

**Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session**

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised**

House Bill 228
Appropriations

(Delegate Rudolph)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Higher Education - Community Colleges and Regional Higher Education Centers -
Degree Programs**

This bill establishes a process for a regional higher education center or community college to offer a baccalaureate degree program sponsored by an in-state or out-of-state four-year institution of higher education. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) must adopt regulations to implement the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MHEC could participate in the process and adopt the required regulations with existing resources.

Local Effect: Community college administrative expenditures could increase minimally to gather the required information before proceeding with plans to partner with four-year institutions. Community colleges could benefit from the partnerships to the extent that access to baccalaureate degree programs at the colleges attracts additional students. Colleges could also benefit financially from the partnerships, depending on the arrangements made with four-year institutions.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill authorizes a regional higher education center or a Community College Board of Trustees to submit to MHEC a request for proposals (RFP) to offer a baccalaureate degree program not offered in the region. Before submitting the RFP, the

center or board must: (1) seek input from students and interested community groups about the program; (2) determine the regional or statewide need for graduates of the program; (3) identify enrollment patterns, characteristics of students, and other unique circumstances that would require the program to be offered in a particular manner; and (4) determine that the program is necessary to meet the academic and economic development needs of the region or State. MHEC must distribute the RFP to public and private four-year institutions of higher education.

If no in-state institutions submit acceptable responses to the RFP, the regional higher education center or board of trustees may submit the RFP to out-of-state four-year institutions of higher education. Before offering the program, an out-of-state institution's program must be approved by MHEC.

Current Law: Although a process is not specifically authorized in statute, many community colleges have partnered with four-year institutions of higher education to allow students to earn degrees from four-year institutions on community college campuses.

Background: Several of Maryland's community colleges have established successful partnerships with four-year institutions of higher education to offer baccalaureate degrees from community college sites. For example, the College of Southern Maryland has developed partnerships with Johns Hopkins University, Bowie State University, Towson University, the University of Maryland University College, the University of Baltimore, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and Capital College to offer four-year degrees in engineering, teacher education, business administration, and computer science. Through the Universities at Shady Grove, Montgomery College has partnered with at least eight University System of Maryland institutions to offer undergraduate degree programs in accounting, information systems, marketing, nursing, social work, special education, and other fields. MHEC advises that these partnerships are often initiated by four-year institutions.

State Fiscal Effect: Students that take baccalaureate degree courses at community college campuses are not included in the full-time equivalent student count that drives State aid through the Senator John A. Cade formula for community colleges. The bill, therefore, would not directly impact State aid to the colleges.

MHEC could distribute RFPs to in-state four-year institutions of higher education and continue to monitor four-year degree programs at community colleges with existing resources.

Local Fiscal Effect: The bill requires community colleges to go through a specific data gathering process prior to submitting RFPs. MHEC advises that, although community colleges typically determine local needs for and interest in baccalaureate degree programs before partnering with four-year institutions, the process defined in the bill could be more rigorous than current procedures and could increase community college administrative costs. Any additional costs would be minimal and would be incurred at the discretion of the community college.

Tuition and fees for students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges are paid to the sponsoring four-year institutions, not community colleges. However, depending on the arrangements that colleges make with four-year institutions, community colleges could receive a facility fee or some other financial benefit through the partnerships. The primary benefit for the colleges, however, is assumed to be the attraction of additional students.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill was introduced in 2004 as HB 1310. The bill passed in the House but received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510