



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 19, 2017

The Honorable Kate Stewart  
City of Takoma Park  
7500 Maple Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Dear Mayor Stewart:

I want to thank you and the members of the City staff who worked diligently to partner with the College over the last 18 months in community engagement efforts, especially the Community Conversations, regarding the future of Montgomery College's Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. I was gratified to hear from stakeholders—including you and our adjacent neighbors—of their commitment to the College's mission as well as support for quality facilities that make our mission real for students.

As you know, I sent a letter on Friday, September 29, 2017, to a wide variety of stakeholders—alumni, students, neighbors, and community leaders—that describes in detail our work and my deliberations about how best to proceed.

Based on our broad consultation with the community, our research into various options, and the needs of our students, I have determined that the most prudent course of action is to continue with our current \$85 million plan in the approved capital budget to replace Falcon Hall and the Science South Building—the plan that was endorsed by the County Council's Education Committee at its October 11 meeting. In moving forward in this manner, we will be responsive to the urgent need for modern facilities and balance the needs of our adjacent neighbors and fiscal prudence. To ensure this balance is achieved, I issued a list of specific design directives to my staff to address the neighbors' concerns with this option. Of particular interest, the directives specify that the new building would be no closer to existing homes than the current location of Falcon Hall. Additionally, the height of the new building would match the height of the existing Falcon Hall along Takoma Avenue and additional height would be interior to the campus. Below are the specific design and construction mitigation directives I issued to College staff. These will serve as the foundation of the building design and construction of the project to minimize perceived height.

Design directives

- Keep the current setback of Falcon Hall—no closer to Takoma Avenue than the existing Falcon Hall.
- Ensure the height is no more than two stories along Takoma Avenue—similar to Falcon Hall.
- Minimize windows along Takoma Avenue to reduce lighting impacts.
- Protect the park-like green space along Takoma Avenue.

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- Locate height and rooftop air units away from Takoma Avenue nearer the campus interior.
- Maximize the building's width to lower height.
- Take advantage of topography to minimize perceived height.
- Hire an architect experienced with designing facilities in historic districts and residential neighborhoods to ensure the exterior respects the campus location.

#### Construction mitigation directives

- Craft and implement specific measures to protect adjacent neighbors' homes and the Belle Ziegler Park from construction activities. Seek strategies used by MCPS for construction mitigation in neighborhoods.
- Provide an onsite project manager to be available to the community.
- Provide a project "hotline" to respond to immediate community concerns.
- Park construction vehicles away from the campus and neighborhoods.
- Craft a construction traffic management plan.
- Mitigate construction noise.

Our neighbors will have a role in further shaping the project during a design charrette process with the project architect. The College will issue a request for proposals (RFP) no later than November 1 to hire the architect. We will seek a firm with experience in designing projects sensitive to the characteristics of residential neighborhoods and historic districts. The RFP process is time-consuming and is expected to take approximately five to six months to complete.

Once an architect is on board, the facilities team will brief the firm on the design and construction mitigation directives to make the challenge abundantly clear: provide modern math and science facilities to the campus while respecting the needs of our neighbors. My staff appreciates the importance of these directives and will work diligently to implement each of them as we committed both in the [September 29 letter](#) and again during the Education Committee discussion.

Nonetheless, I recognize questions and uncertainty remain as to how the College will construct a 134,600-square-foot building within these parameters. More specifics will unfold once the architect executes the charrette process next year. Again, we envision the charrette as an opportunity for stakeholders to work together with the architect to help shape the project in an iterative process in which schematic designs will be crafted, reviewed, and revised. Stakeholders will also have input during the mandatory referral process (MRP) and, again, subsequent to the MRP as the College finalizes the design of the project.

As we await the architect team, we may want to consider the establishment of the advisory committee I suggested more than a year ago. Such a group can help us ensure we do our best to be good neighbors and innovate strategies like the "cell phone lot" space in the garage to manage student drop-off and pick-up. Neighborhood concerns—beyond the design of the math and science building—can be voiced and resolved. In the course of time, the committee might provide opportunities for deeper connections with and in the City, richer engagement with College programs and interactions with our students.

So while there are more conversations to come, it is time to move forward. The need for modern facilities is urgent and real, as you know. The existing buildings are at 56 and 39 years of age. A replacement strategy has been in our facilities master plan for 13 years and envisioned during the deliberations about the campus expansion more than 20 years ago. Furthermore, the project to modernize our facilities first appeared in our capital budget 10 years ago.

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As I said to the community, I am grateful for the insightful and compelling feedback from so many engaged neighbors and other stakeholders. In fact, I delayed the project's July 1 start date to pause and give serious consideration to our adjacent neighbors' concerns. Given this effort and the conversations to come, I am confident we can bring modern facilities to this campus to enhance access to quality postsecondary education and opportunity for down-county residents—and address the needs of our adjacent neighbors. Our collective contributions to this project will have a profound impact on the lives of our students for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "DeRionne P. Pollard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

DeRionne P. Pollard, PhD  
President

Attachment