CONCEPTUALIZING AN AGENDA FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC POLICY AT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

A BRIEFING PAPER (REVISED)

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PURPOSE OF BRIEFING PAPER

Research was conducted and a briefing paper developed to conceptualize a social responsibility and public policy agenda for Montgomery College. This briefing paper provides (a) a well researched perspective to embed a College culture to actualize social responsibility and public policy as institutional practices; (b) examines some of the opportunities and challenges of such an agenda based on a past College initiative; (c) discusses the epistemology and pedagogy of outreach, social responsibility, and public policy; and (d) proposes an organizational structure for establishing an Institute or Center at the College to shepherd a social responsibility and public policy agenda.

Social responsibility (i.e., Corporate Social Responsibility) is a term primarily used within corporate environments. It is a 'term of art' for describing corporate commitment and characterizing corporate practices to strategically and responsibly relate to and with their communities and contribute to the well being of their communities and society. In practice, social responsibility encompasses a variety of activities, which include embracing diversity and inclusion as critical and as a business necessity, establishing strategic community partnerships, enabling employee volunteerism, and taking proactive stances and engaging community stakeholders on issues that have a public good and public policy impact. Within higher education environments, the discourse on social responsibility has occurred within an ambiguous range of lexica which include community service, community outreach, community relations, community partnerships, public service, civic engagement, public deliberation, public policy, outreach, and service learning. As such, for this briefing paper the terms engagement and engagement with the community/public are used interchangeably to characterize these phenomena, as well as social responsibility.

OVERVIEW

The community college mission continues to be broad and far-reaching. Community colleges are often called the people's college, democracy's college or the community's college. Cohen and Brawer (1996) posited that the community college mission was primarily to prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, occupational or

vocational training, and community education, with community education the "broadest" of its mission (Gleazer, 1994, p. 1). Critical components of community education include interaction between the college and community, use of the community as a resource for extending the broader context of learning and an environment wherein the community can educate itself. A final component is institutional evaluation, which recognizes that the significance of citizen success is a benchmark for institutional success (Wang, 2004).

A fundamental role of the community college has been to meet community needs by serving and promoting "a greater social and civic intelligence" (Gleazer, 1994, p. 18). Furthermore the community college's work has been "closely integrated with the work of the high school and the work of other community institutions" (p. 18). It is debatable whether contemporary community colleges are conceptually aligning their mission, goals and objectives with this historical role. An American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' paper published in 1973 criticized that the emphasis is "too often on the word 'college'" and proposed that as a community-based institution, the community college must "organize itself around the customers' needs" by "creating value-satisfying goods and services" (Gleazer, 1994, p. 22). As American community colleges mature, they will need to develop and build on appropriate structures for "a new era of education and community service" and "be in the vanguard of change required in policies, institutional forms, and citizen attitudes," which includes a focus on "people—people in the community" (p. 22).

During the past decade, there has been growing concern and criticism about the disconnection between the academe and the community/public (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Boyte, 2000; Boyte, 2002; Fonte, 1993; Friedman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; London, 2001; London, 2002; London, 2003; Mathews, 1999a; PEW Foundation, 2004; Scott, 2007; Shaposka, 1997; Votruba et al., 2002). This criticism includes the perception that "the relationship between the academy and the public—is far down on the list of priorities, and only a partially identified one" (Mathews, 1999a, p. 78). Mathews (1999) and Mathews (2006) also indicated that "nearly all of our major institutions, and the professionals within them, are deeply troubled by their relationship to the public [community]" (p. 78). However, the criticism that public institutions and their administration have lost legitimacy with the communities that they serve continues to loom large. Higher education is among those organizations that has been diagnosed by the community with 'lack syndrome'— the lack of connecting the community

to political power and facilitating participation in public life, the lack of collaborating, the lack of reciprocating, and, in essence, the lack of recognizing the social capital of a broader, more inclusive community voice (Cortes, 1996; Scott, 2007). This burgeoning criticism about the quality of the relationship between public institutions and the community/public can be characterized as discontent, disinterest, distrust, and finally disconnection. This continued and prolonged disconnection has created an estranged relationship between public institutions and the community/public that has not been easily reconciled. While the relevance and role of the community in the community college mission has an historical context, these recent criticisms also suggest that relating with the community has not been a leadership or institutional priority.

The discourse on higher education's social responsibility, community and community service, outreach, public policy and engagement has occurred within an ambiguous range of lexica. This ambiguity has resulted in criticism, confusion, and created a need for clarity of institutional processes, policies, and practices that have been referred to as activities associated with these concepts. For example, among the criticism of the plethora of institutional processes and practices associated with these concepts is the failure to go beyond extension, conventional outreach, public service, service learning, and public relations (Anderson, 1998; Boyer, 1991; Boyte, 2000; Boyte, 2002; Boyte, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; McGovern, 2003; PEW Foundation, 2004; Woeste, 2002; Zlotkowski, et al., 2004). Consequently, without a clear and commonly agreed-upon definition of social responsibility, outreach, and engagement, "some campuses and their leaders [have been left] with the impression that they are 'doing engagement,' when in fact they are not" (Votruba et al., 2002, p. 8). Currently, there is a more commonly accepted definition of engaging with the community, within the context of institutional social responsibility, outreach, and public policy. This definition makes clear that, in practice, it is long-term, two-way discourse and interactions between an institution and the community that facilitates public participation processes for institutional collaboration with the public to identify, define, and solve public problems (Campbell, 2005; Campus Compact, 2001a; Campus Compact, 2001b; Creighton, 2005; Friedman, 2004; Friedman, Gutnick, & Danzberger (1999); Grossi, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; King et al., 1998; Mathews, 2006; PEW Foundation, 2004; Votruba et al., 2002).

