

Build the Workforce and Foster Entrepreneurship to Fuel Economic Recovery

The international community is again being rocked by major downturns in the economy. The State of Maryland is not immune to this financial upheaval. The Economic Competitiveness/Workforce Workgroup of the Commission to Develop the Maryland Model for Funding Higher Education is convinced that the quickest and most efficient path to economic recovery is through higher education. The state's public and independent postsecondary institutions are the engines that build the professional and technical workforce needed for the jobs of the 21st century. Moreover, these institutions, through their research and development programs, serve as catalysts of entrepreneurship, job creation and small business development by capitalizing and bringing to the marketplace the intellectual property they generate. The workgroup encourages the Commission to look beyond the current crisis and focus on the role that higher education institutions are uniquely poised to play in helping to create the path to economic recovery. We cannot wait for the future. We must shape it!

We offer the following key recommendations under three main themes:

Maximize the efficiency of existing postsecondary resources

- Encourage efforts to further cooperative and efficient use of postsecondary education resources.
- Make the movement of students through and between higher education institutions seamless and less expensive by emphasizing inter-institutional programs and agreements.
- Continue and fund the Early College Access Grant and similar institutional programs to fund dual enrollment for qualified high school students who lack the financial means to participate.
- Support the role of regional higher education centers in ensuring access to baccalaureate and graduate education in unserved and underserved areas of Maryland at a reasonable cost to students and the State.
- Endorse the recommendations in the State of Maryland BRAC Action Plan Report and support actions to implement these recommendations, and expand and foster communication between the military installations and postsecondary education institutions to ensure educational needs of BRAC participants are met.

Focus and enhance workforce preparedness in Maryland

- Develop and expand educational programs and services in areas of critical shortage. Fund existing programs and develop new programs that train the workforce that supports the new economy.

- Provide enhancement funds for professional development for faculty in critical needs areas, especially in STEM fields.
- Provide supplemental funding for college and university programs that foster career awareness in high school students and enhance their academic preparedness to succeed in postsecondary education.
- Develop and fund more loan forgiveness programs in critical need fields, especially in the STEM fields. Use these programs to attract out-of-state graduates and retain in-state graduates who work in critical areas in Maryland.
- Fund the strategy developed by the Maryland Higher Education Commission in 2007 for the six non-USM Regional Higher Education Centers.

Foster entrepreneurship to fuel the economy

- Develop innovative funding mechanisms for renovating university research laboratories and constructing greatly needed new space as appropriate.
- Increase state financial support for the technology transfer activities of Maryland's public and independent universities and provide funding for intellectual property clinic services and venture startup resources across the state technology transfer offices.
- Provide additional state support for public and independent university based startups, including programs such as "entrepreneur in residence" to provide resources to increase creation of Maryland startup companies based on university research. Use tax incentives and other mechanisms to foster public-private partnerships in support of innovation and entrepreneurship.