



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: 2022 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.

Similar to previous years, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) requested all institutions to identify students who were no longer enrolled and who met the definition of a “Near Completer” so MHEC could conduct a targeted outreach campaign during the 2022-2023 academic year (see attached memo). Twenty institutions submitted contact information for 18,710 students.

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 will continue the ongoing email campaign with the newly identified near-completers regarding the match program, the academic program inventory, and the scholarship (see attached sample email).

MHEC extended its third year of a \$125,000 Interagency Agreement (IA) with Maryland Public

Television (MPT) to redirect the campaign to promote an increased need for the Near Completer Grant for individuals leaving college due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MHEC has continued its relationship with MPT (now the Maryland State Ad Agency) to oversee media buys and implantation of those purchases over the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year, promoting the Near Completer Grant.

Goal: Get Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) Near Completer message to the targeted population (18+ male/female) through various forms of advertising and enhancing outreach by way of:

- Brochures* - MHEC produced the updated brochures and made them available online for all to download at their convenience.
- Billboards* - traditional billboard
- Digital Media
- Television*
- Radio*
- Social Media*
- Podcast

*as specified in statute, section 11-209

Performance Measurement:

- ✓ On-line analytics will be utilized to measure the effectiveness of each vendor.
- ✓ A Near Completer information and match webpage is on the MHEC website. (Fulfills statutory requirements)
- ✓ Existing benchmarks exists for the Scholarship and Grants page to facilitate any increase in traffic those pages.
- ✓ For social media we will continue to use protocols currently in place. Data will also be collected directly from the vendor throughout the campaign, where appropriate.

Emphasizing:

Near Completers:

- Students returning to college after being impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Incentive Plan for Match Program

The incentive plan for participation is promoting the scholarship money available to return and finish the degree, after having to drop out due to the pandemic. Campaign messaging includes:

- Did you get close to completing your college degree, but dropped out during the COVID-19 pandemic? As a Near Completer, you may be eligible to get money from the Maryland Higher Education Commission to go back and finish what you started. Go to MHEC.Maryland.gov and click on Near Completer to see if you qualify.
- Don't let money be the reason you miss out on a college degree! If you were impacted by COVID-19 and had to drop out of college, go to mhec.maryland.gov to learn more about

the Near Completer Grant. Finish what you started with financial assistance from the Maryland Higher Education Commission!

- (Pomp and Circumstance music in background) Did you start your college degree, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic never finished it? The Maryland Higher Education Commission wants to give you money that could help you finish what you started. To see if you are eligible for the Near Completer Grant and receive money to finish your degree, go to MHEC.maryland.gov
- (Pomp and Circumstance music in background) Experience the thrill of being handed your college degree, after having to drop out of college, due to COVID-19. It's not too late! The Maryland Higher Education's Near Completer Grant can help you finish what you started. To learn more go to MHEC.maryland.gov and click on Near Completer.
- (Sound of whistle blowing and crowd cheering) Get ready... Get set... Go back to college! Did you start a degree, but had to drop out due to the pandemic? If you are ready to go back and finish that degree, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has money to help you achieve your goal through the Near Completer Grant. Go to MHEC.maryland.gov and click on Near Completer.

Due to our campaign extension, 2021 analytics on our outreach are not currently available at the time of this report.

MHEC will continue to collaborate with the institutions in Maryland to support near-completer students. MHEC plans to meet with appropriate campus representatives in January to further develop collaborations and outreach initiatives.

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