ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES, SUBJECTIVE NORMS, AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS OF MARYLAND STATE LEGISLATORS REGARDING TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

Marsha K. Koger, Doctor of Education, December 2018

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding a tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. All members of the Maryland House of Delegates and the Maryland State Senate were surveyed. The theoretical lens, which guides this research, was drawn from the theory of reasoned action. The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions (policy positions) held by state legislators about potential legislation to implement a tuition-free community college education. The data revealed significant results regarding political affiliation, age, and race. The results

suggested that Maryland's state legislators whose party affiliation is Republican were more passionate about their beliefs in funding tuition-free community college education and were impacted by the constituency they thought were important to them as compared to those whose party affiliation was Democrat. The behavioral intentions of older legislators—between the ages of 56 and 65—were higher than other age groups. The legislators who identified themselves as multi-racial were more influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. There was a strong correlation between attitudes and subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland's elected officials regarding funding tuition-free community college education. Also, the discussion included recommendations for further research.

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by

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DEDICATION

Mom, this dissertation is dedicated to you. I know you almost made it, but I finished for the both of us. Thanks for instilling in me at an early age the importance of education. Thank you for sacrificing for me and my sister, Leslie Green. I know I am the woman I have become because of your unconditional love, encouragement, and sheer perseverance and determination. Thanks for always allowing me to speak my truth. I know we will meet again.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Why not free higher education? This question has been persistently debated by state policymakers since the founding of America's first university, Harvard University, in 1636 (Rudolph, 1990). At that time, America's colleges and universities were funded by philanthropists and had very low tuition rates (Rudolph, 1990). Fast-forward to 2018 one sees the growth of Promise Scholarship Programs throughout the country. Promise programs offer scholarships that make community college tuition-free for public high school graduates meeting certain criteria (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017). Promise programs gained additional momentum with the introduction of the "America's College Promise Act of 2015" to Congress during the Obama Administration (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015; Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

The idea of offering tuition-free college education grew and became a prominent issue during the 2016 presidential election. Vermont Democratic Senator Bernie Saunders proposed making public universities and colleges tuition-free, while Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocated debt-free college for any students from a family with a combined income of $125,000 or less (Lederman, 2016; Woodward, 2016). The opposition, Republican candidate Donald Trump, now the 45th President, wanted to make education primarily a state responsibility (Woodward, 2016). The Trump Administration has suggested

that those colleges and universities with larger endowments should allocate more financial aid to students (Jaschik, 2016).

During the 2016 presidential campaign, several viewpoints surfaced, triggering various voting patterns among legislators regarding funding public higher education, especially at reduced costs or offering free tuition. As a result of divergent political viewpoints, there appeared to be a need to explore legislators' policy decisions, particularly in the State of Maryland, regarding tuition-free community college education. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the factors that might influence voting patterns among legislators with regards to the introduction of tuition-free community college education.

In April 2017, New York became the first state to offer free tuition for middle-class students to attend two- and four-year public colleges (Lobosco, 2017). In May 2018, Republican Governor Larry Hogan signed a bill that would provide tuition-free community college to thousands of Marylanders (Cox, 2018). The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) began a tuition-free college program in the fall of 2018 (CCBC, 2018).

Background of the Study

Funding public colleges continues to be a problem as tuition rates increase and states carry less of the financial burden (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Kamenetz, 2010a; Ma & Baum, 2016; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). Meanwhile, state officials encourage students to attend community colleges as an important

pathway to a postsecondary education and an investment in the American economy (Ma & Baum, 2016). According to a College Board Research Brief, between 2015 and 2016, the average in-district public two-year tuition and fees ranged from $1,420 in California to $7,530 in Vermont (Ma & Baum, 2016). Over a five-year time-period, tuition and fees at community colleges increased by $300 in 11 states and by more than $1,000 in five states (Ma & Baum, 2016). Meanwhile, state and local funding continue to shrink (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Since the beginning of America's first community college, Juliet Junior College in 1901, community colleges have utilized various funding models to support their students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Community colleges rely mainly on state and local government funds, and tuition and fees. In 2016, the following revenue sources supported community colleges: tuition, 29.5%; state, 29.8%; local, 18.1%; federal, 14.1%; and other, 8.4% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018). As state government funding decreases and student tuition rates increase, state legislators are exploring and considering alternatives to the tuition-based model, analyzing the possibility of a tuition-free community college education. State legislators play an important role in this process because public college funding is controlled by each state and subject to approval by the legislature and the college's Board of Trustees (Thelin, 2011).

Free community college tuition is not a new concept. Tuition assistance was offered to veterans returning home from World War II through the G. I. Bill in the mid-1940s. Many veterans attended community colleges to be retrained for

the jobs that emerged after the war (Zook, 1947). The G. I. Bill provided support to veterans for education and training, assistance with housing, farms and businesses, and pay for unemployment (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2013). According to Thelin (2011), California's community colleges also offered tuition-free education with the exception of nominal student fees until the late-1970s.

A resurgence of the concept of a tuition-free community college education occurred with the unveiling of "America's College Promise," a program introduced in Congress in 2015, under then-President Barack Obama. The initiative proposed making the first two years of community college free to students who meet certain criteria (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). The program was proposed as a federal-state partnership with federal funding covering 75% of the tuition and state government covering the remaining 25%. However, this proposed federal legislation was never passed into law because of opposition from conservative Republicans. After the "America's College Promise Act" was introduced, 12 states considered legislation that would create tuition-free community college programs in 2016, including the State of Maryland (Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

The State of Maryland, specifically, introduced several pieces of legislation related to creating tuition-free community college programs during the 2016 Legislative Session. Only two bills, Senate Bill 639, which focused on Prince George's County and the College Affordability Act were enacted. The SB 639 established a task force to study the creation and implementation of a Promise

Scholarship Program that provided financial aid for public high school graduates to attend community colleges (General Assembly of Maryland, 2016). The Prince George's County Promise Scholarship Program task force began meeting in the fall of 2016. A pilot Promise program began during the fall 2017 for public high school students to attend Prince George's Community College. About 100 students were awarded Promise scholarships. Because of rising tuition costs, the College Affordability Act of 2016 was introduced and the legislation passed. It proposed making college more accessible for middle-class families through such measures as a matching state contribution to savings accounts and a refundable tax credit (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017b).

Of the other bills proposed in Maryland, one piece of legislation suggested a non-refundable tax credit for community college tuition and fees; a Senate and House bill proposed the establishment of a community college vocational certificate and associate's degree tuition waiver program; and a House bill proposed a 50% tuition waiver for those Maryland residents enrolled in a community college within two years after graduating from high school or successfully completing a GED (Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

During the 2017 Legislative Session, several actions were taken related to funding tuition-free community college education. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan included $87,000 in his supplemental budget to provide tuition-free community college education to students attending Wor-Wic Community College in Wicomico County (Holland, 2017). The program applied to students starting

classes in the fall 2017. This funding did pass and was included in the Governor's budget. Another piece of legislation that passed provided tuition waivers to foster care recipients.

Governor Hogan asked the assembly to consider making interest on student loans tax-deductible, and to cap tuition increases at state colleges and universities at 2% (Wiggins, 2017). Both pieces of legislation did not pass.

An extensive bill that focused on the development of the Maryland Community College Promise Program was the Higher Education Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2017 (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017c). This legislation did not pass. Legislators and education officials anticipated a modified version of this bill would resurface again during the 2018 Legislative Session (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017).

Several versions of this legislation were introduced in the House and Senate during the 2018 Legislative Session. House Bill 16, Community College—Near Completers and Maryland Community College Promise Scholarships, passed and became effective July 1, 2018 (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). This legislation provides funding in the state budget to assist individuals who have almost completed a community college, as well as establishes a Maryland Community College Scholarship Program. This is Maryland's Promise Scholarship Program.

In previous years, dialogue centered on a tuition-free community college education began as a viable tuition model to ensure everyone has an opportunity

to receive a degree or certificate, which could add to the state's workforce development; but not all have agreed.

While Maryland's Democratic Party overwhelming supported tuition-free college education, there was some Republican opposition. Tuition-free community college has support across party lines, and political affiliation does impact that support. During the 2018 Legislative Session, about a third of those who identified as Republican did not support tuition-free community college education (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). As a result, there appeared to be a partisan viewpoint regarding tuition-free education at community colleges by legislators in the State of Maryland, requiring the need to explore further this phenomenon. There was a need to better understand voting behaviors about tuition-free community college education, which could lead to more targeted lobbying and stronger influential campaigns to influence voting patterns among legislators regarding funding public higher education.

Several studies surfaced relating to how community college presidents, administrators, and faculty members feel about tuition-free community college education (Bell, 2016; Jaschik & Lederman, 2016). But, there was limited research regarding the various voting patterns among state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education and why they make certain decisions that impact funding (Lindsey-Taliefero & Tucker, 2013). Further research was needed to explore the voting intentions of state legislators regarding tuition-free community college education. This need was especially

important as Maryland state legislators proposed and considered various bills to authorize free college tuition during the 2016, 2017, and 2018 Legislative Sessions. Theory of reasoned action guided this study of exploring the factors that might influence voting patterns among legislators with regards to the introduction of tuition-free community college education.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of reasoned action is a persuasion model and is used to explain and inform efforts to change human behavior in any given arena (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In 1975 renowned psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen collaborated and co-authored the book, *Belief Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. From this research, the authors collectively developed the theory of reasoned action in 1980. The theory of reasoned action is now used in a variety of disciplines and is considered one of the most authoritative theories in studying voluntary behavior (Otieno, Liyala, Odongo, & Abeka, 2016). More than 1,000 empirical studies based on the theory of reasoned action have appeared in academic journals (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Theory of reasoned action frames the questions that this researcher asked the legislators, because state legislators have always played a crucial role in funding America's community colleges (Zook, 1947). In Maryland, the state's community college operational budgets are presented to and approved by the Maryland General Assembly (Maryland State Archives, 2018b).

As there are many philosophies that drive voting patterns among legislators regarding state sponsored education in the State of Maryland, it appears that a study to assess the behavior of Maryland legislators to support or not to support this effort may be beneficial to the community. To assess and explore the voting intentions among legislators, this study used the theoretical lens of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The primary function of the theory is to explain behavioral intentions, which in turn, determine the behavior. Figure 1 below illustrates the major components of the theory. This theory posits that attitudes (e.g., belief strength and belief evaluation) and subjective norms (e.g., what experts think, and motivation to comply) may impact the intention to exhibit certain behavior, and in turn, the behavior itself.

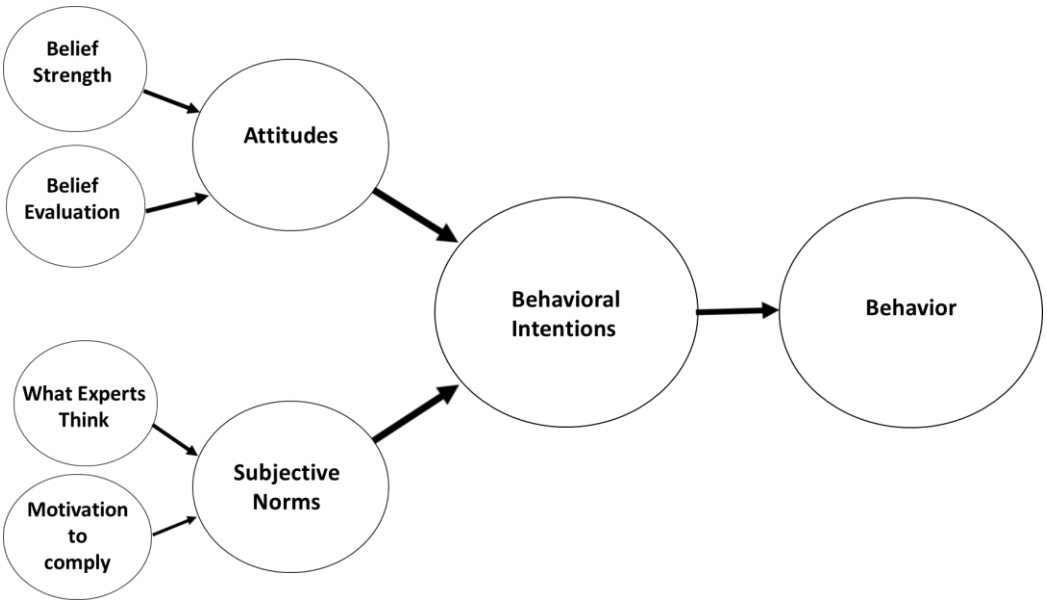


Figure 1. Theoretical framework: Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory begins with identifying the specific behavior the researcher is studying (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The behavior must have four elements: the action that will be performed, the target at which the action is directed, the context of the action, and the time-period in which the action will occur (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). For the purposes of this dissertation, the behavior is supporting the funding of tuition-free community college education during the 2018 Legislative Session. Supporting is being defined as voting in favor of, sponsoring, or co-sponsoring legislation.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), the next step is to analyze the beliefs participants may have about the behavior. This is called the belief strength. Beliefs are being defined as the advantages, disadvantages, and thoughts about the behavior. Beliefs help individuals determine their attitude toward performing the behavior. For instance, if a legislator believes voting for funding tuition-free community college education will result in a positive outcome, the attitude toward carrying out the behavior will be favorable.