A Kellogg Commission (1999) report indicated that a challenge colleges and universities will face is the growing public frustration with higher education's unresponsiveness. At the center of this challenge is the public's criticism and belief that higher education is out of touch with society's problems. The Commission's contention has been reiterated by other studies conducted on higher education's relationship with the community/public. The demand for more accountability from the community/public and legislators for higher education to move toward a more public agenda is evident with the emergence of a national movement to create more publicly engaged institutions (PEW Foundation, 2004; Weerts, 2005, Votruba et al., 2002; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). This movement has been supported through higher education scholarly research and initiatives on civic renewal, public engagement, and higher education for the public good.

Contemporary community colleges are viewed as dynamic, complex, and culturally iconic organizations. Often, community colleges are referred to as the gateway to higher education (Conner & Griffith, 1994; Shaw, Valadez, & Rhoads, 1999). The community college's mission ostensibly is to meet the educational and workforce development needs of the local community (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Gleazer, 1994; Lee, 2004). As such, community colleges have been described as one of the most effective democratizing agents in higher education (Bowen & Muller, 1999; Conner & Griffith, 1994; Dougherty, 2001). Ideally, democratic institutions should emulate democracy in practice and not pursue it as a destination. Creighton (2005) stated, "Democracy is a work in progress . . . [and] public participation in governmental decision making is considered part of the very definition of democracy" (p. 1).

Pursuing an agenda that focuses on institutional social responsibility, community, community service, community building, outreach, engagement and public policy is an opportunity to reclaim and emulate the democratic and civic purpose and intent of the community college. As a democratic institution, community colleges have been charged to be in relationship with the community (President Truman's Commission on Higher Education Report, 1947). As corporate citizens of their communities and by the nature of their location within the communities, community colleges have a unique role and responsibility to establish and sustain relationships with their communities (Association of Community College Trustees, 2005a; Association of Community College Trustees, 2005b; Chambers & Burkhardt, 2004; Deegan & Tillery, 1991; Douglas, 2005; Gleazer, 1994; Scott,

2007; Smith, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004). And community colleges are "ideally suited to serving as the 'nexus' among agencies dedicated to community improvement" (Deegan & Tillery, 1991, p. 244).

The findings of two recent studies indicated that neither a Public Policy Institute alone nor Institute practices are enough to sustain leadership, an institutional culture, and public spaces for public deliberation, which includes establishing and sustaining a social responsibility, community service, and public policy agenda (Scott, 2006; Scott, 2007). The studies urged that change is necessary and imminent for community colleges, including its leadership and trustee governance practices for relating with the community/public. As change agents, it is critical for the CEO and boards of trustees to lead as an informed, educated, and communicative unit. The CEO and boards' success will be defined by proactively involving multiple stakeholders often and early in the decision-making process, ensuring transparency, relating with the community, and communicating frequently with the community/public. It will also be important for the CEO and board of trustees to (a) work with individuals and units strategically positioned within the college's administrative organizational structure and (b) involve these individuals in the endless opportunities to advise, plan, and coordinate the College's and the board of trustees' outreach and engagement activities and to help shape its public policy agenda. Furthermore Public Policy Institute leaders are change agents, and it is important for these leaders to be in the room where strategic planning and decision making is occurring and to be an ever-present voice for pursuing democratic practices and strategies for engaging with the community/public.

The Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream is a recent example of an initiative challenging community college leaders and its leadership team to 'model the way' in engaging with the community/public. Among the initiative's goals is helping faculty, staff and administrators of community colleges strengthen their institution's capacity to "create avenues to understand students' educational experiences, their perceptions regarding their experiences, and their ideas and opinions about how the college might better serve them" (Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count Guidelines, 2004, p. 3). Accordingly, the participant colleges are expected to pursue a process of institutional change whereby "Inside and outside voices must be heard" (p. 4). This initiative's guidelines articulate:

> Institutional change is best designed, carried out and sustained when it involves stakeholders from outside the institution as well as college administrators, faculty and staff. Community involvement is essential for political and financial support and

long-term sustainability of college programs. Equally important are college-community partnerships that augment the college's programs and services (p. 4).

Montgomery College can be an exemplar of social responsibility, community outreach, public policy, and engagement with its communities because it is uniquely positioned within its communities. This perspective notwithstanding, there are still obstacles that must be overcome to establish and successfully sustain an institutional agenda and commitment to relating with the community, as well as convening and engaging with the community/public to deliberate about sensitive issues related to education and public policy. Obstacles exist, at institutions where the leadership has philosophically embraced the notion of engaging and deliberating with the community on public policy issues. These institutions can be a resource and provide opportunities to discover what is being learned about implementing an institutional agenda that promotes social responsibility and public policy. At the governance level, engaging in public discussions about public policy issues is among the responsibilities of public community college trustees. Trustees, however, have revealed that engaging with the community is not necessarily a practice or process that comes naturally (Douglas, 2005; Scott, 2007). As a result, there is an absence of critical inquiry and a public voice in the development of higher education policy.

