

MCRPA DIGEST

March 2025



Lunar New Year: Celebrating Heritage, Empowering Students

Chats with the Chief

Valentine's Day: Origami and Sweets

Leadership Teams

MC GOVERNANCE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Nominations
February 24-March 7

Elections
March 31-April 11



Meet the FY25 Leadership Team:

Executive Team

Dr. Christine Crefton, President
Dr. Paul Miller, Vice President
Ramon Valenzuela, Secretary
Carla Ammerman, Secretary

Professional Development

Michele Kight, Chair
Kimberly Bloch-Rican, Co-Chair
Anna Donohoe, Vice Chair

Community Engagement & Events

Maria Martinez, Chair
Nicole Land, Vice Chair (not pictured)

Membership, Marketing, & Communications

John Amoroso, Chair
Nghii Nguyen, Vice Chair

Please contact any of us if you want to join a committee or get more involved. Committees meet monthly via Zoom, and you can come to see what is going on, lend a hand, listen, and be a part of something pretty awesome!

Governance Information Sessions

12:00-1:00 p.m., Zoom

- Friday, February 28
- Monday, March 3
- Friday, March 14

Participating in Governance fosters a sense of belonging.

Watch [Role of Governance at MC video](#) to see the impact you'll have in governance.

For more information, visit the Governance's website or [email](#).



SPRING EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

These events are planned for the fall and spring semesters. We will send out additional information as it becomes available.

- Mobile Market Volunteer
- Staff Enrichment Day, March 19, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Germantown Campus
- National Poetry Month, April 2, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Zoom
- Five Weeks of Fun, April-May
- 10th Annual MCRPA Retreat (Music, Food, Travel), May 29

Community Engagement & Events (CEE) Committee Meeting | Second Tuesday of the month, 11:00 a.m-12:00 p.m., Zoom

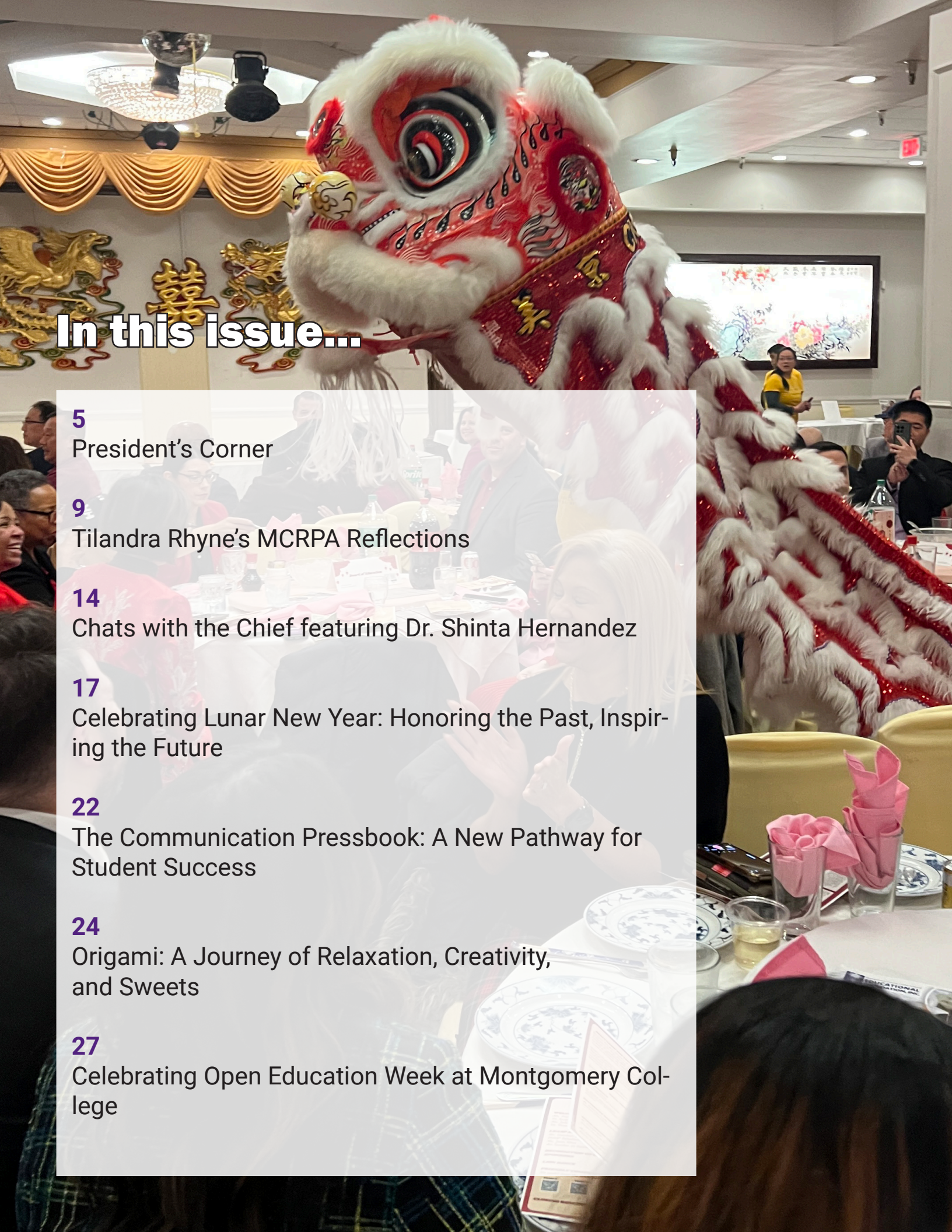
Membership, Marketing, & Communication (MMC) Committee Meeting | First Wednesday of the month, 10:00-11:00 a.m., Zoom