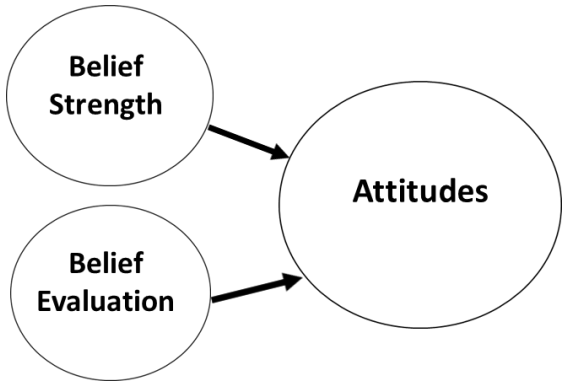


Figure 2. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action: Attitudes Component

Not only is attitude determined by what one believes about the behavior, but attitude also is determined by if one believes the behavior is positive or negative, called belief evaluation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hale, Householder, & Green, 2014; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). The theory suggests that if a belief strength and/or belief evaluation is altered, one's overall attitude about performing the behavior can change; therefore, the actual behavior may change.

Secondly, individuals form beliefs that important people in their lives would approve or disapprove of them in performing the behavior. This is called subjective norms. Subjective norms occur when individuals feel as if the group with the most influence over them wants them to perform a certain behavior (e.g., what experts think); it also includes the social pressure individuals may feel from the *influential* groups in a "motivation to comply" (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Hale et al., 2014; Madden et al., 1992). For instance, if legislators believe the people who are important to them would approve of their voting in support of funding tuition-free community college education, they are more likely to perform that behavior, coupled with the pressure legislators may feel from these individuals to perform the behavior (see Figure 3).

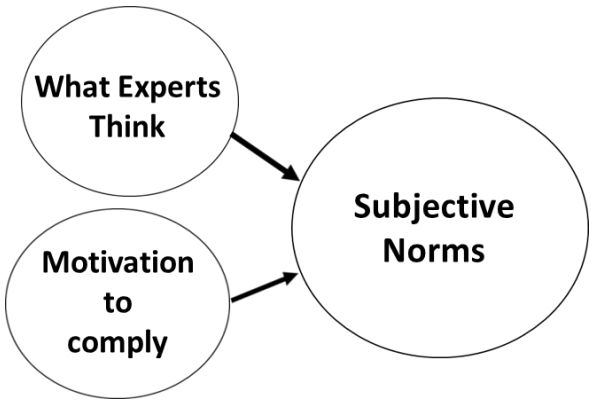


Figure 3. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action: Subjective Norms Component

Both attitudes and subjective norms lead to behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions are the behaviors that the individual intends to accomplish. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitudes and subjective norms, the person's intention to perform the behavior would be stronger. Behavioral intentions are the best predictor of an individual choosing to perform a certain behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hale et al., 2014).

The final outcome of the theory is behavior. Behavior is the specific action that is to be performed. Both variables—attitudes and subjective norms—are important in predicting the impact of behavioral intentions, which influence the individual's behavior.

Research demonstrates that specific demographic characteristics have had an impact on voting intentions and patterns. The most basic element of voting for a specific candidate or issue is identification with the political party (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Party identification influences partisan attitudes, and attitudes toward candidates and issues (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Additionally, in exploring behavior, most studies gather demographics such as gender, race or ethnicity, and age. Segmenting the population into subgroups can determine whether the behavior that is being studied varies across subgroups. Demographic differences may help to explain observed differences (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Evaluating demographic factors are often indicative of cultural groups, and culture influences people's attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. Also, years of service was studied because a hierarchy exists within the legislature wherein freshmen legislators are aggressively trying to make a name for themselves, while senior leadership—through committees and subcommittees—control the legislation that makes it to the House and Senate floor for a full vote (Fitch, 2010). Therefore, the freshman and senior legislator may be influenced by different factors that will impact voting intentions and voting patterns.

Overall, a fundamental belief for an elected official is to "vote your conscience." This saying was made popular by the fourth president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, when he said: "Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost" (John Adams Society, 2017, p. 1). This phrase essentially means to vote according to what the elected official believes. "Vote your conscience" coincides with the theory of reasoned action because this theory explains beliefs and values.

Studies (Fitch, 2010) show legislators' attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions are shaped by experts and influences, including (a) colleagues, (b) constituents, (c) lobbyists, and (d) personal beliefs.

1. **Colleagues** are readily available and are able to give information to another legislator in a digested and evaluative format, especially if the colleague has the same party affiliation, serves on the same committee, and shares many of the same attitudes and subjective norms (Kingdon, 1997). Partisan attitudes constitute one of the most important variables of voting choice (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).
2. **Constituents** are people who live and vote in an area. Shulman (2009) stated elected officials are always torn between acting in the best interest of their constituents or voting according to their conscience. Elected officials serving in the best interest of their constituency is the fundamental rule of a democracy.
3. **Lobbyists** are people who influence elected officials on behalf of interest groups and organizations. Nothhaft (2017) equated lobbying to public relations because much of the interaction that occurs is based on the personal relationship an elected official has with the lobbyist. Lobbyists and elected officials communicate with one another and share information (Nothhaft, 2017).

4. **Personal beliefs** measure the legislators' personal habits and history to determine the potential impact of these attitudes on their behavioral intentions (Madden et al., 1992).

The theory of reasoned action has been used in studies analyzing political behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Some of those studies suggest that politics can predict voting intention and behavior (Madden et al., 1992). This model evolved into the theory of planned behavior, as scholars criticized the theory, suggesting that the theory of reasoned action alone did not take into account behavior in which an individual did not have control (Madden et al., 1992). The theory of planned behavior added an additional variable, perceived behavioral intentions, to capture this behavior.

Theory of reasoned action was chosen as the framework to be used in this study, instead of the theory of planned behavior, because legislators have control over whether to vote for or against a certain piece of legislation. The researcher used the basic and original components of the theory of reasoned action as the theoretical framework for this dissertation. This study did not analyze the last element of the theory—behavior.

As government funding decreases and student tuition increases, state legislators continue to consider alternatives to the tuition-based model, analyzing the possibility of tuition-free community college education. Political dynamics, attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions play a significant role in how legislators vote. Theory of reasoned action is particularly of interest to those

wishing to influence or understand legislators' behaviors, and the factors that contribute to those behaviors, particularly politically based attitudes and subjective norms (Madden et al., 1992). Therefore, in using the theory of reasoned action, one will have a better understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland's state legislators regarding funding a tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland.

Purpose of the Study

The State of Maryland and Maryland's community colleges share an interesting relationship. Maryland's community colleges depend on approximately one-third of their funding from state appropriations, which state legislators control (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a). The purpose of this quantitative study, using the theory of reasoned action as its lens, was to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions (policy positions) held by state legislators about potential legislation to implement a tuition-free community college education.

Research Questions

The current proposed study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators based on their demographic characteristics?
2. Is there a relationship between attitudes and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?
3. Is there a relationship between subjective norms and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?

Significance of the Study

This study analyzed the influences behind the voting intentions and voting patterns of state elected officials. The attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of state legislators are essential and necessary if one is to take an accurate view of why free education may be imperative to financially struggling students and to developing communities and states economically. Through this study, one will have an enhanced understanding of voting intentions of state legislators and could provide community college stakeholders with a better perspective on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education. By understanding these influences, stakeholders can design more

targeted campaigns and strategies to influence legislator's attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions, which can result in enhanced advocacy for funding Maryland's community colleges. Additionally, the results of this study may have consequences for the broader development of legislation related to higher education institutions, as well as add to the body of work regarding the allocation for funding community colleges.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study had several limitations and delimitations in connection with identified and surveyed members of the Maryland House of Delegates and the Maryland State Senate. Limitations are those characteristics of methodology that impacted the interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2012). A key limitation was, although the legislators may have agreed to participate in the study, some legislators may not have answered the survey questions honestly and candidly, while self-reporting the data (Creswell, 2012). This was brought to the researcher's attention because the survey was conducted during an election year, which may have further influenced the legislators' responses. A delimitation of a study is under the control of the researcher. The study was limited to legislators in the State of Maryland, which limited the generalization to only one state being studied.

Definition of Key Terms

An understanding of the following terms is essential to the operational approach of the study:

Appropriation: Program money authorized by the Maryland General Assembly (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2017).

Attitudes: Experiences that influence behavior, resulting from the legislators' expectation of outcomes, and the legislators' evaluations of those outcomes (Madden et al., 1992).

Federal Funds: Federal government payments and grants spent through the State budget. Federal funds often require a state-funding match (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2017).

General Fund: State funds used for state activity, primarily state income and sales tax revenues (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2017).

Grants: Funds disbursed by the state for specific purposes to local governments, non-profit organizations, and individuals (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2017).

Legislative Committee: Committees such as standing, statutory, special, and county and regional delegations in which most legislative work is done. Special committees are usually temporary and go out of existence when their purposes have been completed (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Legislative Process: The laws of Maryland are enacted through the legislative process. Every four years, 188 legislators are elected to serve in the State's legislative branch to make laws (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Legislative Session: Legislators meet in regular session for 90 calendar days each year beginning the second Wednesday in January to act on more than 2,500 pieces of legislation and the State's annual capital and operating budgets (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC): MACC represents Maryland's 16 community colleges, and works with businesses, communities, government, and other organizations to improve student success, provide job training, and promote economic development across the state (MACC, 2016).

Maryland General Assembly: The General Assembly is Maryland's legislative body and represents the citizens of Maryland. The state has 47 districts represented by 47 Senators and 141 Delegates (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC): MHEC is the State of Maryland's higher education coordinating board responsible for establishing statewide policies for Maryland's public and private colleges and universities, and for-profit career schools. MHEC also administers state financial aid programs (MHEC, 2016).

Maryland House of Delegates: The lower house of the state legislature in Maryland (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE): The Department develops and implements standards and policies for Maryland's education programs from pre-kindergarten through high school (MSDE, 2016).

Maryland State Senate: The upper house of the state legislature in Maryland (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

State Aid: Grants and other funding provided by State government to assist cities, counties, public schools, and other groups to provide various services and programs to the citizens of Maryland (Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2017).

Subjective Norms: Legislators' motivations on how people and beliefs that are important to them influence how they vote on specific issues (Madden et al., 1992).

Tuition-free: The attendance of a student at an institution without paying the cost.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. The theory of reasoned action served as the lens for examining the legislators' attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions that support or oppose funding a tuition-free community college education.

