Collegewide Community Engagement Plan (2025-2028)

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1. Background

This collegewide community engagement strategy builds on important work already underway across Montgomery College. The new approach supports the College's Transformational Aspirations and Strategic Plan goals, and is informed by community feedback and national best practices for college community engagement.

Our work began in 2022, with research into 15 community colleges recognized with the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement. The team reviewed these models, which focused on areas such as:

- Service learning integrated into courses and volunteer programs

- Voter registration and civic participation initiatives

- Employer partnerships to deliver training in high-demand fields

- Workforce development programs delivered directly in community settings

- K–12 engagement through tutoring and mentorship

- Strengthening campus–neighborhood ("town and gown") relationships

- Corporate partnerships to support institutional and community goals

- Lifelong Learning

To complement this research, we solicited feedback from internal stakeholders including representatives from Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Community Engagement, attended national conferences, and reviewed scholarly literature on effective community engagement.

Over the past two years, Montgomery College also hosted six Community Engagement Roundtables, bringing together faith-based, business, East County, and philanthropic leaders to gather direct input. Most recently, the Integrated Marketing Plan surveyed community members to better understand stakeholder perceptions and the College's value proposition. Findings from the College's Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) reports further informed this plan around enhanced outreach, language access, and partnerships.

Across these engagements, several key themes emerged:

- Improve outreach and communication and create centralized, accessible points of contact for community members (Chambers of Commerce, HSI/AANAPISI)

- Build deep, sustained partnerships with schools, businesses, and community/faith organizations (Faith, East County)

- Remove barriers through equity-driven support, cultural awareness, and flexible opportunities (Marketing research, East County)

This plan directly supports several key components of the College's Transformational Aspirations and Strategic Plan, including:

- Transformational Aspiration: Access

   Creating a college-going culture: Ensuring all MCPS students and their families have a meaningful connection to Montgomery College by 7th grade.

- Transformational Aspiration: Completion

   Provide experiences of economic, social, and community impact: Increasing civic engagement.

- Transformational Aspiration: Post Completion Success

   Transform lives: Enhanced economic, social, and intergenerational mobility.

- Strategic Plan Goal One

   Strengthening connections between Montgomery College and the broader community.

Defining Community Engagement at Montgomery College
Community engagement at Montgomery College is defined as:

The collaboration between the College and external stakeholders to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes that strengthen access, enrollment, economic mobility, and post-completion success.

External stakeholders include businesses, nonprofits, civic groups, government agencies, faith-based organizations, and K–12 schools.

- Adapted from the Carnegie Definition of Community Engagement

Moving Forward
The Office of Community Engagement will convene cross-functional teams to design and implement a cohesive, collegewide community engagement strategy, supporting these priorities and advancing the College's mission of transforming lives and enriching communities.

2. Priority Areas

The Office of Community Engagement will continue to raise awareness about Montgomery College and help residents enroll. In addition, the Office of Community Engagement will be a convener of cross-functional teams at Montgomery College to implement a cohesive, collegewide community engagement plan that will:

1. Support student enrollment
2. Engage the business community
3. Foster partnerships with community and faith-based organizations
4. Strengthen civic engagement at Montgomery College
5. Deliver communications for the community

3. Goals, Outcomes, Strategies, and Key Progress Indicators

Goal 1: Collaborate with Internal Stakeholders to Support Student Enrollment

Intended Outcomes:
- Improve conversion from community engagement outreach to students who applied
- Support college-going culture starting in elementary and middle school

Strategies:
- Collaborate with Student Affairs in the development of an intentional strategy to provide outreach and support in high schools with clearly outlined roles and responsibilities for all areas (Community Engagement Specialists, Recruiters, TRIO EOC, Financial Aid, ACES, and Dual Enrollment).
- Collaborate with Academic Affairs to continue hosting elementary and middle school campus tours in an effort to create a college-going culture.
- Participate in community outreach events, lead workshops, and host enrollment-focused events in underserved communities.
- Provide one-on-one, bilingual assistance with enrollment and financial aid processes.
- Collaborate with Marketing and Communications to promote programs in underserved areas and with multilingual audiences.
- Improve translation/interpretation processes to increase efficiency to better support student enrollment and success.
- Increase participation in MCPS Summer RISE and Take Your Child to Work Day (TYCTWD), providing students with career exposure experiences.

Key Progress Indicators (KPIs):
- Track enrollment for one-on-one engagements with new student enrollment CRM to establish baseline numbers
- Number of campus tours, outreach events, workshops, and one-on-one appointments (monthly)
- Track conversion rate from outreach to enrollment
- Number of Summer RISE and TYCTWD students participating

Goal 2: Strengthen Business Engagement to Better Leverage Relationships and Support Strategic Planning Goals

Intended Outcomes:
- Better leverage business partners to support student success and strategic planning goals
- Develop and implement a collegewide plan to strengthen business engagement

Strategies:
- Convene a cross-functional team to develop and implement a plan for business engagement at Montgomery College.
- Host chambers of commerce annually or biannually.
- Assign a relationship manager for key business stakeholders.
- Create an infographic/fact sheet outlining all engagement opportunities for businesses at the College.
- Strategically manage sponsorship budget to strengthen key relationships and maximize impact.
- Track engagement in the new Development CRM.