Professional Development Committee Meetings | First Thursday of the month, 2:00-2:45 p.m., Zoom

*Monthly committee meetings are open to all MCRPA members. Contact the committee chair and vice chair for Zoom link.

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President's Corner



As we move into March, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've had so far this year. MCRPA has been thriving, with a perfect balance of professional development, social engagement, and meaningful community-building. It's amazing to see how much we've already accomplished together!

From the start of the academic year, we've embraced our theme, Community Starts Here, and have built opportunities for connection across the college. We strength-

ened our Super Staff Tuesday and Faculty First Friday offerings, growing our reach and encouraging more faculty and staff to get involved. We enjoyed social hours at Kabuto, a trip to the Maryland Renaissance Festival, trivia nights where the *Rising Raptors* made their mark, and a festive Seasonal Sendoff Potluck that filled the room with joy. We deepened our professional growth and continue to attend collegewide events to expand and help employees feel more connected through community-centered programming.

February didn't slow us down! Even with unexpected snow days, we came together to celebrate. We had an impactful Chat with Dr. Shinta Hernandez, honed our origami skills with Nghi Nguyen, welcomed the Lunar New Year, and honored the accomplishments of Tilandra Rhyne, our former MCRPA president off to do great things at PGCC, and Kimberly Robinson, our longtime membership chair off to enjoy retirement. And while I know it's not a widely shared sentiment at MC, I have to mention that February was also the month my beloved Eagles won the Super Bowl! (Don't hold it against me, friends!)

Now, as we welcome March, there are even more ways to get involved! From volunteering at the Mobile Market to Staff Enrichment Day, social events, and professional development offerings, this month is packed with opportunities to connect, grow, and give back. March isn't just about *thawing out from winter*—it's about flexing our strengths and continuing to build our incredible community.

And don't forget—planning is well underway for our 10th Annual MCRPA Retreat on May 29th at MK in Rockville! This year's theme, *Celebrating Connections through Food, Music, Movement, and Travel*, promises a day of inspiration, learning, and fun. For the first time ever, we'll be offering virtual options to expand access across the college. If you'd like to be part of the planning team, we'd love to have you—email mcrpa@montgomerycollege.edu to get involved!

One last thing - come laugh with me! If you're looking for a fun night out, I'd love

for you to join me on March 13th at 7:00 PM for a Comedy Fundraiser benefiting the Montgomery County Friends of the Library (FOLMC)! As a Board of Trustees member, I'm excited to support this event at Give A Hoot Comedy Club in Gaithersburg. It's just \$20 for a night of laughs with comedian Mike Burton, plus delicious Mexican food and drinks are available for purchase. If you'd like to join me, please reach out directly, and let's make it a great night together!

Thank you for bringing your talents, leadership, and enthusiasm to MCRPA. Community truly starts here, and I can't wait to see what we continue to build together this spring!

