

To: Montgomery College Community
From: Dr. Jermaine F. Williams, President
Subject: **Updated Guidance for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**
Date: March 11, 2025

Montgomery College remains committed to its mission and goals. On March 5, a coalition of attorneys general, including Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, released multistate guidance for schools on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts to clarify how K-12 schools, colleges, and universities may respond to information in executive orders, the U.S. Department of Education’s “Dear Colleague” letter, and the FAQ, “About Racial Preferences and Stereotypes Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.”

The guidance is clear that nothing in the Dear Colleague letter or FAQ document changes established legal principles “that encourage—and even require—schools to promote educational opportunity for students of all backgrounds.” In fact, institutions like ours “should adopt numerous approaches as they work to advance their respective missions, break down barriers, and increase access for historically underrepresented students.” Related to access, the availability of program offerings and services should continue to be open to all students. Explicitly stated, the guidance reads that “[e]ducational institutions should continue to foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility among their student bodies.” We do, and we will.

Pertaining to curriculum and the college classroom, the guidance clarifies that the Dear Colleague letter and FAQ document do not have the force of law and “cannot disturb the continued viability of classroom instruction or course offerings that address race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, or related topics.” The guidance further states that institutions like MC “can and should adopt numerous approaches as they work to advance their respective missions, break down barriers, and increase access for historically underrepresented students.”

The College’s recruitment efforts to engage all prospective students may also continue. In fact, as per the guidance, “[i]nstitutions can make special efforts to reach particular groups. Institutions do not have to ignore race when identifying prospective students for outreach and recruitment programs, provided such programs do not give targeted groups of students preference on the basis of racial status in and of itself and that all students have the same opportunity to apply and compete for admission.” These statements support the College’s continuation of grant and program activities that

may make programs more visible and flexible to accommodate particular groups as long as these programs are open to all students.

This guidance offers reaffirmation of the College's practices to recruit, admit, and support all students, maintaining programming and services that are available to all students even as some offerings may be of greater interest or relevance to specific audiences: "...as long as programs are open to all participants, regardless of their race, institutions may offer outreach, informational, and other programs that may, because of their content, be of particular interest to members of a particular racial group. For example, partnering with affinity groups associated with community-based organizations is one culturally sustaining approach often undertaken by institutions that seek to diversify their student bodies." Celebrations of Heritage Months and other community engagements focused on enriching the student experience and enhancing student support are acknowledged as activities that are permitted when they are open for all to participate, as these events occur currently.

A final clarifying point made by these attorneys general offers that, "Institutions of higher education may continue to articulate missions and goals related to student body diversity and equitable outcomes for students." Our mission and goals remain in place and our commitment to them remains strong, as we work to support every student.