This chapter identified three research questions and discussed the study's limitations and delimitations. Chapter I also discussed the significance of the study and defined key terms. A review of the literature surrounding "America's College Promise Act of 2015," history of public education funding, and community college funding are presented in Chapter II. Chapter III describes the methodology required to conduct the study. Chapter IV describes the research findings and Chapter V includes discussions, conclusions and implications, and finally, recommendations.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Few studies exist on the history and impact of a tuition-free community college education. With anticipated job growth in the American economy by the year 2020, citizens must be trained and equipped to perform the jobs of the future. More than 65% of those jobs will require a postsecondary degree or training beyond a high school diploma (MACC, 2017). Students may receive that additional training through community colleges. Since the introduction of "America's College Promise Act of 2015" at the federal level and because of an increase in college tuition costs, state governments and educational officials are discussing and enacting statewide legislation to provide a tuition-free community college education.

This literature review provides information on the issues surrounding tuition-free community college education. It is important to present the background and facts on the concept of a tuition-free community college education in order to lay a solid foundation for a discussion about this issue. The background begins with the introduction of public education funding undergirded by government's role in the nation's educational system. As the information is presented, one will have an understanding about the community college's progression to depending on state and local government funds. The concept of tuition-free community college is explored from the start of the Truman

Commission in 1947 through the introduction of “America’s College Promise Act of 2015.” States are enacting legislation to develop Promise programs to establish components of “America’s College Promise.” This section will explore the background of various Promise programs and explain some of the programs’ outcomes. Also, this section presents arguments for and against a tuition-free community college education. The State of Maryland’s progress relating to this national issue is part of this narrative. This section ends with additional information about the theoretical framework.

Funding Public Education and the Role of Government

The Articles of Confederation, the Ordinance of 1785, helped to establish a mechanism to fund public education (Tyack & James, 1985). As land was divided into townships and sections, one plot was reserved for a school. When settlers bought the land, this income was used to develop a school fund. The other plots were reserved for federal government use. According to Tyack and James (1985), “During the first century of the new nation, Congress granted more than 77 million acres of the public domain as an endowment for the support of public schools” (p. 1). At this juncture, federal authorities only allocated land and were not involved in the finance and governance of public schools.

Congress and the federal government became involved because over time, corruption and mismanagement of the school fund occurred in some states. Congress and state officials began putting prices and conditions on the land. States enforced regulations, such as length of school term and teacher

qualifications so that local entities could receive school funds. Because of this mismanagement of funds, states had to make reports back to the federal government (Tyack & James, 1985). As more states joined the Union and developed constitutions, it was in these constitutions that education and democracy were connected. Officials saw public education as a mechanism to spread democratic values (Tyack & James, 1985).

Democratic values circulated throughout the country with the growth of the nation's colleges and universities. In 1862, then Vermont Senator Justin Smith Morrill believed in universal education, which included women and slaves, so he introduced the Morrill Act, and President Abraham Lincoln signed it into law (Kamenetz, 2010a). Under Morrill's Act, more than $17 million of public lands were sold to endow new state colleges (Kamenetz, 2010a). This endowment and money from the second Morrill Act of 1890 funded 69 American universities over the next 100 years (Rudolph, 1990). These federal land-grant institutions would enroll one in five college students by 1955 (Rudolph, 1990).

While the nation's colleges were growing, so were the options for public higher education. The nation's first community colleges were considered extensions of secondary schools; therefore, they received support from public school budgets (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). As independent community colleges organized, states began offering them support. During most of the pre-World War II era, student tuition and fees provided more funds to community colleges than funding from the states. The funding of community colleges varied from

state to state. Texas colleges received 77% of their financial support from student tuition, while in California tax dollars provided community colleges with 81% of their operating funds (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

After World War II, the country began considering tuition-free community college education. In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education released a report called the Truman Commission Report. The report stressed the importance of making public education free through grade 14. Many two-year college leaders were advocating a no-tuition or low-tuition policy for their institutions since many felt they were extensions of free public schools (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Veterans received free tuition through the G. I. Bill, when returning home from World War II to attend community colleges for retraining (Zook, 1947). The G. I. Bill provided support to veterans for education and training, assistance with housing, farms, and businesses, and pay for unemployment (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2013). Under the G. I. Bill, the number of community colleges, as well as student enrollment, doubled (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

One state had tuition-free community college education and has served as a model for other states to follow—the State of California. California offered free tuition to in-state students from 1921 up until the late-1970s (Green, 2016). California's community college history parallels the start of America's public

higher education system in that in 1920, the California legislature gave profits from public land activity to junior colleges, when a federal law determined that this money would be turned over to the states (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

In the early 1960s, the California Master Plan supported keeping the University of California system tuition-free (Green, 2016). The state provided around one-third of the funding for operations through the middle 1970s, with the balance made up by the local districts. At the end of the 1970s, a proposition eliminated colleges receiving funds from their local tax base and shifted most of their funding to the state government.

California's Proposition 13 limited property tax to 1% of assessed valuation, and a 2% maximum annual increase (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). This effort capped their local support and forced community colleges to look to the states for funding. In California, the state's share of community college revenues increased from 40% to nearly 80%.

California's Proposition 13 not only affected California's community college funding but started impacting community colleges' state funding throughout the nation because other states began implementing a similar proposition (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington passed legislation similar to California's Proposition 13.

As state funding changed for community colleges, funding formulas also were adjusted in most states. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), there are

four state support models: negotiated budget, unit-rate formula, minimum foundation, and cost-based program funding. Negotiated budget funding is arranged annually with the state legislature or a state board. Under the unit-rate formula, the state allocates funds to colleges on-the-basis-of a formula that specifies a certain number of dollars per unit of measure. A modification of the unit-rate formula is the minimum foundation plan. State allocations are determined by a variable rate based on the amount of local tax funding given to the institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The cost-based funding formula is derived from actual expenses (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), community colleges have traditionally been funded by a combination of local funds, state aid, and tuition, with percentages in these sources shifting back and forth. The current funding trend has seen an increase in student tuition as a key source of revenue. This has caused students to rely on loans to finance their education, resulting in tremendous debt upon graduation.

Tuition costs have skyrocketed. According to Kamenetz (2010a), the average tuition for full-time students stayed under $100 per year from the beginning of the community colleges throughout the 1950s; it moved to $100-199 in the 1960s and $200-299 in the 1970s. By 1980, it was over $300; by 1987, it had more than doubled to almost $700, and by 2000, it doubled again. In 2007, it was $2,361 (Kamenetz, 2010a). However, there were differences among states with $721 in California to $5,338 in New Hampshire (Kamenetz, 2010a).

Costs for housing, food, healthcare, child care, transportation, textbooks, and supplies have also increased. According to Kamenetz (2010a), out-of-state and international students pay tuition at a higher rate, as do certain categories of part-time, adult, and evening division students.

In some states, legislatures have established maximum caps; however, community college tuition is usually lower than public four-year institutions. Legislators want community colleges to serve as a low-cost alternative for beginning college students. Nationally, community college tuition is 40% less (Kamenetz, 2010a). With increases in tuition, students have gotten into more debt with grants and federal and state aid given to students. Thirty-eight percent of all community college students enrolled in credit courses receive financial aid. In the 1990s, the federal government became a direct lender. In 2016, students had $1.2 trillion in student loan debt, an average of $35,000 per student (Green, 2016). With the rising costs of tuition, Samuels (2013) believes America's colleges and universities have lost their way. According to Samuels (2013):

> Universities are in crisis because they have lost their central identity. They were once defined by the twin goals of research and instruction, but now these two main activities are often lost in a sea of competing interests. It turns out that when an educational system or institution loses sight of its center, it spins out in many directions, and these new interests can be very expensive and disorienting. (p. vii)

To get America's educational system back on track, Samuels introduced the idea of making all public higher education free through a book called *Why Public Higher Education Should Be Free*. Samuels is the president of the University Council—American Federation of Teachers union representing more than 3,000 lecturers and librarians in the University of California System.

Tuition-Free Community College Education

In 2014, a University of Wisconsin Professor, Sara Goldrick-Rab, introduced the idea of free public higher education to the Lumina Foundation and privately at the White House (Blumenstyk, 2014). Following her proposal, a new organization called Redeeming America's Promise (2017), presented a proposal to create an American Promise Scholarship Program, a program that could provide federally funded grants for students to attend two- and four-year colleges. The scholarship amounts would be equal to the cost of the college tuition, thereby capping the cost of tuition (Blumenstyk, 2014). Basically, Redeeming America's Promise (2017) wanted to start a national conversation about free college.

The reason for the start of such dialogue was that research was estimating that by 2020, nearly 65% of all jobs would require post-secondary training, or certification, but less than a four-year degree (AACC, 2018; MACC, 2017; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015; Weeden & Hultin, 2015). According to Weeden and Hultin (2015), "for this reason, states have been considering many strategies for improving opportunities for students to

have options for both college and careers after high school" (p. 1). Therefore, leaders are looking to community colleges to fill this burgeoning need.

On July 8, 2015, Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, a Democrat from Virginia, introduced to the 114th Congress House Resolution 2962—American's College Promise Act of 2015. There were 111 co-sponsors, consisting of 110 Democrats and one Independent. It was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and referred to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training on November 16, 2015 (Congressional Research Service, 2015). The bill authorized the Department of Education to award grants to states and Indian tribes to waive tuition and fees at community colleges. The bill mandated states to waive tuition and fees for all eligible students. The bill appropriated $1.4 billion in FY 2016 and $79.7 billion over FY 2016-FY 2025 (Congressional Research Service, 2015). The legislation also included giving grants to four-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions to waive or reduce tuition and fees for up to 60 credits for low-income students (Congressional Research Service, 2015).

A related bill, Senate 1716, was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat from Wisconsin. There were 16 Democratic co-sponsors. The bill was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Both Senate and House committees were Republican-controlled with a Republican committee chairman (Congressional Research Service, 2015). Through this federal-state partnership, the federal government

would cover 75% of the tuition and state government would cover the remaining 25% (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). However, the federal legislation was never passed into law. According to the Campaign for Free College Tuition (2017), the goal has transitioned to having states develop their own programs.

Promise Scholarship Programs

After the "America's College Promise Act" was introduced, 12 states considered legislation that would create tuition-free community college programs in 2016 (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). Those states included Arizona, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, Washington, and Wisconsin. The legislative proposals ranged from Arizona requiring community college districts to waive the first two years of tuition and fees for students who live in Arizona, to an assembly bill in California, establishing a need-based aid program to provide financial resources up to $1,000 per student a year (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). As of 2018, 16 states have statewide scholarship Promise programs, and those states include Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Washington (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017). In May 2018, Maryland's statewide legislation was signed into law (Cox, 2018).

Nationally, Promise programs exist in nearly 350 communities, cities, and counties. These programs have been funded and implemented by community colleges and/or local governments (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017).

Each community has adopted its set of criteria for the scholarship program investment, as well as a name for the program. Names include Tennessee Promise Program, the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program, Kalamazoo Promise Scholarship to Maryland Invests; a name recommended by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges for Maryland's Community College Promise Scholarship Program. Maryland's program is called Maryland's Community College Promise Scholarship Program.

Criteria of Promise scholarships fall into two general categories, "first-dollar" and "last-dollar" (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017). The "first-dollar" covers the direct costs of being a student, while "last-dollar" is the final financial assistance given to a student when all other sources of financial aid have been exhausted (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017; Weeden & Hultin, 2015). For students to qualify, some programs have academic criteria, while others use financial need of students for eligibility. Program components may include students paying a nominal fee for courses, engaging with a mentor, and participating in community service work (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017). Overall, most programs require students to live in the community where the scholarships are offered (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017; MACC, 2017). According to Miller-Adams (2015), these scholarships and programs are considered place-based and focus on students maintaining residency in a specific community, which boosts the economic development of communities, cities, states, and regions.

National Tuition-Free Community College Legislation

Kalamazoo, Michigan, established the first Promise Scholarship-type program in 2005 (Campaign for Free College, 2017). According to Kantrowitz (2017), public school students living in Kalamazoo, Michigan were provided with a “first-dollar” scholarship to pay tuition and fees to public colleges in Kalamazoo. An anonymous donor provided the money for the scholarships, but students pay room and board, and other ancillary expenses. To be eligible, students must have attended and graduated from one of the public high schools in Kalamazoo from grades 9-12. The amount of the scholarship is diminished depending on when the student began public schools in Kalamazoo. There is no income requirement. Students must use their scholarship within 10 years of graduating from high school (Kantrowitz, 2017).

