



President's Report to the Board

January 2014

We say it all the time: We are home to 60,000 credit and noncredit students. But who are the individuals behind the numbers? Who are our students? It seems that the common perception in our community is that they are “traditional” community college students—recent high school graduates—not ready for college, either academically, personally, or financially, who turn to our College. While we pride ourselves on being here for those students, believing that those students are the only ones we serve—or even the majority of who we serve—is a fiction. We are so much more. Our students are so much more.

This month's President's Report focuses on initiatives at the College that are designed to reach our students who do not fit this “traditional” perception, but rather make our College what it is today. This report focuses primarily on our credit population, as they are the students we most often track.

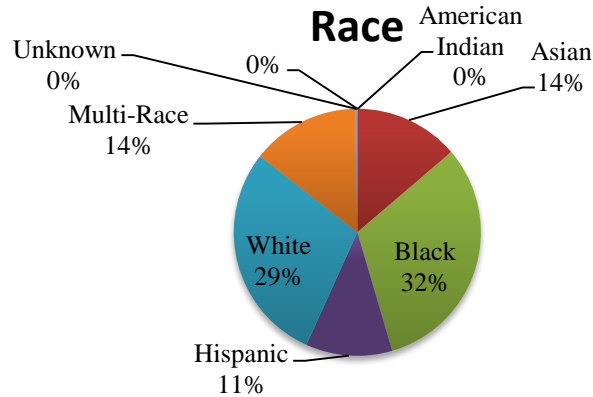
The Numbers

I certainly do not want this report to be a sea of numbers, but I do want to set the context by including some of the statistical information that we know from the latest snapshot of our fall 2013 credit enrollment.

- **Enrollment:** This fall, there are 26,155 students taking a total of 238,136 credit hours. The dip in enrollment we currently are experiencing is likely the calm before the storm. Our research indicates that we will have rapid acceleration in enrollment beginning around 2018. That spike exists because MCPS predicts a future swelling of new students in its schools, which will likely mean an increase in our future enrollment as well.
- **Student Type:** Almost two-thirds of our students (64.7 percent) are part time, while 35.3 percent are full time.



- **Citizenship:** There are 7,614 non-US citizens enrolled in classes, representing 164 counties of origin and 29.1 percent of the student population.
- **Gender:** More than half of our students, 53 percent, are females; 47 percent are male.
- **Race:** Student race data are shown in this pie chart:



Note: The vast majority (80+ percent) of our multi-race students are Hispanic/Latino *and* something else, which means our Hispanic/Latino students are approximately 23 percent of the student body.

Inside the Numbers

These basic numbers are enlightening, but they are the ones that we usually discuss most. This time, I am interested in sharing the microdata, the numbers within these broader numbers.

- **Residence:** It is no surprise that the vast majority—90 percent—of our students pay in-county tuition, while only five percent pay the in-state out-of-county rate, and another five percent pay the out-of-state tuition. But it is most interesting to look specifically where the College draws students from *within* the county: nearly 40 percent of in-county students come from upper Montgomery County. Almost 37 percent come from the mid-county region, and 22 percent come from the lower county.
- **Age:** The ages of our students run the continuum, and there is no single majority age group. Of our credit students, 40 percent are under the age of 20; 38 percent are between 21 and 29 years old; and 22 percent are over the age of 30. The average age is 26.



- **Degree Goals:** Nearly two-thirds of our students (61.6 percent) are involved in transfer-oriented programs of study, while 20.1 percent are pursuing technical degrees, and 18.3 percent are either undecided or non-degree seekers.
- **Major Goals:** Of those students seeking degrees, the highest-enrolled program at the College is general studies, with more than 8,000 students enrolled in the program this year. The next four programs, which each average between 1,000 and 2,000 students, are business/international business, engineering science, science, and arts and sciences transfer.
- **Learning Method:** The number of students taking at least one course via distance education has increased to 18.6 percent of all students, with five percent of students taking *only* distance education classes.

Beyond the Numbers

I want to get beyond mere numbers, and spotlight a number of programs and initiatives that show that MC really does work to reach *each and every* member of our community.

