

Subject: Updates on College Advising Model and Next Steps
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Memorandum

To: Montgomery College Divisions of Student and Academic Affairs
From: Dr. Deidre Price, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs/College Provost
Dr. Ed Cabellon, Interim Senior Vice President for Student Affairs
Subject: **Updates on College Advising Model and Next Steps**
Date: April 8, 2025

As we move through the second half of the Spring 2025 semester, we are pleased to share key updates on the collaborative work taking place to strengthen Montgomery College's academic advising practices. The purpose of this memo is to summarize our progress, highlight key partnerships, and outline our goals moving this work forward since our November 19th communication.

1. Progress Update

- **December 2024: Follow-Up with EAB**

We held a successful session with EAB in December that clarified how the Starfish platform can further support our holistic, proactive approach to student success. This additional training and feedback strengthened our shared understanding of how best to use Starfish across both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. As a result, more faculty and staff have begun formal use of Starfish to centralize key student support data in one technology platform.

- **January to March 2025:**

- **Academic Advising Workgroup (AAW)**

Throughout the Spring semester, the AAW has continued refining recommendations for a unified, cross-divisional advising framework building on the Advising Redesign Taskforce recommendations from 2021. Their efforts have directly informed how we plan to scale Starfish adoption and optimize its full functionality, develop shared academic planning tools, and expand training and professional development for all employees who advise students and provide direct student support.

- **Ongoing Collaboration with Achieving the Dream (ATD)**

Our ongoing partnership with ATD has encouraged deeper, data-driven approaches to advising reform. By aligning our efforts with ATD's Holistic Student Supports Redesign model, we are creating more inclusive and personalized

pathways for students from entry through completion.

- **March to June 2025: Expansion into New Student Onboarding**

As a result of this work, we have laid the groundwork to embed advising touchpoints more strategically in new student onboarding processes, throughout the first semester and first year. Our aim is to ensure that every new student, whether FTEIC, transfer, dual enrollment, or WDCE-to-credit, receives cohesive guidance from the very start of their Montgomery College experience.

2. Summary of Work to Date and Upcoming Activities

Below is a condensed overview of achievements so far and the key next steps we anticipate this spring and into the 2025-2026 academic year:

Focus Area	Progress to Date	Next Steps
Holistic Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued development of a cross-divisional model - Best practices identified via AAW, EAB, and ATD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalize a unified advising framework - Provide targeted training for all counselors/program advisors
Starfish Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - December followed-up with EAB - Increased training sessions offered and utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue expanding Starfish usage throughout the College - Deploy early alert pilot for Spring 2026
Shared Academic Planning Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AAW audit of current advising tools completed - Options for a single planning tool under review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select/implement the academic planning tool - Shift from paper forms to digital tools
New Student Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identified areas in onboarding where early advising can be integrated - Charged a New Student Onboarding workgroup to intersect with the AAW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch a pilot intake survey for first-year students - Incorporate advising interventions before course registration
Training & Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops on proactive advising strategies - Cross-division info sessions held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer new sessions each semester on Starfish, academic planning, and early alert - Encourage broad faculty/staff engagement
Collaboration & Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing engagement with ATD Coaches - Stakeholder outreach sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convene additional forums to gather feedback - Invite broader participation in new committees

3. Looking Ahead to the 2025-2026 Academic Year

- **Develop Unified Advising Structures**

Building on the AAW's proposal, we will work toward a cohesive model where advisors, faculty, and staff share a common framework, baseline competencies, and defined roles in guiding students.

- **Implementation of a Single Academic Planning Tool**

We will collaborate with Information Technology and our vendor partners to streamline and consolidate the various tools currently in use so that students and advisors have a reliable, real-time resource for academic planning.

- **Scale Starfish Collegewide**

We will broaden Starfish usage to improve cross-divisional collaboration for advising encounters, appointment scheduling, and early alerts for students in need of support. The College will identify and implement a dedicated leadership structure in support of Starfish's successful scalability.

- **Refine Onboarding for All New Students**

Our goal is to foster a “no wrong door” approach by embedding advising checkpoints throughout the onboarding cycle, from application through orientation, so that every student has the resources to succeed.

- **Strengthen Training and Professional Development**

Through the partnership with EAB, ATD, and our internal professional development teams, we aim to build faculty and staff capacity to deliver proactive, culturally responsive advising.

4. Opportunities to Get Involved

We invite all faculty and staff to contribute to the work ahead by participating in upcoming committees, forums, and training opportunities. **The next opportunity is April 25 from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on the Rockville Campus, Bldg. TC – Rm. 136.** This event, called “Advising Together,” is an opportunity to learn more about early alert, case management, and other approaches to proactive advising and to engage with colleagues in breakout sessions to refine and inform planning underway as we formulate next steps in our advising redesign. Your expertise and insights will be invaluable as we continue to shape the future of advising at Montgomery College.

Seating is limited for the April 25, in-person event. RSVP by confirming your interest on [this form](#).

In addition to this event, faculty and staff are invited to attend “Starfish in Action: A Faculty Showcase,” led by Julie Levinson. This virtual event will be held on Zoom from 8:30-9:30 a.m. on April 25 and is open to all faculty and staff. Attendance at this virtual event is not contingent on participation in the “Advising Together” event. Division-wide invitations are forthcoming.

5. Questions and Next Steps

We will continue to provide updates as we move forward. If you have questions or suggestions, do not hesitate to contact either of us. Your ongoing engagement is a crucial part of this collective process.

Thank you for your dedication to our students and for your continued collaboration in strengthening the advising model at Montgomery College.