

MCRPA DIGEST

September 2024

Sun, Sand, and Memories: MCRPA's 2024 Mexican Summer

Leadership Retreat's Insights and Perspectives

Leadership Teams



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 Knight, Chair
Kimberly Bloch-Rican, Co-Chair
Anna Donohoe, Vice Chair

Community Engagement & Events

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

Membership, Marketing, & Communications

John Amoroso, Chair
Ngh 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!

Celebrate the start of the semester at our Social Hour on September 19 at Kabuto!

Upcoming Events



The following is a schedule for September events and committee meetings.

Super Staff Tuesday Networking Workshop | Tuesday, September 10, 1:00-2:00 pm, Zoom

Social Hour at Kabuto | Thursday, September 19 | 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Maryland Renaissance Festival | Saturday, September 21 | 10:00 a.m

Buy your ticket online. Food and drinks are available for purchase (cash only, some booths do accept credit cards). Dress up in your best Renaissance outfit!

Community Engagement & Events (CEE) Committee Meeting | Second Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:00 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

Welcome to the start of another exciting year with MCRPA! As we dive into the months ahead, we want to share some incredible opportunities we've been working tirelessly to bring to life. Our leadership team has been busy behind the scenes planning both familiar favorites and new experiences that promise to make this year memorable.

A Sampling of Upcoming September Events

Mark your calendars for some great events this fall! We're starting strong in September with our Super Staff Tuesday Networking Workshop on 9/10, followed by a fun Social Hour at Kabuto on 9/19. And don't miss out on the Maryland Renaissance Festival on 9/21! This event always sells out, so get your tickets now and bring your friends and family for a day of merriment in Annapolis.

Get Involved

If you're eager to get more involved, we encourage you to join us for our monthly standing committee meetings via Zoom. These meetings are a great way to connect and contribute ideas. We also want to hear your thoughts on our new group travel opportunities. This year, we're planning a weekend getaway—if you have ideas for a destination or are interested in helping us plan, please reach out. And for those looking ahead, we've decided to save a big international trip for 2026, so now's the time to start brainstorming!

Professional Development

Your professional growth is important to us. In addition to our partnership with ELITE's PD Team, we're excited to announce the MCRPA Leadership, Education, and Development (LEaD) Program, launching in Spring 2025. This series of 8-week online courses will cover Servant Leadership, Advocacy, and Professionalism. The best part? MCRPA members who participate will be eligible to earn digital badges in each area. This program is open to anyone at the college; it is designed to help you take your skills to the next level.



Celebrate Your Success

We also want to celebrate you! Throughout the year, we'll recognize your accomplishments, both big and small, in our monthly digest. Keep an eye out for the link, and be sure to share your achievements so we can celebrate together. Remember, lifting each other up helps us all rise.

Lastly, join us in making a difference by volunteering at the Mobile Markets in November and again in March. Let's come together to serve our communities on campus and beyond. It's a wonderful chance to give back to our communities and live our FY25 theme, Community Starts Here!

Thank you for your continued commitment to your personal and professional development. We're excited for what's to come, and we hope you'll bring a friend along to join us on this journey. Let's make this year one to remember!

Warm regards,

Dr. Christine Crefton
President, MCRPA (2022-2026)

UPCOMING FALL SEMESTER HOLIDAYS

Thursday-Friday, November 28 & 29: Thanksgiving
Monday-Friday, December 23-January 3, Winter Break

Montgomery College is closed for these holidays.



MCRPA Group's Summer Escape to Mexico: 2024 Travel Memories



The sun was blazing hot. The humidity was heavy. Still, the six MCRPA travelers didn't mind because we were in Cancun, surrounded by palm trees and thinking only of vacation.

This past June, MCRPA kicked off our second group trip, this time to Riviera Maya in Cancun, Mexico. Before the trip, the forecast looked a bit gloomy with clouds and rain, reminding us of our first group trip on the Bermuda cruise last year. However, our week at the private all-inclusive Barceló Maya Caribe resort was filled with fun and sun.

Our journey began at 4:30 AM, and this time, there was no ignoring the buzzing alarm. Some of us took Ubers to Dulles Airport, and thankfully, there was no traffic on the highways or at the TSA terminals. After waiting for over an hour, we boarded our United flight and were off to our vacation destination. The flight took over three hours before we arrived in beautiful Cancun.

Once off the plane, some of us waited about half an hour for our checked bags before heading out. We navigated through some arrival traffic outside the airport and found a local tour guide who directed us to our shuttle bus. It was an hour ride from the airport to the hotel, but once we arrived at the gate, our vacation officially began at our beautiful private resort.

The check-in process took longer than expected, but once it was done, we headed to the buffet restaurant for lunch. There was plenty of food with a variety of choices, including delicious desserts. Naturally, we all tried to sample everything on offer.