- **Residence:** We are actively working on establishing Community Engagement Centers in our communities, especially in the zip codes that need us the most! In fact, I am proud to report that we are closing in on agreements in both Gaithersburg and in the east county to open up centers in the foreseeable future. We plan to provide classes in both locations, specifically to broaden those individuals who can benefit from the College's services.

Additionally, the College's community engagement and student services teams are analyzing how to increase services in zip codes currently underserved, and how we can modify the *type* of support we are able to provide. For example, the numbers indicate that the Gaithersburg area has among the highest percentage of foreign language speakers, including those ESOL students enrolled at MCPS. These factors make additional outreach efforts a natural fit. College recruiters already have an established rapport within the community, but there is more that we aim to do to target the specific populations. Specifically, we are discussing ways to widen our network of community



partners in libraries, community centers, social services agencies, youth groups, churches, middle schools, and more. The work can be more challenging, as it involves building relationships and pairing programs that will provide access to prospective students. The presentations will be smaller than the larger audiences that we traditionally see in high school recruitment, and the follow-up will be more intensive as well. As many of these individuals are first-generation college students, they may not have a knowledgeable support network at home, meaning that the community engagement coordinators and recruiters would be the primary sources of information and support. Although we are only in the initial stages of the zip code analysis and discussion, we remain optimistic that the data can help us broaden the College's reach.

- **Age:** The vast majority of our students are older than traditional college age. While part of our strategic plan is to begin targeting the way we educate adult student learners (beginning in 2016), we have already developed specific programs with this age group in mind. For example, the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) serves older community residents who are low income, and also may be the first in their family to attend college. During one-on-one appointments with members of the College, these adults share their individual career and education aspirations. More than 90 percent of the time, we offer a program that begins their journey towards self-sufficiency. Most of the adult learners cite access and affordability as the reasons that they are able to pursue their goals. During the 2012–2013 academic year, the EOC worked with nearly 900 adult learners in our local community, of which nearly 80 percent were low-income *and* first-generation students. Of the EOC participants who received their GED or high school diploma during the year in the program, 91 percent immediately enrolled in college, mostly at our institution.
- **Academic Goals:** Simply having a list of the most popular majors does not help the College to be intrusive in the lives of individual students, and to learn their own personal goals. To get beyond the numbers, we must know more about each of our students. This spring, all students, with the exception of early placement students, are required to complete an advising questionnaire. All degree-seeking students are required to attend an academic orientation and/or a one-on-one advising session with a counselor or academic adviser, as well as complete an advising questionnaire about their educational plan.



Students also should meet with a counselor/academic adviser to further develop and update educational plans.

We are using an online portal called Starfish that allows a counselor and student to simultaneously modify and update the individual plan. While this plan includes academic and major goals, it also will include tools for educators to use that will look at the complete student picture, and serve to identify any support he or she needs to succeed. For instance, if tutoring or child care is required, it will be noted in the Starfish plan. That way, no matter what stage of the student's journey, or which counselor he or she is working with, there is a single repository. We provide developmental advising, allowing for more proactive and, when necessary, intrusive advising. Starfish allows us to look at the total student, assess what his or her needs may be, and track progress.

There are several benchmarks embedded in the system that transfer the responsibility for the student check-in with the counselor to an automatic check-in process. For example, if a student does not make the required GPA for a certain major, or is shy a certain number of credits, the counselor will automatically learn about it through Starfish and then begin to work with the student to overcome the obstacle.

But we are not stopping there. Once an individual declares a major, we are automatically appointing an academic adviser who can help shape that student's goals *within* the specific discipline. While we do not currently have the framework in place to do this immediately, we will be developing a process for implementation by 2015. Meanwhile, we will be reviewing national models, looking at professional development for faculty doing the academic advising, and examining technological tools that will facilitate this type of advising. We need only look to our successful model in our engineering major, and thereby leverage what we have learned from that experience as we expand that successful practice across all majors at the College.