The very idea of pursuing a public agenda, based on a philosophy of what is universally possible together, becomes a construct that further supports the notion that Montgomery College's current systems of relating with and to the community must be reframed. Beyond the proverbial commitment mantra, institutional leaders must ensure that an organizational culture, structures and strategies exist, which are coupled with the capacity and pedagogy to seek private understanding and create public knowledge. In order to sustain a social responsibility agenda and develop public policy, there must be an organizational philosophy and concomitant practices that (a) embrace inclusiveness; (b) recognize that no one individual, institution or organization has all the information or facts about an issue or concern; and (c) recognize that there is no prevailing self interest that determines the best public policy direction or strategy.

In order to make decisions about the world as it will be, not as it is, an enduring challenge for Montgomery College is maintaining its democratic mission and civic purpose. Maintaining a democratic mission and civic purpose can only be enabled by visible CEO and board of trustee leadership demonstrating its commitment to a social responsibility, public

policy, and authentic public engagement agenda with a broader and diverse community. Strategically and operationally this means (a) assigning this mission to senior level administrative leadership that reports to the president; (b) establishing an infrastructure that centralizes and appropriately aligns related programs and functions to achieve this mission; (c) allocating appropriate fiscal resources; and (d) assigning adequate staffing.

REVIEW OF PAST INITIATIVES

An important strategy for conceptualizing a social responsibility and public policy agenda at Montgomery College must include an investigation of its past efforts. This strategic approach provides an opportunity to examine some of the opportunities and challenges with respect to such an agenda, including establishing an institutional culture of social responsibility; embracing the community college's role in public policy; sustaining public space and outreach; and developing leadership. This approach also provides a context for analyzing and understanding past practices and identifying new strategies.

In 2000, the Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy at Montgomery College was founded to enable the College to expand and enhance its community outreach mission. The formation of the Center was a direct outgrowth of community dialogues initiated by the College's *Council for the 21st Century*, a broad-based advisory council established by its former President (Nunley). The Council was charged with defining the benchmarks against which the College would measure the performance of its mission in serving community needs (Scott, Starr, and Walker, 2001). The *Council for the 21st Century* report states "Without a vibrant, capable, interested community—a community that is intellectually curious and aware, culturally diverse and interdependent, and socially just and supportive—the College would exist in a vacuum." The Council recommended the College serve as an intellectual, social, and cultural force in the community by:

- creating and supporting an environment to examine issues of public policy, social justice, cultural, and intellectual concerns;
- providing a safe, open neutral site for these difficult discussions and seeking widespread participation;
- periodically assessing if programs and services meet the needs, interests, and challenges of the community;
- finding ways to call greater attention to the College's role as a leader in the artistic and cultural life of the County;

- creating a new public image through public relations and advertising efforts and a comprehensive calendar of events; and
- encouraging greater College/community partnerships to participate in issue- and group-based civic and community programs and service projects.

The overarching recommendations of the Council's report mandated the College to:

- Facilitate better public understanding of what we are and what we do through increased communication and outreach.
- Inspire intellectual excitement in the College and the community through mutual engagement.
- Convene and facilitate community dialogue on social, political, and economic issues.

The College's institutional philosophy and commitment to establishing and supporting the Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy is reflected in its mission statement and guiding principles, and was a high priority of Montgomery College's former President. The Montgomery College Board of Trustees mission statement also commits the institution to the "…development of social, cultural, and civic values [as] a natural outgrowth of the College's mission and curriculum." The Board established specific priorities including creating a community advisory body to guide development of the College's role as a convener of dialogues on community issues (a Community Forum or Center) and creating a research entity to support analysis of community issues.

Research was conducted to identify existing models that might effectively be integrated into Montgomery College's structure to address the Council's recommendations and the aforementioned goals. One such model was the Kettering Foundation's Public Policy Institute and National Issues Forums. The Kettering Foundation was of particular interest to the College because it is an organization that conducts research, devises, and tests strategies that strengthen the role of citizens in governing themselves. The Kettering Foundation provided a highly structured model, with training, and utilized materials they have researched and prepared for national public dialogues. In addition, it focuses on studying the question of what it takes to make democracy work (as it should), a question that the College has committed to as a continuous practice of discovery in a changing world.

The Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy's purpose has been to take an integral role in addressing these significant responsibilities. The Center provided a mechanism for training leadership and facilitating the support for an

environment that encourages students and other members of the institution and the broader community to examine issues of public policy, social justice, cultural and intellectual concerns. The Center pursued the following goals to:

- bring its intellectual resources to bear as a visible, politically neutral academic institution in developing a research agenda that addresses the grassroots-level needs of individual citizens, families, community-based organizations, and the community at large;
- train citizens from across all sectors of our community in the skills of moderating civic dialogue and building consensus;
- democratize the dissemination of policy-relevant information to the communities that need it to formulate advocacy positions;
- encourage progress toward social justice for the College's multiple constituencies, many of whom are economically disadvantaged; and
- build climates within and outside the College that transcends mere tolerance and empowers all citizens to reach higher levels of civic participation and engagement.

