

The Pathway to and Through Higher Education

A Case for Investment in Montgomery County's
Groundbreaking Program for Student Success



ACHIEVING MORE, TOGETHER

Across our respective institutions, we have long believed in the power of education to change the trajectory of our students' lives. We know that when even one student graduates with a bachelor's degree, the ripple effect impacts families for generations, and strengthens the fabric of our community at large. We recognize promise in our students, and we work together, across public education institutions, to disrupt patterns of inequity.

Since 2013, we've worked together to bridge identified gaps in our own public education system by providing a seamless pathway of support that starts in high school, continues to community college, and through the attainment of a bachelor's degree to ensure that college completion is possible, especially where support is needed most.

And when it comes to ACES, we're just getting started. After five successful years, we are doubling down on our commitment to ensuring that students have access to an affordable and high-quality postsecondary education, and we realize that we can do far more together than any one of our institutions could do on its own. We hope in reviewing this case statement you see what we've long seen: that together, we can do so much more than any one institution can do on its own, to build equitable pathways to and through a bachelor's degree.

We invite you to join us in this important and exciting work.



Dr. Jack Smith

Superintendent

Montgomery County Public Schools



Dr. DeRionne Pollard

President

Montgomery College



Dr. Stewart Edelstein

Executive Director

Universities at Shady Grove



RECOGNIZING THE BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Today, three-quarters of new jobs in the Washington, DC, region require education and training beyond a high school diploma. Yet, issues of access, affordability, and belonging have placed higher education out of reach for many students in our region. For students who do make it to the doors of higher education, nearly one-third will leave after their first year, often citing the lack of a support network.

Every year in Montgomery County, Maryland, hundreds of students and their families face similar hurdles in their higher education pursuits. Data suggests that even in our thriving County, gaps exist in graduation rates, college access, and degree attainment, especially for those who are first-generation American, immigrants, or from a low-income family. These barriers further limit their ability to pursue a bachelor's degree.

As the growth of highly skilled jobs in our region outpace the pool of available candidates, it is critical that we provide pathways to the degrees and careers that will directly power tomorrow's workforce. This means propelling students to and through higher education—especially those who have the most limited experience navigating the education system.



"In high school, I knew college was for me, but the process was overwhelming for my parents, who knew very little about the college education system. ACES provided us the emotional, educational, and financial support to help me realize my college dreams."

– Jorge Torres, Montgomery College, '18

BUILDING EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Since its launch in 2013, The Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) program has been building equitable opportunities for students in Montgomery County to thrive in college and enter into a career.

A powerful partnership among Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove—Montgomery County's three public education institutions—the ACES program provides access to individualized academic coaching, career readiness, and scholarship opportunities for students who have been historically underrepresented

in higher education. Our coaches work with students every step of the way, beginning in the 11th grade, continuing to community college, and through the completion of a bachelor's degree.

The result is a sharp increase in college readiness, college applications, and graduation among students enrolled in ACES, who are equipped to join the region's workforce and contribute back to the local economy.



2,500+

Students supported with critical education and coaching services each year



99%

Nearly all ACES students receive their high school diploma and enter into higher education



2X

ACES students are twice as likely to receive financial aid than their peers

A SUPPORTIVE PATHWAY TO A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND BEYOND

Students connect with ACES first in high school. They are often the first in their family to pursue college. They may be first-generation Americans, immigrants, from a low-income family, or have differing abilities that have limited their ability to pursue a bachelor's degree.

At ACES, we see their promise, and we believe in their potential.

Our students represent a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including;

80%

are first in their families to graduate from college

50%

are from low-income households

23%

are from single parent households

12%

are English language learners, immigrants, or first-generation Americans

6%

are students with differing abilities

1%

have been, or are presently in, the foster care system



"ACES helped me develop a personality that I never knew I had. It has made me the woman I am today and I am so thankful for all of the opportunities to grow."

— Sara Ruiz, University of Maryland at the Universities at Shady Grove, '18, pictured with her scholarship funders and mentors, Cliff and Debbie White

Sara Ruiz credits ACES with providing her opportunities and guidance she otherwise may not have had, in fact, she did not consider college a part of her future until ACES showed her it was possible. Through the individualized coaching and college application guidance, provided by her ACES coach, Sara received a full scholarship to both Montgomery College and The Universities at Shady Grove, and—after graduating in the spring of 2018 from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business—became the first in her family to graduate from college. In the fall, Sara will start full time at the global accounting firm, Grant Thornton.

ACES coaches meet regularly with students to provide:



Individualized coaching



College application preparation and financial aid assistance



Leadership development



Bridge programming to support with institutional transitions



Career readiness and training

A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACES supports more than 2,500 students across Montgomery County's three public education institutions, but its impact is felt far beyond those numbers. ACES serves as a lifeline for parents, a point of inspiration for siblings, a challenge for peers, and a powerful tool for fostering future leaders in Montgomery County.

THE ACES PATHWAY

Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) is a first-of-its-kind partnership among Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove. ACES provides individualized coaching, scholarship opportunities, and career readiness programming for students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education, improving their ability to thrive in college and into a career. Each year, more than 2,500 students participate in ACES across all three institutions.



INVEST IN THE PROMISE OF OUR STUDENTS, AND OUR REGION

An investment in ACES is an investment in all of Montgomery County's public education institutions. Your investment—no matter the size—benefits the entire county, now and into the future.

Invest in the Promise of our Students

Gifts to the Montgomery County Public Schools Educational Foundation, Inc. support innovative ACES programming and coaching in high schools throughout the county.

Invest in Student Scholarships

Gifts to Montgomery College directly fund student scholarships, easing or eliminating financial burdens of the college completion process, and making the dream of college possible for more students in our county.

JOIN US

ACES inspires promising students—often the first in their family to pursue higher education—to achieve their academic and professional dreams. ACES helps to make those dreams possible by providing the academic support, college guidance, and career readiness students need to succeed.

Through ACES:

- » We reduce the barriers to college by engaging promising students at a critical moment during their high school careers.
- » We provide students with a pathway to success and the ability to enter into a promising career through academic support, targeted support services, and career readiness.

Invest in the Future of our Region

A gift to ACES at the Universities at Shady Grove directly supports student scholarships, career readiness, leadership initiatives, and transformative internships.



ACES students practice giving elevator pitches at the Universities at Shady Grove Summer Bridge Program.

- » We prepare students to thrive in the workplace, with the skills and knowledge to succeed after graduation.
- » We fuel economic development in our county by contributing a more educated, skilled, and diverse workforce.
- » We enhance lives and enrich communities by taking an individualized approach to support the success of each student at every stage of their academic and professional career.

Together, we can support an even greater number of students and their families in their pursuit of higher education. To learn more, visit us online at acesmontgomery.org