- **Degree Goals:** We focus a tremendous amount of resources on students that we help to transfer, or help to earn associate's degrees. Of course, these students are the core of who we are. But I was struck by the fact that while two-thirds of our credit students are here with intentions to transfer, one-third of students are here to pursue technical degrees, or are here simply to enhance their skills, and not necessarily to earn a degree. This is not to mention the tens of thousands of students that we serve through our noncredit programs. One example of a class targeting these non-degree seeking students is an internal partnership between Workforce Development & Continuing Education (WD&CE), the Germantown Campus, and a Germantown-based global commercial enterprise, Amarex Clinical Research. Working together for the third straight year, they provide a 13-week, 39-hour boot-camp course called Clinical Trial Project Management (CTPM). The student profile in that course varies. For example, one is the CEO of a local biotech company who wanted to learn more about clinical trials; another is a recently-retired nurse; and another, a student who works for the Children's National Medical Center. They all hold bachelor's degrees and many have advanced degrees as well, primarily in the life sciences. These students tend to be accomplished, mid-career professionals who are seeking to become clinical research associates and clinical trial managers, or they attend in order to add the CTPM certification to their skills in their current jobs.

Similarly, we are in the very early stages of working with the University of Maryland Baltimore County to create the very first four-year biotechnology program that will be based on our Germantown Campus. Being that both Montgomery County and Montgomery College are at the forefront of the biotechnology industry, it makes sense that we are part of creating a unique life sciences technology program. This project is in its infancy, but it shows just how the College is continuing to reach students outside of our "traditional" student population.

- **Learning Method:** The number of students looking to learn remotely is increasing every year, and I expect the trend to continue. This has a great number of ramifications for the College, including an ever-expanding definition of who our students are, especially since



we may never see them. For instance, late last year I told you about a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that the College was starting called Get Ready for College English. While it is hard to truly know who we are reaching in this course—the point is that it is open to anyone, for free, without many formalities—we do know that nearly 700 students are taking the course this semester. 700! Based on introductory posts, there seems to be a good mix of participants, including high school students (or younger), Montgomery College students, as well as students from other colleges, working professionals, and ESL students studying English for their own personal development. Local home-schooled students seemed particularly interested in the course. In fact, a number of parents of home-schooled students have asked for a part two of the course! There were also many faculty from colleges and universities enrolled. What surprised us, besides the sheer number of students who signed up, was how many international students found the course. The MOOC had students from 81 different countries. After the United States, the largest number of participants came from India (with 56). Spain had 19 students, while the Russian Federation had 18. Peru and Mexico each had 13 students, while Brazil and China each had 12. One of the participants said he was on Facebook asking around about a good English course to take, and someone suggested this one. Professor Emily Rosado also used the MOOC as a supplement to her face-to-face course, allowing her students to interact with people from around the world. She hopes to offer it again next fall and build upon lessons learned. There is no doubt that technology is changing the face of education, in more ways than one.

But changing the way students learn does not always require adopting an entirely different format. The College, as part of a faculty-driven initiative, currently is examining our general education requirements, which are required for every one of our credit students. The College is exploring best practices to ensure that our students are receiving a 21st-century education. What does that mean? It means incorporating aspects of nontraditional class formats or lesson plans, like MOOCs or the use of mobile applications, as a component in a traditional class. If being a successful 21st-century



student means learning on computers, we must make sure that they learn *how to learn* in this new world. That does not require a separate technology class; it requires ensuring our current programs organically incorporate technology in a way that empowers students to excel in today's educational landscape.

As the numbers show, our students are diverse in many ways. We have known that for some time. But they are diverse in ways we often do not consider. For instance, they may not respond to identical styles of advising or teaching. That is why the College is so focused on creating programs and initiatives that get behind the numbers, because by knowing who our students really are, we are better prepared to be intrusive in their academic lives—and empower them to change their lives.

Monthly Discussion Questions¹

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?

¹ Adopted from MacTaggart, Terrence J., *Leading Change: How Boards and Presidents Build Exceptional Academic Institutions*, AGB Press, 2011 (pp. 21–22).

