



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education

**Fall 2020 Financial Support for Bermuda College Students &
College Promise "Merit Award" Programme**
Friday, December 4th, 2020

Mr. Speaker,

This morning I rise before this Honourable House to provide an interim report on the annual Government Tuition Grant of \$300,000 given to the Bermuda College for financial support to students; and, to share information on the College Promise 'Merit Award' programme.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me speak first to the annual grant of \$300,000. My Honourable colleagues will recall that since September 2017, the Bermuda College has been receiving an additional \$300,000 specifically to support students in financial need. This year's grant was even more meaningful as a result of the pandemic and the negative economic impact it has had on so many households.

Mr. Speaker,

My Honourable colleagues will recall that the purpose of the grant is to provide financial assistance to students in one of the three academic divisions or the Professional and Career Education (PACE) division at the College. To qualify for the funding, students must demonstrate a financial need and current students must have a grade point average (GPA) of 2.00 or higher. The tuition awards range from 30% to 80% of a student's educational costs, with the educational costs defined as the value of tuition plus fees.

Mr. Speaker,

This semester 71 students received financial assistance from the tuition grant, which comprised 44 students in the academic divisions and 27 students in PACE. The awards in the academic divisions averaged \$1,178.47 per student and ranged from \$372.00 to \$2,424.00; while the PACE awards averaged \$2,006.65 and ranged from \$325.50 to \$5,160.00. The higher amounts for the PACE awards were awarded to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business

Administration degree programme offered in partnership with Mount Saint Vincent University, and the teacher certification programme offered by the University of West Indies.

Mr. Speaker,

To date, 871 awards have been granted to Bermuda College students since this annual grant was put in place in 2017. As we can see this grant has touched the lives of many of our Bermudians. This is keeping with this government's mandate the finances should not be a major barrier preventing one from enhancing their education.

Mr. Speaker,

Our island works best when the private sector works along with the Government. Let me share with this Honorable House one such partnership. As a result of a student survey conducted in April by Bermuda College, the College was aware that many of its students would face financial challenges returning for the 2020-2021 school year as a result of the pandemic. This was shared with the Bermuda College Foundation Board and they decided to refocus their fundraising efforts to address this immediate need.

As a result of their efforts, an additional \$325,000 has been raised to date to support Bermuda College students in need, assisting a further 104 students this year. I wish to commend the Bermuda College Foundation and its donors for (as their tagline says) ***"investing in our College, our Bermuda, our Future"***.

Mr. Speaker,

I will now shift to provide a brief update on the "College Promise" Programme. My Honourable colleagues will recall that the Government introduced this merit award programme for public high school students in 2019. The programme allows qualifying public school graduates to attend Bermuda College tuition free. To qualify, the public school graduates must:

- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0;
- Test into College-level courses;
- Be recommended by a school counsellor; and
- Be Bermudian.

Additionally, successful students must attend Bermuda College in the Fall or Spring semester immediately after their high school graduation.

Mr. Speaker,

In this the second year of the programme, I am pleased to report to this Honorable House that there are a total of 70 College Promise students at Bermuda College this year. Forty-seven (47) of which are new College Promise students representing an 80% increase over last year. While,

23 out of the 26 students in the initial cohort have returned for a second year, representing an 88% retention rate.

Mr. Speaker,

As a result of more than 30 transfer agreements with the Bermuda College, and its accreditation with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), students can now transfer directly into the 3rd year of a 4-year degree programme after completing their associate degree with the Bermuda College. This affords thousands of dollars in savings for students while earning their baccalaureate degrees at the Bermuda College. I encourage all public high school and private school students and their parents to seek further information regarding this programme from their respective high schools, and see the tremendous advantages it presents.

Mr. Speaker,

The Government remains committed to supporting Bermudians to pursue post-secondary education; and as stated in our recent election platform, this Government believes that **“tertiary education is an immensely powerful instrument to create equality, fairness and opportunity”**.

This Government will continue to provide funding to Bermuda College to ensure that no student is denied a Bermuda College education due to a lack of finances.

Mr. Speaker,

Before I take my seat, I would encourage all Bermudians looking for further education and training opportunities to consider the Bermuda College; as there are many pathways to discover. Thank you **Mr. Speaker**