Started in 2009, Detroit College Promise offers scholarships to students who graduate from public, private, parochial, or charter schools in Detroit. These “last-dollar” scholarships give Detroit public high school students a chance to attend one of Detroit’s five community colleges. The program is funded primarily by the business community with monies from the Michigan Education Excellence Foundation and the Detroit Promise Zone, where a portion of tax dollars are set aside to fund the two-year scholarships. In the 2015-2016 school year, there were 183 students awarded scholarships totaling, $79,800 (Detroit College Promise, 2017; Detroit Regional Chamber, 2017).

In 2014, Tennessee was the first state to enact statewide legislation to provide “last-dollar” grants for students to pay for the unmet need of students’ tuition and fees (Campaign for Free College Tuition, 2017; MACC, 2017; Weeden & Hultin, 2015). Students must be enrolled full-time, maintain continuous enrollment each semester, maintain a 2.0-grade point average, and complete at least eight hours of community service work each semester. Scholars are assigned a mentor and must attend a college orientation session (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). According to Weeden and Hultin (2015), the program is paid for by lottery reserve funds ($300 million) and state general fund dollars ($47 million). Tennessee Promise boosted enrollment by 10% with 17,000 new students enrolled in fall 2015 (MACC, 2017).

In 2015, Oregon created a tuition waiver program known as Oregon Promise. Under this program, students must be an Oregon resident, enroll in a community college within six months of graduating from high school or pass a high school equivalency exam, have a high school grade point average of at least 2.5 or higher, and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The program is similar to Tennessee’s program; however, there are some differences. Each recipient receives a minimum grant of $1,000 even if the full cost of tuition is covered. This $1,000 can be used for expenses such as textbooks. Each scholar must pay $50 per term for courses, and students also

can be enrolled part-time. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission determines which students will receive the $1,000 each year. The state allocated $10 million for the 2016-2017 school year (Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

In 2016 through legislation, Minnesota created a program called the College Occupational Scholarship Pilot Program that provides “last-dollar” scholarships to cover tuition and fees not covered by state or federal grant aid for students seeking to work in high-demand program areas. Scholarship recipients must have an adjusted gross income of less than $90,000 and enroll within two years of completing high school or passing the equivalency test. Students must complete at least 30 hours at the community college and have a 2.5 grade point average or higher. Also, students will engage with a mentor (Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

Kentucky passed legislation in 2016, which established the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program. The Kentucky program is a “last-dollar” scholarship for recent high school graduates that will cover any unmet tuition and fees. Students receiving Work Ready Scholarships will be required to complete a certain number of college credit hours through dual enrollment courses beginning during the 2020-2021 school year (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). If students do not maintain the required 2.5-grade point average, they must return the scholarship money. The state allocated $9.4 million for FY 2017 and $15.9 million for FY 2018 (Weeden & Hultin, 2015).

New York has gone beyond the community college model and is offering free tuition to students attending all public colleges and universities in the State of New York. In April 2017, the Governor of New York signed into law, the Excelsior Scholarship, a “last-dollar” scholarship program providing free tuition to students at public colleges and universities in the State of New York (Levine, 2017). Families must earn an annual income of $100,000 or less. To be eligible, students must anticipate attending school full-time and attend college directly after graduating from high school. Applicants do not have to be a native or resident of New York to apply for the program; however, students must plan to live and work in New York after graduation (Levine, 2017). Students must stay in New York for as many years they have received help with tuition (Levine, 2017).

Maryland’s Community Colleges and Tuition-Free Community College Legislation

While Maryland’s 16 community colleges are moving to a tuition-free model, they do provide cost-effective public education to its citizens (Tschechtelin, 1983). Maryland has had public junior colleges since 1927, and in the 1960s a state system authorized local boards of education to establish colleges that would be partially funded by the state and by the issuance of bonds. Also, state funds are provided to local community college districts for campus construction on a matching basis with local funds (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). In 2017, Maryland’s community colleges educated more than 500,000 students through training, certificate, transfer degree, and lifelong learning programs

(MACC, 2017). Maryland's community colleges enroll more than half of all students attending college in the state; and award more than 12,000 degrees and certificates annually (MACC, 2017).

Maryland's community colleges are funded primarily through state appropriations, local governments, student tuition, and fees (MACC, 2017). The John A. Cade formula is used to determine the amount of the unrestricted aid awarded to community colleges to supplement their operating costs (MHEC, 2006). The MHEC administers the formula-based program. The formula is calculated based on 25% of the State aid per full-time equivalent students at selected four-year public institutions times the number of community college students. The community colleges also receive competitive grant funding through state funds (MHEC, 2006).

During the 2016 Legislative Session, the following legislation was pushed by Maryland Democrats and passed. In response to rising tuition costs, the College Affordability Act of 2016 proposed to make every college more accessible for middle-class families. The bill established a matching State contribution for eligible college savings accounts; created a refundable tax credit of up to $5,000 for undergraduate student loan debt; altered authorized uses of, and clarified eligibility criteria for, specified student financial aid; and established conditions under which students with unpaid balances may continue to attend public institutions of higher education. The bill went into effect July 1, 2016 (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017b).

Other proposed legislation in 2016 included creating a non-refundable tax credit for community college tuition and fees; a Senate and House bill establishing a community college vocational certificate and associate's degree tuition waiver program; and a House bill establishing a 50% tuition waiver for those Maryland residents who have been enrolled in a community college within two years after graduating from high school or successfully completing a GED (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). Legislators did approve an interim study for Prince George's County through House Bill 1087. Chapter 647 of the bill established a task force to study the creation and implementation of a Promise School Program that would provide financial aid for public high school graduates attending community college in Prince George's County (General Assembly of Maryland, 2016).

As a result of task force meetings, three town halls, extensive research and testimony on Promise programs, the Task Force concluded that it was feasible to start a "last-dollar" Promise program in Prince George's County. The scholarships cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees for Prince George's County public high school graduates who enroll at Prince George's Community College (Prince George's Community College, 2015). The program supports certificates, degrees, continuing education, remediation courses, and students will have to participate in community service credits. Funding sources include Prince George's County Government, Prince George's Community College Foundation, the business community, philanthropic community and private

donors, and profits from the gaming industry (Prince George's Community College, 2015). The program began fall 2017.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, several bills were introduced related to tuition-free community college education. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan's supplemental budget included $87,000 to provide students attending Wor-Wic Community College with free tuition (Holland, 2017). The program applied to students starting classes in fall 2017.

The most extensive piece of legislation introduced in Maryland was the Higher Education Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2017. The bill established the Maryland Community College Promise Program, which would provide 100% tuition for students who met certain criteria to attend Maryland's community colleges. The initiatives in the legislation were designed to reduce the costs of attending a public institution in the State of Maryland. The bill also included initiatives for near-completer students, tuition caps for four-year universities and community colleges, and increases in state funding for need-based scholarships (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017c). Funding started at $60,000 in FY 2018 and increased to $100.4 million by FY 2022 with a fully operational program (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017c). This legislation did not pass; however, this legislation did resurface again during the 2018 Legislative Session (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018b).

Additionally, Governor Hogan, during the 2017 legislative session, asked the assembly to consider making interest on student loans tax-deductible and to cap tuition increases at state colleges and universities at 2% (Wiggins, 2017). Both pieces of legislation did not pass. A bill that did pass during the 2017 session allowed a tuition waiver for foster care recipients who have aged out of the foster care system (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017d).

According to the Department of Legislative Services (2016), Maryland has three existing Promise-type programs. The Allegany County Opportunity Scholarship is a “last-dollar” scholarship in which up to 50% of the Allegany College of Maryland cost per credit hour is provided through scholarships. Funding is also utilized by the college’s Center for Continuing Education to support county residents who are taking professional and workforce training programs. The Garrett County Scholarship Program provides recent Garrett County high school graduates equal access to post-secondary education and an equal opportunity for advancement. Garrett County funds dual enrollment of high school students and full tuition and fees for county high school students enrolling directly from high school into Garrett College (Department of Legislative Services, 2016).

In 2016, Wicomico County Government began offering the Wicomico Economic Impact Scholarship. The “last-dollar” scholarships cover tuition and fees and are offered to eligible high school graduates, who graduated from high school, in Wicomico County to get free tuition to Wor-Wic Community College.

Funding is from the county government budget. The county investment was $252,000 in the first year, $540,000 in the second year, and will be $665,000 for the third year (Maryland Department of Legislative Services, 2016).

Baltimore City began a Promise program in 2018 for students to attend Baltimore City Community College tuition-free (Baltimore City Community College, 2018). Residents can earn an associate's degree or a certificate through the Mayor's Scholars Program. The initiative began with a Summer Bridge Program in 2018 and is open to all 2018 public high school graduates regardless of income or grade point average (Baltimore City Community College, 2018). Students who graduate from the program with an associate's degree can attend Coppin State College tuition-free (Baltimore City Community College, 2018).

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) began the Baltimore County College Promise Program in the fall of 2018. To quality, students must live in Baltimore County, must be a recent graduate of a public, parochial or private high within the past two years, must have a high school GPA of 2.5 or better, have a gross family income of less than $69,000, and must enroll full-time as a new student to CCBC. This is a "last dollar" scholarship and can only be used to cover tuition and fees (CCBC, 2018).

During the 2018 Legislative Session, several pieces of legislation were introduced related to tuition-free community college education. Senate Bill 317, introduced by Democratic Senator Paul Pinsky was called the Higher Education

Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2018 (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018b). In this legislation, the Governor would provide $30 million in the state budget beginning in 2020 for 100% tuition-free community college education (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018b). This legislation did pass out of the Senate; however, some of the language from this legislation was used in the bill that did pass. Senate Bill 317 was cross-filed with House Bill 951, introduced by Democratic Delegate Jimmy Tarlau (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018c). This legislation included a 19% state income tax on certain income that would be used to pay for the Promise scholarships. Students would be offered 100% tuition beginning fiscal year 2020. This legislation did not pass out of the House Ways and Means Committee (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018c).

The legislation that did pass was HB 16, Community Colleges—Near Completers and Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship, sponsored by Democratic Delegate Frank Turner (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). The bill establishes a Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program for eligible applicants; a program for students nearing the completion of a degree in the 2019-2020 academic year; and specified tuition caps for community colleges (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). The state budget will include $15 million for Promise Scholarships beginning in FY 2020. The legislation passed on the House floor by a 90-48 vote. The legislation passed on the Senate floor by a vote of 32-14. A potential student must be eligible for in-

state tuition, must enroll in a degree and/or certificate program within two years of graduating from high school, and have an income requirement of $100,000 (single-family household) and $150,000 (married or two-parent household). Students must be enrolled in at least 12 credits each semester and have an overall grade point average of 2.3. This is a “last-dollar” scholarship with an annual scholarship award of $5,000 per recipient (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). The State Senator said discussion on the issue will continue because “there is some clean up” with language on the passed legislation that has to be done and there are some “grey areas.” The State Senator said as the program unfolds, the State of Maryland will have to continue to adjust and adapt the program to meet the needs of the students.

Promise Scholarship Program Outcomes

Have Promise Scholarship Programs helped to eliminate any of the problems America’s higher educational system is facing? Some of the older programs have reported outcomes. The biggest effects of the Kalamazoo Promise Program, one of the oldest programs, was on bachelor’s degree attainment (Miller-Adams, 2015). Following decades of decline, enrollment at the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) grew 24% between 2005 and 2013. The availability of the “Promise” led to a reduction in suspensions, an increase in credits attempted, and for African American students, a higher high school grade

point average (Miller-Adams, 2015). Recent data showed a 33% increase in college completion rates among Kalamazoo students, with especially large benefits among minority and low-income students (Miller-Adams, 2015).

