



ACADEMIC COACHING IN HIGHER ED: An Emerging Strategy for Transformative Learning

“One of the goals of education is not simply to fill students with facts and information but to help them learn how to learn.”

— Zaretta L. Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*

The Achieving the Promise Academy is Montgomery College’s academic coaching program, created to ensure every student has the assistance, opportunities, and tools needed to succeed in college. Like many coaching programs at other two- and four-year institutions, ATPA supports student learning and academic achievement with evidence-based coaching strategies that aid academic, personal, and career goals.

What is academic coaching in higher education?

The Coaching in Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) defines coaching as fostering individualized relationships with students that promote their agency, self-understanding, growth, effectiveness, and persistence within the realm of education and across their lifespan. Founded in 2019, CHEC is a diverse community of coaches and coaching programs from post-secondary organizations that seeks to advance coaching in higher education as a practice that empowers students and transforms institutions.

Theories of teaching, learning, and student success support CHEC’s focus on these student outcomes. Foundational scholar of student success Vincent Tinto identified three major sources of student departure: academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Tinto’s “Model of Institutional Departure” states that, to persist, students need integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems.

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STUDENTS DISCUSS SUCCESS STRATEGIES WITH ATPA COACH DR. OLIVERO



“Cultural responsiveness is not a practice; it’s what informs our practice so we can make better teaching choices for eliciting, engaging, motivating, supporting, and expanding the intellectual capacity of ALL our students.”

Zaretta L. Hammond

To prevent these common causes of departure, learning in a multi-cultural environment must center culturally-responsive teaching. Likewise, learning interventions such as academic coaching and tutoring must also center culturally responsive approaches that support each student’s individual, intersectional needs.

At MC, ATPA’s embedded and personal academic coaching approaches are rooted in culturally-responsive strategies that support student integration into both formal and informal academic systems, while ATPA’s Student Learning Community programming mirrors Tinto’s focus on formal and informal social systems. As a result, coaching is an intentional, individualized support increasing student achievement, retention and persistence, and completion at MC.

Academic Coaching as a Tool to Develop Self-Regulated Learning

Montgomery College defines success in three components (1) providing access to community members seeking further education; (2) supporting their completion; and (3) focusing on post-completion success that results in family-sustaining wages and being civically engaged. Yet our Student Success Score Card indicates that, like many two-year colleges, far too many of our community members are trying to learn in environments not necessarily designed for their myriad needs and goals. While many factors affect student success, historically challenging courses sideline thousands of students each semester. Tailored academic support that accelerates learning *within the term* has proven essential for improving learning outcomes in these courses and helping students stay on track to that post-completion success.

Academic coaching at MC uses evidence-based strategies shown to accelerate student learning while also improving academic habits, skills, and student sense of belonging. These strategies include trust building, active listening, powerful questioning, nonjudgmental and co-creative approaches to problem-solving, and continuous and personalized academic support, helping students develop the self-regulated learning skills necessary to achieve their goals.

Whether tied to specific course content or a students' overall academic goals, ATPA's **culturally responsive, evidence-based coaching strategies aim to:**

- strengthen students' self-regulated learning skills
- build students' confidence and motivation
- foster students' sense of academic belonging, particularly those from historically marginalized and minoritized communities, at MC and within future professions
- increase students' use of other MC resources



Fostering a Sense of Academic Belonging

Through proactive, persistent, and personalized academic support, ATPA coaches help students succeed in the moment and develop self-regulated approaches to learning that foster long-term success, too. ATPA Coaches foster connections between students and professors, and vital areas such as Counseling and Advising, the Office of Student Life, Learning Centers, Disability Support Services, and more. Furthermore, ATPA leverages connections between students working with academic coaches within our Student Learning Community, offering a monthly Learning Community Hour (LCH), a GroupMe chat, and signature events like our annual retreat.

The Future of Academic Coaching at Montgomery College

Academic coaching provides an important, college-wide support for students, but coaching as a teaching and learning strategy is not limited to formal coaching roles. In the future, ATPA hopes to promote a college-wide coaching mindset and partner with more faculty, staff, and student leaders to explore the evidenced-based coaching strategies that have been shown to help students reach their full potential.

**I would not be passing without the coaches!
I've used the coaching pretty much every week with issues such as JavaFx set up, Mid Term Review and even help with projects. I am very grateful for the time coaches have spent with me.**

-Computer Science student Paul Abili



Let's GO!

Annual Student Retreat



We all need a support network. Family, friends, teachers, etc. that we can rely on when things get hard. No one gets anywhere alone.

-ATPA Student Maria Sune



Meeting other people in slightly similar situations to me was refreshing and lets me know I'm not alone.

- ATPA Student Hosie Haile



Academic Coaching in

ACTION!



