

Open Work Session
Economic Impact Scholarship Annual Review
September 17, 2019

Mr. Brian Newton, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services at Wor-Wic Community College, came before Council and thanked Council for the opportunity to talk to them once again about this program. He said the annual report was delivered to Council, and he just wants to highlight a few items in that report, talk about the Maryland Community College Promise Program, and also talk about the future of the program with Council just a little bit. He said Council will see that they really changed the report this year at Council's suggestions and their past conversations. He said, as Council knows, this is a last-dollar funded program, so they have students who came to the program and then had their needs taken care of through Pell grants and other means, and they are not funded with Wicomico County dollars. He said they have focused the report primarily this year on those students who received dollars through the Wicomico Economic Impact Scholarship (WEIS) fund. He reported, there are 62 students in three years who have received WEIS funds, and, at the moment, and as students progress through, they have 33 students, or 53 percent, who have graduated, transferred to another college, or have continued at Wor-Wic either full or part-time. He said they have quite a few students who are continuing with Wor-Wic in a part-time capacity. He explained, the program requires 12 credits to continue receiving funding, but they have a number of students who could not handle the 12 credits and have to work or take care of families, etc., so they have continued with Wor-Wic in a part-time capacity. He said they still consider that to be a success because they are gaining college credits, and they are moving through college. He said it will take them a little longer to graduate than this program anticipated, but they are on course to complete a certificate or a degree that will have an impact on their economic situation, and an impact on the region and the County's economic situation in the years to come.

Mr. Newton said they admitted a class last year, but did not admit a class this year. He said, as Council will recall, they all agreed they were going to suspend admitting a class this year as they looked at the beginnings of the Statewide Promise Scholarship Program, but they did admit a cohort last year. He said they had 342 applications, so, again, a large number of applications were received, but when all was said and done, taking into account last-dollar funding, they had 17 students who received some WEISS funds throughout that first semester, and some of those students continued into the second semester. He said, just to give Council an update on what was spent, \$32,241.84 was spent for the 2018 cohort. He said to give Council an idea of where the program rests in terms of dollars remaining, they will recall there was a \$212,000 allocation, so three years after that allocation, \$141,336 has been spent. He said, again, these students have two and a half years to complete their course of study, and they estimate they are going to spend about \$31,000 or so on the students remaining in the program from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts just based on what they see as the attrition rates and the progress of those students, which would leave them a balance in the fund in the amount of \$39,333.44. He said that is what they have, at the moment, to work with going forward.

Mr. Newton said he will talk briefly about the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program because, again, that is the reason they did not admit a cohort through the Wicomico program in the fall of 2019. He said this program is a Statewide Promise Program for the State of Maryland, and \$15 million dollars was allocated by the Legislature for this program. He said the program was passed in 2017, but there were amendments made to the program during the Legislative Session in 2018. He said it has been a rough beginning, and there have been articles in the press about the implementation of this program and how it has started out Statewide, but the Maryland Higher Education Commission is

responsible for implementing the program. He said, as one of the 16 community colleges, it has been very difficult for Wor-Wic in the implementation as there has been quite a bit of inconsistent communication and changing of the process. He said, in terms of getting students enrolled, they did not really even know what the process was going to be until they were pretty far into the fall of 2018. He said, if Council knows anything about college students, or has had a son or daughter go to college recently, they know they are really making decisions about college during the fall before they are going to enroll in college, so this had an impact on them, certainly, in terms of bringing students into the program locally. He explained, they kept getting rosters that were wrong, and they had to make 514 manual adjustments to rosters in the course of a few months. He said the Maryland Higher Education Commission of Community Colleges, Senators, Delegates, and others are working on how they can do better in the coming years, but they believe in the program Statewide, and believe it will have an impact on Maryland, and will have an impact on making sure students can afford and access college. He said they still, even at this late hour as school started over the last few weeks, do not even know how many students they will have who will benefit from the program in the end. He said, at last count, they had about 25 students who completed all of the requirements for the Promise Program this year, but, again, they know there will probably be more as those students finalize paperwork and finalize processing with the Higher Education Commission. He said he thinks the hope of everyone working on this is, now that they have an idea of what the regulations look like and how this is going to roll out, they will have a better opportunity to enroll more students as they get into the fall 2020 cycle. He said this Statewide Program takes care, or works on taking care, of the needs of those students who are just graduating from high school, or those students who graduated from high school two years ago. He clarified, for example, students who are coming into the fall 2019 cohort could have graduated in 2019, or could have graduated from high school in 2018. Mr. Dodd said, just for the record, this is not the dual enrollment program, to which Mr. Newton responded, that is correct. He clarified, that is a separate program that has been very successful, and is funded through other means. He said they have over 500 students at Wor-Wic who are doing dual enrollment programs, and some of them came into the WEIS program, or into the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program already having completed substantial numbers of credits, but those are different programs.

