



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

The Hon. DIALLO V. RABAIN, MP, JP
Minister of Education

2019-2020 Financial Support for Bermuda College Students

Friday, February 28th 2020

Mr. Speaker,

This morning I rise before this Honourable House to provide an update on the annual Government Grant of \$300,000 given to the Bermuda College for financial support to students; and, also share information on the Bermuda College Promise 'Merit Award' programme introduced in September 2019.

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. We are now six Fall and Spring semesters later, and I am very much pleased with the number of students who have been supported financially, and if it wasn't for the financial aid provided would have not been able to pursue post-secondary studies. It is gratifying to stand here not only to provide an update, but also to give a recap of the number of students who have benefited from this programme. A programme that has positioned so many students to have easier access to the Bermuda College.

Mr. Speaker,

It's always good to remind ourselves about the purpose or the reason why initiatives are implemented as we then begin to internalize the importance. So I remind my Honourable colleagues of the purpose of the funding initiative of \$300,000. The Bermuda College was given a mandate that these monies were to be used solely as financial assistance for students who desired to enroll in three categories of study at the College:

- i) Non-programme and programme academic division courses;
- ii) Professional and Career Education (PACE) programmes. Students enrolled in these programmes had not previously received financial support; and,
- iii) Bachelor degree programmes offered through the Bermuda College.

Also, Mr. Speaker,

My Honourable colleagues will recall the criteria set out, in that new students who demonstrated a financial need, and current students achieving a grade point average (GPA) of 2.00 or higher were eligible to receive financial support. To-date, the financial awards have ranged from 30% to 80% of a student's educational costs, which covers the total value of the tuition programme plus fees.

Mr. Speaker,

When I revisited the data on the number of students who have been financially assisted since 2017, I was truly encouraged. During the 2017/18 academic year a total of 313 students received financial support; at the end of the 2018/19 academic year 198 students were

financially supported; and for the current 2019/20 academic year, to-date 219 students have been assisted financially. This is the fruit of the Government's promise to the people of Bermuda in our election platform – **"...to increase accessibility to Bermuda College by providing financial support to students in need..."** It remains our belief that **"...finances should not be a barrier to tertiary education..."**

Mr. Speaker,

During the past three academic years, more than seven hundred students enrolled at the Bermuda College as a result of receiving financial aid. These students were enrolled in a variety of study programmes. I cast my mind back and recall hearing let me say 'a personal testimony', from a mature student enrolled in the Bermuda College Culinary Arts Programme. She shared with me and some of my Ministerial colleagues how she had been made redundant from her job and was in the midst of determining the next steps in her life. She had a love for cooking and after being informed about the financial assistance the Government had provided for students in financial need and who wanted to pursue studies at the College, she decided to apply and was successful. She stated the financial support made it possible for her to pursue her passion. **Mr. Speaker**, hearing stories like this, makes it all worth the while. I commend all seven hundred plus students for not giving up because of lack of finances; and, encourage more to take advantage of the financial support programme this Government is providing to attend the Bermuda College.

Mr. Speaker,

I will shift now to provide a brief update on the merit-based "College Promise" Programme. My Honourable colleagues will know that the

Government introduced this programme for the first time last year for public school graduates to attend the Bermuda College tuition free. The introduction of this merit-based programme not only fulfills another election platform promise to **“...Increase funding for scholarships so that students in public school have more opportunities to secure higher education...”** it also is aligned directly with the mission statement of Plan 2022, **“...to provide all students with equitable access to holistic, varied and high-quality instruction that is culturally relevant and empowers students to reach their full potential...”** Additionally, the programme was to encourage our senior school students to excel at a higher level in their studies. Senior school students had to achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 upon graduation.

Mr. Speaker,

At the end of the 2018/19 school academic year, senior school guidance counsellors at the CedarBridge Academy and The Berkeley Institute worked directly with the Vice President of Student & Academic Affairs at the Bermuda College to develop the pool of all graduating senior school students who met the criteria for the College Promise programme.

The “College Promise” programme awards each student a total of \$5,000 per semester for a period of two years at the Bermuda College. Eligibility includes:

- Students must be a graduate from CedarBridge or The Berkeley Institute;
- 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 the Bermuda College immediately in the Fall or Spring terms immediately after high school graduation.

Mr Speaker,

To really put this program in its proper perspective, I draw my honorable colleague's attention to a few weeks ago when we discussed the Bermuda College's 2018 Annual Report. During that discussion, I pointed out how the Bermuda College is fully accredited by The New England Commission of Higher Learning. This is the same body that provides accreditation for schools such as Harvard, Boston University and MIT to name a few. Additionally, I also informed colleagues of the over 30 articulation agreements the Bermuda College has signed with overseas institutions in the USA, Canada, The Caribbean and the UK.

Mr. Speaker,

I mention this to reinforce the impact the College Promise can have on our students and their parents. The potential to obtain your Associates Degree tuition free and transfer these credits into a 4-year institution and start in your 3rd year of tertiary education represents a huge financial relief to our students and their parents. This program strikes directly at the heart of the historic inequalities that may have prevented our students, in particularly black public school students, from achieving their full potential. I encourage our parents to look to encourage their children to understand and see the tremendous advantages this program presents.

Mr. Speaker,

Our final report, details a list of 26 students who are currently enrolled in the College Promise programme for the Spring 2020 semester. We are still awaiting information on the type of programmes our students are pursuing and will share that in due course.

Mr. Speaker,

The Government will remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting and encouraging Bermudians to pursue a post-secondary educational qualification. We will also continue to support Bermuda College and the diversity of paths offered for students to discover!

Thank you **Mr. Speaker**