

Senate Bill 81
Shawn B. Coates, Chair, Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland
Unfavorable Report

January 24, 2024

As the chair of the Board of Trustees for the College of Southern Maryland I request an Unfavorable Report for SB 81 – Higher Education – College of Southern Maryland – Budget.

In 2000 the College of Southern Maryland became one regionalized community college. The law enacted in 2000 provided for one regional college serving three counties with equal representation on the governing Board of Trustees. That same legislation created three separate and independent operating budgets for each campus. At the time, that local budget process worked well. But times have changed, especially in today’s post-pandemic world.

In 2020, following two years of extensive deliberations by the College with our three county boards of commissioners and our delegation to develop a local budget process, the State Legislature authorized the College of Southern Maryland to operate under a unified budget, effective for Fiscal Year 2022.

The counties working with CSM agreed that the college’s budget model needed to focus on serving the students of each county, rather than just their buildings. Together, we further agreed that a more equitable sharing of costs of instruction and student services was to be based on each county’s enrollment.

In developing this approach, front-of-mind was that the process must ensure equitable distribution of local funding based on a student’s county of residence as well as where they are taking classes. The process also honors our students’ success, academic excellence, and financial and operational efficiency as core expectations and that the college must be able to respond nimbly to students’ needs.

Today, one operational budget remains a valid local process as it enables efficiencies and removes unnecessary duplications. It is not fiscally possible to replicate all programs at all four of our campuses, and the one-college budget allows us to have employees and contractors work across multiple campuses making more efficient use of resources and talent.

As a regional college, CSM can scale student services across the region, utilizing existing staff. This allows us to meet disparities and create equity.

It is important to note that our concern with SB81 lies in the potential for these proposed changes to disrupt the collaborative spirit and operational efficiencies and student equity that have been achieved through the current one college budget process.

I therefore request this committee provide an unfavorable report to SB81. Thank you.

Shawn B. Coates, Chair
Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland