

**Open Work Session**  
**Wicomico Economic Impact Scholarship Program Presentation**  
**September 15, 2020**

Dr. Brian Newton, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services at Wor-Wic Community College, came before Council. He said it is good to talk with Council about something other than coronavirus, which has dominated the last six months of their lives at the college. He said he is here to give the annual presentation on the Wicomico Economic Impact Scholarship (WEIS) Program, and he will give a few brief comments as Council has a report he provided, and he will then take questions.

Dr. Newton said, as Council will recall, the WEIS Program was created in 2016, and they admitted three fall cohorts in 2016, 2017, and 2018. He said, with the introduction of the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program, they decided, along with Council, to suspend additional cohorts starting in the fall of 2019 to see what the results of the Maryland Promise Program would be.

Dr. Newton said, with the three Wicomico cohorts, they have spent a total of \$149,087.91, and that leaves \$62,912.09 from the original allocation Council made of \$212,000. He said, at this time, none of the remaining students from the three cohorts are receiving WEIS funds, and at this point they do not expect any additional awards to be made to students who have already been admitted. He clarified, they have students who were in the cohorts who are still completing their education, but none of those students at this time are receiving County funds as they have gone on to receive PELL, or, in some circumstances scholarship funds, or Promise funds in other situations. He said, at this point they do not expect any further awards from the original allocation.

Dr. Newton said, as promised when they talked last time, he will give Council an update on what is happening in the community with the Maryland Promise Program because he believes it affects what happens with the Wicomico Program going forward. He said, if Council will recall, last year they had significant issues in the implementation of the Promise Program for a variety of reasons. He said there were a lot of Legislative changes in the middle of the implementation of the program, and there were regulations that came out late. He said there was a change in the application process, so all of that combined led them to a very small cohort of students entering in fall 2019 who received the Maryland Promise. He said they had 32 students who were Maryland Promise students enroll in fall 2019. He said, for this year there were again significant Legislative changes in the 2020 Session, and none of those changes came soon enough to affect the enrollment and promotion for the cohort entering that just started on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. He said, in fact, they are still waiting for the Maryland Higher Education Commission on awarding for students who have already started, so at this point they do not exactly know how many Maryland Promise students they will have for the fall 2020 cohort, even though college has started for the fall semester. He said Council should know that the Legislature made significant changes to the Promise Program that are in affect now and will impact the incoming 2021 cohort. He explained, they eliminated the service requirement, meaning that the student no longer has to work so many years for every year that they receive benefits. He said they eliminated the provision that the funds will turn into a loan if the student does not maintain their GPA, and one of the most significant provisions is that they expanded the program to all Maryland high school graduates and GED completers, so regardless of age, and regardless of the year graduated, as long as they graduated with a

2.3 GPA, are willing to go fulltime and take 12 credits, and maintain a 2.5 GPA, the program is now wide open to everyone, so they expect they will have a greater influx of folks come into the program in the fall of 2021. He said with all of that combined with what has happened due to the coronavirus crisis and the economic fallout from it, the budget for the program, which was originally allocated at \$15 million by the Legislature, has been cut about in half for this year to \$8.5 million. He said they are hearing anecdotally that the program will be fully allocated this year, and that students who applied and were eligible will be on a waitlist. He clarified, they have not received any notification in their Financial Aid Office from the Maryland Higher Education Commission that they will have Wor-Wic students who will be on the waitlist, but Statewide it is their understanding that the \$8.5 million has been used, and they expect that will be the case next year, and they will not see an increase in funding back to the original \$15 million because of economic concerns that the State will process here in the coming year.

Dr. Newton said, with regard to the County funds, they are making a recommendation this year that they utilize those remaining Wicomico funds to assist any students who have been waitlisted. He clarified, again, he does not know if there will be any this year, and he kind of expects there will not be any this year because, again, the program was not well utilized last year. He said there really was not a lot that changed this year in terms of enrollment into the program, but he expects that, as they open the gates to the program to more people in terms of anyone who has graduated from a Maryland high school or completed a GED, they will have more students for the fall of 2021 than they will have funds to allocate them, so they are recommending with that remaining \$62,000 they be able to take care of any students who end up on the waitlist so they do not leave anybody in Wicomico County behind in terms of being able to afford their college education. He said those are the highlights of the report this year, and he will certainly take any questions.

Mr. Dodd said Mr. Newton talked about some students in the cohort who were receiving it. He then asked if they were disqualified because they received other funds, like a PELL grant, to which Dr. Newton responded, correct. He explained, when the Council set this up, this was a last dollar funding program, so they look at all of their sources of funding first. He said they look at their income every year, so they have to complete the FAFSA every year, and if their income went above the \$75,000 that Council set, that would have been a disqualifier. He said, if they received scholarships, or if they received Promise money, it could have been a disqualifier as well. He said they have just had a number of students who are remaining in the cohort who were receiving WEIS funds completely zeroed out.

