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NEWS RELEASE

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First Allegany County Opportunity Scholarships Awarded to ACM, FSU Students

With the beginning of the fall semester, local students at Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) or Frostburg State University (FSU) are now receiving the first Allegany County Opportunity Scholarships. The Allegany County Commissioners, Michael W. McKay, Creade V. Brodie, Jr., and William R. Valentine, established the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship, benefitting Allegany County residents attending either ACM or FSU.

The county's investment in higher and continuing education is already greatly enhancing economic opportunities for its citizens and thus supporting families and the community at large, according to representatives from the ACM and FSU foundations.

Classes for ACM begin Monday, Aug. 25, and FSU classes start Tuesday, Sept. 2. Most of the scholarships at both institutions have been awarded, but some are still to be disbursed.

Allegany College of Maryland

The ACM Foundation created four categories for the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship – Merit Scholarship, Tuition Subsidy for Credit Students, "Jump Start" Early College Scholarship and Continuing Education and Workforce Development Scholarship. Scholarships have already been awarded in the first three programs, with additional scholarships scheduled for the fourth this fall.

ACM students report that the new Opportunity Scholarship program is already making a difference in their ability to seek higher education, making it possible for them to enroll.

For the Merit Scholarship, which encourages academic excellence, nearly 150 awards of \$500 each have been made. These awards are intended to continue in the spring semester. The Tuition Subsidy for Credit Students, which offsets costs not met by other available financial aid, has seen about 100 individuals benefit from awards that average about \$300. Students from every public and private school in Allegany County are represented. Recipients range in age from 17 to 52, with an average age of 25.

The ACM Foundation is collaborating with the Allegany County Public Schools to see that high school students enrolled in ACM on a dual-enrollment basis also benefit. The “Jump Start” Early College Scholarship, which assists students receiving free and reduced-cost school meals, covers the full family expense of a three-credit course. Preliminary figures show that 40 students enrolled in 78 courses will benefit from these \$100-per-course awards in the fall semester.

The Continuing Education and Workforce Development Scholarship will support students of all ages and career phases in meeting the costs of training to enter the workforce, strengthen skills in a current job or retrain for a new career throughout ACM’s Center for Continuing Education. Special emphasis will be given to students in two new grant-funded training initiatives in advanced manufacturing and information technology.

“The Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship reflects a genuine commitment on the part of the Allegany County Commissioners to enhance the quality of life and increase economic opportunity for our citizens and community through expanded access to higher education,” said ACM’s president, Dr. Cynthia Bambara. “In its first year, we are excited to award nearly 300 Allegany County Opportunity Scholarships for the fall 2014 semester to students enrolled in credit courses. We look forward to continuing these awards throughout the academic year and to expanding the effort to include continuing education students.”

Bambara added, “The county commissioners are to be commended for their insight into the needs of our community and for enhancing an on-ramp to higher education that will transform the lives of our residents.”

Frostburg State University

FSU awards the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship to new and continuing students at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels to offset the cost of tuition and fees. As of Aug. 18, FSU had awarded 98 scholarships to 75 undergraduate students, 15 graduate students and eight doctoral students. Nearly \$114,600 has been

awarded so far. A review of transfer students is under way to ensure that they are aware of this opportunity, and as many as 27 more may be eligible.

The maximum undergraduate award is \$2,000, with an average of \$1,234 awarded as of Aug. 18. The Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship is applied after other grants and scholarships are awarded. Students who already receive other grants and scholarships to the level of tuition and mandatory fees (\$7,982) would not be eligible for this new scholarship.

This year's maximum award for graduate and doctoral students is \$1,000.

Scholarship recipients are required to have and maintain a 3.0 grade point average and be a resident of Allegany County for at least three years. All majors are eligible, as are undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students.

FSU Director of Financial Aid Angela Hovatter, who has spent 25 years in the field, said the availability of these funds has helped greatly in her ability to meet the needs of prospective and current students and their parents. "If I can tell a family they are eligible for a scholarship, it makes a huge difference to them in trying to cover all the expenses of attending college," she said.

"The impact of these scholarships will be far-reaching to Allegany County citizens and its economy," said FSU President Dr. Jonathan Gibraltar. "These local students are gaining the high-level knowledge and skills demanded by current employers and by those considering locating in this area. The possibilities for those students and this county will increase exponentially. I commend the Allegany County Commissioners for their vision and foresight."

Scholarship Background Information

The funds for the scholarship are provided from a portion of Allegany County Government's share – 2.25 percent – of the annual gross revenue generated by the video lottery machines at Rocky Gap Casino Resort. The county commissioners designated 70 percent of this revenue for the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship – 45 percent for ACM and 25 percent for FSU.

Fewer than one in five Allegany County residents, 16.3 percent, have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The county ranks 22 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions.

The county commissioners believe that this scholarship accomplishes many goals: encourages population retention and growth, enhances the quality of the local workforce

for current and prospective employers, and supports economic development and the associated prosperity it creates.

The county commissioners determined that the future well-being of Allegany County depends on having an educated and skilled workforce. However, many county residents face financial barriers to pursuing post-secondary education. Funding through the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship provides additional financial resources to increase educational opportunities, enhance economic development, and support the continued well-being of the community.

The scholarship is administered through ACM's and FSU's respective nonprofit foundations, Allegany College of Maryland Foundation, Inc., and Frostburg State University Foundation, Inc. Each institution determined the scholarship criteria.

Educational Institutions

Allegany College of Maryland, www.allegany.edu, a county-supported institution, meets wide-ranging needs in the communities it serves through credit program offerings in career and transfer areas and courses and training programs in continuing education workforce development. ACM enrolls 1,600 credit and over 5,000 continuing education students from Allegany County per academic year.

Frostburg State University, www.frostburg.edu, is one of the 12 institutions of the University System of Maryland. FSU is a comprehensive, residential regional university and serves as an educational and cultural center for Western Maryland. Of FSU's 5,474 total students, 738 undergraduate students and 183 graduate students are Allegany County residents (fall 2013).

For more information about the Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship:

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