Tennessee Promise, the first statewide Promise program, reported the following results: In its first year of operation, FY 2016, 58,286 high school students applied for the program. Overall, the grade point average benchmark, application process, and community service requirements reduced the initial applicant pool to about 16,000 Promise recipients for the first cohort (Department of Legislative Services, 2016). The retention rate from the fall to spring semester was 67%, and from the fall to fall semester (one school year to the next) was 48%; the number of recipients decreased from 16,291 to 7,821 from fall 2016 to fall 2017 (Department of Legislative Services, 2016). Even with free community college in Tennessee, 33% of students did not stay enrolled during the second semester, and another 19% of the original cohort failed to return for the second year of enrollment. This suggests that financial aid for tuition and fees alone is not sufficient for student retention rates (Department of Legislative Services, 2016). The average Promise award given was about $1,727.

Oklahoma's program has met with some success. College enrollment among low-income youth increased by 4.4% compared to states with no scholarship program (Bucceri, 2013). The program increased the probability of students earning a college degree in five years or less, encouraged students not to drop out of college, and increased the likelihood of students earning a two-

year college degree compared with students that signed the pledge and enrolled in college without the scholarship. Bucceri (2013) estimated that the benefit to taxpayers was at least $88 million, wherein students were able to earn higher salaries after having some college experience.

The Promise programs in Maryland report the following results: Garrett College's program has been operating for 12 years. In fall 2006, Garrett County began funding the Garrett College Scholarship Program (GCSP). The program funds dual enrollment of high school students and full tuition and fees for county high school students enrolling directly into Garrett College. Even with the tuition and fees covered, many students did not complete a degree at Garrett College. The most recent cohort was only 51 students. One trend is that GCSP students have grade point averages that are consistently higher by .2 to .6 points over other students and have slightly less need for remedial coursework, suggesting GCSP students are more prepared and successful than the general student body (Department of Legislative Services, 2016). GCSP awards averaged between $1,050 and $1,250 from fall 2009 through fall 2015. Garrett College also has the highest percentage of students with Pell grants—61%—of any community college in Maryland (Department of Legislative Services, 2016).

Overall, Pluhta Inman (2015) said the Promise scholarships mainly assisted students of color and the academically disadvantaged:

> Promise scholarships, especially at community colleges, appear to be an effective strategy to increase college enrollment for underserved students;

> however, since many of these students struggled to make substantial progress toward a degree or certificate, it is strongly advised that additional student and academic support services be made available for these students and that educational leaders better understand and quantify the value of college attendance beyond persistence or completion. (p. 1)

Politics of "America's College Promise Act of 2015"

Legislators and educational officials have expressed various attitudes about the "America's College Promise Act of 2015." Lindsey-Taliefero and Tucker (2013) examined the impact of the Obama Administration's community college initiative on state legislators' attitudes toward economic funding for community colleges through a quantitative study. The results indicated that President Obama's Community College Initiative has had a positive and statistically significant influence on state legislators' attitudes toward community college funding. The study found that legislators made decisions about educational policies based on demographic characteristics and information sources, and these two areas impacted legislators' attitudes (Lindsey-Taliefero & Tucker, 2013).

Of course, the idea of tuition-free community college education was supported by most community college presidents (Jaschik & Lederman, 2016). They believed the debate over the proposal helped raise awareness about the financial needs of community college students. At the same time, community

college presidents were largely divided over whether the legislation would be adopted in at least one-third of all states in the next five years.

On the other hand, because of the attitudes of Republican lawmakers in the U.S. Congress, many felt the legislation did not have a chance to get enacted into law. Hoye and Diamond (2015) said, “But with a roughly $60 billion price tag over the next 10 years, the proposal may have little chance of getting through the wall of Republican deficit hawks that now control both houses of Congress” (p. 1). Hoye and Diamond (2015) stated that Independents and Republicans were questioning the price tag. However, by the Obama Administration presenting this proposal, the profile of a tuition-free community college education was raised, because part of the role of the Presidency is to set the national agenda (Hoye & Diamond, 2015). Starting a national conversation about free public higher education was one of the reasons for proposing the legislation (Blumenstyk, 2014).

Siebold (2015) thought the legislation was a bad idea. First of all, because America’s national debt is already $18 trillion, “handing them a free education on a platter reinforces entitlement. They think, ‘I can have it for nothing and don’t have to work for it.’ What kind of lesson is that? What value does that teach?” (p. 1). Additionally, Siebold said community college students already take about six years to graduate or transfer to a four-year institution, so he believes with free tuition the transfer and graduation rates will get worse.

Siebold (2015) did not believe it was fair to have American citizens pay this debt through taxes, because,

> Giving our kids a free ride without having to do something in exchange for a free education is not only a bad idea in the short term, it continues to reinforce the entitlement mentality that plagues so many of our younger generations today. (p.1)

Historically Black College and University (HBCU) officials were divided over "America's College Promise Act" (Allen, 2015). Officials were unsure if a student would opt to attend a community college for free, instead of attending an HBCU (Allen, 2015). Also, if a student decided to transfer to an HBCU after attending a two-year community college, the HBCU would lose the first two years of student tuition. Allen also believed a student attending a two-year school may not be the most direct route for someone who wants to attend a four-year school. Research demonstrates that Black students have a higher graduation rate from four-year institutions than community colleges. Allen (2015) said "only 7.5% of Black students who pursue a two-year associate's degree full-time finish within three years and about 40% of Black students who earn bachelor's degrees finish in six years" (p. 1).

Button (2015), in an article where he presented the pros and cons for "America's College Promise" outlined the following cons:

- The federal legislation will have partisan opposition because Republicans want states to control free community college education.

- Free tuition for low-income students is already covered under federal Pell grants.
- Since not all scholarships are offered to low-income students, the program may turn into a middle-class entitlement program.
- Tuition-free community college education could hurt four-year colleges because there may be less state funding for higher education initiatives and financial aid at four-year colleges and universities. This concept may create competition with four-year colleges and universities.
- Community colleges already have a high drop-out rate, which is between 66% to 80%. The plan does not address this statistic (p. 1).

Button (2015) addressed the pros for the program:

- The federal legislation put the idea in the national conversation, whereby states can design their own programs, and come up with alternative solutions.
- Universal education for community colleges is inevitable, which can help the United States close the gap between the have and the have-nots.
- Students would benefit: According to America's College Promise Act, 9 million students could benefit (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015).
- States would be encouraged to spend more on higher education. From 2008-2012, state funding for higher education dropped to 22.3%

of total revenues from 29.1%, which led to tuition increases (p.1).

- The legislation required community colleges to adopt evidence-based data to improve student outcomes; however, universal evaluation instruments or tools have not been developed.

A tuition-free public college education became a platform issue during the 2016 Presidential campaign. According to On the Issues (2015), Republican Presidential candidate, Donald Trump, who became the 45th U.S. President in 2017, believed the federal government should not profit from student loans, favored school choice by providing vouchers to parents so their children could attend charter and magnet schools, and wanted to cut the power of the U.S. Department of Education. Trump advocated that state and local governments should control education, whereby each state is free to legislate tuition-free college education. Currently, Trump is pushing to implement the educational initiatives he supported during his campaign by cutting the U.S. Department of Education budget by 13.5%, and shifting $1.4 billion toward charter schools, private school vouchers, and other alternatives to public schools (Brown & Douglas-Gabriel, 2017).

The main advocate for tuition-free and debt-free college was Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. According to Friends of Bernie Sanders (2016), Sanders' debt-free college plan included making tuition free at public colleges and universities, stopping the federal government from making profits on student loans, cutting student loan interest rates, allowing Americans to refinance student

loans at lower interest rates, and allowing students to use need-based financial aid and work study programs to make college debt-free (Friends of Bernie Sanders, 2016). Sanders recommended imposing a tax on Wall Street speculators to fund the $75 billion-a-year price tag.

According to Hillary Clinton for America (2017), Presidential Candidate Clinton proposed a plan similar to Sanders. Clinton advocated that families with income up to $125,000 would pay no tuition for their children at in-state four-year public colleges and universities (Hillary Clinton for America, 2017). Other components included all community colleges would offer free tuition; states would invest in higher education; a mandate for colleges and universities to control tuition costs; and a $25 billion fund to support HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other minority serving institutions. The plan would provide resources to the parents of college students; borrowers would be able to refinance loans at current rates; delinquent borrowers and those in default would receive help; reductions in student loan interest rates; crack down on predatory schools and lenders; and a new payroll deduction portal for employers and employees to simplify the student loan repayment process (Hillary Clinton for America, 2017). Under the plan, aspiring entrepreneurs would be able to defer their loans with no payments or interest for up to three years; and the plan offered an immediate executive action to offer a three-month moratorium on student loan payments to all federal loan borrowers (Hillary Clinton for America, 2017).

Politics of Maryland's Tuition-Free Community College Initiatives

Implementing a Promise program in the State of Maryland has its own set of unique challenges. Bernie Sadusky, executive director of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), has been lobbying on behalf of this issue before state legislators. Sadusky explained that while many citizens believe education is a public good and society should be responsible for offering a community college education tuition-free, others disagree (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). For instance, those individuals who are retired and have already raised their children and have sent them to college do not want to pay additional taxes for tuition-free community college education. Many of them believe they no longer have a responsibility to society (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Additionally, four-year colleges and universities are afraid that a tuition-free community college education may impact their enrollments (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Of course, another concern is cost.

According to the MACC (2017), Promise programs are good for Maryland's economy. The MACC suggested:

> The activities of Maryland's community college students generate about $638.2 million in labor income in Maryland each year . . . Active community college students promote an additional $252.2 million in taxable income each year. Education is also correlated with improved lifestyle behavior, and it is estimated that students in Maryland's

community colleges save the State $33.9 million in social costs. (p. 29)

Sadusky said that the business community has been embracing tuition-free community college education because they feel as if their tax dollars are helping to fund the unemployed and their possible future workforce (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Also, this concept can help with the state's ranking for state institutional aid, wherein if the Promise program scholarships are added to scholarship assistance this can help raise the state's low national scholarship ranking.

Promise scholarships assist with student debt. Maryland's community college student debt is $112 million annually. Cost is the number one reason students drop out of school and do not complete their degree (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017).

However, there are many program mechanics to consider. Most of the programs pay for general education and credit coursework; developmental education and continuing education is generally not included. Some education officials believe students should have "some skin in the game," therefore students may have to pay a small fee to enroll each semester, or participate in community service work (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Also, the county or institutional-based programs limit scholarship participants to recent local high school graduates who enroll at the local community college. The statewide model gives students options because they can attend any community college in the state.

According to the top official for the Maryland Higher Education Commission, James Fielder (2018):

> Free community college tuition has the potential to propel that person who never thought they could be in college . . . It can be a goal to provide free tuition, but free tuition doesn't solve all problems. How are you going to run a race, but you haven't trained for it? Accessibility presents the opportunity, but it doesn't prepare you. (J. Fielder, personal communication, April 14, 2017)

In designing program models, Fielder recommended considering the future of higher education, such as the impact of technology on obtaining a two and/or four-year degree; the impact of Promise programs on distance education and online learning, hybrid models, and even the compression of degrees. Research shows the time required to obtain a college degree is decreasing (J. Fielder, personal communication, April 14, 2017). Fielder also encouraged inviting people with different points of view into this discussion because "education is global."

Fielder concluded his interview by saying: "Education is a career; it is a way of life. We can create the programs. We can get the money . . . Think broader about the importance of every person, every culture, every individual" (J. Fielder, personal communication, April 14, 2017).

Overall, “Education is a right. Free college is an important part of the movement to make that right available to all” (Kamenetz, 2010b, p. 1). The MACC (2017) summarizes this movement with the following:

> The U.S. was the first to provide universal high school; first to build public universities; first to build community colleges; the first to broaden access to college, through the G. I. Bill, we should be the first to provide universal community college. (p. 18)

Maryland’s Political Process and Constituents

Next in conducting this study, it is important the researcher explains the difference between federal and state legislation and the importance of state legislation. State legislation can trump federal legislation. An example of this was during the 2017 Legislation Session. Legislators passed a law to protect Planned Parenthood programs in the State of Maryland, wherein if the federal government cut the budget of Planned Parenthood, the State of Maryland had committed to putting this expense in its budget (Wiggins & Hicks, 2017). This law was passed without Governor Hogan’s signature.

In the State of Maryland, lawmaking powers are given to the Maryland General Assembly (Maryland State Archives, 2018a). Legislators in Maryland meet every year for 90 days from the second Wednesday in January through mid-April to discuss about 2,500 pieces of proposed legislation (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017a).