Barceló Maya Caribe resort includes four separate hotels, each with its own swimming pools, arcades, restaurants, beach entrances, and more. The great thing about this resort is, as their slogan says: 4 for 1, which means you can book one resort and still eat and enjoy the entertainment at any of the other three resorts on the private complex.

"Going to an all-inclusive resort allowed us to swim all day, relax, read, enjoy delicious meals,





“Going to an all-inclusive resort allowed us to swim all day, relax, read, enjoy delicious meals, and spend quality time with friends without worrying about schedules or splitting the bill..”

and spend quality time with friends without worrying about schedules or splitting the bill,” Christine Crefton said. “Jeffrey and I indulged in spa treatments, room service, and swimming right outside our room. Sharing fancy meals with our travel companions was a delight, as we all vacationed at our own pace. No one felt left out or lonely—it was the perfect blend of adventure, lounging, relaxation, beautiful sights, and camaraderie.”

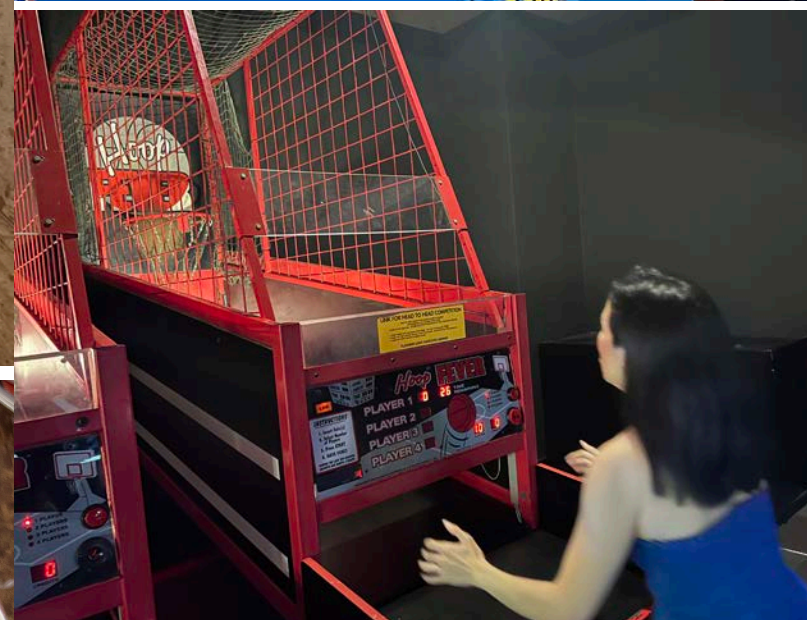
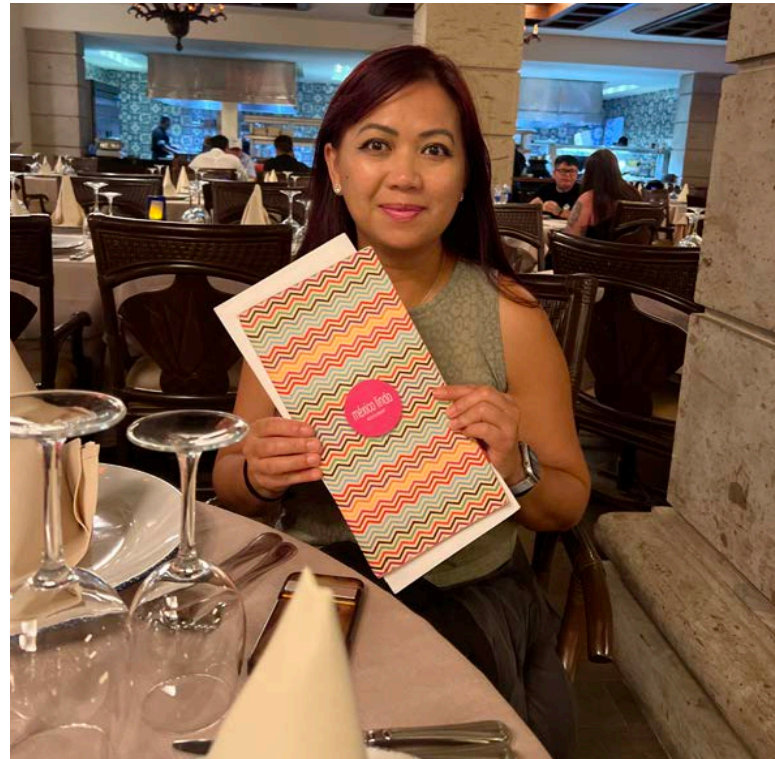
We sat in the buffet to cool off from the heat and humidity while enjoying our wonderful food. Once the feast was over, we took off to tour the resort. The beach was nearby, along with multiple pools and tons of activities around the complex. In the center of the complex was a shopping mall with attractions like an arcade and a haunted house.

