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Montgomery College Interim President Reacts to the Release of the County Executive's FY 11 Operating Budget

Dr. Hercules Pinkney Expresses Concern Over Proposed 12% Reduction in County Funding

In response to today's release of the Montgomery County Executive's fiscal year 2011 recommended operating budget, Dr. Hercules Pinkney, interim president of Montgomery College, issued the following statement:

"Montgomery College fully recognizes that Montgomery County faces serious budgetary challenges as a result of the nationwide economic downturn; however, Montgomery College relies on the county for nearly half of its operating budget and the 12-percent reduction in county funding proposed by the County Executive—\$14.5 million less than requested—will have a devastating impact on the College's ability to meet the record demand by county residents for high-quality education and student services.

In the current economic climate, Montgomery County needs its community college more than ever before. Montgomery College is the first choice for many Montgomery County residents seeking to earn a college degree, update their skills, learn a new trade, change careers, and prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university. Our students—current and future county taxpayers—are the key to our community's recovery, but already too many of them cannot get into the classes they need at the College because there are not enough professors and not enough classrooms. They are essentially turned away from the county's open access higher education institution.

Montgomery College's modest budget request reflected our increased needs. It would have funded full-time faculty positions to help with our historic number of students, targeting high-demand courses in such areas as science, mathematics, and engineering. In addition, it would have allowed for the addition of new staff who are essential to the operation of the College's Rockville Science Center, which will provide new classrooms and modern laboratories when it opens in 2011 for students enrolled in science programs and the country's largest community college engineering program.

Montgomery College also faces state aid reductions in fiscal year 2011 (FY11). The College's aid will be pushed back to levels that have not been seen since FY08—a full three years ago when Montgomery College had 2,300 fewer students taking credit courses. This state reduction means \$3.2 million less in total funding from the College's FY11 operating budget adopted by the Board of Trustees.

With these reductions proposed at the state and county levels, the Montgomery College Board of Trustees must reexamine the institution's FY11 operating budget, which includes a pending tuition increase for students and no pay raises for employees. Among the possible budget reductions that may be considered are eliminating existing positions, implementing furloughs, cutting academic programs, limiting the number of courses offered, reducing institutional grant scholarships for students in need, increasing tuition rates higher than what is pending, reducing the hours of operation for select services, deferring maintenance of the College's physical plant, and curtailing equipment purchases.

During this current fiscal year, Montgomery College has absorbed state and county budget cuts by reducing departmental expenditures, deferring major purchases, cutting positions, implementing a hiring freeze except for positions considered critical, and suspending cost of living increases.

Montgomery College faculty and staff appreciate the difficulties that the Montgomery County Executive faced in his efforts to fund our FY11 operating budget request. We must now work with the County Council during its budget deliberations to ensure that Montgomery College continues to provide open and affordable access to excellent higher education in Montgomery County."

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Montgomery College is a public, open admissions community college with campuses in Germantown, Rockville, and Takoma Park/Silver Spring, plus workforce development/continuing education centers and off-site programs throughout Montgomery County, Md. The College serves nearly 60,000 students a year, through both credit and noncredit programs, in more than 100 areas of study.