Dr. Christine Crefton, President

Raising your collective spirits

while raising funds for a worthy cause

JOIN US FOR A



NIGHT

of

LAUGHTER

WITH



FEATURING COMEDIAN
MIKE BURTON



GIVE A HOOT
COMEDY CLUB

MARCH 13, 2025 | 7:00PM
MARCH 14 & 15, 2025 | 8:00PM

A Comedy Fundraiser
Benefitting FOLMC



Ha
Ha Ha
Ha Ha
Ha Ha

Full La Mexicana food and drink menu available in club
Free Parking | 16143 Shady Grove Road in Gaithersburg

Buy tickets at www.giveahootcomedy.com

friends OF THE LIBRARY

MC Wellness 10K-A-Day: 6-Week Movement Challenge Begins Monday, March 24, 2025

Registration opens for MC Wellness' 10K-A-Day challenge Monday, March 10. Come back then to register and gain access to the program.

<https://mcwellness.10kaday.com/#/welcome>





2015 at our first retreat when, after some hesitation, I raised my hand to serve as the secretary. That small act was the beginning of a journey that took me from being an introverted member to the first two-term president of the association.

During my time with MCRPA, I served in many roles: as secretary from 2015-2016, Communications chair from 2016-2018, President from 2018-2022, and most recently as the chair of Membership, Marketing, and Communications from 2022-2024. Each of these roles allowed me to contribute in meaningful ways, from developing a structured marketing and communications process, implementing

the first structured nominations and elections process, to enhancing member engagement and leading the organization through a pandemic. Under my leadership, MCRPA not only thrived but became a model for employee resource groups across the college, often being called upon by senior leadership to help shape important decisions.

One of the most unique aspects of MCRPA is the diverse community it brings together. The organization is open to anyone within the college, allowing people from various departments and backgrounds to come together. Through MCRPA, I built relationships with people I otherwise would

My Professional Growth Journey with MCRPA

My journey with the Montgomery College Rising Professionals Association (MCRPA) began as an inaugural member in 2011. At that time, I had been with the college for about three years, but I felt disconnected from others outside the unit I worked in. Being naturally shy, joining a new group felt intimidating, but MCRPA seemed like a controlled environment where I could branch out at my own pace. What I didn't realize was how deeply it would shape my personal and professional life.

When I first joined, I was quiet, reserved, and unsure of my place in the larger community. But over time, MCRPA helped me

find my voice. This organization became my space to grow, both as a professional and as an individual. I learned key leadership and communication skills, political acumen, and how to navigate different personalities and situations. If nothing else, MCRPA gave me a sense of belonging, something I had struggled to find in other spaces. It gave me purpose and lasting friendships.

Looking back, I can say that MCRPA has been integral to my personal and professional development. I started as a silent member and, over the years, moved through a variety of leadership roles that shaped who I am today. It all started in



have never crossed paths with. It's a group where connections are organic, where you are encouraged to show up, speak out, and contribute.

Over the years, I've developed friendships with individuals who have become more than just colleagues—they've become my mentors, big brothers, and big sisters. These relationships, grounded in mutual respect and shared growth, will continue to extend beyond the walls of Montgomery College. I am forever grateful for this network, and words cannot fully express how much these connections have meant to me.

The beauty of MCRPA is that it is entirely volunteer-run, with all programming created and executed by members for members. While this self-sufficiency is empowering, it also presents challenges. We all come from different backgrounds, and at times, differing personalities can create tension. But instead of seeing these challenges as setbacks, I embraced them as opportunities to learn. It taught me patience, empathy, and the importance of understanding perspectives beyond my own. Those moments of disagreement often turned into learning experiences that deepened my leadership abilities and improved my communication.

To those who are considering getting involved or who are new to MCRPA, my advice is simple: Show up, speak out, and get involved. This group is what you make of it. It is a space where you can grow, find your voice, and connect with others who share similar values. If there's one safe space on campus, it's MCRPA. It's a group that will challenge you, support you, and help you grow—if you put in the effort.

Looking back on my time with MCRPA, I can confidently say that this organization is the main reason I stayed at Montgomery College for as long as I did. The friendships and professional connections I've made have enriched my life in ways I never anticipated when I first joined. While I may not be actively involved anymore, the relationships I've built will continue to thrive beyond the organization.

When I joined, I had no expectations for what MCRPA would bring into my life, but the experience far exceeded anything I could have imagined. What started as a social group for millennials has evolved into a platform for all college employees who are interested in personal and professional growth. MCRPA has become a space where everyone, no matter their background or career stage, can contribute to the growth of others and themselves.

