



## **Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC)**

### **Cultural Diversity Report**

**2023**

#### **Introduction**

Frederick Community College (FCC) is a comprehensive, public, associate degree-granting institution serving Frederick County, Maryland. Frederick Community College strives to foster a culture of inclusive excellence so all College community members may fully engage, live authentically, and flourish. In addition, FCC dedicates itself to intentional and ongoing reflection to meet the evolving needs of its surrounding communities.

Since the founding of FCC, the College has prepared an increasingly diverse student body to complete workforce preparation, transfer education, career development, and personal and career enrichment.

FCC has created a diversity, equity, and inclusion infrastructure that includes the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; the President's Diversity Advisory Council; MOSAIC (Making Our Space An Inclusive Community) Center; Adult Services; Veteran and Military Services; Disability Access Services; Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language programs. Additionally, the College offers student-centered and employee-centered programs, including those that support Faculty and Staff of Color, the LBGTQIA+ community, student parents and caregivers, and immigrant students. These programs provide support and remove barriers for special populations.

Currently 17% of FCC faculty members and 20% of the professional administrative staff identify themselves as People of Color. In addition, the Student of Color population at FCC is approximately 40%, exceeding the racial and ethnic diversity of Frederick County (29%).

The college's cultural diversity work is grounded in the College-wide 2019-2024 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan, a reflection of the College's commitment to continuous improvement in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The following narrative highlights initiatives and outcomes included in the plan. The plan, with updates through May 2023, is found in Appendix A.

## **Section 1: Summary of FCC's plan to improve cultural diversity**

### **Major goals**

On June 19, 2019, the FCC Board of Trustees approved the first five-year college-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan. The project was the result of college and community conversations over the previous eight months that centered on the strengths and areas of needed growth for the College and focused on four main goals: 1) Increase access and success for traditionally underrepresented students. 2) Increase recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. 3) Prepare students for an increasingly diverse community, workforce, and world. 4) Ensure a more welcoming and inclusive learning and workplace environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

### **Areas of emphasis**

Since 2019, FCC's major area of focus has been to reduce racial equity gaps for African American and Hispanic students.

### **Strategy for implementation**

As part of a Board of Trustees Annual Strategic Priority in FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021, the College undertook a process of assessing the data around access and success from a racial equity perspective. Using tools from the Center for Race and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California and engaging national experts on how colleges address racial equity gaps, the College developed an Institutional Racial Equity Plan to close all racial gaps in access or success by 2027.

### **How progress is being evaluated**

Benchmarks for the Institutional Racial Equity Plan were to be developed Spring 2023 in collaboration with the Assistant Dean of Assessment and Articulation. Due to the unexpected vacancy in that position, these individual benchmarks still need to be determined.

### **Where progress is being achieved**

After a year of developing projects to reduce racial equity gaps, faculty have begun their implementation. Using the culturally responsive principle of connection, a common syllabus template was designed to foster a greater sense of belonging and hope for students. Also included in the syllabus is a Commitment to Equity Statement, which will be used by all instructors in Fall 2023.

As of May 2023, 24 faculty and staff have completed an intensive seven-week institute in culturally responsive teaching. After completing training in implicit bias awareness, relationship-building with students, and equitable grading practices, these Equity Scholars are now positioned to undergo a two-day implicit bias train-the-trainer workshop in which they will acquire necessary skills for training additional full-time and adjunct faculty.

The completion of the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (student climate survey) has resulted in data-informed conversations about race with stakeholders and has increased the college community's comfort in discussing the relationship between students' racial identities and their perceptions of mattering and belonging throughout various areas of the institution. In a concerted effort, students and employees have used

conversations about the data to understand students' needs more clearly and have made recommendations to stakeholders for improving students' experiences, thus increasing their chances for success. While we are committed to closing racial equity gaps for African American and Hispanic students by identifying and responding to their needs, we are confident that all constituents of Frederick Community College will benefit from a more compassionate and inclusive environment.

