

**To:** Montgomery College Colleagues

**From:** Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President

**Subject:** **College Ombuds Recommendation and Update**

**Date:** December 13, 2019

In recognition of the International Day for Tolerance in November, the College's Office of the Ombuds issued its Fiscal Year 2019 report, which contained important information about issues brought to the ombuds' attention as well as a recommendation for institutional action. In this memorandum, I reflect on the recommendation and, in the attachment, you will find my reasons for adopting it. I also want to share important news about a transition and growth in the Office of the Ombuds.

First, as a matter of context, recall that the Office of the Ombuds provides confidential assistance to staff, faculty, and administrators in mitigating and resolving workplace issues and concerns. It was created in 2013 as a result of recommendations from both the Employee Engagement Advisory Group and a workgroup of union and governance leaders. The ombuds operates in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice as established by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). As indicated in the report, 175 employees visited the ombuds in FY19.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank and recognize our ombuds, Julie Weber, who has been at MC since 2016. Ms. Weber is leaving her role this week, and there will be a short break in ombuds services as a result. A search for a new ombuds for employees will be initiated early in 2020 after review of the position by the senior administrative leadership team. In addition, this past summer, we also committed to expanding the Office of the Ombuds to include an ombuds for students. Ms. Weber led a task group that developed the job description for the role. A search for the ombuds for students position is planned for this fiscal year as well. If you have interest in serving on either of these search committees, or if you have any comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr. Stephen Cain, chief of staff/chief strategy officer, at [Stephen.Cain@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:Stephen.Cain@montgomerycollege.edu).

During this interim period between the ombuds for employees' departure and the hiring of a new ombuds, please know that other resources are available to you to help you. While they do not offer the unique services that the Office of the Ombuds provides, they still could be useful during this time. These resources include the Faculty Staff Assistance Program, the Office of Employee and Labor Relations, and the Institute for Part-Time Faculty Engagement and Support. Additionally, in some cases,

speaking with your supervisor, a mentor, or a colleague can also be useful to helping you move through conflict.

I thank you for all that you do in empowering our students realize their academic potential and for all your efforts in building a committed and engaged College faculty and staff.

## ATTACHMENT

### PRESIDENT'S ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN FY19 OMBUDS REPORT December 2019

**RECOMMENDATION.** *Commit to ensuring all employees are aware of the College's ethical expectations as articulated in the Code of Ethics and Employee Conduct, and take ownership of their adherence to these expectations through a mandatory self-assessment as part of participation in an upcoming Ethics Focus Group.*

**Adopted.** With the memorialization of our Code of Ethics and Employee Conduct, and the extensive and effective ethics training completed at the College during FY19, this recommendation is an appropriate evolution of the College's efforts. In addition, in completing one of the FY18 ombuds' recommendations, a group of employees across the College developed guidelines entitled [Ethical Expectations](#). This manual provides guidance on living out our ethical standards. The examples contained in it provide a framework for developing professional habits of behavior.

The idea of a self-assessment fits in well with the work of developing the *Ethical Expectations* guidelines, and I am charging:

- **the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, in collaboration with the Office of Compliance, Risk, and Ethics** – to develop the self-assessment with appropriate input from employees across the College (by May 31, 2020);
- **the Office of ELITE** – to develop and implement an online format where the self-assessment can be provided for employee completion (by June 30, 2020); and
- **all administrators** – to discuss the *Ethical Expectations* guidelines with their teams and assure that members of their departments understand the importance of completing the self-assessment (by September 30, 2020); and
- **all employees** – to participate authentically and honestly in conversations about ethical expectations and to complete the self-assessment (by December 31, 2020).