We walked around to see these attractions and some of the fine dining restaurants in the same area.

Each hotel in the resort had its own themed restaurants. Since we all paid for premium rooms, dinner in the restaurants was included for our whole stay.

A couple of hours later, we got access to our rooms. After some unpacking and a quick rest, we headed to the pool to enjoy the cool water. Some of us decided to hit the beach immediately and enjoy the crystal blue water of the Caribbean Sea.

With the strong breeze blowing the palm trees and the warm water of the Caribbean Sea, it made

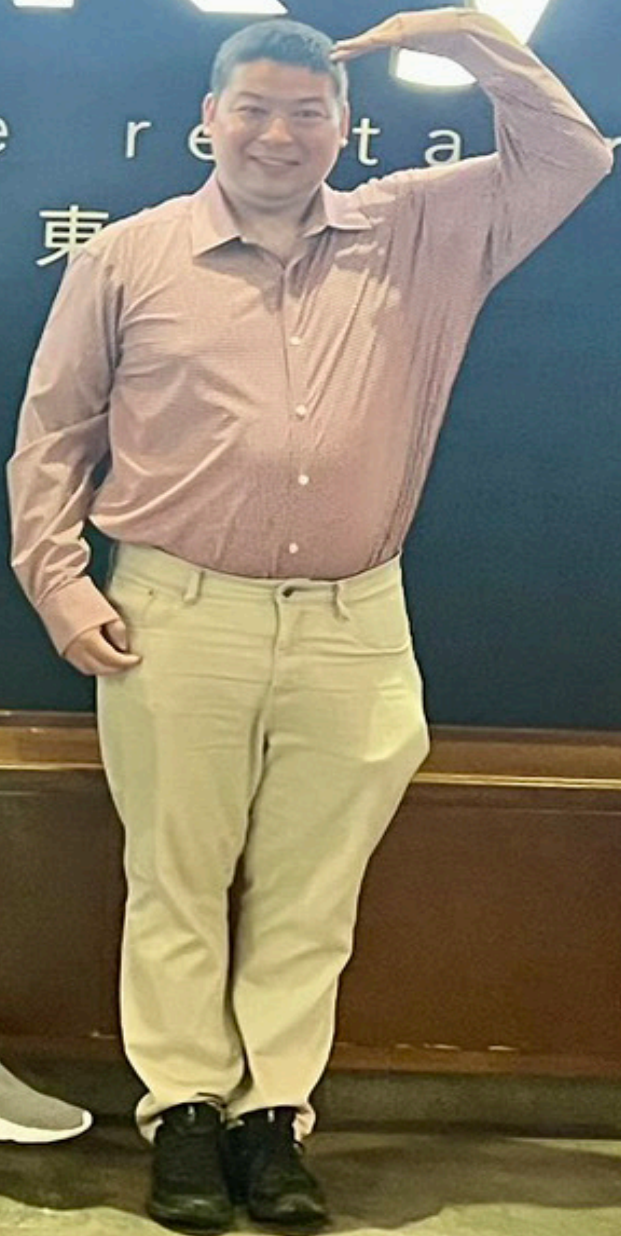
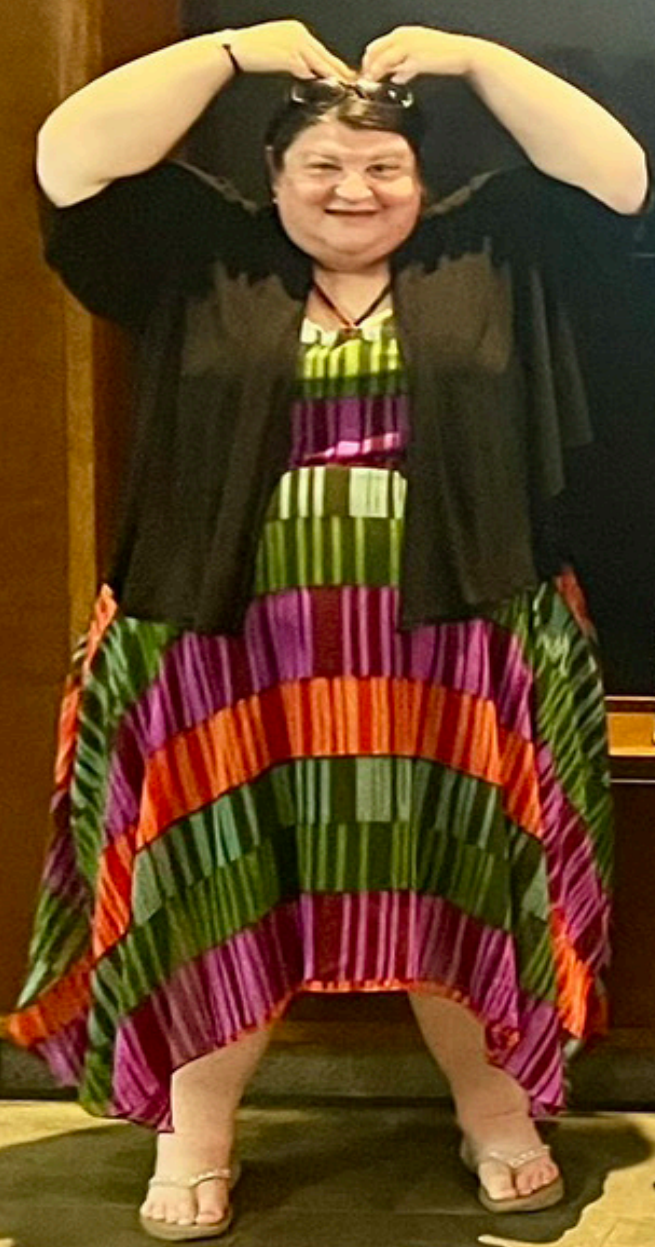