Creation of the Center was a College initiative enthusiastically endorsed and supported by the Board of Trustees, President, students, faculty, staff, and community. Since 2000, the Center for Community Leadership Development and Public Policy has presented Montgomery College with an almost unlimited array of possibilities to further serve its many constituents and substantially strengthen its community. Many of the Center's activities have been conducted with the encouragement and urging of the Montgomery College Board of Trustees and the CEO. Over the past six years, the Center has been involved in a range of activities, both independently or in collaboration with others, which includes:

- conducting four Public Policy Institutes;
- hosting Table Talks on difficult topics;
- developing a study guide for conducting civil dialogue on difficult issues;
- conducting student and teacher training in communication and deliberative dialogue;
- preparing local middle school students and Montgomery students to participate in the taping of *A Public Voice*, in collaboration with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and PBS;
- convening campus and community based forums on national issues as identified by the National Issues Forum Institute (NIFI);

- establishing the Leadership and Democracy Education Program for Montgomery County Public School middle school students, which has also prepared the national student participants for A Public Voice;

- recruiting faculty, staff, students and citizens to serve as Center faculty, dialogue moderators and conveners, and potential attendees to its Public Policy Institutes;

- serving as host for a Charles F. Kettering Foundation Capital Hill briefings, one such briefing was on the issue *"Money and Politics: Who Owns Democracy?"* where local citizens, national and local elected officials, and government and education representatives participated;

- networking with numerous groups, organizations and citizens in carrying out its work; and

- most recently convening dialogues with more than 500 residents of Montgomery County on the issue of higher education access and affordability.

Montgomery College is learning that its *a priori* assumptions about its most commonly used and conventional practices of relating to and connecting with the community/public are not the most favored by its communities. An example dispelling this assumption is that over 500 members of the College's internal and external communities participated in dialogues on higher education access and affordability with the College. Invariably the participants requested that the College continue this deliberative practice of relating with the community. The board of trustees also requested that the College administrative leadership and Center staff continue its practice of deliberative dialogues; expand outreach efforts; and increase its efforts, involvement and interactions with broader segments of the community and groups both in and outside of the College.

 The trustees learning, through its most recent deliberative dialogue practice, has been categorized into three topical themes—*understanding the community and the community's voice, the role of administrator and trustee leadership and organizational structures,* and *continuing to connect with the community through dialogue* (Newman, Scott, Starr, & Walker 2005).

Again, Montgomery College is uniquely positioned within the community. Through the board of trustees and the president, Montgomery College has virtually *endless possibilities* to develop strategies to engage with, build bridges to, and connect with its diverse communities. These strategies require expanding beyond the most commonly used and conventional practices of relating *to* the community/public, and establishing practices for

relating *with* the community/public. The College's trustees and CEO acknowledged that they play a significant role in influencing the organizational culture and determining the style and importance of the College's community relationship and engagement strategies and practices. As such, Montgomery College's president and board of trustees must be the torch bearers for ensuring the College can successfully establish and achieve a goal of social responsibility, outreach, public engagement in the interest of affecting public policy as an organizational priority, develop organizational capacities, identify the most effective practical approaches, and commit the staff, resources, and time to achieve this agenda.

THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN ESTABLISHING AND SUSTAINING A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILTY AND PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Creating, fostering, and supporting social responsibility, outreach, community and campus partnerships have been cited as the way executive leadership translates its commitment to institutional engagement. There is consensus in the literature about the role of the college president and the importance of his or her relationship with the community (Crosson, 1983; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Hoyle, 2001; Hoyle, 2002; Millet, 1980; Vaughan, 1998; Votruba et al., 2002; Weerts, 2005; Zlotkowski et al., 2004;). The earlier writings of Crosson (1983) elucidating the importance of the president's relationship with the community is not a new phenomenon. Crosson stated that the president's external relationships have a significant impact on the president's success and achieving the institution's mission. Millet (1980) emphasized that college presidents are involved in a broad range of relationships with members of the community, which includes—individuals, alumni, civic leaders and organizations, religious leaders, businesses and business leaders, elected officials and legislatures (i.e., governor, senator, mayor), local and state boards of higher education, federal government, and community foundations. Millet also made clear the complexity of the president's relationship with the community and the impact these relationships can have on achieving the institution's mission.

Campus Compact (2001a) identified presidential and trustee leadership as one of its 13 indicators for assessing engagement at two-year institutions. Leadership has a significant impact in shaping campus attitudes, activities and practices on engagement (i.e., social responsibility, community building, public policy agenda, and outreach). A benchmark for

assessing leadership engagement practices is visibility and being at the "forefront of institutional transformation that supports engagement in both their words and their actions" (p. 5).

Hoyle (2001) conducted a survey on the civic engagement activities of higher education chief executive officers. The survey findings provided a lens for viewing how higher education executives define civic engagement. Presidential civic engagement activities were examined in a variety of contexts—shaping public policy; external group influence by serving on the board of directors of an organization; written influence through writing opinion pieces for newspapers; writing articles for journals, writing books, book reviews, and chapters for books; and political action through running for elected office and supporting a political candidate. Hoyle (2001) concluded that even though some college presidents "believe civic engagement is vital to the country's health; many say they are in a quandary over how to become involved while keeping within the spirit and the mission of their institution" (p. 144).

