

Election of the 38th Student Member of the Board of Education

MCR Special Elections Committee 2015 Voters Guide



Election Day
April 29, 2015

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Eric Guerci

Candidate Profile

Grade 10 Bethesda Chevy Chase HS

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www.EricForSMOB.com

Between 6th and 12th grade, each of us will take dozens of standardized tests, hundreds of final exams, and be judged by colleges on our GPAs. When did we just become numbers in MCPS? Who decided that letters and numbers define our potential to lead, learn, and grow? As students, we want to be

defined by our actions and our character, not our GPAs and test scores. I am running for SMOB because our education is at a crossroads. We want an education that prepares us for the future and cultivates our academic, athletic, and extracurricular interests.

As a fellow student and advocate in MCPS, I share your concerns about our daily school lives. With a track record of serving you, the endorsements of two former SMOBS, and the support of students across our county, I am proud to be running to be the voice of our diverse and vibrant student body. I have passionately fought for our voice by serving as the Vice President of the Montgomery County Regional SGA and working side-by-side with our SMOBs to champion initiatives such as technology in the classroom on the SMOB Advisory Council.

These past few months, I've been visiting your schools to meet you in person because I value your concerns, ideas, and suggestions. I've sat down with fellow students, including Minority Scholars leaders and student athletes, in order to fully appreciate your values and the policies that impact your daily lives. My campaign isn't built around me; it's about you, your beliefs, and your desire to see tangible change.

My vision for MCPS is simple: every student should have the opportunity to fulfill his or her highest potential. That means closing the achievement gap with real solutions, such as my plan to implement project-based learning in every school. That also means securing additional money to renovate our schools to combat overcrowding at schools like Clarksburg and Wootton. My plan for MCPS puts education back into your hands. Taking our education back won't be easy, but if we as students come together, empowered by a strong student voice on the Board, we can achieve real progress for MCPS. Please join me in our fight for our education.

Endorsed by SMOB Justin Kim: "Eric is uniquely qualified to be SMOB, with extensive experience and a proven record of fighting tirelessly for the student body. I urge all MCPS students to stand up for a better Montgomery County by voting Eric Guerci for SMOB."

A 5-point plan to obtain realistic and meaningful results:

1. Expand our technology implementation to include personal phones and tablets.
2. Expedite school and athletic facility renovations and additions.
3. Close the achievement gap with solutions such as expanding project-based learning.
4. Change grading policies to reduce and redefine homework and assessments.
5. Decrease class sizes to help make learning more personal for every student.

A Record of Fighting for You:

Montgomery County Regional SGA (MCR) Vice President, Finance Committee Chairman, leads an organization to represent the 45,000+ High School Students of MCPS, fostering educational innovation and developing solutions to MCPS problems

SMOB Advisory Council (SAC) Senior Policy Advisor to SMOB Justin Kim, worked side-by-side with SMOB Justin Kim on open lunch, school construction, and bell times

Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) Trainer B-CC High School Elected and reelected SGA Officer

Westland Middle School Co-President, developed first ever middle school legislative platform while reaching out to students through town halls with unprecedented success

I Support:

- Greater student involvement as stakeholders in the decision-making process
- Real and lasting solutions to close the achievement gap and the engagement gap, such as promoting student and parent engagement through high expectations, college and career readiness programs, and diversifying the teacher workforce
- Fully funding the Operating and Capital Improvements Budgets
- Reducing class sizes through an increase in the number of high-quality teachers
- Expedited school renovations, additions, and modernizations
- Green initiatives, including green roofs and solar panels on school buildings
- Greater internship and career opportunities
- Student evaluation of teachers
- State of the art athletic environments, including Turf fields in more schools
- P.E. credit exemption for student athletes in varsity and JV sports

I Oppose:

- Increased class sizes
- Budget cuts to vital academic and extracurricular programs
- Teaching to the test
- The replacement of on-level courses with honors courses
- In-school punishments for off-school transgressions
- Increased bus waits as a result of the new bus depot
- Loss of class credit or other academic punishments for unexcused absences

If elected, what are your top three non-budgetary priorities you wish to see completed during your term? What actions/steps would be needed to obtain them?

As outlined in my 5-point plan, there are meaningful changes to our school system which can be achieved without spending money. First, I will create a task force with the superintendent that carefully examines student workload and its effect on student well-being with the goal of reducing student workload. Second, I will increase communication between the SMOB and the students by doubling the number of student town halls and effectively integrating technology such as Google Apps. Third, I will implement a Bring Your Own Device policy where students are allowed to bring technology from home into the classrooms to reap the benefits of educational connectivity.

Even though the Student Member of the Board currently does not have a vote on the MCPS budget, they do have an active role in expressing the student's voice in it. If you could allocate an additional five million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?

In order to empower students to make a difference, I would establish a countywide social impact competition called the MCPS Student Impact Challenge. Students of all grades would be able to design and propose an idea, innovation, or business plan that would solve a social issue in our community. Fifty student winners would get \$100,000 to implement their proposals.