### **Where continued improvement is needed**

While efforts have been made to provide professional development opportunities to members of the FCC community, attendance at these events has not always been consistent. Our most successful professional development offerings in terms of engagement have been a result of effective collaborations with various entities of the College. To that end, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will make deliberate efforts to plan events strategically with the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement so that our collective efforts can have a larger impact.

While the composition of Employees of Color has increased slightly over Summer 2022 (up by one percent to 19%), more needs to be done to approach the goal of increasing the diversity of employees to 25%. A permanent VP for Human Resources could help make progress in this effort. Changing leadership and interim positions in Human Resources have created challenges in addressing the action item in the DEI Strategic Plan that calls for "Assess[ing] the strength and weaknesses of the current recruitment processes by race/ethnicity and job recruitment."

Finally, opportunity exists to raise greater awareness and accountability around DEI work. It is clear that the work is being done. Sixty-eight percent (19 out of 28) of the items in the DEI Strategic Plan are in progress, despite a two-year pause for some items during COVID-19 as well as vacancies and interim posts in six administrative positions at the College during the 2022-2023 academic year, including President, Provost, VP for Human Resources, Senior Diversity Officer, VP for Teaching and Learning, and VP for Student Affairs. As interim positions are permanently filled, the work of DEI can continue to move forward consistently throughout the institution. Additionally, a summit where we share the work, discuss our progress, and identify/request support could strengthen awareness and accountability around DEI work.

## **Section 2: Campus-wide and program-specific initiatives designed to recruit and retain traditionally underrepresented students, staff, and faculty**

### **Students**

The Partnership to Achieving Student Success (PASS) program provides wraparound services to students through year-round individualized success coaching and support from a dedicated Student Success Retention Specialist, connection to campus and community resources, and personal enrichment and community-building workshops and events. In the Summer of 2022, the PASS program was expanded to serve students from first-generation, limited-income, historically-excluded, racially-underrepresented, or underserved backgrounds as well as students who would benefit from additional math, writing, and reading support.

In Spring 2023, the Men and Women of Excellence program was revamped to provide intensive services, support, and events for male and female students of color. The Men and Women of Excellence program consists of four

main components to support participant success: 1) individualized success coaching and dedicated support 2) mentoring 3) leadership development activities, and 4) semester scholarships for participants. Each of these action items strives to positively impact term-to-term retention rates, academic success, and transfer/graduation rates through structured services. Outcome data will be tracked and disaggregated to determine their impact on DEI goals.

### **Administrative staff and faculty**

A benchmark to raise the percentage of Employees of Color from 19% to 25% has been identified as a goal to reflect the increase in student diversity (approximately 40% Students of Color). Additionally, the hiring process was revised to be more 'user-friendly,' reducing the length of the application for non-faculty and non-administrative positions from five pages to two. Another goal is to implement a system for checking the percentages of diverse applicants to see where in the hiring process opportunities exist to attract a more diverse pool of candidates. Efforts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current recruitment process by race/ethnicity and job group have been delayed due to the vacancy of a permanent VP for Human Resources.

While FCC understands the importance of representation when it comes to hiring diverse faculty and staff, we acknowledge the importance of retaining Employees of Color once they are a part of the institution. The Faculty/Staff of Color Group meets monthly to build community and discuss issues relevant to Employees of Color. During the 2022-2023 academic year, members supported families of employees who experienced loss through charitable donations; welcomed and engaged the new president and her chief of staff in dialogue about the rewards and challenges of working at the institution as Employees of Color; and met with Students of Color to discuss the NACCC (student climate) survey results. Ongoing discussions are in progress to formalize the group into an Employee Resource Group. In March 2023, employees completed the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey which included 17 questions related to racial inclusion at the College. Employee responses will offer opportunities to create equitable outcomes for Employees of Color as their needs are made evident in survey results.

