



President's **FOCUS**

Monthly Report to the Board

April 2018

Integrated Strategic Planning: Equity and Inclusion

This year the College has done substantial work toward addressing equity and inclusion at the institution. One basic concept of equity is creating opportunities for historically underserved populations of students to have equal access to educational programs that close the achievement gap. This same lens can be trained on the employee experience as well: many of the College's faculty and staff belong to underserved populations and we must assure they have equal access to professional training and opportunities that would help them to experience equity in their careers. This year the College has begun to look more intentionally at these possibilities and their implications for planning.

One of the first steps in this process has been building awareness of how equity fits into student outcomes. I have talked for several years about "radical inclusion," so the notion of inclusion at the College is not a new one. In fact, our classrooms and learning centers are filled with efforts to make students feel welcomed and included. Research on student success shows that such experiences of cultural resonance draw students more firmly into colleges, and promote completion, so the College has been intentional about creating inclusive environments. The College's Office of Student Affairs focuses intensely on trying to create experiences of connection for students, so that their likelihood of completion is improved. Our Academic Affairs strategies try to construct learning environments that honor differences—be they intellectual, social, cultural, sexual, racial, or



geographic. Programs such as Achieving the Promise, ACES, Boys to Men, and the Maryland Male Students of Color Summit, combine the goals of these two offices and exemplify equity-driven efforts. The College was awarded the North East Region's Equity Award by the Association of Community College Trustees, a progress toward building equity. Although we speak frequently about the diversity of who is at the College, we have gaps in extending this notion to equity in outcomes, namely, the principle that students and employees should be given the chance to have equitable results.

This year, I hosted a Town Hall Meeting dedicated to equity and inclusion. This provided a public forum on the topic and enriched our conversations around its complexities. In addition to communicating more clearly about equity as an institutional goal, the College hired an Equity and Inclusion Officer, Sharon Bland, whom I have made part of my office this year. At my request, she has put together a President's Advisory Committee on Equity and Inclusion, which has been assembled with a wide cross-section of employees from across the College. The group has formed eight subcommittees devoted to topics such as equity and inclusion in business practices and procurement, hiring and retention, and best practices and assessment. After a comprehensive listening tour of the institution last summer and fall, Ms. Bland has led the College in conducting a comprehensive survey of the climate around equity and inclusion. Since the beginning of the spring semester the College has spent considerable time and focus interpreting the results. Eight hundred and fifty-one employees responded to the survey, a 28 percent response rate. Respondents reported a broad swath of experiences, which were disaggregated into specific categories such as equity and inclusion training, values, hiring, culture, and personal experiences. Because the survey sought to capture such a wide range of information, it has been complex work to sort out the significance of certain reporting trends and assess how representative they are of the wider institution. To make the process maximally productive, the College engaged a consultant to help us understand what the results mean and what strategies we might employ to address any needed changes in the College's climate. My senior leadership team has also examined the survey results closely through different lenses, and I have communicated my own impression of the results with the entire College. Additionally, I have asked multiple offices to provide specific recommendations to me based on their examination of the survey from different institutional perspectives: ethics and compliance, human resources, and the ombuds office. This process is still underway, and I will share results with



the College community later this spring. In the meantime, the College is already taking steps to improve issues that were identified as urgent barriers to equity and inclusion.

While some elements of equity and inclusion are about attitudes, which may fall into the realm of culture, other parts relate more directly to practice: what policies and procedures does the College have in place that build equity and inclusion, and where are they lacking? The Presidential Advisory Committee is already hard at work drafting recommendations for several changes or improvements in policy and practice that could increase equity for students. A few recommendations are under consideration. Dedicating a full-time position in financial aid to aggressively seeking scholarship opportunities for student could increase students' wins, thus contributing to equitable outcomes. Offering events and lectures at multiple times of the day and evening makes them more accessible for students whose work schedules may limit their availability for certain time periods, thus giving working students time to experience extracurricular activities. This also provides shift-workers the chance to attend functions that their schedules otherwise might not allow. Developing an additional level of graduation-eligibility review might help identify students who were unaware of their ability to earn a degree.

There are additional changes that the College will consider once it has collected and assessed best practices at institutions that have been highly successful at building equity and inclusion. Then the College will consider: what plans do we need to make to achieve similar, meaningful results? These answers will feed into the equity and inclusion master plan, which is just beginning its construction. A few categories of best practices that the plan will likely address include employee hiring and retention. Developing a comprehensive plan to expand recruitment outreach to employees from diverse backgrounds is a recommendation under consideration, with a model identified at San Jacinto College in Texas, which hosts a strong webpage for careers, including resources for intercultural competence and a council on diversity and inclusion to infuse greater equity into the hiring processes. It also has an employment accountability plan for increasing representation of minorities and females in specific employment categories. The impact of bias in the hiring process, a matter closely related to hiring and retention, is mitigated in several ways at other institutions. Just two examples are improved search committee training—Frederick Community College in has mandatory unconscious bias training for all members of any search committee to improve more objective consideration of candidates in the recruitment process.



Fullerton College in California supplies search committees with sample cultural competency interview questions to either utilize or modify as needed. Several, if not all, of these practices might have value at the College, so the subcommittees are researching them carefully to provide clear recommendations for MC's circumstances.

One of the most significant tasks of the President's Advisory Committee on Equity and Inclusion is to develop a master plan, which is expected by December of 2019. Since integrated planning is such a focus this year, the work around equity and inclusion has the advantage of referencing several existing master plans, including the Academic Master Plan and the Student Affairs Master Plan, for example, in designing their own planning and vision. Integrating their work with—or improving upon—the established goals and programming of these two plans will maximize the impact. The comprehensive auditing of College equity and inclusion issues this year by the equity and inclusion survey, Ms. Bland's listening tour, the collegewide conversations including my Town Hall Meeting, and the preliminary work of the President's Advisory Committee will form the basis for the construction of the master plan. Additionally, each of the subcommittees will submit recommendations that will be considered in the plan. The inclusion of best practices from outside the College will assist the institution in creating a comprehensive vision with a set of strong, tested support tools. I feel confident that this year's investment in planning for equity and inclusion is rooted on firm ground and will produce outcomes that enhance the College's mission.