Carroll, the basketball hoop queen...



tokyo

japanese restaurant
東京





for a picture-perfect afternoon of relaxation. Did we mention drinks were included with our stay? The bars were just a short distance away, so the drinks were greatly welcomed as we lay out in the sun, the heat and humidity all around us.

“The beach water was warm, so you didn’t have to worry about jumping right into the water,” Nghi Nguyen said. “This is my first time coming to Cancun. It’s so beautiful, and I truly appreciate the breeze.”

Evening came, and we found ourselves at our first fine dining restaurant of the trip. The service was wonderful, and the meals were delicious. Afterward, we went to the Buffet Restaurant for more food and desserts. They had a different theme every night, with a variety of themed

foods and desserts alongside the daily options. One night, they had a cotton candy theme, which the kids especially loved.

The resort’s entertainment was top-notch, with fantastic dancing and a magic show. We also had the chance to swim with dolphins, and guests of the resort could watch these playful creatures all day. This added a magical touch to our already amazing trip.

Our week at Barceló Maya Caribe felt like a cruise on land, with plenty of food, entertainment, and activities. Some of us decided to visit the spa, which included a sauna, steam bath, and ice bath (for those brave enough to dip into the icy cold water!).



"The highlight of my trip was seeing the actual "Dancing with the Birds," ostensibly a Netflix special, but in Mexico live," Huong Nguyen said. "Waking up to the tropical birds and listening to their mellifluous chirping throughout the day was an experience I didn't anticipate. Looking at the beautiful, culturally distinct sculptures created images I had only seen on the screen, now, in person."

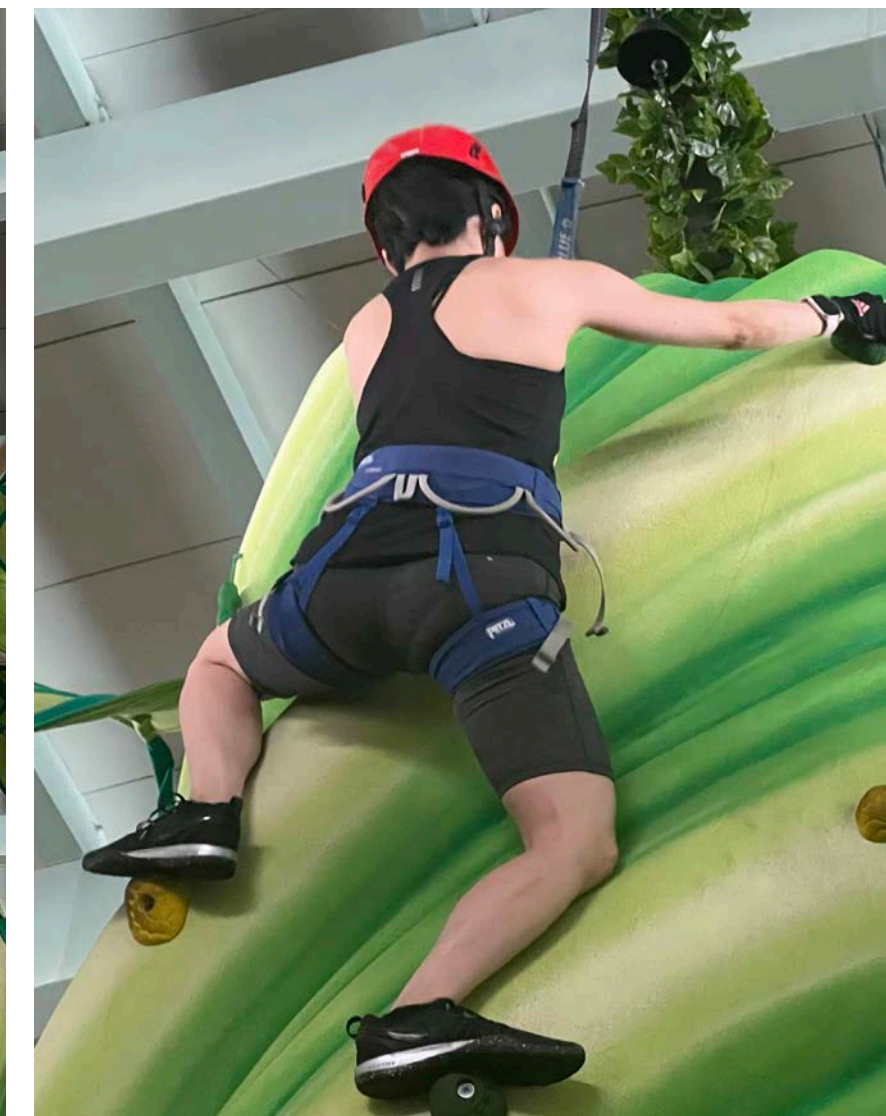
And what fun would it be if we didn't battle each other in a set or two of tennis? The hotel complex had plenty of amenities for staying active, including two tennis courts, a pickleball court, and a basketball court. The heat and humidity were intense, but we hit the tennis courts to get the full experience of vacationing at an all-inclusive Mexican resort.

