, he writes: “I am getting a second chance: a second chance to achieve, a second chance to believe, a second chance at life.” On a side note, in a blog Dennis posted as a student blogger, he asks our College to be his Valentine. I guess the doors our College helped him open sent his heart a flutter.

Notice those words- helped him open. We didn’t open them for him.

That is a crucial change to our mission.

It does not say **we** change lives. But rather that we **empower** *students to change their lives.*

We do not hand out diplomas and certificates.

We do not hand out passing grades.

We do not hand out transfer opportunities.

Our students, because of you in this room, develop the knowledge, confidence, determination to change their own lives. We give them the power to do this. That is, in fact, our power as a College.

Mission Sentence 2

By doing this, *we enrich the life of our community.*

We are on our way to being the most relevant community college in the country. What does this mean?

It means we listen to the needs of our community.

We work in partnership with business to find out what they want in future employees. We become an economic development engine. We create a skilled workforce, high-wage jobs, and other intangibles.

At the same time, we provide access to cultural activities—organized and produced by our students, faculty, and staff—that go beyond classroom walls: we invite intellectually challenging speakers to our campuses; we offer original concerts, art exhibits, and theater performances; we give back by serving food to the homeless, tutoring a struggling child, and more.

We enrich the life of our community. Simply put, we are relevant because we are germane to the subject at hand. We are intentional and deliberate in honoring our social contract with our community.

But the social contract does not end there. While we know our work transforms lives, families, and communities, the acts of knowing and doing is no longer enough. We must show *results*.

Mission Sentence 3

Hence, the third part of our mission: *we are accountable for our results*.

When a Middle States representative visited this past summer, it highlighted the need for greater accountability. Accountability is more than just a buzz word—it is our responsibility as educators and stewards of the taxpayer’s resources. And accrediting bodies are not the only ones who have called, are calling, and will be calling for us to demonstrate our outcomes.

Accountability makes real the mission, and as such, it is an inherent part of who we are and who we aspire to be. It must become a part of how we operate on a visceral level.

Part and parcel with holding ourselves accountable is changing the way we view ourselves. In fact, Middle States already is doing that. For the first time ever, just last year, the organization named us as *an* institution.

A

Single

College.

In the past, Middle States would view each campus through an individual lens...

Three campuses.

Three accreditations.

Even three separate visiting teams in the past.

But no more. Middle States now views us as one College and we *must* do the same.

As such, over the next year you will hear and see me challenging us to be authentic in actualizing a one college consciousness. We must organize ourselves in a way that allows us to flourish as a single entity, despite having a number of separate, moving parts. We are one College.

While I want each campus to retain its own sense of style, gone are the days of “this is how we do it on this campus.”

Here are the days of saying: “this is how Montgomery College should, can, and will do it.”

This requires your help, your buy in, your commitment.

Each and every one of us must look at our own actions under a microscope. We must consider the policy and practice implications of how we do business and align our actions with our words.

This requires active and engaged participation by all members of the college community. And I need your help. Many of you have heard me say that, contrary to popular belief, I have come to the conclusion that Montgomery College does not have a communication problem. We have a participation problem.

And that is what we will be addressing with the implementation of our new governance system, a system that provides an opportunity—dare I say a responsibility—for engagement by all in our decision-making process: faculty, both full-time and part-time; staff, both bargaining and non-bargaining; students, both credit and non-credit; and administrators.

One of my favorite movies illustrates this for me. In *The American President*, President Shephard explains our democracy requires advanced citizenship, that with great privilege there is great responsibility. The right to be a part of a democracy comes with the responsibility to be actively engaged to ensure that your voice is heard. It is the same as students and employees of Montgomery College. The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Governance worked on this initiative last spring and developed a model. The task force consisted of representatives from constituency groups across the college: faculty...full-time and part-time, staff...bargaining and non-bargaining, campuses and WDCE, and students. The task force's model was discussed at open forums across the College. I have personally met with bargaining units and have heard their feedback. The Board of Trustees has endorsed the model. Now it's time for implementation. I implore you to be engaged. I stand here asking for your voice.

