

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

January 2012



**Montgomery College**  
endless possibilities



Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that 2012 is here already. I will begin my new year by taking time for personal reflection. I plan to review my personal mission statement and reflect on where I was, where I am, and where I want to go.

Looking at the year ahead, I know I will continue to work on balance, realizing I am at my peak only when I embrace every aspect of who I am: mother, partner, teacher, colleague, College president, community member, and more.

Realizing our students balance a number of different roles in their own lives will be key to achieving our completion goals as a College. I have asked our campus leaders about their new year's resolutions to boost student completion and their plans for the year ahead. Let me do the same here and share three key efforts we have undertaken to achieve these goals on a collegewide level.

- 1) **The Common Student Experience.** The College's Common Student Experience Task Force is delving into how to create certain truths that all of our students should come to expect, regardless of campus, major, degree, certificate or transfer goals. I hope the Common Student Experience will enable us to be like GPS devices for each and every student, providing clear directions to their destination, whether that be degree or certification completion, transfer, workforce skill, or any other goal.
- 2) **College Strategic Plan.** We currently are in the process of cementing a strategic plan that outlines key performance indicators. I believe we must have articulated benchmarks against which we can measure our progress toward meeting completion goals. Claiming our future depends on knowing not only where we want to go, but also where we are each step of the way.
- 3) **Student Services Restructuring.** The College is working to transition our student development functions from a campus-reporting function into a new student services unit. My hope is that the new unit will help ensure an integrated and comprehensive advising model, by making student advising, counseling, orientation, the first-year experience, and support services central to student success.

As always, I look forward to discussing my own ideas, as well as the resolutions our College units have included in this month's report, with you. Here's to a healthy, happy, and productive 2012!

### **Board Discussion Questions:**

1. What resolutions do you believe the College needs to embrace in order to boost student completion rates?
2. How do you think the College can best achieve these resolutions, given the College challenges that were shared in my December report?

## We resolve to...

- Identify ways to engage students in active learning;
- Use outcomes assessment data to inform future directions in courses;
- Provide greater access to our instructional support centers, continue to update instructional materials and methods, and measure their impact on student success;
- Maintain and build upon the mentoring and advising of students within our disciplines;
- Increase our students' feelings of connectedness to Montgomery College;
- Empower our students to become learners who complete a degree or certificate or program and who take advantage of opportunities like learning communities, service learning, internships, scholarships, awards, leadership roles, and transfer options;
- Develop partnerships with the Montgomery County community, utilizing our new buildings and talented faculty, alumni, and students to further position the College as a vital player;
- Continue to embrace and take pride in the diversity of our community and to capitalize on the learning opportunities generated by our diversity.

## Curriculum

- The English discipline is planning to pilot Advancement to College English (ACE) in the spring semester. The goal is to help students achieve their completion goals, and to address success and retention rates. In this program, students who have tested as Reading Exempt, but fall in the Developmental English 80–89 range (EN 002), will have the opportunity to place directly into EN 101A after successful completion of a writing sample. In order to ensure that these students have the opportunity to be successful at this more advanced level, the English discipline has designed special sections of EN 101A that incorporate additional tutoring, student success materials, and smaller class sizes.
- To help students achieve their completion goals, and to address success and retention rates, the English discipline collegewide is currently working on a year-long project to realign the composition course sequence to ensure that it is meeting the needs of students as well as the needs of other disciplines. During the fall semester, the discipline revisited course titles, descriptions, outcomes, and requirements at every level of the composition sequence. During the spring semester, the discipline expects to develop a program level assessment to demonstrate student success at the completion of the composition program.
- A collegewide group of math faculty members meet regularly to discuss MA 094, the newly redesigned developmental math course, to look at the data, talk about what they observe, and determine what changes to make to the implementation. Last fall, the College matched counselors with every student enrolled in sections of the course to act as personal academic and counseling support. Throughout the semester, counselors visited classrooms at least twice during the semester to talk to students, make appointments, and recommend campus resources as needed. Additionally, at the Germantown Campus, professors required all students to meet with a counselor. Those who were not making satisfactory progress were encouraged to schedule additional meetings with a counselor. Discussions between the student and counselor are not limited to a lack of understanding of the content or a need for additional math help; rather, discussions include issues such as math anxiety, study skills, the expectations of being a college student, and personal issues. This process is based on a recommendation by the collegewide task force that studied best practices for counselor involvement to support student success in these developmental math courses.
- The business task force is using comments from Middle States to inform the direction of courses in accounting, business, business statistics, and economics.
- The College is identifying and addressing barrier courses—those courses with high enrollment and low success. The poor success rates in these courses prevent students from pursuing higher-level coursework in those disciplines. Courses currently under review are in the accounting, chemistry, education, and mathematics disciplines.
- A number of art faculty members will receive training in inquiry-based instruction this spring and then will apply it in their 2-D and 3-D design classes.
- American Sign Language (ASL) faculty will conduct workshops with Montgomery County Public Schools teachers in order to align the ASL curriculum. This effort is funded, in part, by federal Perkins money.



- Collaborations between credit and noncredit offerings continue to strengthen thanks to co-listed course offerings. Co-listing provides a low-risk opportunity for noncredit students to sample a new career area, usually in the context of the full program laboratory in a course taught by a credit department faculty member. Some students in such sections choose to move into credit major status.