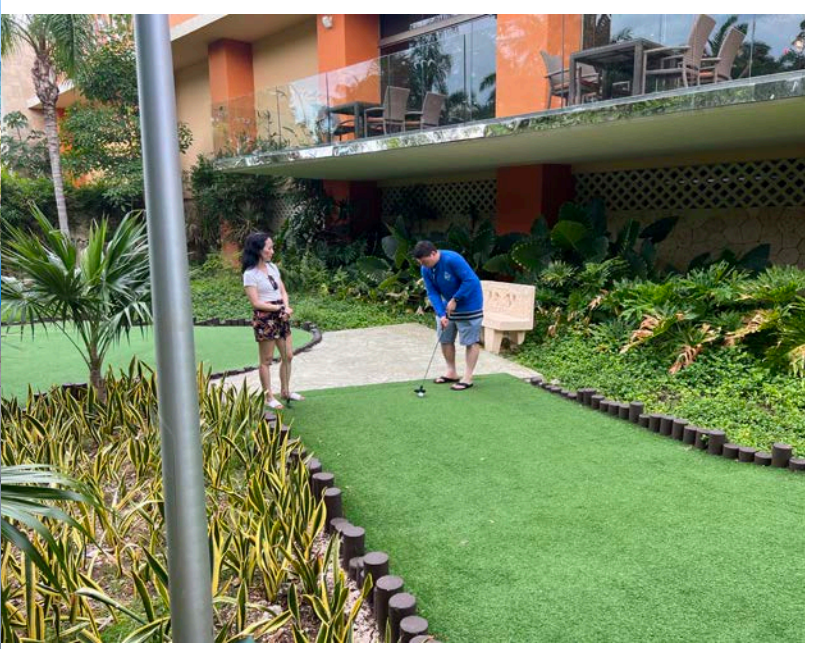
The outdoor fun continued at the mini golf courses (18 holes in total) as we competed to see who had the best swing. After some swinging and plenty of sweating in the heat, we went to the arcade to cool down. The arcade had a bowling alley and plenty of video games, including a basketball hoop game. Carroll Rollman boasted about her basketball skills, so we decided to have a little contest to see who could get the highest score. In the end, Carroll won with 23 points, beating out five other contenders, with the closest contender scoring 22 points. Carroll earned the bragging rights on this trip.

"I didn't believe Carroll when she was boasting about her basketball hoop skills," Nghi said. "But she really is great in this arcade game. We did also play three rounds between the two of us and she beat me 2-1."

One special highlight of our trip was celebrating Christine's birthday with a hibachi feast. It was incredibly special for Christine to be among friends on her birthday, enjoying the luxuries of room service and the swim-up pool. The waitresses brought out a little cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to her as a surprise. The smile on Christine's face was definitely the highlight of the evening.

Overall, it felt truly wonderful to relax and unplug, with some of us spending one day not leaving the room until dinner. Every night, we indulged in a unique and delicious fine dining experience, featuring Mexican, Spanish, Japanese, seafood, and







Italian cuisine. The restaurants were beautifully themed, with great service, making each meal a delightful adventure.