I am also making a promise to you: to listen.

That is one reason that I launched the Service-Outreach-and-Support or SOS initiative. I heard you in how you described your perceptions of, and experiences with, central administration.

When we formed the SOS committee last year, the goal was to ensure that central administration is not an island but rather a fully-integrated, supportive, responsive aid to our campuses. That we own our service role, and take pride in it.

So, Central Administration is gone.

Now, we are Central Services.

It's not just semantics; it is a change in orientation. You'll hear more information about SOS in just a few minutes.

Common Student Experience

And in the next several weeks, you will hear about yet another way I am asking you to get involved. I will be asking Dr. Beverly Walker-Griffea, our new senior vice president for student services, to assemble a broad, inclusive task force to craft a definition of what I call the *Common Student Experience*.

The number one thing I hear from students is “Why can’t I get tutoring on this campus like I can on that one? Why can’t I use software on this campus like I can on that one?”

Let me be clear.

I am not asking for every campus to become cookie cutters of one another. Rather, I am asking for us to become a single Montgomery College chorus. Each campus retains its distinct, unique voice, but the sum of those voices working in concert is much more powerful. When blended together, there is consistency and cooperation. It is the epitome of a harmonized experience for its participants and listeners.

We must in practice and principle establish guidelines that ensure a student’s common needs are met in a consistent and equitable way at *any* of the campuses and locations.

There must be certain truths that all our students come to expect, regardless of campus, regardless of major, regardless of degree, certificate, or transfer goals.

I hope to revisit this concept in more detail at the spring opening meeting.

“Homework”

Have I stressed my desire to hear your thoughts on how we can strengthen our College?

Well... yet again, I am asking for MORE! I told you that I don’t believe in playing small.

I have two homework assignments.

Since our College mission statement will be the foundation of our own strategic plan, its success depends on every member of our community internalizing it and bringing it to life.

I want to know: what do these words mean to you?

We empower our students to change their lives and we enrich the life of our community. We are accountable for our results.

Personal Mission Statements

I believe in the power of mission statements. So, I ask you to create your own personal mission statement.

I am going to let you in on my own little secret- I have a mission statement for my own life.

And today, I want to share one part about maintaining a work-life balance:

I will not engage in behavior or actions that compromise my values or my relationships. I will be honest about my abilities, and strategically consider my movements and actions. More than anything, I want to be happy with my career, challenged by my work, and respected by those with whom I work.

I am by no means suggesting that I have reached my goal. In fact, I would offer that is not possible.

The essence of my mission is to constantly challenge myself to self-betterment so I, in turn, can better the community around me. To me, these are not just words. They are a frame of mind, a way of re-centering me and putting challenges in perspective.

So where do you start?

Dr. Stephen Covey, who has made mission statements his mission says it is not about inventing but rather uncovering your mission. *“You have a purpose in life. You know in your heart what's most important to you. In fact, your mission and values are expressed every day, by how you live—you just may not realize it.”*

You live your mission every single day with every single action you take.

So when putting it on paper, make it resonate with your everyday life.

You can think big by thinking small.

You can think broad.

You can write down a single word or three pages.

Your own mission statement is all about you. But, we all will benefit. Living your own mission will help each of us live up to our common mission.

Postcards

This brings me to my second assignment: tell me how you live our mission.

Pick up a “Mission Moment Postcard” on your way out and write down a few sentences that breathe life into our mission statement.

Tell me a life you have empowered for change.

Tell me a story about how you have enriched the life of our community.

Tell me an example of how you have been accountable for our results.

Conclusion

As you embark on a new school year, I challenge you to think about how our new mission synchs with your own personal mission. I challenge you to be an active architect in defining and shaping the future of the college. I challenge you to be deeply engaged, to be willing to be both excited and uncomfortable as we stretch into the organization that makes our vision statement real.

And I challenge you to not be afraid to shine.