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American Association of University Professors

Montgomery College Chapter

Operating Budget Testimony

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My name is Jarvis Slacks and I have been an English professor at the Rockville Campus of Montgomery College for 9 years. I am testifying today in my role as one of three Vice Presidents of the full-time faculty union, the AAUP.

I am sure that all of can agree that this past year has been anything but normal. Approximately a year ago, the entire faculty at Montgomery College had to start teaching their classes remotely and all students were expected to attend their classes remotely. This sudden shock presented us with an unparalleled task. We were expected to create remote versions of our face-to-face classes, including lab science, applied technology, studio art, physical education, etc. in one week. And to make matters more complicated, the majority of the faculty had no training on how to teach classes remotely and many didn't have the technology at home that would enable them to do so.

Faculty counselors had to come up with a mechanism to provide remote counseling and advising services for our students.

While all of this was taking place, we had to deal with the stress of trying to protect ourselves and our families from a virus that we still didn't understand and for which there is no cure.

Many of our students were experiencing similar stressors. Many of them didn't own a computer at the start of the COVID crisis and had no internet access at home. Many were and still are living in some not so nice environments and had figure out how they were going to study in an environment where they had no place to study. Many of our students and members of their families contracted the virus and students still managed to attend and complete their classes.

Despite all of the negatives, our enrollments were up in the summer, we survived the fall semester, our enrollments were up in our winter session, and our spring enrollments are stable. Our students are being taught their classes by some very creative and competent faculty and they are being counseled and advised by some very dedicated faculty counselors.

We did it and how did we do it? Among other things;

- The counselors made major modifications to our appointment system and created an on-line chat feature to help funnel students to appropriate counselors and to respond to their on-line questions in an efficient manner.
- Our disability support service counselors modified our website and internal processes so that our students could be served remotely in a very effective manner.
- Approximately 700 full and part-time faculty members registered for a specialized seven-week summer 2020 training program so that we would be better prepared to teach our student in a remote environment. This was an intense training program which many of us were required to participate in after the end of our regular workday.
- We modified our spring 2021 schedule in order to better accommodate some of our students by offering 7-week classes in addition to our regular 15 and 13-week classes. This meant that a large number of faculty who were just trained to teach remotely and were still in the process of building their fall 2020 15 and 13 week classes, now had to modify those classes and make them 7-week classes.
- Through the use of the CARES Act funding, fundraising by our Foundation, and other emergency funding, hundreds of students were provided laptops by the College so that they could attend their remote classes.
- Hundreds of students were provided emergency funding to help them pay some of their bills and purchase food.
- We modified our academic regulations in order to accommodate students who could not complete their classes due to COVID related reasons.

For the past year, we have continued to our part to adapt, serve, and educate our students. Now we need you to do your part and support our Administration's FY 2022 operating budget request. We have educated many current county employees, the very ones who are going to get a raise next year. We are educating future county employees, police, fire fighters, health care workers, teachers, etc.

We have supported the College and the County over the last year and despite the increased workload, adapting courses, adapting services, as well as dealing with the personal stressors and sacrifices we experienced, we have agreed to **no increase in salary for next year**. Let me repeat, while other county employees negotiated an increase in salary for next year, we agreed to no increase in salary for next year. We hope that this sacrifice and degree of cooperation is recognized and appreciated by both our Administration and the County because we will be asking for and expect an increase salary for the full-time faculty for the 22-23 academic year.

Thank you.