I could not have asked for a better experience. MCRPA truly changed my life, and I am forever thankful for the journey.



Volunteers needed for a variety of essential roles in the 2025 Worlds of Work (WoW) and MC Experience events, held on March 17, 18, and 20 across our three campuses.

<https://signup.com/go/whbAgYw>



Chats with the Chief Featuring Dr. Shinta Hernandez

Embracing Growth: The Power of Mentorship, Networking, and Life-long Learning

Each semester, as part of our Chats with the Chief event, MCRPA invites a senior College leader to share their professional journey. These leaders provide valuable insights on career progression and offer advice to empower, encourage, and support our members. This event gives members a unique opportunity to connect with College leaders outside of their usual roles and departments.

On February 11, we welcomed Dr. Shinta Hernandez, Dean of MC Online and Academic Support, to speak with MCRPA virtually as part of Super Staff Tuesday: Chats with the Chief. As Dean, Dr. Hernan-

dez leads initiatives in online education, open education, and the Digital Learning Center. Since joining MC in January 2007, she has contributed significantly to advancing open education and pedagogy, social justice and equity, inclusive curriculum, faculty professional development, international collaborations, online education, and the social sciences.

During the event, Dr. Hernandez shared both her personal and professional journey, reflecting on how her upbringing in a tight-knit family and community shaped her belief in the power of education. From an early age, she felt a strong sense of be-

longing, which inspired her to pursue a career in teaching and academic leadership.

Dr. Hernandez emphasized the importance of mentorship, encouraging professionals to seek out mentors while also serving as mentors to others. She highlighted the value of meeting new people, learning from their experiences, and building meaningful connections that can guide one's career.

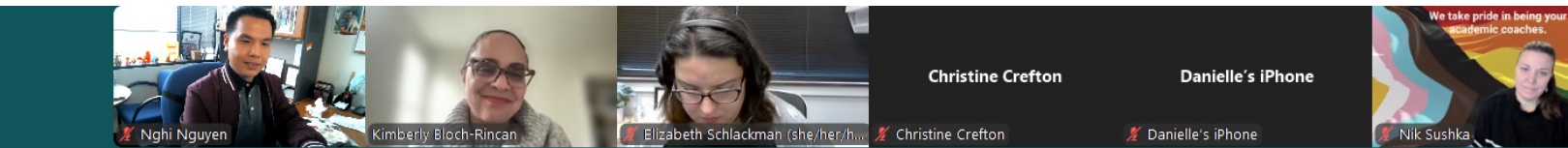
She also stressed the importance of leveraging social media as a learning tool. Platforms like LinkedIn provide access to valuable information, industry insights, and networking opportunities. Engaging with content shared by professionals in

your field—such as articles on mentoring and updates in higher education—can help broaden your knowledge and open new career opportunities. Attending conferences, both in person and virtually, can further enhance professional development.

Dr. Hernandez left us with a key takeaway: Always take the initiative to learn, because you never know where life will take you. She encouraged everyone to embrace lifelong learning, remain open to new experiences, and seize opportunities for growth, both within and beyond the College.

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 8:00 a.m-4:00 p.m., Germantown Campus *Stronger Together: Transforming Tomorrow*

Register today on Workday!





LEAAP's Lunar New Year Celebration: A Festive Evening of Community and Giving

The League of Educators for Asian American Progress (LEAAP) held its annual Lunar New Year celebration on February 13, following a delay due to snow. Despite the postponement, the event was more vibrant than ever as MCPS staff and the greater community came together to support LEAAP's scholarship fund.

Montgomery College continued its tradition of supporting the event, with several MCRPA members attending in festive attire, holding lucky red envelopes, to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

The evening was especially meaningful as Tilandra Rhyne joined the celebration before embarking on her next adventure at Prince George's Community College. Although she is leaving Montgomery College, she assured everyone that she will stay connected, particularly with MCRPA.

One of the highlights of the evening was the recognition of Ms. Joan Rhee, a past LEAAP scholarship recipient and current Art Teacher at Gaithersburg High School.

Keeping with tradition, the event un-

derscored the significance of the Lunar New Year in supporting LEAAP's scholarship fundraising efforts. Guests were energized by a spirited Lion Dance, which symbolized good luck, happiness, and prosperity for the new year.