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Rachit Agarwal

Candidate Profile
Grade 11 Richard Montgomery High School
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Hey! My name is Rachit Agarwal. I'm a junior at Richard Montgomery High School, and I hope to have your support in my bid to be your next Student Member of the Board of Education. Montgomery County is an incredibly diverse community—ethnically, economically, religiously, experientially. Here's what I, Rachit Agarwal, bring to the table:

Passion. Dedication. Experience. Positivity. Visionary leadership. Fostering. 'Truthiness'. These are all words that you constantly hear, words you have probably grown tired of (well, maybe not the last one). And it makes sense. Every year, we sugarcoat (or 'sice') the concept of "student leadership" in a vain hope that somehow if we make what we do sound impressive, we'll be able to do impressive things. Student governments and student representation on the Montgomery County Board of Education places us in a unique position to advocate for ourselves and for our younger siblings, but more often than not, we set ourselves up for disappointment.

We hope to make changes to how our school system works, because we see the need for change—in our classrooms, at the orchestra pit, sports practice, and debate tournaments. But it takes time to make many of these changes. The SMOB isn't realistically capable of immediate tangible change; this occurs about as often as Leonardo DiCaprio wins an Oscar. As much as we'd like to think so, that isn't what we send students to the Board of Education to do.

In the short-term, I will approach the position of SMOB as a link between the Board and the students, and advocate for changes that can be implemented soon.

The SMOB's true responsibility is to represent the future students of MCPS by setting a solid foundation for them. The policies we enact now will have a greater effect on the current children that will soon be MCPS students. That's why I'm advocating for an expansion of county-wide Pre-K programs that will help our children get the high-quality start they need. After all, 85% of brain development occurs before we even set foot in a school.

If elected Student Member on the Board, I plan on:

- Dramatically improving communication between the SMOB and the students. You'll have an easy way to talk to me and other students through the myMCPS web and mobile apps. I will also send out frequent video updates and hold monthly open town hall meetings in order to listen to you. Trust me; I need friends to talk to.
- Introducing policies that help reduce the achievement gap while benefitting all students. For reducing the achievement gap, my priorities are lower class sizes, implementation of open technology, and expansion of early childhood education. See more in the platform.

Don't set yourself up for disappointment. Remember, we need to focus less on poetry, and more on practicality. Thank you so much for your support, and I look forward to talking to you!

In conclusion, #letsgetrachit.

Education

Richard Montgomery High School: International Baccalaureate*Roberto Clemente Middle School: Math/Science/Computer Science*Fallsmead Elementary School

Experience (more details at rachitformob.com/record)

SMOB Student Advisory Council (SAC)
(2014) Chief of Technology: Working with current SMOB to develop app for scholarships/internships (2013) Public Relations Officer: Facilitated communication through videos
Montgomery County Regional (MCR) SGA
(2014) Tech Deputy: Co-developed/launched MCR website, started and leading open technology initiative
(2013) Media Deputy: Publicized works of MCR through social media/videos; Encouraged council to partner with local businesses
Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) Seminar (2014) Delegate: Represented Richard Montgomery HS Richard Montgomery High School DECA (2014) Co-President: Working with Cornell/Montgomery College to bring free business classes to school, Richard Montgomery High School SGA (2013) Schoolwide Treasurer: Reached out to students through videos, Roberto Clemente Middle School SGA
(2011) President: Led charitable and efficient efforts through events; Increased student engagement through social media and website

Platform (more details at rachitformob.com/platform)

Goal: Reducing the achievement gap with policies that benefit all students
Achievement Gap: Expansion of countywide Pre-K, staff development, lower class sizes, bilingual ESOL teachers, partnerships with SAT/ACT test prep companies for low-income students, school renovations, scholarships/internships app, use of free software tools in classrooms
Capital Improvements Plan (School Renovations): Expediting plan to target high-need schools faster
Student Workload: Use of assessment schedules, consistent grading policies, project-based learning
Environment: Continuation of recyclable lunch trays, use of solar panels in schools
Athletics: New athletic turf fields through partnerships with sports organizations
Magnet Programs: Emphasizing programs in under-performing schools
Extracurriculars/Electives: Partnerships with colleges and using free/low-cost online resources to increase variety and quality of extracurricular activities
Bell Times: More research into students, minimizing financial burden, talking to students and teachers to see which model is the best for them
Common Core/Curriculum 2.0: More research by communicating with current students to examine effectiveness, rethinking its implementation in classrooms

If elected, what are your top three non-budgetary priorities you wish to see completed during your term? What action/steps would be needed to obtain them?

- 1. Open Communication**—Using my experience in technology, I will integrate an easy way to communicate with me into the myMCPS web/mobile app. I will also send frequent video updates and hold monthly town hall meetings.
- 2. Open Technology**—"Technology in the classroom" isn't just about purchasing devices; it's about being smart in how we use software/ hardware. My open technology plan helps teachers implement apps like Google Classroom and Khan Academy into their classes so students can better connect with their teachers for free. These tools will help students learn more effectively.
- 3. Open Scholarships/Internships**—I plan to continue SMOB Dahlia's work on an internships and scholarships database by continuing to develop a web/mobile app called Ship to help teachers, counselors, and students collaborate to find these opportunities. Scholarships and internships should be open and accessible to every student in Montgomery County, and this plan will do just that.

Even though the Student Member of the Board currently does not have a vote on the MCPS budget, they do have an active role in expressing the student's voice in it. If you could allocate an additional five million dollars anywhere in the budget, where would it be and why?

I would add more of the single asset we cannot learn without: Teachers. I want to especially focus on high-need schools and bilingual ESOL teachers, as ESOL students commonly don't get enough support. This would help reduce the achievement gap, and all students would benefit.