Regarding the bill process, according to the Maryland State Archives (2017), a bill is introduced by the Senator or Delegate in the Senate or House Chamber for first reading. The bill is referred to a standing committee. Committees are bi-partisan with members representing a variety of geographical locations. Most education related Senate bills are assigned to the Education subcommittees of Education, Health and Environmental Affairs and Budget and Taxation. The education related House bills are assigned to the Education subcommittees of Appropriations, and Ways and Means (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). The subcommittee makes a recommendation to the full committee, and the committee holds a public hearing. The overall committee votes on the legislation. If the proposed legislation receives a favorable report and is voted out of committee, then it goes to the House or Senate floor for second reading (Maryland State Archives, 2017). Members present arguments in favor of or against the proposed legislation. Amendments can be made to the legislation during second reading. After a third reading, an overall vote is taken. If the legislation passes, it is then presented in either the House or Senate chambers and goes through the same process. Some pieces of legislation may have a companion bill introduced in the House and Senate simultaneously. If passed by both the House and Senate, the legislation goes to the Governor for the Governor's signature (Maryland State Archives, 2017).

The Governor can sign or veto the legislation. If the Governor vetoes the legislation, legislators can override a veto with a three-fifths vote of both houses, and the bill can become law (Maryland State Archives, 2017). Items can become law by other processes. Bills can be grouped and voted on together, which expedites the legislative process (Maryland State Archives, 2017). Capital items can be included in the Governor's supplemental budget, which was the case of Wicomico's Promise Program starting fall 2017 with Wor-Wic Community College. Some issues can become gridlocked when there is a Republican Governor with a Democratically-controlled Maryland General Assembly and vice versa, particularly on issues that have typically been democratic, such as criminal justice reform and education (Petrocik, 1996).

During Maryland's legislative session, some bills are passed the last day of session, while others are left in committee and may get reintroduced the following year (B. Sadusky, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Legislation can take up to five years to pass. Most of the legislation related to tuition-free community college education was introduced during the 2016 Legislative Session (Weeden & Hultin, 2015). Maryland's statewide tuition-free community college legislation was passed just minutes before the end of the 2018 Legislative Session (Vazquez, 2018).

After the legislative session, legislators return to their district offices during the interim. While being a Delegate or Senator is considered a part-time role in Maryland, many continue working throughout the summer months, especially

those members in leadership positions. During the summer, many legislators attend community meetings, and meet with constituents, handling their representational duties.

Constituents are a large part of a legislator's job, and legislators place importance on the preference of their constituents (Stadelmann, Eichenberger, & Portmann, 2012). They are elected by the citizens and public tax dollars help to pay their salaries. Constituents, however, do have a different opinion about the role of State Senators and Delegates, and view the House members as more of a service provider while State Senators are viewed as more of the policy makers (Tucker, 2017). This study included all members of the Maryland General Assembly, Delegates and State Senators. Constituents also give legislators ideas for legislation. In 2015, students from schools throughout the country conducted public demonstrations indicating their support for tuition-free college education in the Million Student March (Skinner & Vande Panne, 2015). Therefore, how the community and constituents feel about funding tuition-free community college education is an important part of this conversation.

Demographics of State Legislators

Most state legislators are members of a bipartisan non-governmental organization called the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) based in Washington, DC, and Denver, Colorado. Started 43 years ago, NCSL's mission is to support, defend, and strengthen state legislatures. NCSL researches issues impacting state legislatures and tracks state legislators'

demographics. Demographics, such as age, gender, race, party affiliation, and years of service, were obtained from NCSL reports. According to a NCSL report, while state legislators do reflect the constituents they represent, state legislators are not as diverse as the country (Kurtz, 2015). According to Oakford (2015), by the year 2043, people of color will comprise the majority of the U.S. population.

Regarding gender, women serving in state legislatures grew from 4% to 25% in six years (Kurtz, 2015). Women make up 51% of the country's population. More women are in House chambers (25%) than in Senate chambers (22%). In Maryland, 31% of state legislators are female, and 69% are male.

Regarding age, the average age of all state legislators is 56 (Kurtz, 2015). Across the country, the average female legislator is two years older than her male counterpart. On average, Senators are two years older than House members since some legislators serve in the House and then move to the Senate. In Maryland, the average age of a House member is 52, and the average age of a Senate member is 60 (Kurtz, 2015). The age range of the largest member of registered voters in the 2014 Maryland state elections was between 45 to 64 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Regarding race, in Maryland, minorities make up 33% of the legislature consisting of 1%, American Indian/Native Alaskan; 4%, Asian/Pacific Islander; 23%, Black/African-American; 3%, Hispanic/Latino; and 3%, Multiracial/Other. Sixty-seven percent are White/Caucasian (Kurtz, 2015).

Non-white women are better represented in state legislatures. Non-white groups are achieving higher levels of representation (Hardy-Fanta, Sierra, Lien, Pinderhughes, & Davis, 2005). There has been a consistent rise of African-American elected officials in federal and state legislatures, with African-American women comprising the highest number in this demographic (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2005). There has also been growth in Hispanic and Asian elected officials. National statistics on the number of Native American elected officials has been hard to capture because these statistics are kept by each state (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2005).

According to U.S. History (2018), for the past 50 years, African-Americans have tended to vote Democratic. Latinos have also been voting Democratic. However, various Latino groups have different voting patterns. Cuban Americans have been voting Republican, while Mexican Americans have been voting Democratic. Asian Americans have tended to vote conservative. Polls suggest that issues such as education are more addressed by the Democratic Party so more people of color are members of the Democratic Party (U.S. History, 2018).

Regarding political affiliation, there is a significant difference in the number of women Democratic lawmakers compared to women Republican lawmakers. Women legislators comprise 34% of the Democratic Party and 17% of the Republican Party. There is no difference in ages between members of the two political parties or among various regions of the country. Minorities are better represented among Democrats, 33% than Republicans, 5% (Kurtz, 2015).

Nationally, the Republican Party has more control over the states than the Democratic Party. Minorities (combined) now fill the majority of Democratic seats in Arizona, California and Nevada legislatures.

In Maryland, there are 141 members of the House of Delegates and 47 State Senators for a total of 188 legislators. Ninety-one members (65%) of the House of Delegates represent the Democratic Party, while 50 (35%) delegates are Republicans. Out of 47 state senators, there are 33 (70%) Democrats and 14 (30%) Republicans. The leadership in both House and Senate (President, Speaker, Majority Leaders, and Majority Whips) represent the Democratic Party.

According to a Pew Research Center report, concerning the overall electorate, research shows that different age groups do have different political profiles (Desilver, 2014). Out of 10,000 Americans, those citizens ages 65 and up, 32% fall into strong Republican-oriented groups as conservatives and 33% are aligned with strong Democratic groups (Desilver, 2014). Those ages 18 to 29, 20%, lean toward the Republican Party and favor limited government but are socially liberal. Another 20% lean to Democrats but are skeptical of social-welfare programs. And 17% are not registered to vote but follow politics and are the least politically engaged. Furthermore, most people's political outlooks are set early in life (Desilver, 2014). U.S. History (2018) said as children age they vote the same way as their parents.

Regarding years of service, many state legislators are subject to term limits, which means legislators are restricted to the number of terms they can serve. Maryland does not have term limits, but state elected officials serve for four years at a time. Kurtz (2015) said one of the main reasons term limits may have been implemented was to increase the number of women and minorities serving in state legislatures. Unfortunately, term limits have not impacted an increase in women and minority lawmakers. Minority legislators average 19% of the membership in term-limited states and 17% in the other states (Kurtz, 2015). In fact, of all demographic categories, the only one that has been affected by term limits is age. Lawmakers in term-limited legislatures are three years younger than those in the other states. Therefore, term-limited legislatures have fewer long-serving—and therefore older—members.

Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions of Legislators

The Congressional Management Foundation, a nonpartisan organization in Washington, DC, studies the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of lawmakers. In a book written by the organization's president, Bradford Fitch (2010), he outlined how legislators make decisions on how they will vote, what influences legislators, and effective strategies to guide legislators in voting. The book is based on his own personal experience as a staffer and consultant on Capitol Hill, studies developed by the Congressional Management Foundation, and hundreds of interviews with members of Congress and their staff.

According to Fitch (2010):

> Legislators use a kind of political math to make decisions, weighing a variety of factors when determining whether to vote for or against a bill, to cosponsor legislation, or to support or oppose funding for an initiative. When all the details are burned away, legislators follow three voices when making a decision. One member of Congress called these voices the "Three H's": Heart, Head, and Health. (p. 22)

Fitch (2010) explained the heart as the legislator's own beliefs and values, mostly guided by his or her conscience. Generally, more seasoned elected officials such as Senators are more deliberate and may take longer in their decision-making process. The head is defined as the legislator conducting independent research, studying the issues, and interpreting the data to determine the best policy decision. The health means factoring "politics" into the decision, which means legislators are listening to their constituency. Legislators measure how their vote will impact voters' perceptions in their district; and how their vote might affect the next election.

According to a 2004 and 2005 study done by the Congressional Management Foundation with more than 350 policy and communications staff in more than 200 offices, the following factors influenced an undecided legislator: 1) constituent meetings; 2) personally written letters and emails, and; 3) anyone who represented a constituent. The following modes of communication had the most influence on undecided legislators: 99%, constituent visits; 96%,

representatives for constituents; 96%, individualized letters; 94%, individualized emails; 93%, lobbyist visits; 91%, individualized faxes; 88%, phone calls; 65%, form letters; 63%, form emails; and 57%, form faxes (Fitch, 2010).

In making decisions on how to vote, legislators consult various sources such as family and friends, particularly people they trust; knowledgeable acquaintances; respected colleagues particularly junior members; party leadership such as the Majority Whips and Majority Leaders; and lobbyists. According to Fitch (2010), “The popular portrayal of lobbyists’ influence on governmental decision-making is largely inaccurate” (p. 30). “Most lobbyists in Washington don’t drive fancy cars, don’t have expense accounts, and don’t work for fatcat corporations. Moreover, they rarely determine policy outcomes—organized citizens do.” Fitch said the advocates in Washington, DC work on behalf of associations, non-profit organizations, and companies. “Their power is in their knowledge of a topic, ability to communicate the issue effectively, and accurately interpreting how a policy decision will affect a lawmaker’s state or district” (Fitch, 2010, p. 30).

Overall, Fitch (2010) said it is important to get to politicians before they take a stand.

> The most important rule for influencing a legislator has to do with timing. If a member of Congress or a state legislator already has come to a decision, you will have a difficult time changing his position. Politicians learn early on in their careers that there is a huge price to pay for

> inconsistency. Reporters and opponents will crucify them as “flip-floppers” if they change a position. Therefore, once they take a position on an issue, they’ll stick to it. (p. 38)

Maryland’s Agencies Supporting Community Colleges

State legislators influence funding of community colleges, and Maryland’s community colleges are all impacted by the concept of tuition-free community college education. In addition to the guidance of state legislators, several educational institutions provide support and play an important role in the governance structure of community colleges. Next, the researcher will briefly explain a history of the national and local community college governance structure.

According to Townsend and Twombly (2001), nationally, and within the State of Maryland, when junior colleges were extensions of high schools, some shared administration with public school districts, while others had a separate board of trustees. In the 1960s, local districts were mandated to form independent community college districts. Districts had to comply with certain minimum student potential qualifications, and certain locally assessed valuation set by the State Board of Education. Oversight for the public community college was transferred from the state Department of Education to a state-level board with members appointed by the Governor. These members assumed all the

responsibilities for public community colleges. The federal Higher Education Act of 1965 directed states to create higher-education coordinating commissions if they wished to qualify for various federal aid programs (Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

The Board of Trustees from Maryland's community colleges are appointed by the Governor. According to Vaughan and Weisman (1997), board members have general oversight for community colleges and make decisions that affect students, faculty, and staff. Issues brought before the board can range from student conduct, parking, and sports to staff salaries and benefits. In Maryland, several independent and governmental agencies share some management of Maryland's community colleges.