The celebration was further enriched by a feast of delicious food and lively dance music, adding to the excitement as attendees welcomed the Year of the Snake. In the Chinese zodiac, the Year of the Snake represents wisdom, intuition, transformation, and strategic

thinking, making it a fitting theme for an event dedicated to education and growth.

A friendly fundraising competition added an element of excitement, as three teams competed to collect the highest donations from guests. The most rewarding achievement of the night was raising an impressive \$15,000 for LEAAP's scholarship fund.

MCRPA wants to wish everyone a joyful and prosperous Lunar New Year!





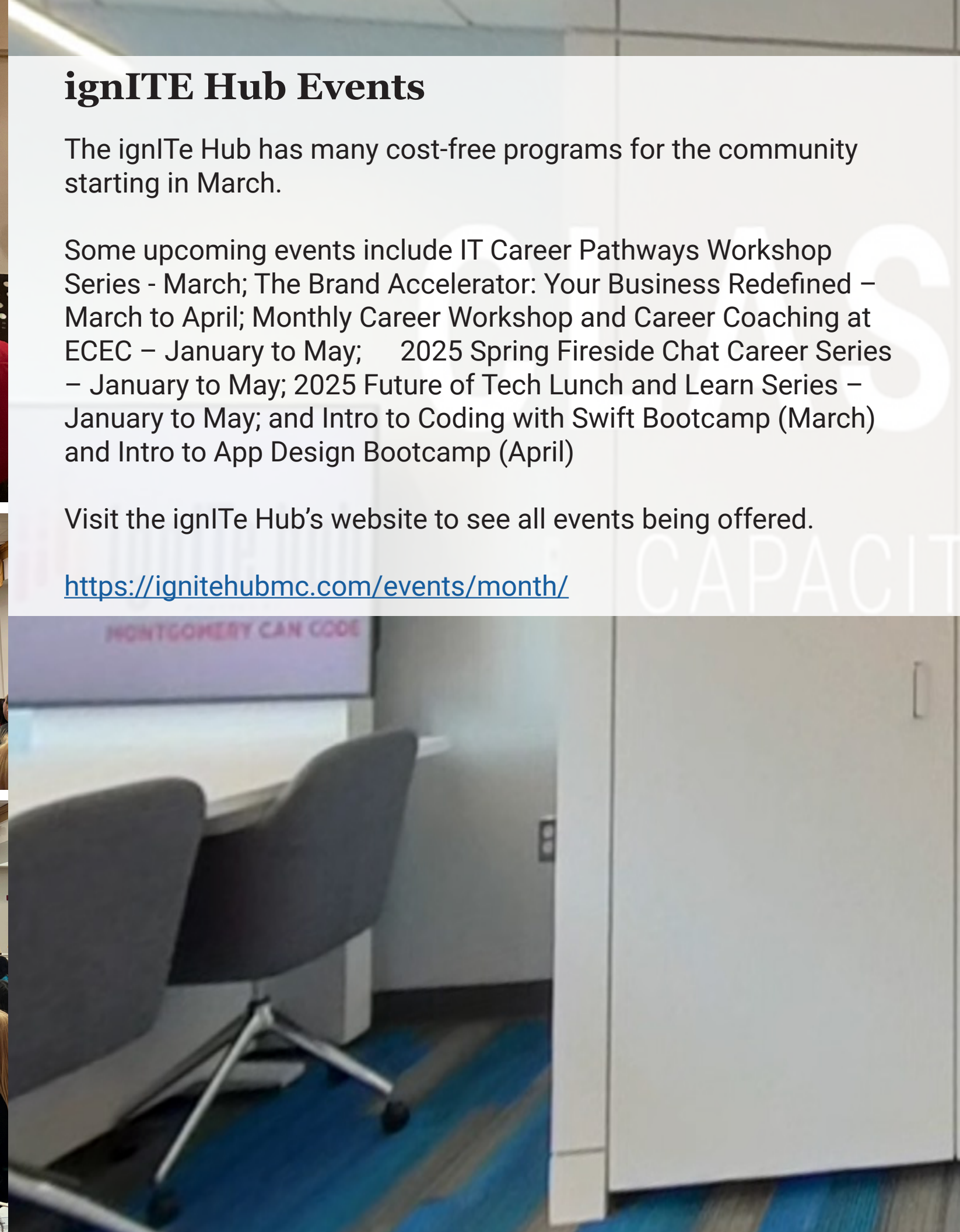
ignITE Hub Events

The ignITe Hub has many cost-free programs for the community starting in March.