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Task Force on Public Engagement (2002) conducted a two year study of its membership and produced a final report titled *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*. This study, spanning a period of two years, involved its membership institutions. The Association developed a framework that is useful to presidents and chancellors for determining how higher education leaders think about and promote public engagement on their campuses. The study described the challenges of public engagement for higher education institutions and identified definitive ways in which institutions needed to respond. An assessment for higher education engagement was developed that was constructed around a model for institutional engagement to compare what was considered an "ideal" with the "real" was developed for the study (p. 10). AASCU developed also developed a strategic toolkit useful to state college and university CEOs who want to "breathe more life into the concept of public engagement at the campus, college, and departmental levels" (p. 10). In addition to providing a guide for presidents, chancellors, and other campus leaders with a working definition of public engagement, the guide identifies exemplary initiatives on campuses committed to engagement. It also proposes specific actions that institutions, public policy-makers, and the Association can implement to demonstrate their commitment to public engagement. The AASCU's research is among the seminal studies establishing the role of higher education

leadership in determining and sustaining public engagement as an institutional mission and priority.

The AASCU study provided a conceptual framework that Weerts (2005) used to conduct a study on *how campus executives, faculty, and staff at large research universities articulate and demonstrate their commitment to outreach and engagement and how community partners validate and make sense of this commitment.* In his study of land-grant institutions, Weerts (2005) indicated that community partner perceptions of institutional engagement are informed by the rhetoric and behavior of top university/college leaders. He stressed that leadership at the top levels of the institution is critical to demonstrating commitment to outreach and engagement—both in the institutional and the community partner contexts. Weerts reiterated the important role of executive-level leadership in assuring community partners that an initiative is sustainable, important, and valued within the institution. Leadership commitment is most evident in their rhetoric and is demonstrated when it is visible and provides a high public profile to these activities.

Higher education presidents and its board of trustees must be in a relationship with the community through strategic connections and partnerships with a variety of organizations and individuals. Executive level leadership is required to create, foster, support, and sustain a successful institutional agenda to actualize social responsibility, outreach, public policy, and college/community partnerships, on behalf of and in collaboration with the president and the board of trustees.

CONCEPTUALIZNG MONGTOMERY COLLEGE'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILTY AND PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Within recent years much has been written "concerning the need for America's colleges and universities to more aggressively and creatively engage society's most pressing challenges" (*New Directions in Civic Engagement: University Avenue Meets Main Street*, 2004, p. 7). In discussing how higher education institutions connect and relate with their communities, Boyte (2000) argued that current practices and strategies are "often narrowly defined in terms of community outreach or public service. It is seen as something carried out *on behalf of* the community, instead of *in partnership with* the community. What is needed is a more 'public epistemology', one that emphasizes the art of public discourse, the cultivation of civic

imagination and capacity, the importance of engaging alternative points of view, and the value of engaging in 'public work'" (*Higher Education and Public Life: Restoring the Bond*, 2000, p.4). Social responsibility, outreach, public policy, and community/campus partnerships should be more than symbolic gestures, public relations campaigns or photo-ops (Woeste, 2002).

A study conducted by McGovern (2003) found that higher education has too narrowly defined community. McGovern pointed out that community is comprised of institutional or campus community; the professional or disciplinary community; the academic community; and societal subcultures or people with identifiable common needs, such as the homeless, victims of domestic violence, farmers, at-risk youth, people living in poverty, the incarcerated community, and people living with mental illness. Each has its own needs and purposes.

In characterizing publicly engaged higher education institutions, Votruba et al. (2002) suggested, "The publicly engaged institution is fully committed to direct, two-way interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit" (p. 9). The research of Votruba et al. (2002) investigated the authenticity of engagement in higher education by examining how presidents and chancellors "walk the walk and talk the talk in leading engaged institutions" (p. 5). Arguing, "Many universities espouse the importance of public engagement but do little internally to align the institution to support its achievement," Votruba et al. (2002) maintained that public engagement as a result "remains on many campuses very fragile and person-dependent". Moreover, the study found that neither institutional culture nor leadership had significantly impacted how public engagement was viewed, valued and practiced. A specific observation was that "At most institutions, the idea of public engagement is not so deeply rooted in its culture that its emphasis would continue unabated after the departure of a committed CEO or other academic leader" (p. 7). The study recommended that public engagement

> become as deeply embedded in the institution as other mission dimensions. . .public policy must be developed that actively promotes the engagement of colleges and universities in their regions, rather than passively permitting or implicitly discouraging engagement. . . institutions should embrace public engagement as a core

value and defining characteristic, and encourage activities that authentically promote these ends (p. 7-11).

Within the context of higher education, the concept of engagement, according to the PEW Partnership, "…implies a greater role for colleges and universities in framing society's critical questions, in creating space for public deliberation that offers exposure to different points of view and enables people to form, express, and discuss their own opinions" (*New Directions in Civic Engagement: University Avenue Meets Main Street*, 2004, p. 4). Engaging with the community includes the institutional core functions of research, teaching, and service, as well as public outreach and citizenship preparation. It also requires a commitment to developing metrics for assessing and evaluating these core functions to reflect about and enhance institutional practices, programs, and protocols (Holland, 1997; Holland, 2001a; Holland 2001b).