Maryland Higher Education Commission. Maryland's higher education coordinating commission is the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), an independent agency created in 1988. It is responsible for the planning, supervision, and coordination of Maryland's postsecondary educational system (MHEC, 2018). Commission responsibilities include developing a State Plan for Postsecondary Education, which lists the statewide workforce needs, as well as the goals and strategies for meeting those needs.

MHEC officials have helped to develop the parameters of the tuition-free community college education program. MHEC will oversee the new Maryland Community College Promise Scholarships (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a). MHEC develops guidelines and makes funding recommendations for

higher education. The Commission's responsibility includes the assessment of statewide needs for higher education capital improvements (MHEC, 2018). MHEC also awards grants, assists with settlement conflicts between colleges, and approves degree programs.

Maryland State Department of Education. Under the leadership of the State Superintendent of Schools and guidance from the Maryland State Board of Education, the Department develops and implements standards and policies for education programs from pre-kindergarten through high school. The MSDE also oversees technical education, rehabilitation services, and library programs. The MSDE handles transfer agreements and dual enrollment programs between public school systems and community colleges.

Maryland Association of Community Colleges. The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) is the main advocate for Maryland's public community colleges and acts as a resource for its member institutions. The MACC executes a strategic direction for Maryland's community colleges; represents community colleges at the state and national level; provides opportunities for trustee development; facilitates the exchange of ideas and information; and, promotes the benefits of community colleges to the citizens of the State of Maryland (MACC, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

While the agencies above provide a solid foundation for Maryland's community colleges, the theory of reasoned action provides a sound theoretical framework for this dissertation. The theory of reasoned action is one of the most common theoretical frameworks used to explain and inform efforts to change human behavior (Otieno et al., 2016). It has also been used to develop interventions to change behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Therefore, by discovering the intentions of elected officials, one can develop interventions to modify their behavior if subjective norms and attitudes are impacted.

The theory suggests that intentions decide behavior. Belief strength and belief evaluation define an individual's attitudes. The belief strengths are the negative or positive feelings/beliefs an individual has regarding a concept, and belief evaluations are how strong an individual believes in the concept (Fishbein & Azjen, 2010). Another element of the theory of reasoned action is subjective norms. Subjective norms explore the thoughts of the experts in their lives who are important to them, as well as the elected officials' motivation to comply with the beliefs of the experts. For instance, an elected official may be interested in what a lobbyist feels about an issue but may not feel compelled to vote how the lobbyist wants the legislator to vote. According to the theory of reasoned action, based on the subjective norms and attitudes, a legislator intends to display a certain behavior, and will, in turn, exhibit that behavior.

In addition to the theory of reasoned action, the researcher analyzed Rosenberg's (1960) Structural Theory of Attitude Dynamics. Similar to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action, Rosenberg defined attitude as the feelings a person has about an object or concept, and the value the individual places on the object (Tuncalp & Sheth, 1975). Used to explain the basis of attitude regarding decision-making, this social psychological theory seeks to describe the relationship among beliefs about an issue, feelings towards that issue, and the propensity of an individual to act in relation to that issue. Tucker (2013) used this theory as the framework in her dissertation and in explaining the theory she stated the following: "It suggests that when someone believes that a particular social entity is in alignment with his/her values, such beliefs engender positive attitudes and a disposition to act favorably towards that entity" (p. 4). While this theory uses attitude to predict behavior, Rosenberg's (1960) Structural Theory of Attitude Dynamics was not comprehensive enough for what the researcher wanted to examine.

The researcher considered another theoretical framework: the theory of planned behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The theory of planned behavior contains the same elements of the theory of reasoned action. However, in the theory of planned behavior, a third component was added: perceived behavioral intention, because Ajzen believed the theory of reasoned action did not take into account *ALL* human behavior, particularly those behaviors a person does not control (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). State legislators do have control over whether

they intend to vote for or against a piece of legislation, or whether they will sponsor or co-sponsor legislation related to funding tuition-free community college education. This framework added an additional variable that was not needed for this study. Therefore, the researcher used the original version of the theory of reasoned action for this dissertation's theoretical framework.

Summary

The state of public higher education is at a crossroads. Tuition rates have skyrocketed. Students are experiencing tremendous student loan debt. Support from federal, state and local funds have decreased. With 65% of projected jobs requiring some postsecondary education by the year 2020, who will educate America's future workforce and how? Tuition-free community college education, administered through Promise programs, may offer a viable option. Promise programs provide states with flexibility on the type and execution of the program; and overall, may help America "keep the promise" by taking on the responsibility of educating its future citizenry.

This chapter presented the background on the funding of public education and community colleges. The concept of tuition-free community college grew with the unveiling of "America's College Promise" by the Obama Administration. The introduction of this initiative began a national conversation about free public higher education. States have now taken up this cause, and Promise Scholarship Programs, modeled after the federal legislation, have emerged nationally. Several states have enacted statewide tuition-free community college

legislation, and New York has mandated tuition-free public education for two- and four-year-colleges. Maryland passed statewide tuition-free community college legislation during the 2018 Legislative Session.

A tuition-free community college education has received mixed reviews among Democrats and Republicans. The federal government has a Republican-controlled House and Senate, while Maryland has a Democratic Senate and House, and the Majority Leaders and Majority Whips in the Maryland General Assembly are all Democratic, which made the State of Maryland more open to the passage of tuition-free community college education legislation. The activities of Maryland's community colleges are undergirded by educational agencies such as MSDE, MHEC, and MACC. With politically driven mixed views on funding higher education, it may be useful to understand the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of state legislators.

Chapter II reviewed relevant literature related to tuition-free community college education and its impact from various perspectives. Also, Chapter II outlined Maryland's political process and the importance of constituents to legislators. The chapter gave details about the demographics, attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of state legislators, and the theoretical framework. In the next chapter, the author focuses on the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature revealed information about tuition-free community college education. However, limited information surfaced that focused on legislators' attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. Thus, there was a need to contribute to the literature and through this study discuss funding options for community college students. These options may also help stakeholders in advocating for or against community college funding. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding funding a tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland.

Research Design

A quantitative correlational research design was used in this study. Quantitative studies examine a research problem and explain why something happens (Creswell, 2012). A quantitative approach is one in which the researcher uses numbers to quantify human behavior (Creswell, 2003).

Quantitative research methodology was chosen because quantitative studies measure attitudes, rate behavior, and can help a researcher determine what factors are influencing an outcome (Creswell, 2003). The outcome of the Maryland state legislator for this study is how individual legislators intend to vote regarding tuition-free community college education.

Correlational research design relies on the measurement of two or more variables to determine the extent to which the values for the factors are related or change in a specialized pattern (Creswell, 2012).

Research Questions

The current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators based on their demographic characteristics?
2. Is there a relationship between attitudes and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?
3. Is there a relationship between subjective norms and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?

Hypotheses

Given the theoretical framework and the research questions, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education based on party affiliation?

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education among the different age groups of legislators?

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education between male and female legislators?

H_{04}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education between race (White, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and Other) of the legislator?

H_{05}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college between various years of service of the legislator?

H_{06}: There is no relationship between attitudes and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?

H_{07}: There is no relationship between subjective norms and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?

Participants

The targeted population for this study was the members of the Maryland state legislature. There are 141 members of the House of Delegates and 47 State Senators for a total of 188 legislators. Ninety-one members of the House of Delegates represent the Democratic Party, while 50 delegates are Republicans. Out of 47 state senators, there are 33 Democrats and 14

Republicans. The leadership (the President and Speaker, Majority Leader and Majority Whip) in both House and Senate represent the Democratic Party. All members of the Maryland General Assembly were asked to complete a survey, and two Education subcommittee chairmen were interviewed, as well.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Characteristics. The sample (*n* = 31) for this study consisted of Democrat (*n* = 28, 90%) and Republican (*n* = 3, 10%) Maryland state legislators. The racial composition of these participants consisted of White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Other. African American Maryland state legislatures made up the majority of the respondents (48%) in this study, while White (39%) made up the second largest group. There were slightly more female (52%) than male (48%) respondents in this study. Most of the responses came from participants who were 46 to 55 (39%), while participants under 35 had the lowest response rates (7%). Most of the respondents had eight or more years of service in the state legislature (52%). The findings for the demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Instrumentation

To gather data, the researcher used a quantitative questionnaire that was emailed to all of Maryland's state legislators. The survey was developed based on instructions for developing a theory of reasoned action questionnaire (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010), and a model document from the Centre for Health Services (Francis et al., 2004).

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Under 35 years of age	2	7%
36-45	3	10%
46-55	12	39%
56-65	5	16%
66 and older	9	29%
Race		
White	12	39%
African-American	15	48%
Hispanic	0	0%
Native American	0	0%
Asian	2	7%
Other	2	7%
Political Affiliation		
Democrat	28	90%
Republican	3	10%
Gender		
Male	15	48%
Female	16	52%
Years of Service		
1 to 7 years	15	48%
8 or more years	16	52%

The survey asked the legislators demographic questions, derived from an instrument used by Skinner (2010) in a survey of Missouri legislators.

Demographic factors are necessary because of the influence of culture on people's attitudes and subjective norms. Hence demographic factors are often indicative of cultural groups.

Overall, the survey focused on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators. Responses to these questions were asked on a seven-point Likert scale. A seven-point Likert scale using adjectives for the scale is generally used for theory of reasoned action surveys (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The Likert scale is a rating scale, whereby the researcher can capture important information, measure certain traits, and collect accurate data (Boone & Boone, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Likert, 1932). A Likert-type scale is used when participants are asked to tell how closely they agree or disagree with a statement (Fink, 2009). The survey was comprised of four parts. Each of the sections is described below.

Part I: Attitudes of State Legislators. Part I, in questions #1 through #10, sought to assess the attitudes associated with funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. Participants were asked about the relationship between attitudes and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education (Research Question #2). This section was divided into two parts. For example, the first section assessed the belief strength of legislators, and asked if the legislator strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: "Tuition-free community college education legislation will give more people an opportunity to attend college."

Likert scale responses used for the seven components were: (a) strongly agree = 1, (b) agree = 2, (c) slightly agree = 3, (d) neither = 4, (e) slightly disagree = 5, (f) disagree = 6, and (g) strongly disagree = 7. Five questions in the second section assessed the belief evaluation, and legislators were asked if they believe certain statements were good or bad. For example, “State government allocating funding for tuition-free community college education” is considered a good or bad statement. Likert scale responses used for the seven components were: (a) good = 1, (b) quite = 2, (c) slightly = 3, (d) neither = 4, (e) slightly = 5, (f) quite = 6, and (g) bad = 7.

Part II: Subjective Norms of State Legislators. Part II, in questions #11 through #19, sought to assess the opinion of the legislator regarding subjective norms associated with funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. Participants were asked about the relationship between subjective norms and the legislators’ behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland (Research Question #3). This section was divided into two parts and examined what groups have an influence on legislators in making policy decisions (what experts think), and how likely they are to comply with these experts (motivation to comply). For example, if legislators agree with the statements: “My constituents would approve of me voting in favor of legislation associated with funding tuition-free community college education regarding tuition-free community college education legislation” and “I want to vote how my constituents think I should vote.” Likert scale

responses used for the seven components were: (a) strongly agree = 1, (b) agree = 2, (c) somewhat agree = 3, (d) neither = 4, (e) somewhat disagree = 5, (f) disagree = 6, and (g) strongly disagree = 7.

Part III: Behavioral Intentions of State Legislators. Part III included three questions asking the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland (Questions #20-22). For instance, if the legislator was extremely likely or extremely unlikely "to vote 'for' legislation associated with funding tuition-free community college during the 2018 Legislative Session." Likert scale responses used for the seven components were: (a) extremely likely = 1, (b) likely = 2, (c) somewhat likely = 3, (d) neither = 4, (e) somewhat unlikely = 5, (f) unlikely = 6, and (g) extremely unlikely = 7.