Mr. Newton said he thinks it is important to remember as they look to the future of what the Wicomico funding might be used for that both the Wicomico Program as put together previously as well as the Promise Program are really focused on students coming out of high school, and are focused on students going full-time in credit degree and certificate programs. He said, as they look forward, they know there are needs of folks who want to obtain a college education and get into the workforce that are not being met. He said there are certainly students who are going part-time and cannot afford to do full-time, even when tuition and fees are paid for, because they still have obligations and responsibilities that have them work 15 to 20 hours per week, so they have that group of students who certainly have a need in terms of funding. He said they have students who are older than those coming out of high school who maybe did not go to college when they came out of high school, but maybe they need to retrain in some way for new jobs or future jobs in the community. Mr. Dodd said he brought that up before. He said he tries to attend all of the graduations, and he sees people in their 40s walking the stage, and some of them probably could have benefited from this program, to which Mr. Newton responded, exactly. He said, as they look to the future, Dr. Hoy has had a conversation with the County Executive, who, of course, was the one who initially brought this program forward, but they are looking at how they can adjust the program to meet those workforce development needs of the students in the noncredit programs, as well as credit programs that may be needed for workforce readiness. He said, as Council knows, they are preparing to build an applied technology center that will have many of these needed workforce programs for their community in it, so they are looking at how they can fund students who

may not be coming right out of high school, and they may have a way to be taken care of through the Promise Program. He said there are other students and people in the community who need that leg up with community college education. He said, of course, the noncredit programs are those that do not end in a degree or formal certificate, but end up in some sort of licensure or certification, such as welding, CNA, phlebotomy, etc. He said there is a great need there, and those are short-term programs where students can end up in the workforce very quickly, so there is a need that can be funded for those students as they look to the future. He said they are asking for Council's patience as he and Dr. Hoy put pen to paper and really try to come up with what the future of the program might look like, and then come back to Council for further conversation at a later date.

Mr. Holloway said, when the program was first brought out, it was supposed to be helping the employers of Wicomico County hire people. He then asked how many people have gone through the program and graduated, or moved onto another college, to which Mr. Newton responded, in terms of funding from the WEIS program, 33. Mr. Holloway asked if there is a tracking mechanism to find out how many of the students who graduated have stayed in Wicomico County and worked, to which Mr. Newton responded, they are following up with them. He clarified, again, the first graduates of the program are just coming out, but many of the students are going onto a 4-year university, and most of those, frankly, are at Salisbury University, and then would go to work after that point. He said they are tracking those who are coming out, but it is very few, of course, in terms of actual graduates at this point. He explained, as they go through and have those students completing their third and fourth years of a bachelor's education, they will need to find out where they are working, or what they are doing. Mr. Holloway asked if they have any working so far, to which Mr. Newton responded, they do not have any working so far that he is aware of. Mr. Holloway asked if this started in 2016, to which Mr. Newton responded, yes, but it takes up to two and a half years to complete their education, so they are just coming out as graduates or, again, many of them are transferring. He clarified, again, the numbers they are talking about are only those students funded by the program. He said the program had an impact on bringing people to higher education who would not have otherwise thought about it because, again, they are talking about taking care of the students in terms of free scholarship money, and many of them could have done that anyway through the Pell program and other means, but they did not know about it. He said this program that Council approved has helped students come to college who otherwise would not have. He said, again, when they talk about FASFA and all the things needed to be done in terms of getting ready for college, it can be a barrier to students and can be very confusing, which ends up in them not pursuing it. He clarified, this is not only the students the County has funded, but if someone comes through outside of the program that has been funded by other means.