Some upcoming events include IT Career Pathways Workshop Series - March; The Brand Accelerator: Your Business Redefined – March to April; Monthly Career Workshop and Career Coaching at ECEC – January to May; 2025 Spring Fireside Chat Career Series – January to May; 2025 Future of Tech Lunch and Learn Series – January to May; and Intro to Coding with Swift Bootcamp (March) and Intro to App Design Bootcamp (April)

Visit the ignITe Hub's website to see all events being offered.

<https://ignitehubmc.com/events/month/>



COMMUNICATION



PROACTIVE THINKER:
VOLUME I

Dr. Christine Crefton, Dr. Shawn Sanders, & Dr. Tracey Smith-Bryant

The Communication Pressbook: A New Pathway for Student Success

MCRPA is always looking for innovative ways to support our students, and the Communication Pressbook is a perfect example of trying something new to help them succeed. Developed by Dr. Christine Crefton and Dr. Tracey Smith-Bryant, both dedicated MCRPA members, in partnership with Dr. Shawn Sanders, this self-paced, competency-based resource offers Montgomery College students a flexible way to build and demonstrate essential communication skills.

Unlike traditional learning materials, the Communication Pressbook is designed as a “choose your own learning adventure” where students engage with concepts in a way that works best for them. Built with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, the resource ensures accessibility and inclusivity in every aspect. Students can complete assessments through formats that fit their strengths, such as blog writing, infographic creation, case studies, or self-reflection. This interactive approach allows them to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios and build confidence in their communication abilities.

More than just a learning tool, the Communication Pressbook is directly tied to the Communication Badge, part of the Proactive Thinker Microcredential. Employers consistently rank communication as one of the most critical workplace skills, and this badge provides students with a tangi-

ble, verified credential to showcase their proficiency. The badge is completely free and open to all current MC students, making it an accessible and meaningful way to strengthen their resumes and career prospects.

MCRPA members can play a key role in encouraging students to take this individualized learning journey in pursuit of the Communication Badge. By guiding students toward this opportunity, we help them gain a recognized credential that sets them apart in the workforce. This initiative reflects MCRPA’s commitment to fostering innovation and creating new pathways for student achievement.

If you would like to learn more about the Communication Pressbook, the Communication Badge, the Proactive Thinker Microcredential, or how to create your own Pressbook, please feel free to contact Dr. Christine Crefton at christine.crefton@montgomerycollege.edu. Let’s continue to find new ways to support student success together.

Join the Planning Committee for the 10th Annual MCRPA Retreat!

We're gearing up for our 10th Annual MCRPA Retreat, and we'd love for you to be part of the planning team! Last year's retreat was a record-breaking success with over 50 participants, and we're aiming for another incredible turnout this year. The theme, "Celebrating Connections through Food, Music, Movement, and Travel," is already well underway, and we'd love your input to make this event even more engaging and memorable.

If you're interested in joining the planning committee, please email mcrpa@montgomerycollege.edu to receive the calendar invite for our three virtual planning meetings between now and May. Let's make this milestone retreat one to remember!



Origami: A Journey of Relaxation, Creativity, and Sweets

Valentine's Day wouldn't be complete without a touch of creativity and some sweet treats!

MCRPA's origami event has become a beloved tradition, bringing together members for an afternoon of relaxation, artistic expression, and, of course, plenty of sweets.

This year, participants learned to craft beautiful origami flowers, including hydrangeas and chrysanthemums.

While origami is traditionally a precise art that requires mathematical skill and careful folding, at MCRPA, we set aside the calculations and focused on fun, creativity,

and the joy of making something by hand.

With tables filled with colorful paper, tape, scissors, and plenty of enthusiasm, members spent the event unwinding, socializing, and embracing the beauty of origami—proving that sometimes, the best way to celebrate is with a little artistry and a lot of fun!

Everyone left with flowers in hand and newly learned origami skills, hopefully inspired to create more beautiful paper origami flowers at home.



Wellness Offerings

At Montgomery College, we go above and beyond to prioritize employee wellness. Benefit-eligible employees may receive up to 1.5 hours a week to engage in activities that enhance your well-being, ensuring a healthier work environment.