## Student Support

- Speech and theatre faculty are implementing an early intervention pilot, in which faculty contact students who are failing at midterm to identify what help is needed to get back on track.
- Maryland's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MI-BEST) pilot project, currently underway, allows the College to offer contextual English as a Second Language course offerings for students wishing to learn occupational course content concurrent with improving English language skills. Spring formats include English for speakers of other languages for the building trades, customer service, and healthcare occupational areas. The College is hoping to receive a second round of funding in order to offer certified nursing assistant and technology office professional specialist courses. MI-BEST is funded partially by the Casey Foundation and the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation.
- The College is expanding credential offerings this spring and summer in health career fields, such as health information technology. Programs leading to industry certifications and credentials continue to be popular, allowing flexibility for working adult students. The College experienced more than 6,000 noncredit enrollments in industry credentialing coursework, including apprenticeship, automotive programs, early childhood education, health occupations, project management, and real estate.
- The School of Art + Design has adopted the mantra "Create—Graduate—Transfer" and is putting teeth behind it by having students present their portfolios and transfer pieces to visiting representatives from major arts schools, including the Maryland Institute College of Art; the Columbus College of Art and Design of Columbus, Ohio; and the Art Center of Design of Pasadena, California. There are plans to collaborate with the visual arts program in the spring to expand the program to more visiting schools. Additionally, first-year students now attend the event to witness what they will be expected to accomplish. As one student put it: "[i]t's a bit scary, but inspiring, to see what students are doing and to see their enthusiasm when speaking to the colleges."
- As online registration increases, visual arts program faculty plan to expand their advising role with all new students in the arts. They have found that one-on-one contact with a faculty adviser is the best method to ensure that students are taking classes to fulfill their requirements and boost their retention. The program also encourages current students to declare themselves as art majors if they had selected general studies or no major when they entered the College. This change enables students to become eligible for scholarships that are designated specifically for art majors.
- More programs are implementing the use of the Test of Essential Academic Skills assessment as part of next fall's admission process, since doing so helped improve student completion in the health sciences program. Additionally, instructors are holding additional free reviews prior to major certification exams in both credit and Workforce Development & Continuing Education programs such as certified nursing assistant and pharmacy tech.
- During this spring semester, MCPride and Allies will create and develop a College web page. The group also is planning a one-day consortium for faculty, staff, and administrators who want to develop their own programs at other community colleges.

## Student Stories

- [Ricky Day's story](#) proves how the College's Graduate Transitions Program (GTP) truly empowers student completion. After Ricky successfully completed the program in May 2009, Seeking Equality, Empowerment, and Community for People with Development Disabilities selected him to participate in a grant program with the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH was so impressed with Ricky's skills, knowledge, personality, and work ethic that he was hired full-time with a competitive salary. GTP, a two-year program in Workforce Development & Continuing Education, is designed to prepare developmentally disabled students to become productive citizens. They take six classes per semester: reading, math, computers, science, history, and communications. Students also engage with guest presenters about employment and career exploration.



Thanks to funding from the county, the students prepare, interview, and receive paid employment while in the program. Most GTP students return to the College to mentor and work with classes of GTP students, as well as to continue to take other classes in response to their own new goals and needs.

- College internships provide a bridge between the academic and professional worlds. For example, students have the opportunity to intern in laboratories at the “start-up” businesses operating in the Germantown Innovation Center, which is located on the second floor of the Goldenrod Building at the Germantown Campus. During his first semester, student Yi Shen served as an intern for Advanced Biomimetic Sensors, Inc. (ABS), a biotechnology company located in the innovation center. Dr. Ellen Chen is president of ABS. The following story about Yi’s experience is in his own words:

*“My time with Advanced Biomimetic Sensors, Inc., has been a whirlwind of activity. From the first day on, it was a nonstop immersion into a foreign and fast-paced world of independent grant research. I got a full 360-degree view of what it takes to make it in the research business. Working with Dr. Chen, I explored many different facets of her company and gained familiarity with much of the goings-on of each.*

*My first duty involved becoming acclimated with the laboratory setting. Channeling my inner Karate Kid, Dr. Chen had me clean glassware, calibrate instruments, and perfect my pipette skills in a most disciplined and repetitive manner until doing so was second nature. Next came a trial by fire immersion into engineering design. There was no time within the internship to train me. The work I was doing was legitimate with real deadlines and real consequences. I was thrust into a position of designing and modeling the various prototypes Dr. Chen had invented for proposal submission and patent approval. It was exhilarating as well as unequivocally daunting. As the weeks flew by, different projects required different treatments. For one project, I was told to track down surface-coating services and to price them. Another project had me pricing the materials for possible mass-production and tabulating the results into a spreadsheet for a proposal to Raytheon Corp.*

*Overall, the experience was very rewarding and I have greatly broadened my horizons through the experience. I learned that I was capable of things that I normally would never even think possible. I learned to be creative, spontaneous, and flexible. I learned to look at the big picture and be goal-oriented because, if I got overly nitpicky over a detail, the entire project would have been derailed in a major way. I thank Dr. Chen for throwing me into the deep end, as I have emerged a much more capable person because of it.”*

