

From the Washington Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2022/09/16/montgomery-college-techmap-it.html>

Montgomery College gets \$1.6M to support students pursuing IT careers

Sep 16, 2022, 3:03pm EDT

A program to support underrepresented students pursuing careers in information technology is launching at Montgomery College — with a \$1.6 million boost from the federal government.

The U.S. Department of Labor awarded the Rockville-based community college and 12 other institutions with a total \$45 million in grant funding, the institution announced on Thursday. The funding comes through the department's Employment and Training Administration's Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant program.

"These grants are designed to empower community colleges to ensure their curriculum meets the needs of employers in their communities and equips workers with valuable skills," U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh said in a statement.



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The U.S. Department of Labor just granted Montgomery College \$1.3 million.

The grant will fully cover the cost for Montgomery College's Tech Metro Area Pathways (TechMAP) program, which seeks to work with 1,000 students — primarily people of color, women, disconnected young adults and people who are unemployed or underemployed — over four years.

Montgomery College benefits from this second round of the labor department's funding, which is designed to expand career and technical education programs at community colleges.

"The TechMAP Program will help our learners who are historically underrepresented in IT complete certificate or degree programs and navigate a pathway to a career in the IT sector," Montgomery College president Jermaine F. Williams said in a statement. "We can continue to close the equity gap for students who traditionally have been underrepresented in postsecondary education and employment."

Montgomery College will incorporate relationships with employers, industry professionals and other organizations to connect students in the TechMAP program with jobs and wraparound services. The hopeful end result: a boost in retention and completion rates for disadvantaged Montgomery College students, as well as setting more students on a path to earn professional credentials and higher-paying employment.

"Regional employers are expressing an urgent need for tech talent," Steve Greenfield, Montgomery College's dean of workforce development, said in an email. "Students and community members, underrepresented in the tech industry, demonstrate lower rates of completion, and often have less access to high quality education, training, and jobs in the tech industry. Industry needs an infusion of new talent, and community members need access to well-paying tech jobs."

Through the new TechMAP program, Montgomery College will work with the Maryland Tech Council, Indian international IT company Infosys and Kensington-based computer consultant Aquas Inc., with room for more industry partners to inform the educational curriculum and provide career opportunities, Greenfield said. Community partners — including WorkSource Montgomery, Montgomery County Health and Human Services,

Interfaith Works, Housing Opportunities Commission and Identity, Inc. — will provide students and participants for the program.

TechMAP is housed within the college's Information Technology Institute, under the academic affairs division's workforce development and continuing education unit.

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