Visit the Wellness website to see all workshops being offered.

<https://info.montgomerycollege.edu/offices/human-resources/wellness.html>





Celebrating Open Education Week at Montgomery College

Montgomery College is once again celebrating Open Education Week (March 3-7) with a series of events, workshops, and campus engagement opportunities designed to highlight the power of Open Educational Resources (OER) and their role in making learning more accessible, affordable, and equitable for students. This week is about raising awareness and empowering educators, students, and staff to explore how open education can enhance learning experiences, reduce costs, and foster innovation in teaching and curriculum design.

MCRPA is proud to highlight several members who are playing an active role in this year's events, bringing their expertise and passion to the forefront of this important initiative.

MCRPA Members Leading the Way in Open Education

One exciting moment of the week is the Open Education presentation debut of MCRPA member Tracey Little, who will be co-presenting with Dr. Christine Crefton in their workshop, "[What Publishers Don't Want You to Know: Become an OER Advocate!](#)". This session (March 5, 3:00-4:00 p.m.) will expose the aggressive tactics of the textbook industry while introducing participants to OER as a powerful alternative for making education more affordable and impactful. Attendees will also learn how they can earn OER Advocate and OER Learning Architect badges to further their understanding and engagement with open resources.

Dr. Crefton will also be part of the faculty-led panel discussion, "[Empowering Students Through Open Pedagogy: Pressbooks for Well-Being and Belonging](#)" (March 5, 4:00-5:00 p.m.), along with Dr. Shinta Hernandez, Professors Heather Satrom, and Dr. Dre Betancourt. This session will explore two innovative projects using Pressbooks—one focusing on mindfulness and movement to help students manage stress and another designed to support immigrant and refugee students in building a sense of belonging through OER. Faculty and staff will gain insight into how open pedagogy can transform learning environments and provide meaningful, student-centered experiences.

Finally, Dr. Paul Miller, will present "[Decolonizing the Curriculum: Culturally Responsive and Relevant Teaching with OER](#)" (March 4, 4:00-5:00 p.m.). This workshop will guide faculty through strategies for making curriculum more inclusive and representative of students' lived experiences. Participants will explore an OER developed through Montgomery College's 2021 MOST Institutional Grant, designed to help instructors integrate culturally responsive and decolonizing teaching practices into their courses.

Bringing Open Education to the Campuses

Beyond professional development, Open Education Week is also about engaging with students directly. Members of the MC Open Initiative will be visiting campuses on March 3, setting up information tables with resources and giveaways to encourage students to explore how open

education can support their learning. Be sure to stop by:

- Takoma Park/Silver Spring – Charlene Nunley Student Services Center (ST) Lobby, 10:00-11:00 a.m.
- Germantown – DeRionne Pollard Student Affairs and Science Building (SA) Lobby, 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- Rockville – Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Student Services Center (SV) Lobby, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Why Open Education Matters for MCRPA

MCRPA is committed to fostering innovation and student success, and Open Education Week represents an opportunity to embrace new approaches that make learning more accessible and equitable. Open resources, such as Pressbooks, OER courses, and microcredentials, empower students to take charge of their learning while also supporting faculty in developing more engaging and inclusive teaching methods. By participating in Open Education Week, MCRPA is championing efforts to expand access to high-quality education and ensure that every student, regardless of background or financial means, has the opportunity to succeed.

We encourage all MCRPA members to sign up, participate, and help spread the word about these events. Faculty and staff can learn more about OER, discover ways to integrate open resources into their courses, and support students in accessing free learning materials.

