



President's Report to the Board

November 2012

Every four years during this very month, our country expects us to fulfill a civic responsibility at the ballot box. We have the duty of deciding who will lead and shape our country as president of the United States. It is a great responsibility and, yet, for many individuals and institutions, like ours, it is but one day of many when we directly contribute to our community's future. At Montgomery College, we devote every day to empowering students to change their lives, enriching the life of our community, and holding ourselves accountable for our results.

As one of the largest employers in our county and one of the largest undergraduate institutions in the state, Montgomery College is in a position to be a catalyst for community change, a leader in community development, and an anchor in community relevancy—all through education. We drive economic development, community transformation, and cultural renewal. Our College understands—and dare I say, embraces—our role as a significant presence in our community. We are highly motivated to invest in our county's greatest assets: our people, our community. This position of power and influence means the responsibility to be a thought center, and a thought generator. We cannot, and will not, shy from the difficult conversations. *Montgomery College 2020* emphasizes our role as a place that “facilitates intercultural understanding and/or neutral public dialogues on issues of importance and to bring the community to the College.” We insert ourselves into our community narrative, and by doing so, we signify our commitment to this community and the mutuality of our existence.

I would contend that such a deeply ingrained sense of community commitment makes us an “anchor institution.” The Penn Institute for Urban Research [defines](#) anchor institutions as “economic engines for cities and regions, acting as real estate developers, employers, and purchasers of goods, magnets for complementary businesses, community builders, and developers of human capital.” To me, the term goes beyond dollars and cents; it means that we shape the future of our community in *every sense*. Rich Harwood of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation [calls](#) anchor institutions “those special groups in communities that help to spark and lead change, convene and connect others, and focus on community.” Educational



organizations are key members of those special groups; a Brookings Institution [Report](#) found that “eds and meds” are on the list of top 10 private employers in the 20 largest cities in the US.

Part of fulfilling our role as an anchor institution rests on ensuring the relevancy of our curriculum in meeting the needs of our students and the needs of the community, the nation, and the world through programs that address the global, knowledge-based economy. We cannot achieve this mission without forming partnerships with members of our community; they are the new currency in our mission. Our partners inform us about the stumbling blocks students might face. Our partners provide support when we need state-of-the-art equipment in our labs. Our partners help make sure our students receive the most up-to-date, relevant, and pertinent education. Our partners are essential in helping us adapt quickly to the needs of today...or, I could say, tomorrow. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to successful partnerships; therefore, the College works to diversify the type of organizations with whom we partner, as well as the types of opportunities the partnerships provide.

We have developed pragmatic partnerships, where organizations leverage their resources by donating a building or equipment—the necessary infrastructure for hands-on education. For instance, Marriott Corporation provides ongoing funding for the Marriott Hospitality Center on our Rockville Campus, as well as for instructional supplies, scholarships, field trips, and equipment for an updated kitchen where students learn the ropes of food and business management. On our Germantown Campus, our partnership with Holy Cross Hospital not only will establish a learning hospital that will be an educational pipeline to the jobs of tomorrow, but also will create an ongoing annual local impact of more than \$200 million.¹

To fulfill our mission, we must go beyond the pragmatic and also develop conceptual partnerships, where companies lend their talent and expertise to mentor students and help faculty devise highly relevant curricula. For instance, the College is in the midst of solidifying a partnership with Gap, Inc., that would guarantee management positions for nearly a dozen College students. Our partnership with Discovery Communications not only has resulted in internship opportunities for a number of students—and a full-time position for one—but also has introduced dozens of students directly to executives who lend expertise on the skills, technological tools, and job-searching strategies necessary to compete in today's workforce.

The College also makes a concerted effort to form partnerships with small businesses, which have an essential impact on the health of our local economy. We have [tapped](#) a local CEO, Bobby Patton of Patton Electronics, to spearhead the External Advisory Committee to our [Graduate and Transfer STEM Talent Expansion Program](#) (GT STEP) program, which is funded through a recent grant award from the National Science Foundation. In addition to providing cutting-edge STEM education, the program also will help place STEM students in internships at local business, including at Patton Electronics. What makes this partnership even more special is that at least five members of the Patton family call themselves Montgomery College alumni, and

¹ <http://www.holycrossgermantown.org/economic-impact>



they were featured on the cover of our [spring 2010 Insights magazine](#)! As another example, the College has [partnered](#) with Amarex Clinical Trials LLC to create a course, Clinical Trial Project Management, to prepare individuals to oversee and manage the Food and Drug Administration's trial process for new pharmaceuticals. A number of students successfully completed the inaugural course, with one securing full-time employment with Amarex. The College will offer the course again this month for 25 new students. Finally, Workforce Development & Continuing Education is developing a new course based on the needs of our community; a private, proprietary child development center commissioned our College to implement the Maryland State Department of Education-approved 90-hour child growth and development/curriculum planning course onsite at their facility.