Mr. Holloway asked what the differences are between the State's program and Wicomico's program as far as qualifications for getting in, and he understands the State set their bar a little higher than the County, to which Mr. Newton responded, there are a couple of differences in the two programs. Mr. Holloway clarified, he is asking as far as qualifications, to which Mr. Newton responded, the Promise Program requires a 2.3 grade point average in terms of an entry, and the WEIS program does not have any entrance GPA requirement, but has a 2.0 GPA requirement to continue in the program. He said the continuing GPA requirement in the Promise Program is 2.5. He said the State also set their income limits different in terms of applications. He explained, the income threshold for the WEIS program is \$75,000, but the State program's is \$100,000 for a single parent household, and \$150,000 for a two-parent household. He said, as they have talked about many times before, with the \$75,000 income threshold, most of those students ended up being taken care of by the Federal Pell Grant Program, which is why they have had very few students funded by the program since they were taken care of by other means,

and is great because they came to college and were able to take advantage of resources that were there. He concluded, those are the major differences in the application portions of the program.

Mr. Holloway said he knows they are talking about doing something with workforce development so that this money can be used to put people back to work with retraining. He said, when that is discussed, it would be nice to make sure the folks had some skin in the game, and it is not completely free to them, but it is an assistance program. He said he thinks the citizens would appreciate that more.

Mrs. Acle asked, if the student does not complete these, or they fail every course by just not showing up, do they have to repay that, to which Mr. Newton responded, certainly, if they did not show up at the beginning, they would be taken out. He said there is a certain date where, if a student does not show up to classes by that date, they are taken out of the class at that point, and there is no charge to the County in that case, and those classes are dropped at that point. He said, if they stay in class past that mark but did not reach the threshold in the Wicomico program of completing 12 credits and having a 2.0 GPA, they would not receive funding the next semester. He clarified, they do not have carte blanche, but each semester they have to meet that threshold, and it is actually the same in the Maryland Promise Program, but just a different GPA of 2.5, but, again, they have to continue with the 12 credits. He said, as they have looked at the program and evaluated it, certainly, 12 credits is a difficult piece they need to look at Statewide as well as locally. He said 74 percent of their students at Wor-Wic are part-time, so these students who are being asked to take 12 credits per semester are actually very much in the minority of the students they have at the college. He said community colleges generally take care of and are there for those folks who are working toward either credit or non-credit licensure certification, and are often doing so on their own time in between working or taking care of families. He said, as they develop these programs to assist students with college education, he thinks they have to be mindful that they have to be realistic about who is attending community colleges. He said it is different than if they go to Salisbury University or any other four-year institution because they are in residence, they are living there, and they are taking full loads of classes, so that is a different student than Wor-Wic often has. Mr. Dodd said it would be nice to build in some type of provisional status for some of these students. He said, whether they are working full-time or not, some people struggle taking more than two classes. Mr. Cannon said that is what he thinks has always been a concern over the last couple of years of the program. He said it was with the very best of intentions to initiate this program, but he does not know whether they are hitting the mark as much as they thought they would. He said their concern at the County level is the most efficient use of their funds. He said he believes in one of the years it was a 41 percent follow-through success rate, which he thinks is very low. He said, if he is reading correctly on the 2019 progress from the 17 original students, only four have elected to continue, to which Mr. Newton responded, four are continuing full-time. Mr. Cannon said he is really concerned about that because they started out with 17, and are now only with four. He clarified, this is no reflection on Wor-Wic or Mr. Newton's program whatsoever, but he thinks something seems to be amiss with the taxpayers' dollars that are being spent. He said somehow or another it is not an effective use of taxpayer funding if they are only getting four out of 17, and he does not know why, outside of Mr. Newton's comment in this document that they were faced with the challenges of having to work, and part of what he just said a minute ago, so he is trying to see how they can make this work so that the cost per student or cost per credit is not tenfold of what it is for the average student.

