



## President's Report to the Board

February 2014

This year commemorates the centenary of the beginning of World War I and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. Today, we are winding down the longest war in our country's history, while continuing to fight for civil rights in different contexts. As the needs and realities of our world evolve, so too must we in order to reach the students of today and tomorrow. What worked in classrooms yesterday simply may not work any longer. We must focus anew on academics in ways that address the issues we face in this second decade of the 21st century.

With this focus, we are taking a hard look at the academic affairs of the College to develop a One College structure that provides all students with a common student experience—consistent curriculum standards, independent of mode of delivery—regardless of which campus students attend. From our general studies curriculum to online programs to intrusive advising, nearly every aspect of our current academic operations is under the microscope. It was exactly one year ago—in the February 2013 President's Report—that I first laid out how we are working to redesign our academic operations. In the year since, seven work groups have been meeting to brainstorm, craft ideas, and hammer out details about the best structure to actualize our institution's goals. I am pleased to report that each of the work groups has submitted a final report to the College's interim senior vice president for academic affairs, Dr. Sanjay Rai, and we are in a month-long open comment period for community review. Dr. Rai will be providing me with his final recommendation for the new academic structure in March, with the intention of implementing it on July 1.



I want to focus this month's President's Report on the general framework and advantages that we already anticipate with the new academic structure: academic units comprising well-aligned disciplines; discipline leadership provided by chairs that have responsibility and authority; collegewide deans leading closely-aligned subsets within academic units; and the agility to implement innovative best practices collegewide, ensuring consistent opportunities and standards as the hallmark of the common student experience.

### **Department Chairs**

Department chairs are the foundation of the academic structure. Historically, the College has separated faculty and administrator roles. This creates an artificial barrier that sometimes interferes with effective and efficient leadership from both faculty chairs and deans. That is not to say that the current employees in these roles do not do a phenomenal job—they do!—but the current structure itself serves as an impediment. By creating department chair positions that give leadership responsibility and authority to individuals with content expertise and classroom experience, we create a role that bridges the current gap. Chairs will understand the specific and unique needs of the department. They also will have administrative responsibilities, with decision-making responsibilities at the campus level. The department chair role will be akin to the mayoral role in local politics advocating for constituent (department faculty, staff, and students) needs while working with leaders at the state (collegewide) level to prioritize and craft mutually beneficial solutions.

Chairs, in 12-month positions, will have supervisory authority and will not be members of the bargaining unit. I am looking forward to seeing the final details when the proposal is officially submitted, as I know that faculty, including members of the bargaining unit, and administrators worked collaboratively to develop a model that will serve the College well. It will provide great opportunities for individuals who serve as chairs, and for professional and discipline growth and development, allowing us to focus on our vision of educational excellence and opportunity for all students.



## **Collegewide Deans**

The primary purposes of the new structure are to ensure academic consistency collegewide, to provide a common student experience, and to reduce redundancies that currently impede our flexibility and our implementation of innovative ideas that best serve today's students. Consistency across all campuses ensures that common standards and pedagogical practice in classroom and in labs, regarding the use of technology and extracurricular opportunities, will be available to all students. Our current academic leadership structure is campus focused, with redundancy in deans' roles in particular. Each campus has deans overseeing multiple disciplines, some of which have little or no alignment to each other. Each vice president/provost is responsible for all disciplines on his or her campus. Beginning in July, there will be collegewide deans and collegewide vice presidents/provosts that have academic responsibility for focused academic areas.

This presents opportunities for a collegewide approach in a wide variety of ways: hiring faculty; ensuring equitable distribution of resources; assessing and implementing strategies that foster degree and certificate completion; streamlining interdisciplinary collaboration; establishing clear reporting lines and greater accountability; creating greater unity within departments, disciplines, and academic units; and fostering opportunities for collegewide innovation in academics.

## **Flexibility**

The new academic structure will enable us to be more responsive to the internal and external forces that require consistency and unity from the College community. Coordination of scheduling within and across campuses and an increased focus on data-driven decisions that balance collegewide and campus information offer exciting possibilities that align with our core mission.

The new structure will create transparency internally and for our external partners. It will allow us to collaborate with Montgomery County Public Schools and streamline the development and implementation of initiatives required by the passage of The College and Career Readiness



and College Completion Act of 2013. With a streamlined, academically aligned structure in place, we will be able to better assess and meet the needs of our entire Montgomery College community.

### **Conclusion**

Redesigning our structure positions us, as individuals and as a College community, to see ourselves differently with new roles and new responsibilities. I am deeply impressed with the inclusiveness of the academic redesign process, and I am inspired by the collaboration that has occurred. I know that those two things—inclusiveness and collaboration—will lead to the successful implementation of a final, inspired new academic structure.

### **Monthly Discussion Questions<sup>1</sup>**

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?

---

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

