Community colleges are an undervalued asset in our country. Not only is that not right, it’s not smart. — President Barack Obama, July 14, 2009

Montgomery County Needs Montgomery College now more than ever. Why?

The Montgomery College mission calls us not only to “change lives” but to also to “lead in meeting economic and workforce development needs.”

- Montgomery College is helping more people than ever before attain an education and increase their ability to find meaningful employment—MC serves 60,000 students annually!
- Montgomery College strengthens the local economy by $1.8 billion annually. The math is simple: Higher education = higher paychecks = higher tax revenues.
- Montgomery College cannot continue to achieve its mission without sufficient financial support from the County. Student tuition already accounts for 30% of College revenue and fewer students are able to enroll due to increasing tuition costs and fewer available faculty and classroom space.

*Enrollment tells the story!*

60% of the MCPS graduates, who stay in state to attend college, begin their education at Montgomery College.

All MCPS high schools send students to MC.

The College has been growing rapidly throughout the recession; our for-credit undergraduate enrollment was over 26,000 this fall, the second largest in the state (and within 400 students of the largest, the University of Maryland, College Park).

Enrollment grew 7% last fall.

MC’s enrollment growth over the last four or five years is the equivalent of two high schools.

Like the public schools, we’ve seen tremendous changes in our population, students who in years past might never have considered college but are now proudly enrolling as the first in their families to attend college. A trend that is likely to continue as MCPS closes the achievement gap and more students want and are ready for college.

High achieving students who have been priced out of public four-year schools are choosing MC.
Adults in need of retraining are coming to MC. Enrollment in training and continuing education courses is approximately 26,000 in one semester.

MC is Maryland’s largest community college when you combine our credit and non-credit enrollment.

MC has the largest engineering program of any community college in the country.

Enrollment in biotech courses has increased 26% since the fall of 2008.

Need the funding to protect our mission --- the budget numbers!

In the County’s proposed budget, now pending in front of the County Council, there is $15 million less in county funding for the College than the Board’s Fiscal Year 2011 budget request.

To be more specific, in Fiscal Year 2010 the County provided $106.5 million in funding for the College. However, the recommended county funding level for the College for Fiscal Year 2011 equals $93.1 million. That is a drop of 12.6% or $13.4 million less in County support from Fiscal Year 10 at a time when our enrollment grew by more than 7%.

For Montgomery College, the county reductions come on top of state aid cuts - $3.2 million since Fiscal Year 2010, bring us back to FY 2008 state funding levels. These cuts come during a period of soaring enrollment growth.

The College did not ask for any help from the County to weather the state aid cuts.

Budget cuts imperil the College’s mission

This reduction will have a substantial impact on the College. To put the magnitude of this cut in context, $15 million is almost the annual cost of all academic and student services programs at the Germantown Campus. (Readers note: the College has NO plan to close the Germantown Campus --- this is illustrative only!)

Unfortunately, given the magnitude of the state and county reductions, we must consider a variety of painful choices, from furloughs to position and program cuts.

Further tuition hikes beyond those already recommended in the College’s proposed budget are likely. Students already pay for more than 30% of the College’s budget. Clearly, students already pay their fair share.
With the combined state and county reductions, it will be extremely difficult to open and staff the new Rockville Science Center, hire new faculty to meet demand, and to protect core academic and student services. And the list goes on – cutting student scholarships, reducing the hours of operation for tutoring services, to name a few examples.

Delaying the opening of the Rockville Science Center, a green, state-of-the-art lab building, will imperil plans to renovate the adjacent Science East and West buildings needed to complete the new science and math complex at the Rockville Campus. The lab building will provide the modern labs necessary for a quality science and engineering education. Delays in the renovation of the Science East and West buildings would put on hold the new classrooms so vital to serving more students.

*If we are unable to hire faculty to meet the growing demand, the end result will be to offer fewer classes, which shuts out the growing number of students who enroll at Montgomery College each year.*

*Tuition hikes and furloughs, along with a mix of targeted reductions, cannot close the funding gap of $15 million without putting our mission in jeopardy.*

Former President Dr. Nunley warned a few short years ago, “let’s not raise the bar and close the gap at K-12, only to slam the door to higher education. That would truly be a tragedy.”

Montgomery College needs help from the Council to open the Rockville Science Center on time, address enrollment demand, pay the cost of benefit increases and protect key academic and student services programs.

**A solution to economic troubles ...**

Tom Watkins, head of Human Genome Sciences said it best in a recent *Gazette* newspaper story “Montgomery College has been a good source to find qualified employees. They turn out terrific employees.”

Clearly, job growth and workforce development go hand in hand.

We truly believe that our students—current and future county taxpayers—are one of the keys to our community’s recovery. An economic impact study found that the regional economy is *$1.8 billion* stronger as a result of Montgomery College’s past and present efforts.
The county has a workforce in need of retraining to meet current employer demand and projected needs -- more allied health workers, lab bench workers, and green job technicians. MC can help!

An educated workforce commands higher salaries, leading to higher tax revenues. The average income of someone with an associate’s degree is 39% more than a student with a high school diploma, and 117% more than someone who did not achieve a H.S. diploma.

The more skilled and educated residents we can prepare here at Montgomery College, the better.

The more MCPS graduates who see an open door when they come to MC, the better for our economy.

_MC is already struggling to keep pace with the demand for an affordable quality college education._

We already are struggling to meet demand – last fall 647 students were not successful in getting the necessary math or science classes. Those are our future engineers and scientists.

We are also concerned that further tuition hikes will make college out of reach for some of our students. There is not enough financial aid to go around as it is. 2,675 students did not enroll at MC last fall after qualifying for, but failing to receive, institutional aid from the College. We simply did not have enough funds for them. 2,675 students. That’s the same as turning away every student from Blair High School.

Further program cuts, cuts in the number of class sections, and more tuition hikes may mean more students who are unable to attend college. And in a county where an educated workforce is instrumental to a healthy, thriving economy – that would be a real tragedy.

_The workforce of today and the future begins at Montgomery College_

As a result of our education and training programs, MC provides:

- Skilled lab bench workers for our bio-tech firms
- The new green economy workers
- Health care workers to address the nursing and allied health shortages and
The next generation of engineers and scientists through our STEM programs – science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

*Given the severity of the fiscal challenges, the College proposed a lean FY 2011 budget.*

The Board of Trustees’ requested budget asked for funds to address enrollment growth and open the Rockville Science Center.

The Trustee’s proposed budget did not include any funds for new program or initiatives and took other actions to minimize the need for new resources. The requested FY11 budget:

- Included a tuition increase for students;
- Substantially tapped our fund balance;
- Reduced the initial proposal for staffing the new Rockville Science Center;
- Timed the opening of the Science Center for later in the fiscal year to reduce its impact on the budget; and
- Did not include pay raises for employees.