Montgomery College's operational standards for social responsibility, public policy, and outreach should be based on well established national benchmarks for higher education institutions and, where available, specifically community colleges. In general, the organizational mission and intent should be to optimize its capacity for teaching, service, and research in these areas. Therefore it is recommended that critical operational components to implement a social responsibility, public policy, and outreach agenda include:

- practices and strategies that expand the democratic mission and civic purpose of the College, which include citizen/public scholarship and action research that contribute to the public good;
- sustained direct, two-way interactions between the College and its internal and external communities and constituencies to identify, define, and solve public problems and address societal issues;
- projects and initiatives that enhance the civic viability of the curriculum, teaching and learning;
- projects and initiatives that prepare an educated and engaged citizenry;
- collaborations between the College and community for the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit and the public good; and
- Processes for authentic public participation, which seek individual/organizational knowledge to create public knowledge.

FUNCTIONAL COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE AT MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Montgomery College is a critical stakeholder in the quality of life of its community. Its students, faculty, and staff are members of that community. The College's mission is multifaceted, and embracing diversity is a foundation of its mission. The Board of Trustees, the President, and the college community recognize that supporting access, equity and diversity related policies and programmatic initiatives, on behalf of educating the residents of Montgomery County, ensures equity in teaching and learning for all students. The College's leadership to achieve access, equity, diversity, and non-discrimination is provided under the direction of the President, through the Director of the Office of Equity and Diversity. The office participates as an administrative and leadership partner to assist the College with maintaining an environment and climate responsive to the needs of its diverse students, faculty, staff, and community constituents. The Office has been an active participant within the campus and surrounding communities, and a champion of the College's commitment to diversity. Moreover, the Office has provided the leadership and been among the College's principal collaborators, planners, and facilitators of programmatic initiatives to connect the College and the community which have contributed significantly to improving the quality of life in Montgomery County. With an unwavering purpose to impact and add value to the lives of students, faculty, and staff, and to ensure the educational success and cultural enrichment of students and members of the surrounding community, the staff has served as a catalyst for change. As such, the principles of access, equity and diversity provide a stable foundation on which to advance a social responsibility and public policy agenda, as well as expand the democratic mission and civic purpose of the College. These are ideals rooted in a philosophy that, to effectively actualize its democratic mission, community colleges must be the stewards for providing access to equal employment and educational opportunities for its community.

Although there are several independent and unrelated College offices and activities that connect the College and community, their effectiveness could be enhanced if centralized. Overall the impact of these units/activities has essentially been establishing community connections, collaborations, and partnerships through civic engagement and

outreach; educational, social and cultural programming; early intervention and pre-college programs; and student engagement and service learning. A resulting affect has been framing and shaping the community's perspective on a variety of local and national public policy related issues such as the achievement gap, access to and affordable higher education, demographic trends, sprawl, transportation, crime, immigration, workforce development, etc. In order to enhance institutional effectiveness and efficiency, Montgomery College should purposefully pursue the opportunity to align, centralize, and integrate these units/activities.

A Social Responsibility, Engagement and Public Policy Institute (SREPPI) could serve as the umbrella for aligning and optimizing four critical functions that are interdependent—diversity and workplace inclusion; engagement, outreach and public policy; community linkages and partnerships; and service learning (as illustrated in Figure 1). As the "community's" college, aligning and centralizing these functions will strengthen the College's capacity to be strategically and proactively responsive to engaging with the community to meet educational and employment needs. For example, the Office of Equity and Diversity; a Center for the Study of Community College Engagement, Outreach and Public Policy; an Office of College/Community Linkages, Alliances and Service (CLAS); and an Office of Student Engagement and Service Learning could conceivably represent some of the organizational units within such an Institute. As a collective, these units can provide the infrastructure and become a catalyst for demonstrating the College's commitment to broad-based and progressive early connections, collaborations, partnerships, interactions and interventions with the community for the public good. Within this construct, the Office of Equity and Diversity could be restructured and renamed the Social Responsibility, Engagement and Public Policy Institute. The Institute would be responsible for providing the administrative leadership and oversight for the strategic planning, budget, personnel/staffing, and facilities support to these units. An overview of the mission of each existing and proposed unit within such an Institute is highlighted below and illustrated in Figure 1: Functional Components of a Social Responsibility, Engagement and Public Policy Institute at Montgomery College.

Office of Equity and Diversity

The Office of Equity and Diversity currently provides the College's leadership for achieving, assessing, and monitoring institutional access, equity, diversity, and

nondiscrimination in academic/education and employment initiatives. The Office is responsible for facilitating, coordinating, developing, and delivering compliance, educational, social, and cultural programs and initiatives in support of the College's mission and Equal Employment and Equal Education Opportunity (EEO) policies and procedures. Among the office responsibilities are:

- monitoring and addressing the College's risk management issues by assuring compliance with state and federal anti-discrimination and employment laws, regulations, and reporting requirements;
- serving as the College official contact with state and federal compliance agencies and preparing the College's annual state and federal compliance reports;
- developing and establishing the College EEO policies and procedures, in accordance with state and federal regulations;
- conducting research, policy and legal analysis and evaluation of contemporary judicial issues and legislative actions directly affecting diversity efforts in higher education;
- conducting timely mediation and thorough investigations and adjudication of discrimination allegations and complaints.
- establishing faculty and staff development initiatives and opportunities designed to—address and promote awareness about sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, and issues related to support for students and employees with disabilities;
- supporting faculty or staff in the areas of pedagogical change, curriculum transformation, and effective teaching strategies for diverse learners;
- convening discussions about effective pedagogy for diversity courses and programs and campus climate issues;
- connecting the college with the community and establishing critical linkages with diverse internal and external constituents;
- serving as the liaison with the African American, Asian American, and Latino communities; and
- developing programming that encompass academic and non-academic initiatives and co-curricular activities on issues of access, equity, and diversity.

