



Senate Bill 254
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and Faculty Senate
College of Southern Maryland
Unfavorable Report
February 9, 2022

I am writing to oppose Senate Bill 254—College of Southern Maryland—Vice President of Equity and Inclusion—Funding and Responsibilities because this overreach would jeopardize the College of Southern Maryland’s Middle States Commission Higher Education accreditation status.

The College of Southern Maryland is required to conduct a self-study process every ten years through our regional accreditation body, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Our last self-study was conducted in March 2014, and at that time, I served as the co-chair for the study. At the time of our study, we had our accreditation status fully reaffirmed without any contingencies. Additionally, at the time of the report from MSCHE, the College of Southern Maryland received numerous commendations from our accrediting body. As someone who has served on several accreditation visits as a site review for MSCHE, I can say that both our reaccreditation status and our commendations are unique and should not be taken for granted. The statements of praise are a clear testament to our work at the College of Southern Maryland and our ability to stand out from other community colleges for our ability to emphasize student success and make a positive impact in Southern Maryland.

The College of Southern Maryland has just begun our two-year process of writing our next self-study for MSCHE, which will be complete in the spring of 2024. To that end, it is imperative to note that in the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements for Affiliation under Governance, Leadership, and Administration, we are required to have a governing body that “has sufficient independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution. Members must have primary responsibility to the accredited institution and not allow political, financial, or other influences to interfere with their governing responsibilities.” SB 254 would not only require the college to have a Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (a position that already exists), but it would require an expansion of the office to add a Director of Multicultural Affairs and three diversity coordinators.

This unfunded mandate would not only come at an additional annual cost of more than \$600,000, but it would also ensure that the College of Southern Maryland would be put on immediate warning by MSCHE for political interference. Should MSCHE continue to have concerns over this breach of Standard IIV, the college could be placed on warning status and eventually face the loss of eligibility for federal student aid programs, guaranteed student loans, federal research grants and would lose eligibility for state aid. This would not only impact the college's ability to keep its doors open, but it would also affect the thousands of students in our region who would no longer have quality and affordable higher education access in Calvert, Charles, or St. Mary's Counties.

It is for these reasons that I encourage the members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to give SB 254 an unfavorable report.