Criminal Justice 110 student **Jordan Douville** meets with his embedded academic coach, **Cassandra Freeman-Reiter**



ATPA Student Assistant **Andre Ferguson** leads September's Learning Community Hour



ATPA Program Coordinator **Marie Arthus** & French Professor **Khady Diene** host a Francophone Students Meet-Up

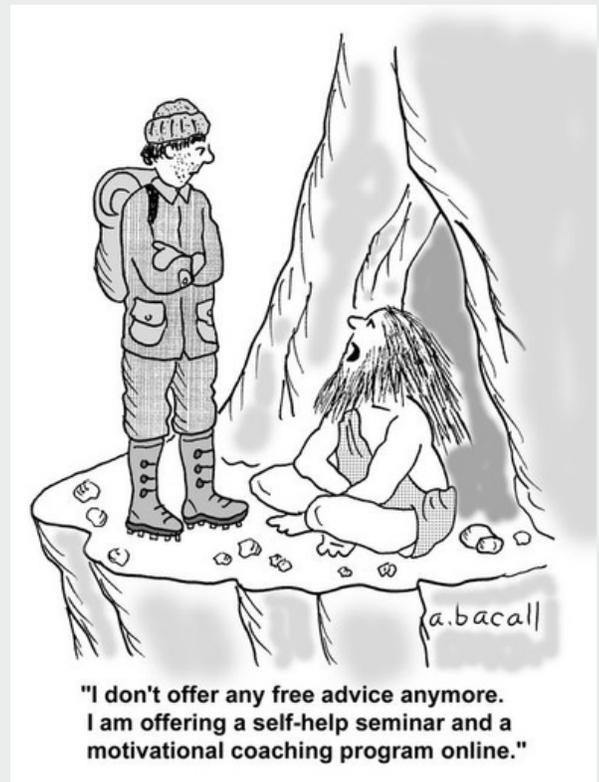
LET'S GET DEEP

Addressing Coaching Perceptions and Misconceptions

To ensure that academic coaching in higher education is firmly rooted in evidence and ethics, colleges and universities must consider the occasional concerns and misconceptions that accompany “life coaching” as a phenomenon. Indeed, the somewhat nebulous self-improvement service is rightly scrutinized, while the proliferation of self-described life coaches and their representation in social media and popular culture can affect students’ perception of the value or purpose of academic coaching.

Unscrupulous individuals who target vulnerable individuals seeking guidance and personal development can do real harm when coaching in unethical ways, particularly when they lack training or credentials. There is real danger in a person doling out mental health “advice,” providing unlicensed services and preventing people from accessing proper care. When these so-called coaches promise quick fixes or pressure clients to conform to unhealthy or controlling lifestyles, in exchange for exorbitant fees, they are far outside the ethical guidelines of organizations like the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

In contrast, trusted professional organizations like the ICF promote core coaching competencies and professional values that establish standards for ethical and evidenced-based coaching practices. At MC, ELITE offers Certified Leadership Coach Practitioner training that is eligible for ICF learning hours, while a Coaching Certification Program in WDCE is currently under review to meet the standards of Level 1 ICF accreditation. Meanwhile, the Coaching in Higher Education Consortium and nonprofits like InsideTrack also help colleges and universities that offer academic or success coaching build evidenced-based, equity-focused programs.



Thanks to funding from the Crimsonbridge Foundation, ATPA has been working with InsideTrack since 2022 to develop foundational coach training and assess our program’s practices to ensure they align with the highest coaching standards. ATPA also works closely with academic departments and ELITE to ensure our coaching strategies help students improve their academic performance and build the academic skills, habits, and mindsets that lead to success here at MC and beyond. As a result, students can trust that MC’s academic coaches are ready to support them while fulfilling our mission to help students discover their passions and unlock their potential to transform lives, enrich the community, and change the world.

PERCEPTION:

Coaching is a fad, a scam, or pseudoscience administered by unqualified individuals.

1

RECONSIDER:

MC's academic coaching program operates within a framework of evidence-based coaching strategies. Coaches are trained and practiced in these strategies and offered continuous opportunities for professional development.

PERCEPTION:

Coaching undermines a student's responsibility to engage in self-motivated learning and achievement.

2

RECONSIDER:

Students who work with an academic coach are demonstrating their motivation to learn by seeking out support. Furthermore, coaches help students learn how to continuously evaluate their own progress and understanding, a sign of deeper and more integrated learning.

PERCEPTION:

Coaching is just a trendy name for mentoring (or tutoring or advising) and confuses students seeking those specific services.

3

RECONSIDER:

Whether connecting students to Learning Centers, Counseling and Advising, the SHaW Center, or Student Life, ATPA Coaches are one important part of the college-wide network that ensures students use the many different services that help them learn, grow, and thrive. Because coaches proactively help students connect with these areas, students who work with coaches are *more likely* to use such services and at critical times.

