

Students Paying More for MCCC Education

County cuts cause financial burden

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Montgazette Editor-in-Chief

Blame the recession on the Montgomery County government's decision to slash 30 percent of its college funding.

And blame the budget cuts for Montgomery County Community College's decision to raise tuition and fees a total of 8 percent over last academic year.

The county's 30 percent, or \$5.25 million, cut for the 2012-2013 academic year puts the college's operating budget at a level not seen since 2002, when there were roughly 10,000 full- and part-time students. The college now has more than 13,000 full- and part-time students, and expenses are more than they were 10 years ago, according to Montgomery County Community College President Dr. Karen Stout, who in her Aug. 28 "State of the College" message to faculty and staff emphasized the need to find ways to raise revenue while keeping the tuition affordable.

Montgomery County Community College students' share of tuition now provides between 47 percent and 50 percent of the school's revenue, compared to 36 percent 10 years ago. Most Pennsylvania community college students cover only 33 percent of college costs with their tuition.

"It's horrible," said hospitality major Anh Nguyen. "We're students. Money shouldn't be such a big burden."

The college president agreed, noting in an interview that the biggest loss from the cuts is "the ability to preserve the affordability to students."

Tax collections are down because of the recession, and that prompted the county commissioners on June 6 to reduce funding to the college. The college's Board of Trustees reacted to the cuts and approved the school's

operational and capital budgets on June 18.

"The Board recognizes that the College cannot offset a budget cut from the County on the backs of our students, and that any increase in tuition serves as a barrier to higher education," Stout said at the time of the Board's decision.

A Montgomery County resident will now pay \$135 per credit (\$112 in tuition plus technology, activity and comprehensive fees totaling \$23). Students this academic year will see not only higher costs but also low-enrolled classes like nuclear engineering cut from the schedule – to make up for loss of income.

"We have to start being smarter about what we invest in," Stout said in an interview, adding that the college's focus will be on programs that cater to a wider range of students and interests. One of these programs is the new Culinary Arts Program the college is offering this semester, she noted. The newly set budget won't affect construction and renovation projects, however. The 2022 improvement plan is still in effect, Stout said.

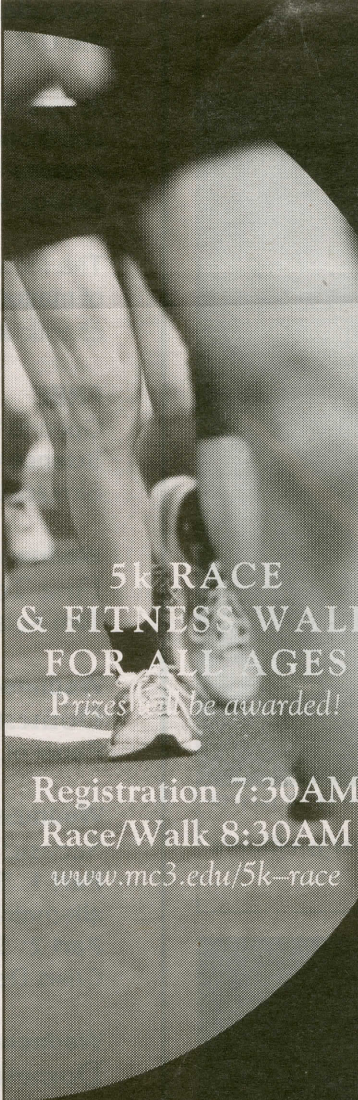
This fiscal year will be spent setting the foundation and plans for renovating the Physical Education building, Stout said. "Our hope is to break ground by next year," she said, when asked about the project's timeline. Money comes from the state. Therefore, she said, the county budget cuts won't affect progress too much.

The college's environmental sustainability efforts will play a major role in keeping operational costs low, Stout said. As of this year, 100 percent of the school's energy will be from renewable wind energy. A \$4 million project will help four Central Campus buildings switch from propane to natural gas. And an additional \$1 million was saved from other cuts, she said.

Dr. Stout said they worked hard to preserve many vital parts of the MCCC experience. All jobs within the school were kept. Student services were kept as well. The board tried to make cuts effective and attempted to keep the impact on students to a minimum, she said.

Aside from budget cuts, Dr. Stout said she is still looking to improve the college. There has been a discussion about a mandatory financial literacy class for all graduating students.

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19th Annual
Community **DAY**

Saturday, October 6, 2012
11am-3pm

340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell

5k RACE
& FITNESS WALK
FOR ALL AGES
Prizes will be awarded!

Registration 7:30AM
Race/Walk 8:30AM
www.mc3.edu/5k-race

- **5k Race & Fitness Walk:**
Registration 7:30am
Race/Walk 8:30am
visit: mc3.edu/5k-race
- **Admissions Info Session**
with campus tours:
11am, 12pm & 1pm
- **Community Day**
11am-3pm
Farmer's Markets
Food Vendors
Health and Wellness Expo
Women's Soccer Game 12pm
Live Music including Ronnie Gent
Children's Activities:
Pony Rides • Hayrides
Kid Crafts • Moon Bounce
...and more!

Tickets on sale for some activities!

For the latest updates and to preregister for Community Day activities, visit us online at mc3.edu/communityday

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Community College