Key Progress Indicators (KPIs):
- Number of engagements tracked using the development CRM
- Increase number of documented business partnerships on partnership matrix (currently 22)
- Increase in the number of business partners engaging with multiple departments at the College

Goal 3: Foster partnerships with Community and Faith-Based Organizations

Intended Outcomes:
- Better leverage community and faith partners to support enrollment and student success
- Increase college-going culture

Strategies:
- Manage sponsorship budget to strategically support partners and better leverage relationships with key stakeholders.
- Use partnership matrix to identify and seek out high-impact partnerships aligned with enrollment, student support, and other strategic plan goals.
- Explore tracking partnerships in Development CRM.
- Host the President's Community Engagement Roundtables to nurture existing and new relationships with community leaders.
- Convene campus Deans around community and campus relations.

Key Progress Indicators (KPIs):
- Number of partners in the matrix meeting three or more criteria
- Number of Community Engagement Roundtable meetings
- Number of community and faith-based organization co-hosting enrollment events

Goal 4: Strengthen Civic Engagement at Montgomery College

At Montgomery College, Civic engagement can take many forms -- volunteering, voting or political activism, community participation or service, environmentalism -- anything where students develop the knowledge, skills, and desire to make a difference in their communities. The foundation of being civically engaged is being civically informed, and faculty have a powerful role in ensuring that students have the required civic knowledge for their civic engagement. -Definition developed by MC Political Science faculty using the AAC&U value rubric for civic engagement (from Gen Ed committee) and Illinois State University's Center for Civic Engagement webpage.

Intended Outcomes:
- Civic engagement integrated into the college's practices
- Increased voting rate of MC students

Strategies:
- In collaboration with a cross-functional team, develop an annual plan to meet strategic plan outcomes that include:
  - voter education activities
  - strengthening civic engagement in general education classes
  - civic engagement events
  - number of student volunteers
  - classes that integrate student service learning.
- Coordinate voter education and empowerment activities through MC Votes in collaboration with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in preparation for midterm elections.
- Collect data on a quarterly basis for the strategic plan and the mandated annual MHEC report.

Key Progress Indicators (KPIs):
- Increase voting rate of students by 5% (baseline 24.8% in 2022 and 41% in 2018% for last two midterm elections)
- Number of service-learning courses
- Number of student volunteer hours
- Number of civic engagement events/activities

Goal 5: Collegewide Community Engagement Communications

Intended Outcomes:
- Community members are informed of the College's offerings and activities
- Community members become champions for the College for referral purposes

Strategies:
- Design and implement targeted communications for the community.
  - Businesses
    - Audit existing communications to businesses, refresh, and align with new brand guidelines (including WDCE and other offices)
    - Connect our social media team with business partner organizations' social media
  - Neighborhoods surrounding each campus including East County
    - Communications team to coordinate look, feel, and content of campus deans' communications to local neighborhoods while aligning with new brand guidelines

- Connect our social media team with local community organizations and municipalities' social media
  - o K-12 students and families
    - Audit existing communications to K-12 families, refresh, and align with new brand guidelines (including WDCE and other offices)
    - Connect our social media team with business MCPS communications and other key offices' social media
    - Continue Marketing department's paid ad campaigns, viewbooks, postcards, and email campaigns
    - Create age-appropriate materials for middle school student/family outreach (collaboration between Creative Services, Academic Affairs, and Community Engagement)
    - Communications team to create parent outreach communication plans and materials

- Upgrade community engagement website to be collegewide and refresh the community engagement newsletter.
- Streamline translation process to enable College staff to be better able to produce materials in multiple languages.
- Develop promo video and materials (communications team) to leverage community use of campus facilities users (paid or in-kind).
- Promote the use of the College's events calendar.
- Develop a print newsletter for the community and leverage space on WDCE catalogue for broader MC promotion.

Key Progress Indicators:
- Growth in community-facing web traffic (to redesigned Community Engagement site & East County page) by X% year-over-year
- Number of refreshed newsletters published and open rates
- Average turnaround time for translated materials reduced by X%
- Number of families/students reached in the distribution of age-appropriate materials to middle school students
- Number of refreshed business partner communications
- Number of promotional materials distributed/screened by community users of campus space

4. Measuring Success
Success will be tracked using monthly, mid-year, and annual impact reports. KPIs will be monitored for each goal area, aligned with internal benchmarks and external feedback. Staff will use CRMs (when they become available) and other reporting tools to collect, track, and analyze engagement data.

Each goal includes metrics reviewed mid-year and annually by the Office of Community Engagement and reported to Senior Leadership. These include:
- Outreach-to-enrollment CRM tracking
- Community partnership dashboards
- Civic engagement participation data
- Event attendance and conversion rates
- Feedback from chambers, schools, and nonprofits/faith communities

These data points will support evidence-based growth, reflection, and annual refinement of the plan.

5. Timeline and Implementation (2025-2028)

Year 1 (2025-2026):
- Establish baseline data and CRM tracking
- Convene four cross-functional teams (business, high schools, civic, partnerships)
- Continue chamber convenings and Roundtables
- Pilot civic engagement events and prepare for midterm elections (June 2026)
- Continue middle school outreach
- Share the partnership matrix with internal stakeholders

Year 2 (2026-2027):
- Track community engagement conversions to applications in CRM
- Evaluate partnership ROI and enrollment impact
- Implement a comprehensive and coordinated business engagement plan
- Implement a robust civic engagement plan for the midterm elections
- Scale up more targeted outreach programming and community events in underserved communities

Year 3 (2027-2028):
- Institutionalize successful models across divisions
- Update and adjust goals to the long-term community engagement framework

This plan serves as a blueprint for community engagement across Montgomery College, connecting our mission to the diverse residents and neighborhoods of Montgomery County, and ensuring we deliver on our promise of educational excellence, access, and opportunity for all.