PERCEPTION

Coaching only benefits students who are in academic crisis.

4

RECONSIDER:

Coaching not only builds habits and teaches tools of success but also increases student connections and belonging in their social and academic environment. All students can benefit from coaching through ATPA's culturally responsive approach and an increased connection to the institution at large.

PERCEPTION

Time spent with coaches is a distraction from completing assignments or studying.

5

RECONSIDER:

When students meet with a coach, not only are they often working actively on class work, they are also practicing skills and habits that help them become more effective overall.

Assign a self-paced workshop directly to students!
Contact atpa@montgomerycollege.edu for details.



Self-Paced Success Workshops



Help students build academic skills & habits anytime, anywhere, *at their own pace*

StudentLingo[®]
More Skills. More Success.

Log in with MyMC credentials
studentlingo.com/montgomerycollege

Sample workshops:



Exam Preparation Tips & Test-Taking Strategies

Dr. Sandra Yancy McGuire
15-20 minutes
[Action Plan](#)



Emotional Intelligence: The Other Key To Academic Success

Dr. Peggy Mitchell Clarke
10-15 minutes
[Action Plan](#)



Online Courses: Staying Motivated & Disciplined

Mike Coste
10-15 minutes
[Action Plan](#)

- Connect students to 50+ brief, interactive workshops
- Assign action planning worksheets to help students connect skills in your course
- Explore additional resources for each topic with students

PROFESSIONAL WEEK ELITE WORKSHOP

Using StudentLingo to Integrate On-Demand Success Workshops into Courses, Academic Coaching, Co-Curricular Learning, and More

Instructor: Nik Sushka

Date: Thursday, January 18, 2024

Speed session: 3-4 p.m.



ENGLISH 102 Dynamic Duo

Host Faculty Eurae Muhn & Embedded Academic Coach Tamar Levey
Nurture Success through Academic Partnership



“So many studies show that students feel hesitant about asking for help, [such as] students from underrepresented backgrounds, unless there is a relationship of trust.

Students know that [Coach Levey] is a reliable, knowledgeable figure who’s going to be there and is aligned with my teaching philosophy, is a content expert, and truly cares about them.”

-English Professor and Host Faculty Eurae Muhn

During a recent ATPA partner discussion, MC students Aisha, Julian, and Kay joined their English 102 Professor Eurae Muhn and embedded academic coach Tamar Levey to discuss the ways host faculty and embedded academic coaches collaborate to support student learning.

As a former embedded support coordinator, Professor Eurae Muhn has a special connection with ATPA. She started off the discussion reflecting on a deep appreciation for being able to collaborate with colleague and embedded coach Tamar Levey: “I think we’ve worked together at least five or six times now. So we have a really nice rapport and a good system going between the two of us. I’m very, very thankful for her.” Professor Levey also shared her enthusiasm for her collaboration with Professor Muhn to support students in and out of English 102 classrooms. One example the two highlighted was scheduling intentional class visits for in-class coaching.

During these in-class coaching sessions, Coach Levey takes an active role with students, offering additional assistance, connecting students to external resources and opportunities, and facilitating follow-up meetings. Professor Levey believes that this hands-on approach creates a nurturing environment fostering student success: “I love being an embedded coach. I think that the support is entirely necessary. I like to meet students initially both through email and when I attend classes to remind them, I’m not grading you. I’m not hounding you. I am simply here to support you in whatever ways you need support.”

Students in the course confirmed how Professor Levey’s presence affected them. Kay began by sharing how beneficial a simple check in can be: “[Coach Levey] is always asking, how are you doing or do you need any help? It was nice just to have someone ask you how you’re doing.” Students said in-class reminders from Professor Levey also made a difference. Aisha shared, “I tend to just avoid my email all together, so, what really helped me was the constant reminders by Professor Muhn and Professor Levey in class because I was there, I was present, and I couldn’t really just tune it out.”

Aisha also highlighted the ease of accessing Professor Levey outside of class for an additional perspective on her class work: “Personally, I loved having a second opinion on my essay before presenting it to Professor Muhn. Also, Professor Levey made it very easy to work on our writing and enhance and develop it because she offered links and suggestions. I found myself using a lot of her links.”

Lastly, Julian reflected on the courage it takes for students to share essays for feedback and how his writing improved after experiencing the student-coach trust within this course: “I feel like she really helped like everyone out of the class, especially me mainly, because I’m not really that much of a strong writer, but after this class I felt like I really improved on my writing.”

ATPA regularly hosts discussions with department chairs, program directors, academic coaches, and host faculty to exchange best practices and support strategies. ATPA’s next partner discussion will take place on Tuesday, December 12th.