Fiscal Year 2021 Higher Education Overview (Operating Budget)

Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA)
Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee
Senator Craig Zucker, Subcommittee Chair
January 23, 2020

House Appropriations Committee
Delegate Maggie McIntosh, Chair
Education and Economic Development Subcommittee
Delegate Ben Barnes, Subcommittee Chair
January 24, 2020

For almost 240 years, Maryland’s independent colleges and universities have been part of the State’s system of postsecondary education. By partnering with private, nonprofit colleges and universities, Maryland is able to serve MORE students in MORE geographic regions, offer MORE academic programs, award MORE degrees, and obtain MORE favorable outcomes at a LOWER cost for State taxpayers. This is a successful public private partnership that has stood the test of time.

Today, Maryland’s 13 State-aided independent institutions serve more than 65,600 students in 180 geographic locations and offer 1,600 approved academic programs, including more than 900 post-baccalaureate and graduate programs. These advanced-level academic programs are essential to Maryland’s knowledge-based economy and cited often by the State in seeking to attract major employers. Last year, the MICUA institutions awarded more than 15,200 degrees and achieved remarkable outcomes as measured by high retention rates and graduation rates, shorter time-to-degree, low student loan default rates, and top-ranked mid-career salary earnings. Johns Hopkins University, MICUA’s only doctoral research university, spent $2.6 billion on research and development activities, issued 150 patents, fueled 24 new start-up companies, and created 1,000 new jobs in 2019. With just 3% of the State’s appropriation for higher education, the MICUA institutions produce remarkable benefits.

As the facts demonstrate, the State’s investment in its independent institutions is a wise and efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Therefore, we are disappointed that the 2020 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act reduces the Sellinger Program appropriation by over $32 million and disregards the long-standing funding relationship between the State and the segments of higher
education. Further, the BRFA perpetuates the long-delayed promise to return the funding of independent institutions to an amount that was first intended as early as the 1970’s and supported in reports since. Maryland is best served by a system of higher education with public and private, two- and four-year institutions working collaboratively to meet the State’s goals for postsecondary education. **We respectfully request that the Maryland General Assembly reject the BRFA and fully fund the Sellinger Program in the fiscal 2021 budget.**

The *Higher Education Fiscal 2020 Budget Overview* prepared by the Department of Legislative Services, requests that MICUA comment on the factors contributing to the decline in student enrollment. MICUA institutions fully recognize and embrace their role in the success of the postsecondary pipeline. Our institutions are actively engaged in efforts to increase overall enrollment. We reach out to middle school and high school students and their families to encourage college attendance, advise students on college preparation, and assist with the admissions and financial aid application process. Representatives from MICUA institutions participate in college fairs in high schools with diverse populations and host on-campus recruitment events for prospective students and their families. Many MICUA institutions offer dual enrollment programs for qualified high school students and summer bridge programs for admitted students who may need extra support to acclimate to college life and succeed in college-level work.

We agree that in order to reach the State goal of 55% degree attainment by 2025 there needs to be effective recruitment of first-generation, underrepresented and low-income students. To this end, we are proud to report that undergraduate enrollment of underrepresented minority students (African-American, Hispanic, and Native American) grew by 77% from 2008 to 2018. Several of our campuses include both on and off-campus programming to target these populations. For example, Goucher College specifically connects with the SEED School of Baltimore and Bard Early College High School to identify underrepresented students, and partners with community-based organizations such as the Baltimore Urban League to do the same. St. John’s College hosts an annual fully-funded summer program coordinated with UNCF and AEU to provide underrepresented minority students with leadership and critical thinking programs. To improve retention, McDaniel College assigns peer mentors to every new student and trains these emissaries in the unique needs of diverse populations. At Mount St. Mary’s University, the Mount Cares Committee assigns a contact person to all students who are identified as “at-risk” and at Notre Dame of Maryland University, the Trailblazers Program supports first generation college students via personalized meetings, workshops, collaborations with other on-campus services and departments, and guest speakers.

We continue to prioritize the financial aid that we award and we are proud of the efforts that we have made to ensure that low-income students are able to access and afford higher education. In particular, it is worth noting that one in four of our students is a Pell Grant recipient, and 82% of the need-based financial aid that MICUA students receive is institution-based. Further, as part of the Guaranteed Access Partnership Program (GAPP), we match 100% of the State-awarded Guaranteed Access Grant so that these low-income high-achieving students may receive up to $38,200 per year towards their pursuit of higher education at our institutions.

The *Higher Education Fiscal 2020 Budget Overview* also requests that MICUA comment on programs or initiatives to re-enroll and ensure successful outcomes of students who have completed some college but not attained a degree. While MICUA retention and completion rates
are among the highest in the nation, we will continue efforts to improve them, particularly among identified groups.

**Six-Year Graduation Rates for First-Time, Full-Time Degree Seeking Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MD 4-Yr Independent</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 4-Yr Independent</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 4-Yr Public</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall U.S.</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: Totals include completion at transfer institution. Source: National Student Clearinghouse, 2019.

Students re-enrolling in MICUA member institutions were not eligible for the Near Completers Grant Program launched by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) in fiscal 2020. These tuition grants were only available to near completers at Maryland public two-year and four-year institutions. One MICUA member institution (Maryland Institute College of Art) signed on to participate in MHEC’s Near Completers Matching Program in 2019, while other MICUA institutions reported to MHEC on their existing initiatives to reach, re-engage, and re-enroll near completers. For example, Stevenson University reported on its new bachelor’s degree in Professional Studies. This program is designed as a flexible interdisciplinary pathway to degree completion for returning adult students, allowing them to maximize prior undergraduate credit earned from Stevenson or other institutions. The degree is offered fully online featuring eight-week courses, six starts per year, and a complement of online support services.

Since fiscal 2013, three MICUA member institutions have launched formal near completer programs through the State’s institutional “One Step Away” grant program: Goucher College, Notre Dame of Maryland University, and Washington Adventist University. Grant funding has been used for activities and initiatives such as outreach to former students, tuition and fees grants, vouchers for books and supplies, tutoring and academic support services, and near-completer events. Campuses have developed new systems for transcript analysis for near completers through prior learning credit and transfer credit. They have also invested in support staff to serve as “navigators” to work with cohorts of near completers and coordinate aspects of their re-entry into the institution, including orientation, academic and social support, advising, financial aid, and the removal of potential institutional barriers that could prevent degree completion.