*Open to the
public!*

Job Fairs

*No
Registration
Required*

 10:00AM - 1:00PM

 **APRIL 2: GERMANTOWN, BE 151/152**

 **APRIL 10: TPSS CAMPUS, ST ATRIUM**

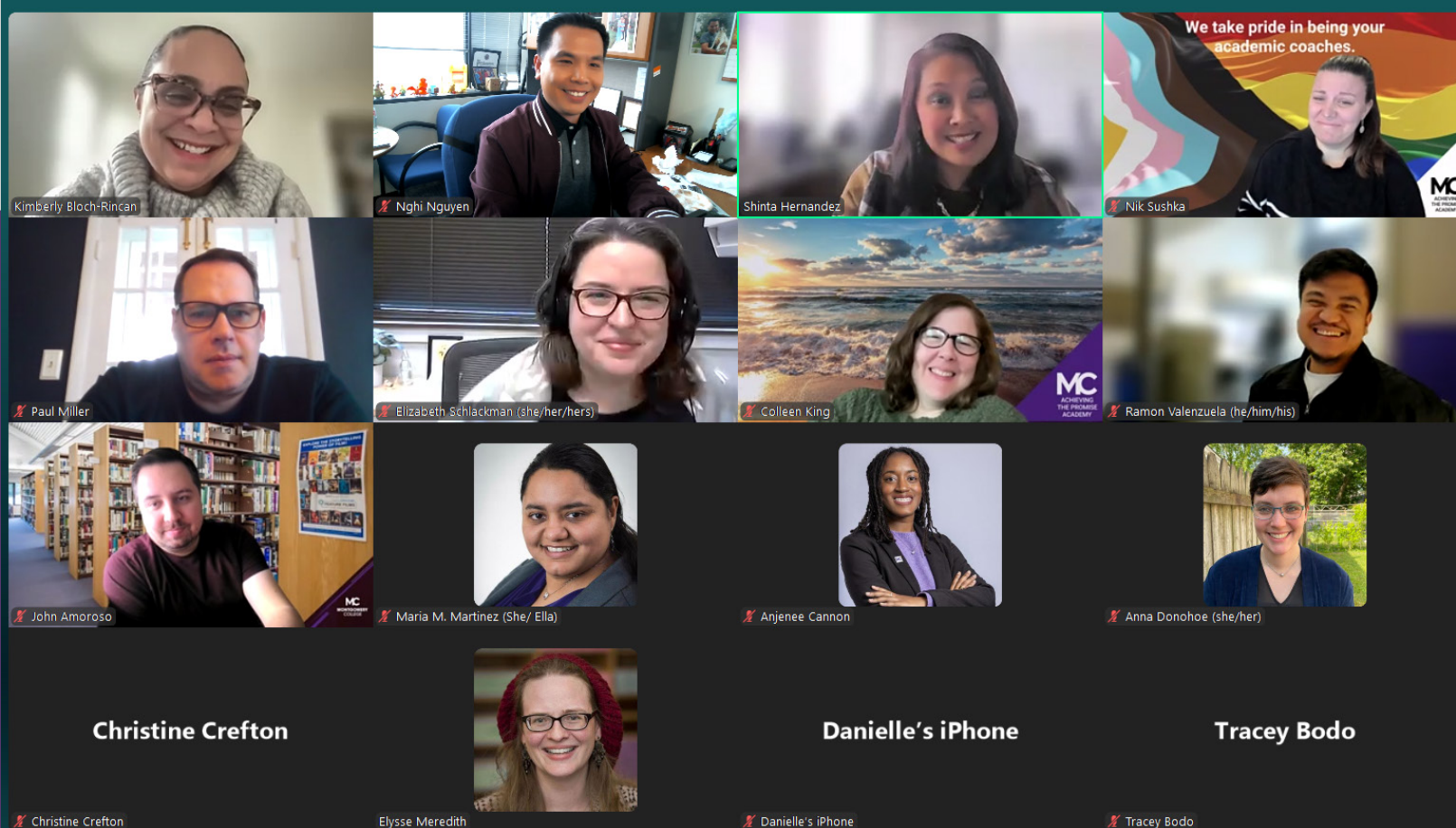
 **APRIL 25: ROCKVILLE CAMPUS, PE GYM**

On-site employer info.:

<https://bit.ly/MCJobEvents>



For accommodations please contact maria.matinez@montgomerycollege.edu at least two weeks prior to event.



MCRPA was established in 2011 as an employee resources group. We collectively seek out opportunities to learn and grow as individuals and as burgeoning professionals. Our members are enthusiastic supporters of Montgomery College's mission and community. If you have a desire to get involved and participate in hands-on personal and professional development activities, networking, and community service, you are a perfect fit for MCRPA.

Each MCRPA member plays an important role in our structure. Because our activities directly result from our members' shared interests, we encourage our members to engage with MCRPA programming. Members determine the intensity and time commitment of their involvement. We realize that members have other commitments, both personal and professional. Explore our committees, events, membership and leadership team. MCRPA always welcomes suggestions for new roles and/or committees.

Join MCRPA - <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/offices/mcrpa>

Contact Us - mcrpa@montgomerycollege.edu

