



To: Frederick Community College Board of Trustees

From: Dr. Annesa Payne Cheek, President

Date: August 21, 2024

Subject: Consent Item
Approval of 2024 Frederick Community College Cultural Diversity Plan – Annual Progress Report for submission to the Maryland Higher Education Commission

Board Policy: E-1 Ends, EL-1 Treatment of Students, EL-2 Treatment of Employees, and EL-8 Access to Education

OVERVIEW

Frederick Community College (FCC) is required, in accordance with §11-406 of the Education Article, to submit a report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) summarizing institutional progress toward the goals of its cultural diversity plan. The College has been operating under a multi-year plan from 2019 through 2024.

ANALYSIS

- The College’s commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and promoting a sense of belonging across multiple dimensions of difference is reflected in the *2019-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan*.
- The major goals of the DEI Strategic Plan are (1) to increase access and success for traditionally underrepresented students; (2) to increase recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce; (3) to prepare students for an increasingly diverse community, workforce, and world; and (4) to ensure a more welcoming and inclusive learning and workplace environment for students.
- The College has a diverse student body representing 50 countries. Of these students, 25% are first-generation credit-seeking students, and 43% students of color, exceeding the racial and ethnic diversity of Frederick County (35%).
- Notable accomplishments in the report include the development of a culturally responsive syllabus, implementation of a comprehensive student support communication and tracking system (EAB Navigate), tutoring availability via an online platform, and embedded tutoring for English and math gateway courses.
- The MOSAIC Center, which serves as a physical space and vital hub for promoting cultural understanding and inclusivity, sponsored a series of *Courageous Conversations* on topics such as cannabis, intimate partner violence, and issues impacting trans, intersex, and drag communities. Discussions on the

Israel/Palestine conflict, writing campaigns for Hispanic Heritage Month, and Banned Books Week celebrations were also hosted by the MOSAIC Center.

- Organizations across the country continue to struggle with measuring the impact of DEIB efforts. And while there has been great enthusiasm among faculty and staff for implementing DEIB initiatives at FCC, to date, there is limited evidence demonstrating the impact of our efforts. As the College continues its equity work, and leverages the support of the Achieving the Dream network (a national network of community colleges focused on achieving equitable student outcomes) we expect to enhance our ability to address persistent opportunity gaps and produce better student outcomes overall.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend board approval of the *2024 FCC Cultural Diversity Plan – Annual Progress Report* for submission to the MHEC

ATTACHMENT(S)

2024 FCC Cultural Diversity Plan – Annual Progress Report

Annual Progress Report on Cultural Diversity Plan July 2024

As required by §11-406 of the Education Article, this document is the Frederick Community College (FCC) annual progress report for its programs related to cultural diversity. This report summarizes institutional progress toward implementing FCC's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan. The Plan is a multi-year action plan that the College has implemented over a period of five fiscal years from 2019 through 2024. Following Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) requirements for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, FCC's annual progress report responds to the following questions.

- 1. A summary of the institution's plan to improve cultural diversity as required by Education Article §11-406. Include all major goals, areas of emphasis, strategy for implementation and progress on those goals. Also, provide an explanation of how progress is being evaluated. Please indicate where progress has been achieved, and some best practices identified that aided the institution in making progress. If there is no formal plan approved by the institutional governing board, describe how the institution intends to come into compliance by July 1, 2025.**

Introduction

Frederick Community College (FCC), located in Frederick, Maryland, is dedicated to preparing an increasingly diverse student body for workforce preparation, transfer education, career development, and personal enrichment. FCC prides itself on its core values of learning, innovation, diversity, excellence, community, and integrity. The College's mission statement reflects its commitment to diversity: "Focused on teaching and learning, Frederick Community College provides affordable, flexible access to lifelong education that responds to the needs of diverse learners and the community."

Major Goals

FCC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is grounded in the *2019-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan* (see Appendix I). This framework for continuous improvement in DEIB reflects the College's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and promoting a sense of belonging across multiple dimensions of difference. The plan is divided into four domains with the following major goals: (1) to increase access and success for traditionally underrepresented students; (2) to increase recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce; (3) to prepare students for an increasingly diverse community, workforce, and world; and (4) to ensure a more welcoming and inclusive learning and workplace environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Within each domain, specific goals are outlined, such as increasing the representation of students, faculty, staff, and administration from underrepresented groups, enhancing support services for diverse populations, and promoting a campus culture of inclusivity and respect which all aim to achieve equitable success outcomes for all learners.

Strategy for Implementation

As a mechanism for implementing the DEIB Plan, a Racial Equity Strategic Advisory Team (RESAT) was established in 2021. The focus of RESAT was on operationalizing the recommendations of the DEI Strategic Plan. Specifically, the RESAT worked to address sixteen board-approved Key Performance Indicators related to racial equity gaps in success, persistence, graduation, and course success. The RESAT developed targeted interventions and assigned specific tasks to individuals to make progress toward benchmarks related to high-impact teaching practices, access to dual enrollment, student experience, human resources and professional development. One

outcome and deliverable that emerged from the work of the RESAT group was the development and implementation of a Culturally Responsive syllabus that includes an equity statement (see Appendix II).

