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THE MONDAY MINUTE

with Dr. Williams



February 2, 2026

Welcome again to the spring 2026 semester. Join me in thanking our colleagues in the Office of Facilities and the Office of Public Safety, Health, and Emergency Management, who worked last week to clear sidewalks and parking lots and ensure that our learning environments were ready. Additionally, I am deeply appreciative of all the faculty and staff who engaged and supported students last week, during what was a unique “start” to a spring semester.

As February begins, we recognize the ways Montgomery College brings history, innovation, and student leadership together. This week, we mark the start of Black History Month while also celebrating student initiatives in emerging technologies and national recognition for our Data Science program. These moments reflect our shared commitment to providing students with accessible, equitable, and high-quality education that prepares them for meaningful careers and engaged citizenship. Thank you for your continued dedication to our students and our mission.

BACKPACKS ON THE GO PROMOTES DIGITAL LITERACY

In this [episode](#) of *Backpacks on the Go*, I spoke with Carlos Santiago Peñaloza, a business major with a minor in information technology, at the Digital Learning Center on our Rockville Campus. Santiago, a Phi Theta Kappa member and Digital Learning Center student assistant, founded the College’s first AI Club to help students use artificial intelligence ethically and responsibly. Recognizing that many students were hesitant to use AI tools because of academic integrity concerns, he created a space for learning, dialogue, and exploration grounded in ethical use. We also discussed the Digital Learning Center’s resources, including workshops and one-on-one guidance focused on AI literacy. Santiago’s leadership reflects our commitment to

equipping students with both technical skills and strong ethical frameworks for success.



DATA SCIENCE PROGRAM RANKED #5 NATIONALLY

Montgomery College's Online associate of science degree in data science has been ranked #5 nationally in [TechGuide's 2026](#) Best Online Associate in Data Science Programs. This recognition reflects the program's excellence in preparing students for careers in a rapidly growing field. The ranking is based on objective measures, including faculty support, financial aid availability, graduation outcomes, and student success metrics. This achievement highlights both the program's exceptional quality and our College's commitment to flexible, accessible pathways to in-demand careers.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS KICK OFF TOMORROW

The first 2026 Black History Month event at the College will be held tomorrow, February 3. This [virtual kickoff event](#) will be hosted by the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging. The national theme this year is "A Century of Black History Commemorations," a reflection on the power of history, identity, and collective responsibility. The MC Library also features related [resources](#), including video and book recommendations. This month offers opportunities to learn, connect, and deepen understanding in ways that strengthen our community, and reminds us that learning is enriched when we broaden perspectives by defending and uplifting diversity of thought, intellectual curiosity, academic freedom, and civil discourse—ensuring that we listen to voices that have too often been marginalized.

With Raptor Regards,

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