

DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS PRESS EVENT/ AUGUST 23, 2011

“Discovering” Partnerships to Train a Skilled Workforce

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
Dr. DeRionne Pollard

August 23, 2011

Welcome to Montgomery College! Let me thank everyone who took the time to be here today, especially those of you who will be speaking.

Thank you **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan**, here on behalf of President Obama, for your commitment to education and efforts to ensure Americans have an opportunity to succeed in today’s global marketplace.

Welcome and thanks to **Penny Pritzker**, for her work as the chair of Skills for America’s Future.

Thank you **Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley** and **Secretary of Labor, Licensing, and Labor Alex Sanchez** for launching Skills to Compete Maryland to help ensure every Marylander has access to at least two years of post-secondary education or training.

Thank you **County Executive Ike Leggett** for your constant support to make the College an invaluable resource for our community.

Thank you **Discovery CEO David Zaslav** for bringing us together today. Discovery clearly believes in the power of education as demonstrated by your programming, your efforts to support America’s elementary and secondary schools, and the new initiatives upon which you are about to embark.

Let me also thank our distinguished guests here today: **Brenda Dann-Messier**, U.S. assistant secretary for vocational and adult education; **Valerie Ervin**, president of the Montgomery County Council; **Danette Gerald Howard**, interim secretary of higher education; **Bill Robertson**, chair of the Governor’s Workforce Investment Board; **Walter Bumphus**, President of the American Association of Community Colleges; **Gerardo de los Santos**,

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President of the League for Innovation; and **Steve Silverman**, director of Montgomery County Department of Economic Development.

Thanks also to the board members in attendance: Board Chair **Steve Kaufman**, Trustee **Marsha Suggs Smith**, and Student Trustee **Jonathan Jayes-Green**.

Just Monday, I unveiled our new mission statement approved by our Board of Trustees: *We empower our students to change their lives, and we enrich the life of our community. We are accountable for our results.*

Here is part of our vision designed to put teeth behind these words: *Our organization will be characterized by agility and relevance as it meets the dynamic challenges facing our students and community.*

What I think is so powerful about these words is that they clearly state that a fundamental part of who we are as an institution is a dedication to being germane to the needs of our community. We are ready to prepare both the next generation of scientists and engineers, along with registered nurses, lab bench workers, HVAC technicians, auto mechanics, and other “middle skill” positions.

That is why we offer degrees, certificates or training for all of the above! Whether part of our credit or noncredit health science offerings, technical training apprenticeships, or any trade program in between, our graduates leave equipped with the experience and skills necessary to thrive in today’s workplace and help drive the economy back to health.

Many of you received an inside view of how we strive to do this by touring a few of our health science program labs. How crucial are partnerships to our student’s success? Hugely. Every year, we receive generous funding from federal, state, and county resources to support

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capital projects like the building in which we are standing today. In addition, we receive private philanthropy to support facilities enhancements, equipment, hiring of faculty and staff, scholarships, and beyond! This support allows students to learn the tools of the trade in state-of-the-art, hands-on learning environments—not your mother’s classroom!

But it goes beyond financial help. Partnerships allow us to guide our students to internships and employment with local companies.

For example: one student is working on the surgical floor. A local hospital recently shared this patient comment: “[h]er level of performance was excellent. Had she not introduced herself as a student, I'm sure I would not have known she wasn't yet a registered nurse.”

Another student is working on the team to manufacture breakthrough treatments for Lupus thanks to a partnership with a prominent biotech company.

Our College stands ready to do more. We, along with Maryland’s 16 other community colleges, are committed to the Skills to Compete goals, and to increase the number of degrees awarded by nearly two-thirds by 2025.

We look forward to meeting this goal in part by continuing strengthening our ties with local businesses. That is why we are thrilled to announce a new partnership with Discovery. By working together, our students will have access to internships with the company, as well as direct interaction with executives through lecture and meetings. One man who has been instrumental in this partnership is discovery CEO David Zaslav, who it is my pleasure to introduce right now!