Being an anchor institution means thinking beyond private-public partnerships. Our new Office of Advancement and Community Engagement, under the leadership of Senior Vice President David Sears, will soon have a director of community engagement who will establish community engagement centers throughout our county. Rather than be anchored at our campuses, these satellite centers will enable the College to directly reach underserved populations in the areas where they live and work.

Speaking of underserved populations, last year marked the inaugural year of a partnership with the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. The College helped inmates receive high school diplomas and provided them with the knowledge and support necessary to pursue education upon release. One of last summer's graduates is enrolled at the College, with the help of a scholarship, and hopes to transfer to a four-year university in the future. We are developing a curriculum for workforce development classes, including Digital Literacy and Building Trades, to take place at the correctional facility, as well as planning to restart the correctional facility's bakery training program that ended due to financial constraints.

Anchor institutions enrich more than the immediate community; there are no geographic boundaries to the reach of an anchor's impact. In fact, I contend that education may be our country's most important export. That is why the College developed partnerships with leaders in India and Ethiopia. Just last month, 10 Montgomery College faculty, staff, and administrators gave a symposium to members of the administration at the University of Gondar in Ethiopia about the US community college system. Staff at the US Ethiopian Embassy indicated that Ethiopia needs assistance in capacity building, and enriching its higher education structure, including strategic planning, governance, and financial management. There are social needs as well; women comprise only 11 percent of the university's student population, and they enter the program already lagging behind their male classmates. A similar partnership with leaders in India resulted in a number of visits to each other's country in hopes of demonstrating what our institution does best and to learn about the best practices in India's own higher education system. The relationship between our College and India attracted local, national, and international attention.

The College also benefits from our international partnerships. In addition to establishing the College as a thought leader, the partnerships provide unique opportunities to learn from our counterparts overseas and to infuse our own students and community with an increasingly crucial



international perspective. With the door open to international exchange, I anticipate these are the first of many instances of the College receiving international grants and other revenue-enhancing opportunities.

No matter which model, partnership currency only works when the parties involved realize that each is left better in the exchange. In fact, I would contend that the success of an anchor institution depends on the success of its constituents, partners, and community. The Brookings Institution [Report](#) explained that anchor institutions are starting to recognize that “their health depends on their cities’ health.” Cultivating mutually beneficial partnerships is a *requirement* for our own institutional health, and the health of the community in which we breathe.

The great Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. inspired me to think about this idea of mutuality, which I have spoken about in the past. In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” he wrote “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.” As an anchor institution, Montgomery College and our partners are in a unique position to guide that single destiny. The quality of life for those with whom we interact, teach, and motivate only can be measured when we look at the quality of life for the entire community in which we live, work, and play. Building up a student, a local business, a government agency, or another country will have an enormous ripple effect on our College and community.

I ask you, as board members, to consider our role as an anchor institution and the impact of partnerships in this mission. You are a critical lynchpin; you spend your days as part of the external community, yet you play an integral role in the direction of our institution. I encourage you to share with me any partnership opportunities you think would augment our position as an anchor institution. Consider attending our community engagement events as representatives of the College. Above all, I ask for you to continue to be in the forefront of shaping our institution’s future, and the future of our community, 365 days a year.

Monthly Discussion Questions²

1. **Institutional needs.** What kind of change, if any, does our institution need?
2. **Context and competition.** Do we understand our institution’s competitive position?
3. **Consequences of no change.** What are the consequences if we do not engage in a change process?
4. **Leadership capacity.** As a board and as individual board members, are we able and willing to work with our president to bring about positive change?
5. **Change process and players.** Based on this discussion, what is the right role for the board to play at this time?

² Adopted from MacTaggart, Terrence J., *Leading Change: How Boards and Presidents Build Exceptional Academic Institutions*, AGB Press, 2011 (pp. 21-22).

