



Larry Hogan
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor

Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D.
Chair

James D. Fielder, Jr., Ph.D.
Secretary

November 23, 2022

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President
Senate of Maryland
H-107 State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
H-101 State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: 2021 Report on Near Completer
Campaign and Match Program
MSAR #11586**

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones:

Section 11–209 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland requires a near completer communication campaign to identify near completers in the State and to encourage near completers to re-enroll in an institution of higher education to finish a degree. The Commission shall submit a report to the General Assembly on the details of the statewide communication campaign and the match program, including implementation of the campaign and match program and a detailed account of the expenditures under the grant program.

As noted in previous reports, MHEC maintains the Match Program on a devoted webpage, which utilizes Maryland's existing Academic Program Inventory (API). Using the website, a Near Completer can match their original major with Maryland institutions that currently offer the same or similar majors. Near Completers can identify both 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities by searching for academic programs by areas of interest (i.e., major) or by searching for academic programs by institution and degree level. Once a program of study has been identified, a Near Completer is encouraged to contact the relevant universities and colleges that match with the major they are interested in and inquire about re-enrollment

MHEC has continued the statewide communication campaign that began July 1, 2018 and has entered into a third year of a three-year Interagency Agreement (IA) with Maryland Public Television (MPT) to oversee media buys and implementation of those purchases over the 2021-2022 academic year. A breakdown of expenditures is provided below:

- Brochures*: Most high school students are studying remotely, not in the individual buildings, so MHEC produced the updated brochures and made them available online for all to download at their convenience.
- Billboards*: movable billboards costing a fraction of traditional billboards = \$15,000.

- Digital Media: \$10,000.
- Television: \$78,000 (advertising buys spread out over 6 months by the four televisions stations).
- Radio*: I Heart radio which uses stations across the state – again targeting Baltimore and Annapolis audiences = \$15,000.
- Social Media*: create and facilitate in-house utilizing social media boosts = \$2,000.
- Podcast: in-house (no cost associated).
- Promotional items: \$5,000.¹

The campaign continues to emphasize that “Life Happens” and targets students that may not have completed their program of study due to financial circumstances, family responsibilities, health, or other reasons. MHEC is using a variety of specific campaign messages, including:

- Get ready... Get set... Go back to college! Did you start a degree, but dropped out for whatever reason and now are ready to go back and finish it? If so, The Maryland Higher Education Commission has money to help you achieve your goal. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- Get ready... Get set... Go toward your Goal- Learn more about getting money to finish your college education with funding from the Near Completer Grant at MHEC.maryland.gov
- Don't let money be the reason you miss out on a college degree! (Sound of referee's whistle and “It's Good”) If you are One Step Away from Achieving **your** Goal, go to MHEC.maryland.gov to learn more about the Near Completer Grant which will
- help you pay to go back to college and finish your degree!
- Did you start your college degree, but for some reason never finished it? Well, the Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- Experience the thrill of being handed your college degree, after giving up that dream years ago. It's not too late! The Maryland Higher Education's Near Completer Grant has money to help you finish what you started. To learn more, go to MHEC.maryland.gov and click on Near Completer.

Incentive Plan for Match Program

The incentive plan for participation is promoting the scholarship money available to return and finish the degree, along with numerous campaigns that outline critical reasons for earning their degree. Suggested Campaigns include:

*MHEC intended to use **\$20,000 to contract companies for both the billboard totaling \$15,000 and for promotional items, totaling \$5,000.** However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no audience for the billboard (mandates to telework) nor were there any events to give away the promotional items. That money was returned to the state since neither option were the proper campaign tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, MHEC's goal was to utilize both movie theaters and transit to promote the Near Completer Grant in its second year, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that targeted audience was not available in either potential campaign.

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These are breakdowns of the different reasons for going back to get the degree:

- Did you start your college degree, but due to family obligations never finished it? Well, the Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- Did you start your college degree, but due to health issues never finished it? Well, the Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- Did you start your college degree, but were just too young to really appreciate the value of a college education? Well, the Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- Want to move up in your job, but need to finish that degree to be considered for a promotion? Well, the Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To learn more about the Near Completer Grant go to MHEC.maryland.gov

Outcomes from 2020 Campaign

Total Impressions (All Platforms): 6,213,764 (see breakout below)

	<i>Broadcast & Public TV</i>	<i>Cable TV</i>	<i>Broadcast Radio</i>	<i>OTT</i>
	<i>Total numbers of persons who have seen the PSA spots on broadcast and public television</i>	<i>Total numbers of persons who have seen the PSA spots on cable television</i>	<i>Total number of persons who have heard the radio spots</i>	<i>Total number of persons who have seen the PSA spots on Over-The-Top media platforms</i>
Projected Impressions	3,274,556	985,634	1,258,600	322,920
IMPRESSIONS ACHIEVED	3,233,974	1,020,757	1,616,800	342,233

- **Eye on Annapolis Podcast:** 19,948 downloads with additional 24,740 listeners on FB, Twitter, and YouTube.

MHEC will continue to collaborate with the institutions in Maryland to support near-completer students. If you have any questions regarding this report, please feel free to contact Mr. Lee Towers, Director of Legislative Affairs, at lee.towers@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Dr. James D. Fielder
Secretary