Tracking Progress

To measure progress, FCC employs a variety of data metrics, including enrollment and retention rates of diverse student populations, diversity representation among faculty and staff accessible via Power BI Data dashboards. The College also gathers qualitative data through surveys and focus groups to capture the experiences and perceptions of its community members. These key performance indicators are inclusive of all students and disaggregated by race, gender, and age.

The use of disaggregated student data as well as student climate surveys has informed the need for and supported the development of multiple equity initiatives (described below). While there has been great enthusiasm among faculty and staff for implementing DEIB initiatives, to date, there is limited evidence demonstrating the impact of these efforts on addressing the opportunity gap. As the College continues its equity work through its relationship with Achieving the Dream (a national organization focused on achieving equitable student outcomes), we will build our capacity to track and use data to inform activities and decisions.

Areas of Emphasis and Success

Professional Development. The plan includes robust professional development facilitated by FCC's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including training for faculty and staff on equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive teaching and assessment (see Appendix III). An Equity Scholar Program was developed to build capacity among faculty. Equity Scholars participated in cohort professional learning workshops aligned with the DEIB Strategic Plan and implemented equity practices. In addition to implementing equity practices in their own courses, Equity Scholars were charged with supporting departmental equity initiatives.

For example, an Equity Scholar from the English department developed an English 101 online course shell using equity principles, first deployed in Fall 2023. Faculty utilizing this shell reported that it appeared to have had a positive effect on student success, and as of Fall 2024 this course shell will now be mandated for use in all English 101 courses. Once this occurs, a deeper longitudinal study will be used to determine if the impact of using this shell is, in fact, significant. While there have been pockets of course success (student receiving A, B, or C) and great energy, FCC has not yet achieved its equity benchmark of 74% for all students.

Faculty also undergo training in instructional and universal design, ensuring a consistent and accessible learning experience for all students. Key departments now benefit from dedicated student success coaches who offer proactive student outreach. These efforts collectively aim to cultivate a more supportive and inclusive environment where every member of our community can thrive.

In FY 2025, FCC will launch a new certification course for online teaching practices. This training aims to equip instructors with skills in creating inclusive online learning environments through best practices, instructional strategies, and technology. These efforts reflect FCC's commitment to DEIB, ensuring an enhanced educational experience for all stakeholders.

Student Support. The College has enhanced initiatives to help all learners succeed through efforts such as (1) EAB Navigate, which provides comprehensive student support through an early alert system; (2) success coordinators; (3) faculty advising training; (4) case management advising; (5) online tutoring via the ThinkingStorm platform; and (6) enhanced tutoring for English and math

gateway courses. To maintain a consistent student experience, FCC provides faculty training on using the Blackboard learning management system. Additionally, student clubs such as African Students Association, All Things Asian Affinity, Black Student Union, Gender Sexuality Alliance, ASL Club, Muslim Student Association, and Spanish Club serve as a safe space and as a source of cultural education to the larger community.

Other initiatives that enhance a culture of belonging for students include the Partnership for Achieving Student Success (PASS), Parents Lead, and Students of Excellence, which all focus on supporting underrepresented students and fostering inclusivity. The Adult Education and ESOL Program offers rigorous instruction to immigrants and refugees, facilitating their transition into credit courses. Continuing Education and Workforce Development also collaborates with local employers and community organizations to serve diverse populations.

FCC's Student Affairs team has begun using the Loss Momentum Framework (a national tool to support educators in designing every step of a student's pathway with the end goal of completion at the forefront) to address barriers to student success, while the Language Access Plan ensures effective communication for non-English-speaking populations. Additionally, FCC has established essential resources like Cougar Mart (a food pantry) and food lockers so students can access food at their convenience without having to make an in-person contact.

Student experiences are also being improved through curriculum reviews, co-curricular programming, and racial climate assessments. Additional efforts to address biases in teaching and the equitable distribution of institutional aid are ongoing.

Inclusive Spaces. Physical spaces are being updated to better reflect the cultural diversity of students, and efforts are underway to celebrate student cultures more visibly in collaboration with the community. The MOSAIC (Making Our Spaces an Inclusive Community) Center at FCC serves as a physical space and vital hub for promoting cultural understanding and inclusivity through diverse programming. Events like *Courageous Conversations* tackle significant topics including cannabis, intimate partner violence, and issues impacting trans, intersex, and drag communities. Discussions on the Israel/Palestine conflict, writing campaigns for Hispanic Heritage Month, and Banned Books Week celebrations further enrich campus life.

Additionally, initiatives like Beyond Strangers, Interfaith Dinners, and festivities such as Hispanic Heritage Month and Lunar New Year celebrations foster empathy and community cohesion across varied backgrounds. Collaborations with the Maryland School for the Blind, including Goal Ball games (a team sport designed specifically for athletes with a vision impairment), aim to deepen these connections.

