

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE
Office of the President

December 10, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Montgomery College Colleagues

From: Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President

Subject: Adoption of Ombuds Recommendations

The Office of the Ombuds was established in August 2013 to provide confidential assistance to staff, faculty, and administrators in mitigating and resolving workplace issues and concerns in accordance with the International Ombudsman Association's Code of Ethics. In each fiscal year since its inception, the Office of the Ombuds provided service to five percent of College employees—a number that is typical for organizations that have an ombuds. Specifically, over 150 Montgomery College individuals each year have sought assistance from our ombuds to understand options to resolve workplace concerns. Through this service, the ombuds also helped to identify critical issues that might not otherwise have been addressed in as timely and equitable a manner.

The Office of the Ombuds contributes to the organizational health of Montgomery College, and the employees who have sought its assistance are to be commended for positively contributing to the College's organizational health.

What is also clear, however, is that there are a number of workplace interactions that must improve. It is imperative that we treat each other with professionalism, respect, and tact. We must work harder to develop and maintain credible, trusting, and respectful relationships with one another. This organization must not tolerate conduct that is less than collegial and respectful.

The College Ombuds, Sarah Espinosa, made six recommendations in the second annual ombuds report, which was communicated to the College community on October 15, 2015 (see the report [here](#)). Many of the recommendations are already in various stages of implementation. I am adopting the ombuds' 2015 recommendations as explained below. What follows is a re-statement of each recommendation along with my decision regarding it.

Recommendation 1. Collaboratively develop, adopt, and implement both a Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct for all Montgomery College employees.

Adopted. As I affirmed when I originally adopted this recommendation in 2014, I agree that formally setting ethical expectations and standards of conduct is a best practice that will provide clarity and consistency for all employees. The Employee Services Council established an ad hoc group to draft a code. After it is considered through the governance

system and College Council makes its recommendations, I look forward to reviewing and establishing a code of conduct in the coming year.

Recommendation 2. Support and enhance managerial competencies and best practices by regularly soliciting feedback from employees and building professional development plans considering the results of 360-feedback tools.

Adopted. This fall, administrators and department chairs received the results of the “360” feedback that was solicited from their direct reports, peers, and supervisors. Soliciting and reflecting on this valuable feedback in constructing individualized professional development plans is of value to individual administrators and department chairs as well as the organization as a whole. In adopting this recommendation, I charge the Office of Human Resources and Strategic Talent Management (HRSTM) with identifying the appropriate 360 feedback tool and utilizing such tool to collect similar feedback for all managers and supervisors no later than fall 2016. The administrators and department chairs will continue to receive feedback every two years and will again have the opportunity to participate in this process and benefit from the feedback gathered in 2017.

Recommendation 3. Critically examine the employee experience and take affirmative steps to ensure an inclusive workplace for all employees. Provide a fair and efficient process to address employee concerns about identity-related inequities, including those rising to the level of discrimination.

Adopted. I am troubled by the issues raised by the ombuds and committed to ensuring that Montgomery College’s core values of integrity and diversity are realized in our formal processes as well as our workplace culture. To further examine the issues surfaced and to assist in identifying and implementing affirmative steps to ensure an inclusive workplace, I will ask the chief of staff/chief strategy officer to work with an outside expert and the senior leadership team and then present me with recommendations no later than August 1, 2016. I will also task the senior vice president for administrative and fiscal services to take immediate steps to review and address concerns raised regarding the equity and diversity complaint process.

Recommendation 4. Assist and support administrators, staff with supervisory responsibilities, and department chairs by providing and requiring additional training. Further, reward those exhibiting the skills developed in these trainings and hold accountable those who choose not to exhibit those skills.

Adopted. Ensuring those employees with managerial responsibilities are provided with training is a critical responsibility of Montgomery College. The Office of Human Resources and Strategic Talent Management (HRSTM) and its Center for Professional and Organizational Development (CPOD) have many effective training programs currently in place to provide such education. To begin actualizing this recommendation, HRSTM will require all employees with managerial responsibilities, who have not already done so, to complete its Crucial Conversations course and its Civility in the Workplace course no later than May 2017.

Recommendation 5. Consider the creation of a competitive, developmental cohort program or programs to help develop future model managers and administrators.

Adopted. This recommendation, first adopted in October 2014, contributed to the development of the Presidential Innovation Leadership Institute, a nine-month program designed to build senior-level leadership capacity within the organization by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and overall competencies of participants. The first cohort was selected through a competitive application process at the beginning of this academic year.

Recommendation 6. Commit to continue to provide Montgomery College employees with access to the Office of the Ombuds by: transitioning the ombuds from a temporary position, committing resources to recruit an Associate Ombuds, and incorporating the Office of the Ombuds, its roles, responsibilities, and ethical obligations into Montgomery College Policy and Procedure.

Adopted in part. The Office of the Ombuds continues to demonstrate its worth in providing employees with valuable services to mitigate and resolve workplace issues and concerns. The recruitment of a full-time employee ombuds will take place this spring, in anticipation of the successful candidate beginning prior to July 1, 2016. Once a full-time employee ombuds is successfully recruited, the current ombuds, Sarah Espinosa, will continue to work on a part-time basis, and focus on exploring the feasibility and development of an ombuds service for students. Further, I anticipate a draft policy for the Office of the Ombuds will be brought to the Board of Trustees for its consideration this spring.

Thank you for your work towards achieving Montgomery College's mission—to empower our students to change their lives and enrich the lives of our community. Thank you also to College Ombuds Sarah Espinosa for her dedication and service in establishing the Office of the Ombuds as a resource for Montgomery College.