"The food was delicious, and I looked forward to all our meals," Jeremi Lecuyer said. "In the morning, I enjoyed the omelet. At lunch, I enjoyed fried rice with chicken. Most importantly, I loved the selections of fresh fruits, especially the passion fruits."

With Christine and her husband Jeffrey, the King and Queen of Escape Rooms, what would a trip to Mexico be without a mystery-solving challenge? So, the six of us tackled a whodunit Escape Room. Despite facing a few issues like sound problems and a malfunctioning help button, we couldn't find the real killer. And no, it wasn't the butler. Sadly, we never found out who the killer was, as they didn't reveal it.

After that, some of us went from the mystery room to the scary room for a night adventure in the fun house. Everyone was excited about entering the fun house, but no one wanted to take the lead in the dark.

"I took the lead when we first went inside the fun house," Nghi said. "But once they closed the door, and it was so dark in the room, I made Jeremi lead. Carroll and Huong didn't volunteer, of course."

The darkness closed in around us as we cautiously took each step, startled by the unsettling noises around. It was a quick and spooky journey, but the relief was immense when we all emerged from the dark room. If you enjoy scary settings with ghouls and monsters, this fun house is tailor-made for you.

Meanwhile, Carroll, always up for adventure, also took on a rock climbing challenge. What made it even more impressive was that she successfully climbed to the top and rang the victory bell.

"When Carroll asked me if I wanted to join her and sign up for rock climbing, I thought she was just kidding around," Nghi said. "I didn't take her for a rock climbing person, but then she got hooked into the gears and climbed all the way to the top. She and Jeremi are the daredevils this trip."





RIVIERA MAYA

Barceló Maya Grand Resort



And as they say, going up might be a bit easier, but coming down that rock wall was another challenge altogether. Nonetheless, Carroll made it safely to the ground, and her excellent effort earned her a prize.

Jeremi had his share of adventures during the week, with the highlight being a relaxing trip on a catamaran with a guide. They sailed out into the ocean to enjoy the breeze and admire the warm crystal blue waters.

Nghi, not dressed for the catamaran outing, opted not to join Jeremi, a decision he regretted later when strong winds forced the cancellation of the catamaran activity for the remainder of the trip.

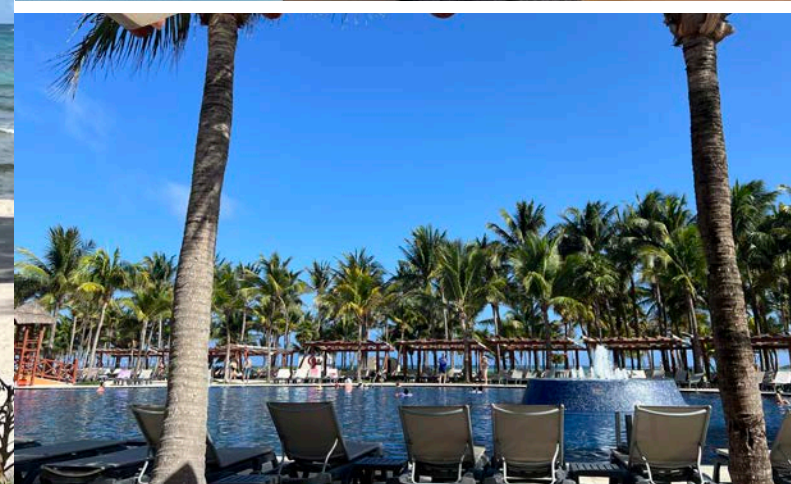
"I really enjoyed the opportunity to do various activities throughout the day. There was always something to do," Jeremi said. "Not limited to walking, jogging, snorkeling, catamaran with guide, ping pong, hydrotherapy spa, mini golf, arcade, Uno with Nghi."

We can all agree that our second MCRPA Group Travel was a resounding success. The weather was perfect, the food was fantastic, and the activities were loads of fun. Some of us have already mentioned that they would gladly do another all-inclusive MCRPA trip anytime!

"After demanding few months, I really appreciated my getaway to Mexico," Carroll said. "I enjoyed the slower pace of just lounging around. Some of my favorite activities that I enjoyed



“I enjoyed the slower pace of just lounging around. Some of my favorite activities that I enjoyed were: dining at the a la carte restaurants for dinner, getting my Tinkerbell tattoo..”



were: dining at the a la carte restaurants for dinner, getting my Tinkerbell tattoo, taking a yoga class, and climbing to the top of the rock wall.”

Our MCRPA Group Travel offers our members the opportunity to travel together. It was an idea conceived by some of our leadership members who travel frequently, knowing that many of our members share a passion for travel. So, why not explore the world together as a group?