## **Section 3: Efforts designed to create positive interactions and cultural awareness among students, faculty, and staff on campus**

### **Faculty and staff cultural training programs**

Using storytelling to interrupt stereotypes and biases, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion began a new series called "In Our Own Words." Employees from the college provided testimony about their own lived experiences centering on the topics: 1) Leading While Black, 2) Women in STEM, and 3) From Home to Here (stories of first-generation students who now work at FCC). Panelists consisted of administrators and faculty from nine areas of the College. Designed to foster greater connection throughout the college, these sessions had a positive impact on FCC students who reported feeling supported and cared for while relating to employees' stories of resilience. To garner greater future participation (each session averaged around eight participants), the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will work more closely with the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement to collaboratively plan events.

The National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) is a student climate survey designed to assess students' sense of mattering and belonging on campus and the community. Surveys were distributed to students 18 and older during February and March of 2022. Data results were shared with stakeholders in February 2023. This initial report-out resulted in a five-part discussion series, "Let's Talk Race," based on five domains of the

survey: mattering and affirmations, cross-racial engagement, racial learning and literacy, encounters with racial stress, and appraisals of institutional commitment. The "Let's Talk Race" series garnered an average participation of 17 students and employees from 14 areas across campus. Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that the sessions made it easier for them to hold data-informed discussions about race with students and colleagues. Each session brought forth recommendations to the College about strategies for fostering a greater sense of belonging among students.

Recommendations included: 1) a space for students of color and faculty and staff of color to discuss their racial trauma, including mental health resources that address racial trauma; 2) focus groups that allow students of color to share their experiences about spaces on campus where they have reported not always feeling welcomed (i.e. tutoring, financial aid, advising); 3) more collaboration with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Center for Teaching and Learning, and Office of Student Leadership and Engagement to host and publicize DEI-related events; 4) mandatory microaggression and implicit bias training. The FCC community demonstrated courage and vulnerability through storytelling and data-informed discussions about race. These were major steps towards raising awareness and educating others about group differences and fostering greater inclusiveness throughout the college.

### **Curricular initiatives that promote diversity in the classroom**

In 2022-2023, all academic departments began implementing equity initiatives developed during the previous academic year. To meet the needs of diverse student populations, departments incorporated welcoming videos and welcoming statements in syllabi for students; implemented REACH coaches to help ESL students read and understand exam questions in the health sciences; engaged in a department-wide syllabus revision and workshopping project; and developed a financial literacy project that incorporated lived experience.

The Fall 2023 semester will see the introduction of required equity statements in syllabi for all classes, and the division of Teaching, Learning and Student Success will explore implementing mandatory training in implicit bias as the next step on a multi-year process to train faculty in the use and implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices.

FCC's second cohort of Equity Scholars, nine full-time and adjunct faculty trained in culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, completed the Culturally Responsive Teaching Institute in May 2023, for a total of 24 trained faculty and administrators. Along with completing the seven-week intensive course which provided a framework for teaching equitably, participants also transformed their syllabi and assignments to be culturally responsive and served as expert advisors to departments to help develop racial equity initiative projects. The second cohort of Equity Scholars peer-reviewed each other's classes to provide objective feedback about assignments and the class experience. After two years, the data is showing a relationship between students exposed to CRT pedagogy and retention. Students taught by Equity Scholars persist longer than students not exposed to CRT principles. Equity Scholars from both cohorts will undergo training in implicit bias to provide subsequent training for full-time and adjunct faculty.

### **Co-curricular programming for students**

The MOSAIC Center hosted cultural awareness programs and courageous conversations. The "Courageous Conversations" series takes hot-button topics in politics and current events and encourages direct, face-to-face conversations about them. Each program provides a framework for having productive conversations with people of varying beliefs, backgrounds, and perspectives. Topics have

included Women's Equality Post Roe vs. Wade (approximately 40 participants); Our Perception of People with Disabilities (61 participants); and Policing (approximately 65 participants).