Following up on findings from the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) survey (a survey that assesses racial climate on campus), efforts are underway to improve accessibility of buildings and promote representation through art across campus. To support the mental health and wellbeing of students, FCC has Zen Den spaces where students can meditate and decompress, as well as a labyrinth for meditative walks.

Employee Recruitment and Evaluation. Employee performance reviews now include criteria for assessing the ability to interact with diverse populations, reflecting our commitment to fostering a truly inclusive campus culture. Additionally, hiring committees must now be comprised of a minimum of 25% diverse representation, bolstered by rigorous unconscious bias training for all hiring committee members. Professional development workshops such as "How inclusive are you, really?" and "Benevolent Prejudice," are designed to deepen awareness and understanding.

Efforts are also underway to improve diversity in staffing through an assessment of recruitment and hiring practices and over time, an informal employee network comprised of faculty and staff of color has emerged. Collectively, these efforts emphasize the College's commitment to creating an inclusive environment that embraces diversity at all levels.

Cultural Competency General Education Review. FCC is assessing and expanding courses to build capacity for interacting across differences. The College's General Education Committee evaluated and revised the definition of cultural competency and is facilitating a course audit to strengthen the Cultural Competency general education requirement and set high-impact goals for global engagement with support from the Global Learning Committee. Plans to enhance global engagement in classrooms are also underway, assessing interest and capacity to integrate global content effectively.

Policy Review. The College is reviewing its International Travel Policy to further support these goals. Moreover, FCC has introduced policies addressing pregnancy and parenting, and updated its Religious Accommodations Policy and Title IX Policies, ensuring equitable opportunities for all students. Additionally, since FCC recently became an Achieving the Dream (ATD) institution, there has been a commitment to review student focused policies using ATD's Equity Toolkit that focuses on principles to assess institutional policies, practices, and structures with a common focus on equitable student success. To date, the Code of Student Conduct policy has been reviewed using this process.

Focus on the Future

As FCC reaches the end of its current DEIB plan and anticipates identifying a new leader for DEIB, the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) survey was conducted and provided the College with useful insights about strategies to advance a more inclusive campus environment. Additionally, an external consultant was engaged to lead an assessment of current attitudes, mindset, and progress on DEIB initiatives to support a transition in leadership. The consultant facilitated focus groups with students, faculty, staff, and administration, alongside other data collection methods, to gather critical insights. This assessment sought to understand the strategic efforts required to maintain and enhance momentum around DEIB, with a particular focus on racial equity and justice during a pivotal period of transition for the institution.

Faculty, staff, and students alike embraced the potential to contribute to a more equitable campus culture, ensuring that DEIB principles permeated every facet of academic and administrative life at FCC, signaling a commitment to enhance DEIB across the College's infrastructure. As themes emerged from the consultant's assessment, a diagram was developed to support the next phase of the College's DEIB efforts (see Appendix IV).

2. **A summary of how the 2023 Supreme Court’s decision to strike down race-conscious admissions practices has affected your campuses policies and practices. Specifically provide information on the following (no more than three pages):**
 - a. **Outreach and Support Programs:** Are there any new initiatives or programs being implemented to support underrepresented minority groups or enhance access to higher education for historically marginalized communities?
 - b. **Community Engagement:** How is your institution engaging with stakeholders, including students, faculty, alumni, and community partners, to navigate these policy changes and ensure ongoing commitment to diversity and equity?
 - c. **Equity and Access:** In light of the ruling, how is your institution ensuring continued access and equity for historically underrepresented groups in higher education?
 - d. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** What mechanisms are in place to monitor the impact of policy changes on student demographics, campus climate, and educational outcomes? How will your institution evaluate the effectiveness of these adjustments over time?

Summary of Impact of Supreme Court’s Decision to Strike Down Race-Conscious Admissions

As an open-enrollment institution, Frederick Community College accepts all students who meet the minimum admission criteria. The Supreme Court decision did not impact the admission process, outreach to the community, or require any changes to policy. FCC enrolls more students of color (43%) than the population of Frederick County (35%). Hence, the Supreme Court’s decision in 2023 has no measurable impact on our policy and practices as a college.

Appendix I:

Frederick Community College's [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2019-2024](#)

Appendix II:**Culturally Responsive Syllabi Embedded in All Syllabi*****About FCC's Commitment to Equity:***

It's FCC's mission to serve students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives; to address students' learning needs; and to respect students' identities, inclusive of sexuality, gender identity and expression, disability, age, religion, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

While I will do my part to ensure that all students are seen, heard, and valued, your suggestions of how to make this class an inclusive space are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements.

From: [Culturally Responsive Syllabus Example](#)

Appendix III: [Professional Learning Assessment Plan CTL & DEIB](#)

Appendix IV: Emergent Themes for Future DEIB Planning