Center for the Study of Community College Engagement, Outreach and Public Policy

The Center should be comprised of a multidisciplinary research team of academic and non-academic scholars. The focus of the Center's work is establishing and promoting a community college educational think tank for the study of and to address issues related to the theory and practice of engagement, outreach, and public policy. As advocates of community-based participatory and action research, the Center will be responsible for connecting the college and community through a range of activities and programmatic initiatives such as,

- convening, facilitating, and sustaining dialogue and engagement on local and national public policy issues;
- establishing a variety of strategies and interventions to enhance institutional and community capacities for engagement, outreach, and addressing public policy related issues;
- coordinating a visiting and engaged scholars program;
- conducting social responsibility engagement, outreach, public policy assessments and evaluations;
- networking among Maryland and other states, and grassroots democracy; organizations operating across the nation and internationally;
- developing briefing papers on local and national public policy issues; and
- hosting roundtables, presentations and conferences where members of the college, community, thought leaders, and renowned speakers are invited to discuss contemporary community college research and public policy implications, address local and national public policy issues, and learn about contemporary theories and practices of engagement, outreach, and public policy.

Office of College/Community Linkages, Alliances and Service (CLAS)

This Office should be a point of contact and responsible for connecting the college and community through a range of activities and programmatic initiatives which focus on building new and sustaining existing external partnerships within the community; coordinating outreach projects and faculty and staff volunteerism; conducting community linkages and partnership SWOT analyses and community mapping; managing an institutional database and conducting research on trends, strategies, and outcomes being (including those

at other institutions around the country) used to establish and sustain successful community partnerships and community building; and maintaining a college database on community organizations, community leaders, constituents, and stakeholders.

Office of Engagement and Service Learning

This Office should be responsible enabling and enhancing the College's capacity to develop shared experiences for faculty and students interested in the integration of community service with instruction and learning, curriculum-based service, and community-based research. The office should be the College resource for enabling faculty to pursue community-based learning; identifying community partnering opportunities for curriculum-based service and learning; and establishing collaborations for student to participate in applied, action research. The Office should be the College and community point of contact for such activities as:

- preparing students for responsible citizenship and community service for the public good;
- building institutional capacity for sustaining a student engagement and service-learning curriculum that enhances the academic curriculum;
- enabling faculty and community partnership and linkages for integrating and sustaining practical experiences for students, curriculum-based service and learning;
- hosting roundtables, presentations and conferences where faculty and other members of the college, community, thought leaders, and renowned speakers are invited to discuss theories and practices, share ideas, best practices and explore challenges related to successfully developing and implementing student engagement and service-learning programs; and
- promoting and coordinating student volunteerism, civic engagement, and advocacy activities related to service-learning.
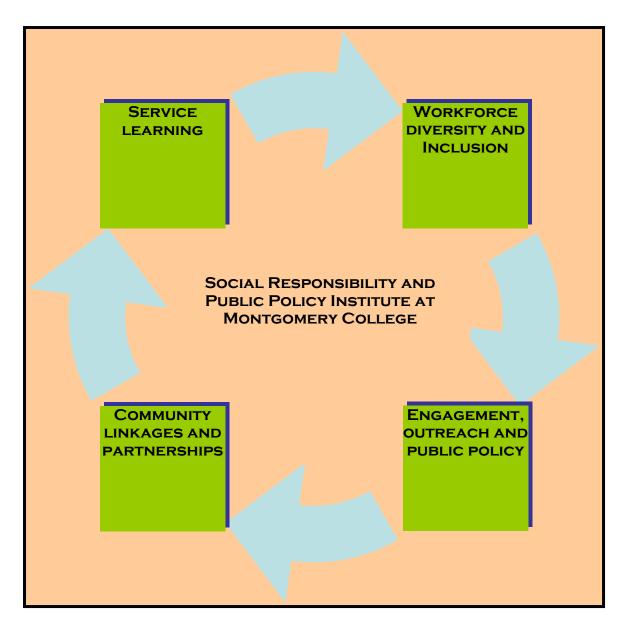
Figure 1: Alignment of College Services/Units Connecting the College and Community

Figure 2: Schematic of Functional Components of a Social Responsibility, Engagement and Public Policy Institute at Montgomery College

