

HILLMAN PROGRAM LAUNCH  
Thursday, April 4, 2013

# Entrepreneurial Spirit

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A Speech by  
Montgomery College President  
Dr. DeRionne Pollard

April 4, 2013

Thank you Steven for helping us to celebrate the creation of the Hillman Entrepreneurs program—how appropriate to celebrate the power of entrepreneurship here in our “joint venture” with the county to advance our community’s economic vitality. There are so many people who made this day possible, and I want to take the time to thank a few of our program participants. Thank you, of course, to Suzanne and David Hillman for your forward-thinking vision and generosity towards our College. We are so grateful to you both! County Executive Ike Leggett also is here to celebrate the Hillmans—thank you for the budgetary support, Ike! Thank you to all of our state legislators, some of whom I am pleased to see here today, for your continued support of community colleges during this session. And, finally, thank you to all of the men and women who dedicate their time to our

College, including Montgomery College Foundation Chair Doug Firstenberg.

As the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child.” I would like to adapt that saying...to “it takes a community to empower a student.” A community with members, like the Hillmans, who are willing to devote their *own* resources to perfect strangers in order to empower others to change their lives and to enrich the lives of us all.

In this case, the generosity of the Suzanne and David Hillman Family Foundation comes in the form of The Hillman Entrepreneurs Program. We all know that being a college student can be a daunting experience, let alone being a college student with dreams of being an entrepreneur. That word’s very definition indicates the level of courage needed to pursue a future as an entrepreneur: “a person who organizes and manages

any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.”

What the Hillman family has provided our students is a kind of experimental sandbox—a place where students can take risks, where they can be innovative, resourceful, and creative, with the support of professors, mentors, local business leaders, philanthropists, and their colleges and universities. The gift of this program goes beyond a financial impact, though that is phenomenal. The lasting gift is the fact that these students feel the support from members of the community who do not know them, yet believe in them and their potential, so much so they are willing to invest in them. That is the power of giving. That is the power of the Hillman Entrepreneurs Program.

The dreams of the 15 members of Montgomery College’s inaugural Hillman entrepreneurs are as diverse as the students

themselves. Like the makeup of our College and our community, there is no majority race in this group of students, they look the way America looks. Though the majority of students are straight out of high school, two of them already own businesses. Half are declared business majors; the others are majoring in engineering, biochemistry, life sciences, psychology, and English/journalism. A number of them have received multiple scholarships. One of them already is on the board of a foundation.

All of them are successes...looking for the way to make a difference in our community.

On behalf of our 15 Hillman entrepreneurs, and the many more that will follow, thank you to the Hillman family. Thank you, also, to our partners at Prince George's Community College, The University of Maryland, and Montgomery County, all of

whom you will hear from today, for being part of our  
community working to empower students to change their lives.