



Maryland Independent College and University Association

140 SOUTH STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401

PHONE: 410-269-0306
FAX: 410-269-5905
www.micua.org

TESTIMONY

House Ways and Means Committee

HB 966 – Higher Education – College of Southern Maryland – Bachelor’s Degree Programs

Tina Bjarekull, President

February 26, 2016

MEMBERS

Capitol Technology University

Goucher College

Hood College

Johns Hopkins University

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Institute College of Art

McDaniel College

Mount St. Mary’s University

Notre Dame of Maryland University

St. John’s College

Stevenson University

Washington Adventist University

Washington College

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Ner Israel Rabbinical College

St. Mary’s Seminary & University

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony urging an unfavorable report for *House Bill 966 – Higher Education – College of Southern Maryland – Bachelor’s Degree Programs*. This bill would authorize the College of Southern Maryland to offer upper-level undergraduate courses and to award bachelor’s degrees.

Maryland’s 16 community colleges serve a critical role in the State’s higher education system. The College of Southern Maryland provides high-quality, open-access, career-focused educational opportunities, awarding certificates and associate’s degrees. Abandoning its core mission is not in the best interest of the State, students, employers, or the taxpayers of Maryland. The needs of Southern Marylanders who want to attend or transfer to a four-year public or independent institution can be met within the current capacity of Maryland’s higher education system.

Collectively, MICUA’s 13 member institutions have over 140 articulation agreements with Maryland community colleges, in nursing and in other academic program areas. Many offer guaranteed admission, dual admission, transfer scholarships, tuition discounts, and other incentives and supports for Maryland community college students. Last year, 13% of all bachelor’s degrees awarded by the MICUA institutions were earned by transfer students from a Maryland community college.

A number of MICUA institutions work closely with the College of Southern Maryland, Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, and Waldorf Center for Higher Education. At the undergraduate level, Capital Technology University offers four bachelor’s degree programs in engineering and computer science related fields at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center. Since fall 2008, Notre Dame of Maryland University has offered a cohort-based bachelor’s degree program in

elementary education on the campus of the College of Southern Maryland. Further, three MICUA institutions offer face-to-face graduate programs in Southern Maryland in diverse fields including teacher education, communication, leadership and management, business administration, information assurance, and systems engineering.

Since 2005, Stevenson University has had an articulation agreement with the College of Southern Maryland for the RN to BS option, through which nursing students complete the first 90 credits with the community college and the final 30 credits with Stevenson. At that time, Stevenson offered hybrid nursing courses on the College of Southern Maryland's campus, with both face-to-face and online components. In 2007, Stevenson developed a fully online version of the RN to BS program. Enrollments in the face-to-face courses immediately dropped off, as students gravitated toward the online program option. Given that there was not sufficient student enrollment to sustain its on-campus course offerings, Stevenson continued to serve these nursing students through its online RN to BS program.

In 2010, the Maryland Higher Education Commission approved Stevenson's request to offer its Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center. Although Stevenson marketed the program, scheduled classes, and attempted to enroll nursing students, there was never sufficient student demand to run any of the courses. Students from Southern Maryland elected to enroll in Stevenson's online program rather than attend classes at the Center. Most RN to BS students work in the nursing profession while attending college. The work hours are varied and schedules change frequently. Online programs fit the needs of these students. Moreover, the Stevenson program is affordable. Students earn 90 credits at the community college and 30 credits at Stevenson. The University offers a 20% discount to students who transfer from a Maryland community college. As a result, a student can earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing for well under \$30,000. Stevenson reports that with its online delivery, it has the capacity to serve many more Maryland community college students who wish to complete a bachelor's degree in nursing.

It is important to note that community colleges continue to play a crucial role in preparing associate's level registered nurses who can enter the workforce quickly. The State's four-year colleges and universities with nursing programs are committed to creating a seamless progression for these RNs, to continue their education while working so they have the knowledge and skills they need to advance in their careers and remain competitive in their jobs. Diminishing the role of the associate's degree and potentially delaying entry into the nursing profession can have negative implications for the nursing pipeline, at a time when more nurses are needed.

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly created the Southern Maryland Higher Education Council (Council), which was tasked with examining the needs for higher education in the tri-county Southern Maryland region; identifying any unmet areas of need; and developing recommendations and strategies, both short- and long-term, to improve access to higher education in the region. Over a two-year period, the Council conducted site visits to higher education facilities in the tri-county region and other areas of Maryland; participated in briefings by State and regional education and business leaders; conducted surveys of students, families, businesses, and industries; and gathered and analyzed data from national, State, and regional

databases. The Council concluded that non-traditional students, including working adults seeking bachelor's degrees, represent the greatest area of unmet demand in the region. However, the Council did not recommend that the College of Southern Maryland offer bachelor's degrees. Rather, the Council made the following recommendation in its report released on December 2, 2013:

“The Southern Maryland Higher Education Center (SMHEC), the Waldorf Center, and the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) should partner with the state’s four-year universities to provide more baccalaureate degree opportunities through 2+2 programs and other innovative approaches. The region’s population centers should be considered when new or expanded programs and partnerships are developed, as should the degree of alignment between emerging research programs/opportunities and area workforce demands. A long-term goal should be to create greater collaboration and integration of course offerings at SMHEC and the Waldorf Center so that the two centers, along with CSM, are able to respond to more effectively and efficiently to regional education needs.”

HB 966 essentially ignores the two years of work that the Council spent studying higher education issues in Southern Maryland. If there are in fact unmet academic needs for students in Southern Maryland, then MICUA pledges to work in partnership with local communities, the College of Southern Maryland, and the other four-year segments of higher education to address those needs.

Expanding the mission of one Maryland community college will fundamentally change the State’s carefully constructed funding formulas, resulting in counterproductive relations and an unhealthy competition for students, faculty, academic programs, capital grants, and other resources. It will reduce the importance of certificate and associate’s degree programs at the very time that Maryland is focusing on improving its postsecondary attainment rates. The expansion of associate’s into bachelor’s degree programs could be relatively expensive to implement and result in higher costs per degree for all students. In short, this decision will do a disservice to Maryland community colleges, students, and taxpayers.

Maryland needs a diverse array of colleges and universities to provide access, choice, and opportunities for students; address workforce needs; and drive economic development through research and discovery. Redefining the core role and mission of the College of Southern Maryland is not the way to meet these needs effectively or efficiently.

For these reasons, MICUA respectfully requests an unfavorable report for House Bill 966.