Office of Equity and Diversity	Center for the Study of Community College Engagement, Outreach and Public Policy	Office of College/Community Linkages, Alliances and Service (CLAS)	Office of Engagement and Service Learning
Monitoring and addressing the College's risk management issues by assuring compliance with state and federal anti-discrimination and employment laws, regulations, and reporting requirements; Serving as the College official contact with state and federal compliance agencies and preparing the College's annual state and federal compliance reports Developing and establishing the College EEO policies and procedures, in accordance with state and federal regulations; Conducting research, policy and legal analysis and evaluation of contemporary judicial issues and legislative actions directly affecting diversity efforts in higher education; Conducting timely mediation and thorough investigations and adjudication of discrimination allegations and complaints. Establishing faculty and staff development initiatives and opportunities designed to—address and promote awareness about sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, and	Multidisciplinary research team of academic and non-academic scholars. Establishing and promoting a community college educational think tank for the study of and to address issues related to the theory and practice of engagement, outreach, and public policy. Advocating and practicing community-based participatory and action research Connecting the college and community through a range of activities and programmatic initiatives such as, ▪ Convening, facilitating, and sustaining dialogue and engagement on local and national public policy issues; ▪ Establishing a variety of strategies and interventions to enhance institutional and community capacities for engagement, outreach, and addressing public policy related issues; ▪ Coordinating a visiting and engaged scholars program; ▪ Conducting social responsibility engagement, outreach, public policy assessments and evaluations; ▪ Networking among Maryland and other states, and grassroots democracy; organizations operating across the nation and	Connecting the college and community through a range of activities and programmatic initiatives which focus on building new and sustaining existing external partnerships within the community; Coordinating outreach projects and faculty and staff volunteerism; Conducting community linkages and partnership SWOT analyses and community mapping; Managing an institutional database and conducting research on trends, strategies, and outcomes being (including those at other institutions around the country) used to establish and sustain successful community partnerships and community building; Maintaining a college database of community organizations, leaders, constituents, and stakeholders.	Enabling and enhancing the College's capacity to develop shared experiences for faculty and students interested in the integration of community service with instruction and learning, curriculum-based service, and community-based research. Serving as the College resource for enabling faculty to pursue community-based learning; identifying community partnering opportunities for curriculum-based service and learning; Establishing collaborations for students to participate in applied, action research. Preparing students for responsible citizenship and community service for the public good; Building institutional capacity for sustaining a student engagement and service-learning curriculum that enhances the academic curriculum; Enabling faculty and community partnership and linkages for integrating and sustaining practical experiences for students, curriculum-based service and

issues related to support for students and employees with disabilities; support faculty or staff in the areas of pedagogical change, curriculum transformation, and effective teaching strategies for diverse learners; Convening discussions about effective pedagogy for diversity courses and programs and campus climate issues; Connecting the college with the community and establishing critical linkages with diverse internal and external constituents; and serving as the liaison with the African American, Asian American, and Latino communities; and Developing programs that encompass academic and non-academic initiatives and co-curricular activities on issues of access, equity, and diversity.	internationally; ■ Developing briefing papers on local and national public policy issues; and ■ Hosting roundtables, presentations and conferences where members of the college, community, thought leaders, and renowned speakers are invited to discuss contemporary community college research and public policy implications, address local and national public policy issues, and learn about contemporary theories and practices of engagement, outreach, and public policy.		learning; Hosting roundtables, presentations and conferences where faculty and other members of the college, community, thought leaders, and renowned speakers are invited to discuss theories and practices, share ideas, best practices and explore challenges related to successfully developing and implementing student engagement and service-learning programs; and Promoting and coordinating student volunteerism, civic engagement, and advocacy activities related to service-learning.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSION

Establishing a Social Responsibility, Engagement and Public Policy Institute at Montgomery College is forward thinking and timely. In that the current director of the Office of Equity and Diversity is one of a few known scholars in the area of authentic engagement practices for community college leaders and boards of trustees, the College has a leader in place with the vision, expertise and scholarship to lead such an Institute. Montgomery College has an unprecedented opportunity to distinguish itself as one of the vanguard higher education institutions that has prioritized and established an institutional agenda with an organizational structure and practices to authentically relate and engage with the community for the public good. A solid plan to implement this agenda with complementary authentic practices for relating with the community about the world they share—*as it will be, not as it is*—could strategically position the College. It could also enhance the College's opportunity to pursue and achieve the new Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching *Community Engagement Classification.* Only 76 U.S. colleges and universities have been selected for this classification.

Transformational leadership at every level of the College, which includes trustee leadership and commitment to more democratic governance practices, is the impetus for making a College social responsibility, engagement and public policy agenda effective and successful. The College's leadership team must be willing to proactively champion organizational change, implement institutional strategies that connect people and connect the college to the community, and establish relationships with a more inclusive public to facilitate participation in public life. Furthermore tactical strategies that ensure collaboration for the public good, assure reciprocity, enable a critical pedagogy for democratic community engagement practices, and restore and reclaim the public trust require benchmarks for legitimizing such commitment (Friere 2000; Scott, 2007). There are several key factors that the president should consider to optimally legitimize and sustain College strategic directions in these areas, which includes establishing a plan of action to:

- articulate it as an organizational mission and priority;
- embed it in the organizational culture;
- develop the organizational capacities to ensure success;
- assign senior level administrative leadership serve as its shepherd;

- establish an infrastructure that centralizes and appropriately aligns related programs and functions to achieve this mission;
- allocate appropriate fiscal and operational resources;
- ensure the assignment of adequate staffing; and
- allow the Institute staff development time to research, learn, analyze, assess, evaluate and explore sources and resources that ensure continuous quality, currency in the discipline, and success implementing this agenda.

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