

James Gekus
Montgomery College Alum
Testimony
FY24 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Council
April 11, 2023, at 7 pm

Good evening, Council President Glass and members of the Montgomery County Council.

My name is James Gekus. I am a Montgomery County resident and a proud Montgomery College alum.

But I am not only an MC graduate—I am also a current student who has returned to study cybersecurity.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled at MC in 2005. I earned an associate's degree in general studies. I transferred to the University of Maryland College Park and received my bachelor's degree in business.

I went on to work for the Smithsonian Institution for a year, and then for DHL Express as a logistics manager for eight years. However, I felt that the world was moving forward, but I was staying the same after working in the same job for so long.

We all see that the world is changing so much and so quickly—*especially* with technology. I realized I needed to make a career change. Cybersecurity seemed like the best option, offering a career with advancement opportunities. But I needed an education to get me ready for that change.

I considered going to get a master's degree, but I didn't want to spend tons of money and create debt. Plus, I didn't know much about computers, so I had to start from scratch.

There was only one place that could give me the opportunity I needed: Montgomery College.

The College offered the education required at an affordable price with quality classrooms and labs to begin a new career in cybersecurity.

So, I came back to MC—with my associate's degree and bachelor's degree in hand—to earn another associate's degree, but this time in cybersecurity.

My experience with MC has always been great. My professors are current practitioners in their field, which I think means I am receiving a very relevant education. And the students are some of the best and brightest out there.

Of course, saving money on tuition is critically important, too!

I love MC and I am proud to be graduating in May with my cybersecurity degree.

So, I am here tonight to ask you to support Montgomery College's budget requests.

I will close with this question: Have you ever been asked "if you had all the money in the world, what would you do?"

My response to this has changed over the years, but I know what I would do: study at Montgomery College!

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you tonight as a voice of Montgomery College alumni.