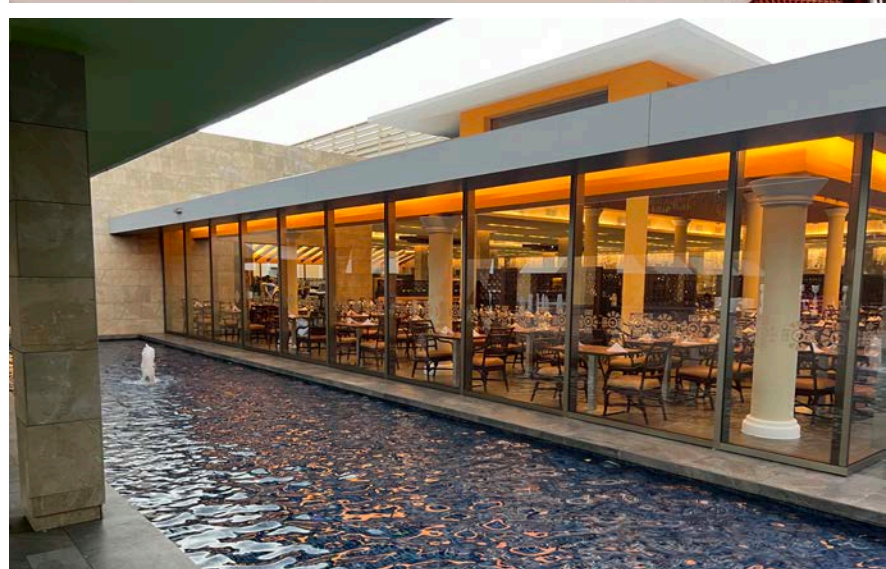
“Spending time with my MC colleagues in a vibrant and life-affirming location heightens my appreciation for their fun, jubilant, intellectual qualities—which I realize they bring to our students daily,” Huong said.

“Having experienced the heat and humidity of Mexico for the first time,” Carroll said. “I came back to Maryland with greater appreciation for our summers, which feels mild in comparison.”

Our first group travel was the Bermuda Cruise in 2023. Looking ahead to 2025, we’re considering destinations like Ireland, Peru, or even a domestic trip to one of the National Parks. The leadership team is also exploring options for a one-day theme park excursion, possibly to places like Hershey Park or Busch Gardens.

“According to the Wall Street Journal, more travelers are seeking ‘do-nothing’ vacations to rest and recharge, prioritizing wellness vacations,” Christine said. “Travelers are prioritizing relaxation over action-packed itineraries, and all-inclusive resorts provide a worry-free environment without the need for constant planning. Many travelers now place a greater emphasis on self-care and relaxation during their trips. Our experience confirmed that all-inclusive resorts truly cater to this need.”

We’re always open to travel ideas. If you have suggestions for our next trip or are interested in leading one, please contact MCRPA.



MC WELLNESS

Montgomery College is committed to fostering a culture of well-being that encompasses emotional, environmental, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual wellness. Our inclusive wellness program is available to active and retired faculty, staff, and spouses.

Registration for MC Wellness is required annually, and includes access to classes, locker rooms, and the campus open gym.

Visit the MC Wellness website for more information including the MC Wellness Class Schedule
<https://info.montgomerycollege.edu/offices/human-resources/wellness.html>



MC PRIDE & ALLIES

Fostering a welcoming environment for our LGBTQIA+ employees and students at Montgomery College, MC Pride and Allies is an employee affinity group that works to foster a welcoming environment for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA)+ employees and students at Montgomery College.

To learn more about our group structure and leadership, and to join our group, please visit our website:

<https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/life-at-mc/mc-pride/>



Leadership Retreat: Key Takeaways and Perspectives

MC Rising Professionals Association's
Annual Leadership Retreat

DREAM | INSPIRE | INNOVATE

July 12, 2024

During Our Time Together...

Team Building Activities

2023 – 2024 Reflection

Review the Membership Survey Results

Identify FY24 Theme

Why Join MCRPA?

Committee Work Sessions & Goal Setting

Initiatives & Calendar of Events

Celebrate!!!

MC MONTGOMERY
COLLEGE

The MCRPA leadership team held the annual Leadership Retreat on Friday, July 12, at the Rockville Campus. This event sets the tone for the upcoming year, and this year's agenda was packed with activities and discussions aimed at reflecting on past successes, identifying areas for improvement, and strategizing for the future.

We kicked off the day by enjoying some morning treats while catching up with each other. The opening building community activity was to decorate an oversized puzzle piece with facts about ourselves, our values, achievements, dreams, goals, and interests. The exercise allowed us to learn more about each other and show that our individual contributions fit into a larger complete puzzle. The best part of this is that there is plenty of room to add more pieces as we grow and add more people to our community.