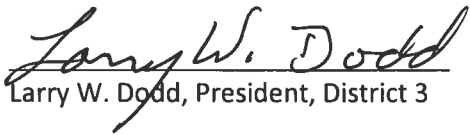
Mr. Dodd asked if enrollment is down significantly at Wor-Wic, to which Dr. Newton responded, they are still processing that. He explained, they still have dual enrollment figures to process from the high schools, and they have some figures with their Criminal Justice Academy. He said right now as of this morning they are down a few percentage points. He said this summer they were looking at 20 to 40 percent down as the numbers were coming in, so they have recovered well. He said it is still financially challenging because a lot of their noncredit programs are not able to run, or certainly have not run up until now, so they have a financial crisis that they are working through, but they have recovered. He said all of the community colleges in the State of Maryland are down in their enrollment. He said, again, things change by the day, but as of the other day Wor-Wic was the best of all of the ones of everybody being down in terms of their enrollment, so they are proud of that. He said, again, it certainly has not recovered them fully in terms of budget, particularly because of their noncredit programs which are not

running in many circumstances. Mr. Dodd said he knows online classes can be a struggle for some people, to which Dr. Newton responded, it is, and they are having that challenge. He said he was just dealing with a student this morning who was having that challenge, and some students really like the in-person learning. He said they are doing a lot of remote testing, and that is challenging for students who really prefer to test in person, particularly students with disabilities where it can be difficult to test in a remote virtual environment, so it is a challenge, but they are proud that they are able to get the college open. He said about one-third of their students are attending classes in person, one-third are attending completely online, and then about one-third are attending a hybrid combination of some in person and some virtual and online instruction. He said so far that is working for them, and they do not have some of the challenges that their university partners have with residence halls and those types of issues, so thankfully they are just at the beginning of week two and so far they are okay.

Mrs. Acle said she was just wondering how their dual enrollment numbers compare from last year, to which Dr. Newton responded, they will not know until the end of this month because a significant percentage of their dual enrollments that are classes taking place in the high school come later on, so they do not get those figures right away. He said they do know that in terms of the last fiscal year he believes they had 575 dual enrolled students, which, again, is another increase for them, and a very significant percentage of their overall enrollment of about 3,000, and they are continuing to see increases in Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset Counties. He said it has been a challenge this year, and the schools have been working through their processes for reopening, and they are requiring some actual time online at times when students would usually come to Wor-Wic for dual enrollment, so they have been working with those challenges with the school districts, and they have been very flexible. He said it is just different, but he thinks in the end they will see about the same amount of dual enrollment they have had in the past, and hopefully parents are looking at that as an option as they figure out how to deal with learning at home. He said it is a good option for students, even if they do not want to come to the college to do dual enrollment online with them at Wor-Wic.

Mr. Hastings said it was nice to see some of the successes of students who are going on to get their graduate degrees. He then asked if they are doing a good job on promoting the program, or how well does Dr. Newton think they are doing a good job, to which Dr. Newton responded, in terms of the Wicomico Program, they have not been promoting it because they suspended the cohorts. He said, in terms of the Promise Program, the promotion has been heavy, particularly in this last year because they had a low amount come in during the first year, so they stepped up their promotion this year. He said he thinks the challenge has been, as they understand it, and there are a couple, but the Maryland Program like the Wicomico Program requires fulltime enrollment, and that is just not what they are anymore. He explained, 75 percent of their students are part-time, and they are working, or have other obligations, so they have seen a significant increase in their part-time students over the last five years in particular. He said because that fulltime requirement is there, he thinks that is one of the things that is a challenge for the program. He said there was pushback from some students and parents about the program because it turns into a loan, and there was the work requirement for each year they receive the funding. He said the reality is it was a better deal than what a student loan would be at the federal level in terms of if it did turn into a loan, but he thinks parents and students did not want to necessarily take that gamble because, if they did not maintain the 2.5 grade point average, it would turn into a loan. He said, as they have talked to high school counselors, parents and students, they have had many who are

interested, but they have not necessarily seen them follow through. He said he thinks, again, with the changes the Legislature has put in place, he believes they will see an increase in the amount. He said, unfortunately, it comes at a time when they are reducing the amount of budget due to the economic crisis, but hopefully they can get those figures to return because, again, he thinks the combination of taking away the service loan requirement and opening it up to all people who have a high school degree and a 2.3 GPA will be significant. He said also the Promise Program is available for noncredit, so the licensure and certification classes that are taken in a sequence, such as certified nurse assistant, truck driving, etc. are classes they can take. He said, unfortunately, the implementation from the Higher Education Commission in terms of the noncredit rules was even slower than the credit rollout, so they have not seen a real significant population come to them in the noncredit realm, but they expect that will change as time goes on. There was no further discussion.

  
Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

John T. Cannon, Vice President, At-Large

  
Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Nicole Acle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4

  
Joe Holloway, District 5



William R. McCain, At-Large

  
Laura Hurley, Council Administrator