Mr. Newton said he will make a couple of comments, and, certainly, he shares Mr. Cannon's concerns about retention and completion, which is what they spend the majority of their time discussing and working through. He said he thinks that is the biggest challenge with most community college, again, because they are talking about a different type of student who often is not living in residence, and

whose full life is not pursuing education, so there are a lot of other factors in play. He said, so Council knows, they are spending a lot of time and energy on the whole population of their students in terms of how they can better retain them and get them to graduation or transfer. He reported, their retention rates, generally, are in the 50 percent mark for their entire student population, which is not a failure of the college or the instructors, but, again, these students have many challenges in their lives as they are working through their education that maybe an 18-year-old at College Park, Salisbury University, or somewhere else does not because they are living at a residence and have that full support. He said he certainly takes Mr. Cannon's point, and he thinks what they will see as the years go on with these numbers is that some of these students will come back to them, which is often the case with Wor-Wic students who do not succeed initially, so they come back a semester or two later and continue their education because they are comfortable with it. He said he understands Council is trying to be as efficient as possible with the dollars, and they need to work with Council to look at the program going forward and how they can best do that, but he thinks Council can be assured that he thinks there are long-term affects here that have been put in motion that will help even more students than are listed as fulfilling the exact requirements of these programs. He said they have students who are continuing with lesser credits, they have students who will come back, and it is all about impressing upon students in high school and in the community the value and the importance of a college education for their citizens here, and for developing workforce. Mr. Cannon said he thinks sometimes it comes down to the best investment being either postgraduate or workforce development, and he thinks they really need to seriously evaluate that. Mr. McCain said Mr. Newton said they are looking into that, and it seems their target audience who they initially set out with was the full-time student, but now with the Maryland Promise Program, it seems that the nontraditional workforce development student is probably where the greater need is, and probably where the County dollars can be more efficiently spent. Mr. Newton said right now the Promise Program has been approved with an allocation of \$15 million Statewide this year, and will probably spend about \$4 million, so they are not spending the entire allocation. He said it is moving, and, as they look forward, there will be a time when Promise will not cover the needs, and will not have students who want to access that program who might need help locally. He said there are a number of these County and community supported programs across the State, so they have to keep that in mind going forward. He said he thinks, as was stated earlier, it is what it is for the moment, but certainly in this day and time today the Maryland Promise Program is meeting a need of those students who are coming out of high school or have been out of high school for a year, so they think, again, there are other needs that need to be met, particularly looking at their workforce, and those students who maybe have been out of high school for a few more years. He said there is a need there, there is a need for part-time, and there is a need for students who want to get that retraining, so there are a lot of needs they have to meet in the future, and he hopes Council will consider that moving forward. He clarified, the Promise Program just does not solve all of their issues in terms of funding, and there are a great number of needs they need to meet to build their workforce.

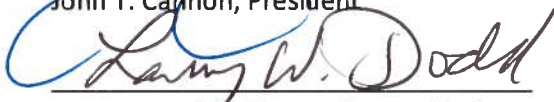
Mr. Holloway addressed Mr. McCain and said, in reference to his earlier comment, that was discussed when this program first came along, but it was dismissed, so they did talk about workforce funding at the time. He then asked Mr. Newton if the Promise Program does any workforce funding, to which Mr. Newton responded, Promise does workforce, but, again, it is only for that right out of high school group. He said that was a change in the past Legislative Session when it added that students could access the funding for a licensure or certification of courses that are taught in a sequence. He clarified, if the student does one session of welding and then comes back and does another session of welding, they would take care of that, but it does not take care of any students who are out of that high school range, other than those who just completed a GED. He said, as Council may know, there are Federal Pell grants and those types of things for the credit population, but for the noncredit population, they do not have

the Federal Pell money, so he thinks they need to look at the age of the students and where they are at in their life. He said there are some GI Bills for veterans that can access certain programs, but, for the most part, the resources are on the credit side of the institution in terms of scholarships and financial support. Mr. Cannon said Council will be anxious to see what Mr. Newton's recommendations might be in the near future.

Mr. Dodd asked, of the \$15 million the State allocated, did Mr. Newton say that only \$4 million was spent, to which Mr. Newton responded, correct, and that was Statewide. Mr. Dodd asked why that was, to which Mr. Newton responded, again, because of the rollout, it was very difficult for students to access the program. He said all the community colleges had the same struggles Wor-Wic did, and, again, that number is shifting as they are still awarding students because of the backlog and the way the program was implemented, so they will not know a true number for several months. There was no further discussion.

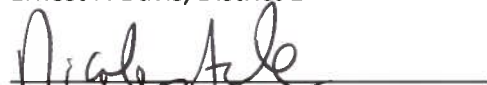


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