We started the business portion of the day by reflecting on this past year's successes. It was exciting to hear from our newest leaders and hear how our FY24 theme of Community, Collaboration, and Celebration was met through meaningful interactions and planned events. This was followed by discussions on areas of improvement and growth opportunities to ensure that MCRPA continues to evolve and meet the needs of our members. We did that by evaluating the Annual Membership Survey results. This helps identify key opportunities for planning for 2024-2025 and hear directly from our members.





The survey provided valuable insights into how we can better serve our members. Highlights included the significant personal and professional growth many members experienced through MCRPA, the success of our networking opportunities, and the impact of the professional development offerings. We also identified areas for improvement, such as increasing inclusivity for long-time employees, enhancing event accessibility through more virtual and on-campus gatherings, and expanding professional development options beyond what ELITE offers.

Next, we engaged in a fun and collaborative team-building activity called Brick by Brick. Each person received a bag of Legos (all with the same amount and kinds of pieces) and had the choice to build either a vehicle, animal, or architecture. Each team member then presented their creation and explained the inspiration behind it. The key to this activity is to illustrate in a fun way that we may have similar starting points, but we are all unique in our thinking and contributions. Not one structure was exactly like the rest, yet we were all given the same tools and directions. That is the value of a diverse team.

Following this activity, we discussed expanding MCRPA's impact and solidifying its vision within the College for the 2024-2025 theme. The year's theme is MCRPA: Community Starts Here! We talked about how this theme could easily become a future tagline for MCRPA. We are excited to put the theme into action.



We shared a lunch together before jumping into our afternoon free association activity. A significant portion of our discussions centered on answering the question, "Why Join MCRPA?" and effectively communicating the value to our membership. We brainstormed innovative strategies to engage both new and current members, starting with an exercise where we shared words that came to mind about why employees should join MCRPA. We then selected key words from the brainstorm to focus our messaging. It was great to push ourselves and do it as a group, no wrong answers just quantity over quality. We then picked our favorite words and phrases and dug deep into how to make those important ideas pop in our future planning.

This was a great and inspiring segue into the committee work that came next. The committee chairs and vice chairs collaborated to discuss goals, plan calendars, and set expectations for FY25. Each committee then presented its plans to the group, allowing us to collaborate on new ideas and help each other meet short-term goals. A big part of the retreat is always planning the Fall 2024 calendar of events, and we have some tried-and-true events coming up and some new ideas to meet our members' needs.

In the end, the executive team presented their short-term and long-term goals for MCRPA, providing a strategic vision for the future. This presentation outlined the key initiatives and objectives guiding MCRPA through FY25. These included the introduction of an MCRPA Pressbook, a future group travel opportunity, the MCRPA's LEAD program, and the Transformational Professional Microcredential.

To conclude, we celebrated our achievements and wrote each other inspirational messages to include in our individual "affirmason jars*." These messages are a reminder of the supportive community that we will continue to provide each other



through the year and during our time at MC.

The MCRPA Annual Leadership Retreat is not just about planning, it's about building a stronger, more connected, and more effective MCRPA. Through reflection, strategic planning, and collaborative activities, MCRPA is poised to significantly impact the coming year. All the volunteer leaders deserve a huge thank you. They put in extra effort to make sure that the offerings of MCRPA are meaningful and impactful to all members. Many of the offerings are available to everyone at MC, so we are really serving more than our membership. We are building a community, and as our FY25 theme says, MCRPA: Community starts here!

See you all at our upcoming events!

**Trademark belongs to Anna Donohoe*



GOVERNANCE AT MC

The Montgomery College participatory governance process allows all members of the college community to provide input and make recommendations for institutional improvements. It also provides structures through which feedback and recommendations are considered when making important decisions.

Participatory governance is a method of decision-making in which collegewide policies, procedures, and practices are recommended to the College's president and the Board of Trustees.

Visit the MC Governance website for more information including the councils' meetings dates and times.

<https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/about-mc/governance/>

Did You Know?

- The last three Outstanding Staff of the Year award recipients have been MCRPA members, and at least two members receive the Outstanding Staff Awards every year...
- Our members actively volunteer in events such as Staff Enrichment Day, Mobile Market, and Commencement...
- Many of our members participate in MC Governance, and some serve in officer roles (Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary)....



MCRPA DIGEST SUBMISSION

We are accepting submission for our monthly MCRPA Digest. Use this form to submit your information to be included in the Digest.

Examples of types of submission we are looking for:

1. Share information on a conference you recently attended
2. Share your travel story
3. Recent accomplishments (earned a degree or certificate, received a grant/scholarship, published a book, etc.)

Submit your information today and be part of the MCRPA Digest!

<https://forms.office.com/r/LaDw2Qa9wZ>



Join us at the Maryland Renaissance Festival on September 21!



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





MC
MONTGOMERY
COLLEGE