

Subject: Appointment of the Interim Collegewide Dean of Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET)
Date: Tuesday, September 3, 2024 at 12:56:40 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Academic Affairs
To: All Employees Dynamic Grp
Attachments: image001.jpg



Memorandum

To: Montgomery College Employees
From: Dr. Nawal Benmouna, Interim Vice President of STEM and Health Sciences
Subject: **Appointment of the Interim Collegewide Dean of Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET)**
Date: September 3, 2024

I am pleased to announce Dr. Rebecca Thomas has accepted the position of interim dean of science, engineering and technology (SET), beginning on August 17, 2024.

Dr. Thomas has served the Montgomery College community for nearly 20 years, as faculty, course coordinator, part-time faculty coordinator, and most recently as the chair of the biology department at the Rockville Campus since 2018. As chair, she developed and implemented operational efficiencies; implemented a departmental action plan to hire, onboard, mentor, and significantly increase ATPA embedded coaches in BIOL 150 courses; co-led a BIOL 150 early intervention pilot to reduce course DFW rates, supporting student success and completion; advocated for and supported the Early College biology program at the Rockville Campus; negotiated consensus among biology faculty on numerous curriculum revisions for biological sciences and environmental sciences programs to align with institutional priorities. She also implemented an innovative Biology Academic Advising MS Bookings site to improve students' ability to connect with academic program advisors, which included training for faculty which fostered stronger, more frequent interactions between students and program advisors.

In addition to her work as chair, Dr. Thomas has served on numerous committees, including the Virtual Campus Initiative, Faculty Council (co-chair), MC's Coronavirus Advisory Team, MC's Return to Campus Advisory Team, and Comprehensive Advising Team and Advising Team Redesign Taskforce. She currently serves on the Student Success Network's Completion Workgroup and MC's Institutional Review Board and is the TPSS Hispanic Student Nursing Club's faculty supporter. Since 2019, Dr. Thomas has been the principal investigator (PI) on a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (I-USE), Collaborative Research: Institutional and Community Transformation for Teaching and Learning Quantitative Reasoning in the Biological Sciences. This project, which brings together MC, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and three other Maryland community colleges, engages biology and math faculty across institutions to develop shared curricula that support biology students' success by building quantitative skills across four core biology courses.

From 2008-2018, Dr. Thomas served as the biology department course coordinator for Principles of Biology (BIOL 151) and developed new curriculum materials, renewed course lab content,

created lab OERs to reduce costs for students, and led the cross-campus faculty coordination for course outcomes assessment and textbook decisions. From 2006-2015, Dr. Thomas served as the biology department part-time faculty coordinator to improve support and environment for part-time faculty providing stronger mentorship, constructive evaluation, inclusion in department meetings, office space improvements, developed equitable standardized departmental processes for interviewing and hiring, and developed a more effective system for part-time faculty course assignments to diversify their teaching opportunities.

Dr. Thomas has several publications and has made presentations at a number of highly regarded events including, the Regional Conference of the Society for the Advancement of Biology Education Research, Council for the Study of Community Colleges, National Association of Biology Teachers, the Association of Faculties for Advancement of Community College teaching, among others. In 2023, the National Association of Biology Teachers awarded Dr. Thomas the Professor Chan Two-Year College Award for the Engaged Teaching of Biology, an honor bestowed upon one outstanding individual each year. Previously, she was also recognized with an Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Award from the College, and an Excellence Award from the National Institute for Staff & Organizational Development.

Dr. Thomas earned her bachelor of science with honors in biology from Samford University and her master of science and doctor of philosophy in evolutionary biology from the University of Chicago. She is a 2021 graduate of the MC Presidential Innovation Leadership Institute and a 2024 graduate of the Higher Education Resource Services Leadership Institute (HERS), a nationally-recognized, competitive and transformational leadership development program.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Rebecca Thomas to her new role as the interim dean of science, engineering and technology.