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion partnered with the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership to sponsor their first live LGBTQIA+ dance party. Over 150 students and employees attended. Participants enjoyed dancing, face-painting, a DJ, drag performance, and free lunch. Available also were HIV testing and other resources that provided information for members of the LGBTQIA+ community and allies. Out of 81 respondents, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the event fostered a greater sense of inclusion and belonging. Eighty percent agreed they had a chance to see and understand issues important to members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Eighty-nine percent reported feeling physically safe.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion hosted the 14th Latino Festival. This community event celebrates Latino culture through food, dance, music, and art. This year's festival was particularly noteworthy since its return invited the community to gather on campus again after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19. On average, the event draws over 1,000 people and attracts 50+ vendors. Through story-telling, dialogue, and the implementation of culturally responsive initiatives and celebrations, FCC is creating positive change for stakeholders by harnessing the talents and strengths within its community.

## **Section 4: A description of emerging populations that are currently underrepresented in higher education**

### **ESL students**

In an effort to assist students and visitors with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), in Spring 2023, a three-part professional development series entitled "Engaging Our Hispanic and Latino Community" was offered to faculty and staff to provide training in basic introductory Spanish communication skills. Participants received instructions on how to greet, offer assistance, and provide directions to students needing assistance in various offices on campus.

To provide greater access to students and visitors for whom English is not a first language, trainers made available a language line offering online interpretation services, a booklet that includes in-person first contacts, a list of employee volunteer interpreters with their language proficiency, and a campus map translated into Spanish. The materials were posted on the DEI intranet site as a collegewide resource, along with the training PowerPoint and other training resources.

### **Student parents/caregivers**

In Fall 2022, Parents Lead, a cohort program that assists parents in pursuing a degree, was revamped to include wraparound services to student parents by providing individualized success coaching and support, connection to campus and community resources, and opportunities for student parents to form a supportive community through cohort activities and targeted programming that address needs of the adult and student parent population. In Fall 2023, a cross-institutional taskforce (convened through the College Success for Single Mothers grant) created a set of campus-wide recommendations for supporting the success of single mother and parenting students. Included in the recommendations were scholarships and tuition waivers for student parents; affordable childcare for student parents and caregivers; an annual strategic goal related to caregiving students; and spaces on campus that are family-friendly (i.e. toys, books, coloring pages in waiting areas, and space in study areas for students with children in-tow).

## **Non-traditionally-aged students**

FCC's Adult Basic Education (ABE) population includes adults who may be experiencing addiction/recovery, homelessness, learning differences, incarceration, or other challenges that forced them to drop out of school. These challenges typically linger as they continue through the program. The ABE/GED program provides asynchronous and synchronous online classes as well as in-person instruction and offers classes at an alternate location for students who may not have transportation to the main campus. The ABE/GED program also provides asynchronous classes at Frederick County Adult Detention Center. The program is currently coordinating a GED class for a non-profit organization in Frederick that provides transitional services for community residents. While the current emphasis for our DEI Strategic Plan is to address racial equity gaps for African American and Hispanic students, FCC is equally committed to meeting the needs of other under-represented populations, including ESL students, student parents and caregivers, and non-traditionally-aged students.

## **Section 5: Other initiatives central to the DEI strategic plan**

Through the Food Locker Program, FCC offers food that students can prepare at home and share with family members. Providing food in lockers allows students to register to receive an access code to pick up the food at their convenience. Since the program's inception in October 2022, there have been 112 visits to the food lockers by 69 students.

The Counseling and Wellness Office has added a full-time counselor and created a Zen Den for students. Before the Fall 2022 semester, one full-time counselor provided one-on-one therapy to students with no centralized quiet space for the office. Using the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), the counseling space was expanded to include two private offices for staff and a new Zen Den. The Zen Den provides a quiet space for students to take a break between classes. Students are offered an opportunity to relax using weighted blankets, a massage chair, and activities that offer kinesthetic and sensory stimulation. The Food Locker Program and improvements to the Counseling and Wellness Office demonstrate FCC's care for the whole student, which is equally vital to students' success.

Frederick Community College's continued efforts towards the DEI Strategic Plan demonstrate a collective commitment from students, faculty, administrators, and community members despite periods of transition and the aftermath of a global pandemic. Our endeavors point to our resilience and our ability to reflect on areas of growth, to pay attention to what the data and gaps are telling us, and when necessary, to regroup, recalibrate, and finish the work we've started.