

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well. Today, I'm reaching out to address a matter of utmost importance: our community college will likely be facing an unexpected, but significant budget shortfall. As your president, it is my responsibility and the responsibility of my team to ensure transparency and collaboration as we navigate these challenging times together.

Earlier this month, we received news that Allegany County Government was facing a \$13 million dollar deficit. <https://gov.allconet.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1344> The County has made some difficult decisions as part of their own budget, including removing all capital expenses, freezing open positions, reducing the EMS budget by \$2 million, increasing fees, and decreasing County department budgets by 10%, etc. As part of these difficult decisions, through an email, the County notified all outside agencies receiving funds, including ACM, that they will decrease their funding by 10% for FY25.

As you can imagine, this was not forecasted and has created a very difficult situation as we plan to finalize the FY25 budget. This cut from the County of \$833,186 would in turn mandate an elimination of the \$333,377 increase from the State for FY25 for a total of a \$1,166,563 reduction due to the legislated requirement of maintenance of effort. This means if the county does not match the prior year allocation, ACM will not receive any additional allocation from the State of Maryland.

Upon receiving the email with our bad news, I immediately called the County. My team and the Board leadership met with the County and have had additional conversations with County Commissioners to stress the importance of ACM for workforce development and job training and the significant impact of this decision. We are also working with the Western Maryland Delegation to discuss options related to the required County maintenance of effort. With the leadership of the Board and my team, these conversations are continuing. We will also attend the public meeting of the County Commissioners on May 16th at 5 p.m. to strongly request that they reconsider this decision.

While the specifics of these challenges are undoubtedly concerning, I want to assure you that we are committed to confronting them head-on with resilience and determination. In response to this situation, our leadership team has been diligently working to explore all available options to mitigate the impact on our community and preserve the quality of education we provide. This will likely include a tuition increase of 5%, a careful review with the possibility of not filling open positions, a significant reduction in travel and professional development funding, along with other budget reduction strategies.

Due to the efforts of our entire campus community, ACM is fortunate to have experienced double-digit enrollment growth over the past two years. We are currently projecting continued enrollment growth in the Fall 2024. Our leadership challenge will be to maintain these enrollment increases while having to balance a new budget reality.

I understand that uncertainty can be unsettling, particularly in times of unexpected financial strain. Please know that we are dedicated to maintaining transparency throughout this process and will provide regular updates as new developments arise. Together, we will weather this storm and emerge stronger than ever before.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our students and our institution. Your hard work and perseverance are the cornerstone of our success, and I am confident that, together, we will overcome these challenges.

Warm regards,

Dr. Bambara