

The Sellinger Program

Supporting Higher Education in the Maryland Tradition

The State of Maryland has maintained a partnership with its independent colleges and universities for over 200 years. The first higher education institutions chartered in the State were independent colleges—**Washington College**

higher education, prompting the Maryland Council for Higher Education to warn that a financial crisis was imminent for many of the State's independent institutions. In response, the Governor appointed a distinguished panel of citizens from public and private institutions of higher education and local businesses to serve on a committee to evaluate private higher education in Maryland. The Committee was chaired by Philip Pear, member of the Maryland Council for Higher Education. Hence the Committee became known as the Pear Committee.



was chartered in 1782 and **St. John's College** was chartered in 1784. These colleges received the State's first grants for higher education in 1784. Throughout its history, the State has supported independent higher education through different programs. Currently, the primary State support for independent higher education is through the Joseph A. Sellinger Aid Program, which was established in 1973.

At that time, four private institutions of higher education in Maryland had fallen into dire financial straits and closed. In addition, the University of Baltimore—then a private institution—wrote to the State requesting a public takeover. These were the “signs of the times” for independent

During the summer of 1972, the Pear Committee met with every private college president in Maryland and hired an independent auditor to review their financial statements, enrollment data, staffing records, cost containment efforts, and other records. At the conclusion of its work, the Committee recommended that the State provide modest public support of private higher education to preserve and strengthen a dual system of higher education. The panel wrote that “the savings to the State in tax dollars due to the existence of these institutions has contributed substantially to the welfare and well-being of all of the citizens in Maryland. These savings can be continued by assuring, through modest State assistance of

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As a result of the Pear Committee's findings, in 1973 the State established a program to provide State grants to eligible private institutions. The creation of this grant program was seen as an efficient and effective way to sustain Maryland's private institutions. A moderate State investment provides for a high rate of return through degrees granted, citizens educated, and positive economic impact.

The State grant program is now known as the Joseph A. Sellinger State Aid Program, named for the former Loyola College president and respected higher education leader. The program awards State aid to independent colleges through a formula linked to their enrollment and to the per-student appropriation of selected four-year public institutions. The statutory formula provides per full-time equivalent student (FTES) funding of 16% of the amount granted per FTES at ten public institutions in the prior year.

This self-adjusting formula remains in effect today and continues to be a national model. The Sellinger formula structure encourages cooperation and collaboration among Maryland's segments of higher education. The 15 eligible MICUA institutions receive about 3% of the State's investment in higher education, serve 52,000 students, and award about one fourth

of all degrees conferred in Maryland annually. The Sellinger funds are used to support the Maryland goals for higher education as identified in the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education.



Due to Maryland's economic climate, the Sellinger Program has been underfunded for several years. Severe reductions have had a chilling effect on student financial aid and educational services. In addition, the cutbacks have threatened the competitiveness of Maryland's independent institutions, being far deeper than the reductions in funding passed by legislators in neighboring states.

Unpredictability in higher education funding remains a concern. During periods of fiscal constraint, State appropriations for higher education are treated as discretionary spending. This practice creates financial instability for Maryland's colleges and universities and causes financial hardships for students and their parents. Given the importance of higher education to the State's economic wellbeing and quality of life, Maryland should adopt sound fiscal policies that provide stable and predictable funding. ■