

Welcome to the Community College Virtual Symposium

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
Dr. DeRionne Pollard

April 27, 2011

Dr. Pollard welcomes the audience to the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College – and also welcomes the broader audience participating in the virtual summit. She introduces Congressman Chris Van Hollen, representing Maryland’s 8th District.

Good afternoon everyone!

On behalf of the Montgomery College Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, administrators and our 60 thousand exceptional students, I am so very proud to welcome all of you -- those who are here in person and those who join us virtually -- to Montgomery College. I would be remiss if I did not thank all of those who made this happen -- beginning with President Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, two people who have been incredible advocates for our community colleges. We thank them and the White House staff who spear-headed the White House Summit on Community Colleges last fall.

Thank you to Secretary Duncan, Under-Secretary Kanter, and their staff at the Department of Education who have devoted their time and effort to make today possible. We welcome all the panelists and participants to Montgomery College. I would like to add my special gratitude to the many community supporters who are with us today, as well as the best faculty and staff one could imagine.

It is nice to see community colleges getting the attention they deserve. I have to give special recognition to my new home state of Maryland. We are the first state to fully adopt the completion challenge issued by the American Association of Community Colleges. For Maryland's

community colleges, this challenge was about positioning our state to better meet the need for a skilled workforce and to be on the frontlines of research, development and scientific discovery.

We are the ideal partner in this endeavor. Community colleges are potentially the most transformative institutions in contemporary America. They can change the trajectory of an individual; transform the quality of life for a family; and enhance the intellectual, economic, and cultural essence of a community. Montgomery College students -- who number nearly 60,000 and hail from 170 different countries --are a testament to that kind of transformative power.

Students like Corey Golladay, who came back to Montgomery College as a 37 year-old father, and is on his way to pursuing his dream of receiving a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Maryland. Or take student Zeus Williams, who came to Montgomery College uncertain about his future career. Zeus is now working in the Manufacturing/ Cell Culture department at Human Genome Sciences. He's on the team that manufactures the company's first FDA-approved drug to treat Lupus.

A community college transformed the lives of these students... but there are many more we can – and must - reach. Transformation requires all of our good efforts – from our supportive national

policymakers to our state and local leaders. But ultimately, the incredible faculty and staff who work on the front lines of our colleges will be the ones who develop the best path to completion at each of our colleges. At Montgomery College, I hold a special appreciation for all of those engaged in student success and goal completion, and I thank them. Their commitment to students is extraordinary.

We are also lucky here at Montgomery College to have outstanding representation in Washington, including Congressman Chris Van Hollen, representing Maryland's 8th District since 2002. He is the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee. He has a long list of accomplishment and accolades, but I want to focus on his work with community colleges.

As Congressman, Chris has been a leading proponent of STEM education at Montgomery College. His support led to technology and equipment funding for both our Rockville engineering program and our Bioscience Education Center. He has also been a strong supportive of our efforts to develop a science and technology park at our Germantown Campus. And all community colleges should be grateful for Congressman Van Hollen's long support for Pell Grants, including support to increase the maximum Pell and tie it to the Consumer Price Index.

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And of course, we always love when he takes Montgomery College students as interns! Congressman Van Hollen....