



President's Report to the Board

September 2013

Welcome back! It is hard to believe we are embarking on a fresh academic year already. But I know you share my sense of enthusiasm, optimism, and determination to make this year one of continued success, growth, and even risk-taking. When I addressed the College community at the opening meeting about one month ago, I compared our journey to the one depicted in our Summer Dinner Theatre show, *The Wiz*. Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion joined together in a journey for individual goals, but along the way they recognized that the unexpected twists and turns in the journey *itself* is what empowered them to find their home, their intellect, their heart, and their courage.

We find ourselves in the middle of our own purple-brick road. Each College employee, department, discipline, and campus is working together to reach individual and collective goals—all geared toward student success. I hope this report provides you with an oversight of some of the new initiatives currently underway to greet our students as they start their own journeys down the road to a successful future.

Academic Redesign

As you read in a recent memo and in *It's Friday*, I accepted the comprehensive and deliberate recommendations made by our Academic Redesign Task Force. I am confident that the change to our academic organization will profoundly, and positively, influence our academic leadership, our faculty, and our students. I expect our College to implement the academic redesign on July 1, 2014, which gives us less than one year to iron out many of the crucial details, while leaving room for incremental changes and ongoing assessment.



We already have begun the implementation phase. Currently, a series of work groups—led by the four vice president/provosts and comprised of deans, associate deans, academic affairs and student services department chairs, faculty, and staff—are outlining the important details required to implement a redesign of this scale. For example, the groups are considering the relationship among staff, faculty, coordinators, department chairs, associate deans, deans, and vice president/provosts and the staffing needs for departments and units. As you will recall, under the plan, academic affairs and student services department chairs will assume supervisory and leadership responsibility of faculty. I recognize this change comes with some anxiety, but I believe it will enable the College to strike a critical balance between autonomy and accountability, and between innovation and consistency.

Furthermore, the work groups are collaborating with Dr. Don Pearl, senior vice president for academic affairs, who will identify how to structure his own office to support the organizational changes. We have already determined one required change in this regard; our vice president/provosts will lead their own campuses, but also will assume leadership for multiple disciplines *across* campus lines. While their campuses will still serve as their home bases, their focus will be on creating a One College academic structure. They will continue to report directly to Dr. Pearl.

I look forward to receiving the work groups' plans by mid-December, and will keep you informed throughout the process. Relying on the input of members of the College to guide the academic redesign has been a priority for Dr. Pearl and me. The redesign process truly has been guided by the men and women working with our students—faculty, staff, administrators, and representatives from key resource areas. I am proud of the hard and collaborative work so many of our College employees are pouring into this process, and am certain it will pay off in the form of more students empowered to change their lives.

College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act

Our College is responding to the [College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013](#), passed in April by the Maryland General Assembly, which requires testing of high school students no later than their junior year in hopes of boosting college enrollment and



completion. Perhaps the biggest change our students already are experiencing is the requirement that all of our degree-seeking students have a degree plan *upon entrance* to the College. Our counselors have begun working with such students to develop degree plans, aided by an orientation information session and a reorganized [web page](#) that lists degree plans by major. During orientation, each student received a catalog that outlines College majors and the requirements to achieve the degree. Additionally, this summer we sent postcards to newly registered, degree-seeking students to inform them about this requirement and guide them to the resources they need to start their own planning.

To aid in the plan creation, our academic departments created four- and six-semester sequenced curriculum sheets for each program, which include notice of prerequisites. A major goal of the sequencing is to ensure that students attempt credit-bearing English and math courses *within their first 24 credit hours*. In fact, if a student fails to do so following the completion of a developmental course, we will provide intrusive advising to that student. Our College also is reviewing whether we have technological capabilities to *automatically* sequence student developmental course registration, a requirement that would prevent a student from taking a course out of sequence without instructor permission. Beginning this spring, advisers/counselors will meet with students who are not achieving required benchmarks prior to registration, as well as congratulate those students who do. The College will continue to hone major field advising, which is one of the main goals for academic affairs in fiscal year 2015.

While the College and Career Readiness and College Completion legislation has created external urgency, we at the College have had a sense of urgency for some time. I am proud of the intrusive advising our students already are receiving on our campuses this year, and I look forward to the continued dedication to preparing our students to complete college and succeed in the workforce.

ACES

Speaking of College readiness, I am thrilled that what started as a germ of an idea—ACES, the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success program—is now up and running in



eight Montgomery County Public Schools, with two more starting later this year. We have recruited phenomenal coaches who are working one-on-one with high school juniors and seniors on being successful in high school, completing college admission applications, tackling the daunting world of financial aid, and transitioning from high school to college. The ACES coaches spend four days a week in the high schools ensuring students have access to the support they need to get to Montgomery College, or any other college, and to complete. Each of the coaches is required to have a master's degree, as well as a passion for helping students succeed. Takoma Park/Silver Spring Vice President/Provost Brad Stewart recently shared that one coach flatly refuses to call students with whom she works "at-risk;" rather she says she spends her days working with "at-promise" students. That is the kind of optimism and determination that makes our College all that it is, and all that it will be, to these future students.

Welcome Centers

Welcome Centers on our Germantown and Rockville Campuses, as well as in the Mannakee Building, are open for business and already have helped more than 2,000 students navigate their first few weeks at the College! In fact, staff of the Germantown Welcome Center helped students even as they toured the new space prior to the center's official opening. The centers provide a place for students and community members to find out general information about the College, receive assistance with each stage of the enrollment process, and have access to computers. We have talked about making our students feel at home from the moment they step foot on our campuses, and I am thrilled that we now have the facilities and staff in place to provide this heartfelt welcome. Plans are under development for the Welcome Center at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. After a series of meetings in the spring, the decision was made to take additional time to ensure the selection of the best location. Facilities is evaluating the options and has a timeline that will include an opening later this year. Furthermore, in the months and years ahead, I hope we will continue to expand our Welcome Center presence outside of our College footprint.

If you visit any of our campuses, the energy and excitement is palpable. Our students are here for a mission. They are here to empower themselves. They are here to find a home. They are



here to find intellect. They are here to find heart. They are here to find courage. We are here to provide them with the road to their own future. This responsibility requires we learn from and adapt to our students. That is why I spent time this summer taking a step back, being mindful of the College's journey and the hard work that is ahead.

It is in this vein that I leave you with a quote from the inspiring spiritual leader Buddha who said, "There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way and not starting." We have started. We are on the road to actualizing our College's true mission. Our only mistake now will be to not go all the way.

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).