Part IV: Demographic Information of the Legislator. Part IV addressed the demographics of the state legislator (Questions #23-35). Legislators were asked to identify how long they have served as a state legislator (combining House and Senate where appropriate); which branch of state government they currently serve in either in the House or Senate; and their party affiliation (Democrats, Republicans or Independent/Unaffiliated). Other questions included the following: If the legislator's district is (a) urban, (b) suburban, (c) rural; the type of public community college located in the legislator's district: (a) none, (b) public community college (two year), (c) private community college (two year), (d) four-year public college and/or university; the legislator's age, gender, race, and

highest level of educational attainment. Racial categories included: White, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and Other. How long the legislator has lived in the district they serve and where the legislator and their children obtained their undergraduate education are also demographic questions included on the survey. Table 2 explains the variables measured and correlates the variables with questions on the survey.

Table 2

Variables Measured by the Survey

Variables	Items
Part I: Attitudes	Questions # 1-10
Belief strength	Questions # 1-5
Belief evaluation	Questions # 6-10
Part II: Subjective norms	Questions # 11-19
What experts think	Questions # 11-14
Motivation to comply	Questions # 15-19
Part III: Behavioral intentions	Questions # 20-22
Part IV: Demographics	Questions # 23-35

Open-ended Interview Questions. To provide a more comprehensive analysis of the survey, several open-ended questions were developed (Creswell, 2003). Open-ended questions can be included with survey research (Singer & Couper, 2011). Quantitative interviews can help to clarify or explain things that may be confusing (Creswell, 2003). These open-ended questions were addressed only to the Education Subcommittee Chairmen in the House and Senate. For example: “What are your top three concerns regarding tuition-free

community college education legislation?" Those members represented the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs, Budget & Taxation, House Appropriations, and House Ways & Means Committees. Additional questions asked the opinion of the legislator regarding the history and future of tuition-free community college legislation, as well as identification of those top three concerns regarding funding tuition-free community college education legislation. Officials from the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) recommended the above topics and that the researcher interview the subcommittee chairmen.

Since legislation related to tuition-free community college was introduced during the 2018 Legislative Session, the Education Subcommittees review the proposed legislation first, before the legislation is introduced to the full committee and voted out of committee with a favorable or unfavorable report. Therefore, work that is done on the subcommittee level can impact whether or not the legislation makes it out of committee. This was the case with the Higher Education Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2017 that included the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program. This legislation did not make it out of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee (General Assembly of Maryland, 2017c). However, Community Colleges—Near Completers and Maryland Community College Promise

Scholarship (legislation similar to the Higher Education Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2018) did make it out of the House committee and passed during the 2018 Legislative Session (General Assembly of Maryland, 2018a)

Pilot Study. Since the researcher developed the instrument and it had not been validated, a pilot study was conducted. Pilot studies can be used as a pre-testing of a research instrument (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Five Morgan State University students and five senior staff members of the Maryland General Assembly were given the survey instrument for comments and recommended changes. They were asked to take the survey and evaluate the clarity of the questions.

One senior staff member was concerned about the confidentiality and anonymity of the elected official. She said after the elected official completes the demographic information, the researcher could determine the identity of the elected official. The researcher stressed to the staff member that all answers were anonymous and confidential. One delegate did question the anonymity of the survey and said he felt more comfortable signing the confidentiality agreement and filling out a hard-copy paper survey. He did not fill out the survey electronically. Also, the average time to complete the survey during the pilot study was 12 minutes. Based on the feedback, a final instrument was developed.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach alpha statistical procedure. Cronbach alpha measures the reliability of an instrument by measuring the consistency of an instrument to determine the interconnectedness of the items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Measurement is between 0 and 1 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The resulting Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged between .122 and .894 (see Table 3). Alpha values greater than .70 are sufficient for research purposes (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Thus, the instrument met the minimum requirement for reliability. Attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral scales were scored by summing the related items of those scales. The attitudes scales' factors (belief strength and belief evaluation) and subjective norms scales' factors (what experts think and motivation to comply) were also scored by summing the related items of those factors. A Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted to ensure the reliability of the items that created the scales and their factors (see Table 2). The attitudes (10 items; α = .792) and behavioral intentions scales (3 items; α = .806) were found to be highly reliable with the exception of the subjective norms (9 items; α = .594) scale. As for the factors of the attitudes and subjective norms scales, *Belief Evaluation* (5 items; α = .894) and *What Experts Think* (4 items; α = .762) were highly reliable, while *Belief Strength* (5 items; α = .122) and *Motivation to Comply* (5 items; α = .409) were not reliable. Because attitudes and behavioral intentions scales—as well as *Belief Evaluation* and *What Experts Think* factors—were all found to be highly reliable, this researcher was able to proceed with the analysis in this study.

Table 3 lists the variables measured, the number of items linked to each variable, and the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 3

Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Variables Measured

Variables	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficient
Part I: Attitudes	10	.760
Belief strength	5	.122
Belief evaluation	5	.894
Part II: Subjective norms	9	.594
What experts think	4	.762
Motivation to comply	5	.409
Part III: Behavioral intentions	3	.806

Data Collection Procedures

The first step of the data collection process involved gaining MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. After IRB approval, a survey was conducted of Maryland legislators. The participants were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study. A recruitment letter introduced the researcher, explained the purpose of the study, stressed confidentiality of the responses, and an offer was provided to share the results upon completion.

The participants were required to read and sign (electronically) a consent form acknowledging the nature of the study and the usage of the data before they could participate in the study. The legislators were advised of their right to withdraw their participation at any point during the study. They were also

instructed that all responses would be confidential. Participants who agreed to participate were directed to an online website (Question Pro) to fill out the survey. The participants were given two weeks to respond to the survey. At the end of the two-week period, an insufficient number of participants had responded to the survey.

A second email was sent and telephone calls were made to all of the participants who had not responded after two weeks. During telephone conversations, the non-respondents stated they were either too busy or did not want to complete the survey. The researcher followed up with in-person visits. After approximately four weeks of data collection, of 188 potential participants, 31 completed the survey. All data were downloaded from the survey website, reviewed for accuracy, prepared for analysis using SPSS, and stored in an electronic format.

Four Education Subcommittee chairs were identified to conduct interviews; however, two Education Subcommittee chairs made themselves available. Two interviews with the Education Subcommittee chairs were held via telephone. They were audio-taped and conducted in 30 minutes. The interviews have been transcribed and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the responses to the demographic questions. Inferential

statistical procedures for comparing groups or relating scores for individuals were used to address the research questions and hypotheses.

In the open-ended interviews, the researcher looked for common ideas in the responses to the open-ended questions. These ideas have been recorded and incorporated into the analysis of the data.

Research questions one and the first five hypotheses were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). MANOVA is used when there is more than one dependent or outcome variable. If the dependent or outcome variables are related to one another, MANOVA helps a researcher determine the effect of the treatment variable on any one outcome. It allows a researcher to determine the best combination of dependent variables (Salkind, 2010). If the overall MANOVA is significant then the ANOVAs can be reviewed and interpreted. Post hoc analysis is unique when an independent variable with three or more categories is found to be significant.

According to Richardson (2011), additional tests can be conducted within MANOVA because of a small response rate. Box's *M* tests and Levene's *F* tests of equality of error variance were conducted to test the assumptions of the homogeneity of covariance matrices within MANOVA. Levene's test is an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances for a variable calculated for two or more groups. Box's *M* test is used to test the equality of covariance if the design is unbalanced. A *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) was interpreted for significance if the assumption of variance-covariance was met. *Wilks' Lambda*

compares group means on a combination of dependent variables. *Pillai's Trace* was interpreted for significance if the assumption was not met.

The Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient procedure was used to address Research Questions #2 and #3 and Hypotheses #6 and #7. Correlation coefficients measure the relationship between variables, and not the differences between groups. Correlations point out the direction of a relationship and help the researcher to better understand what two different variables share with one another. These statistical procedures are summarized in Table 4. All hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

Table 4

Summary of Data Analysis Procedures

Research Question	Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistical Procedure
1	H_{01} H_{02} H_{03} H_{04} H_{05}	• Political Affiliation • Age • Gender • Race (White, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and Other) • Years of Service	Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Behavioral Intentions	MANOVA
2	H_{06}	• Attitudes	Behavioral Intentions	Pearson product correlation
3	H_{07}	• Subjective Norms	Behavioral Intentions	Pearson product correlation

Summary

This study utilized a quantitative correlational research design. Creswell (2003) recommends using quantitative research when measuring attitudes and rating behaviors. This research design analyzed the relationship between variables. The researcher explored the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland's state legislators regarding a tuition-free community college education. The targeted population of this study was 188 members of the Maryland State Legislature. A survey instrument was designed, capturing the elements of Azjen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action. Three research questions and seven hypotheses were analyzed through this study. Data were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to summarize the findings. Two 30-minute interviews were conducted and results analyzed.

This section explained the methodology that was used to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education. The research design, the participants, the type of survey instrument, as well as how data were collected and analyzed were explained. The next section will discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV:

FINDINGS

This study explored the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland. The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions (policy positions) held by state legislators about potential legislation to implement a tuition-free community college education.

Using a quantitative survey, administered electronically, data were collected from Maryland state legislators (*N* = 188). Returned, useable surveys numbered 31. The results of the survey are presented below. Inferential results on the demographic characteristics of Maryland state legislators from the three research questions are presented.

Differences in Dependent Variables Based on Demographic Characteristics

Research Question #1 asked: “Is there a difference in attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators based on their demographic characteristics?” Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted to assess separately the effects of the independent variables, namely, party affiliation (Democrats, Republicans), age (<35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66+), gender (male, female), race (White, African American, Asian, Other), and years of service (1 to 7 years and 8 or more years) on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions (dependent variables) of Maryland

state legislators. Demographic characteristics can help to explain differences in voting intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Box's *M* tests and Levene's *F* tests of equality of error variance were conducted to test the assumptions of the homogeneity of covariance matrices. A *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) was interpreted for significance if the assumption of variance-covariance was met. *Pillai's Trace* was interpreted for significance if the assumption was not met. According to Richardson (2011), the effect size was calculated using partial eta squared (ηp^2) with suggested effect sizes of small (.0099), medium (.0588), and large (.1379).

Party Affiliation. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was not computed because there were fewer than two nonsingular cell covariance matrices. Lavene's *F* tests revealed that the assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was justifiable for *Attitude Belief Evaluation* (.086), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* (.097), *Subjective Norms - Motivation to Comply* (.110), and *Behavioral Intentions* (.263). The assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was not met for *Attitude Belief Strength* (p<.001). Although the *Attitude Belief Strength* Lavene's *F* tests were statistically significant ($p < .001$), the homogeneity of variance was considered satisfied to proceed with all dependent variables. Moreover, *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) was chosen since the homogeneity of variance was not in question and *Wilks'* is the most frequently reported MANOVA statistic.

A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for party affiliation (Democrats, Republicans), $F(5, 25) = 8.462$, *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) = .327, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .629$, power = .998). The multivariate effect size was estimated at .629, which suggests that 63% of the variance in the dependent variables were accounted for by the independent variable. Power to detect the effect was .998. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there was a significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education based on party affiliation. These results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Multivariate Effects of Party Affiliation on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

	Wilks' λ	*F*	*Df*	*Error df*	*P*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Party Affiliation (Democrats, Republicans)	.371	8.462	5	25	.000	.629	.998

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effects for party affiliation were obtained for *Attitude Belief Strength*, $F(1, 29) = 10.107$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .258$, power = .867), *Attitude Belief Evaluation*, $F(1, 29) = 35.993$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .554$, power = 1.000), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, $F(1, 29) = 34.450$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .543$, power = 1.000), and *Behavioral Intentions*, $F(1, 29) = 7.678$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .218$, power = .785).

For *Attitude Belief Strength*, Republicans mean scores (*M* = 20.67, *SD* = 8.622) were higher than Democrats (*M* = 14.50, *SD* = 2.333). For *Attitude Belief Evaluation*, Republicans mean scores (*M* = 26.00, *SD* = 7.937) were higher than Democrats (*M* = 9.46, *SD* = 4.176). For *Subjective Norms—What Others Think*, Republicans mean scores (*M* = 15.00, *SD* = 3.606) were higher than Democrats (*M* = 6.75, *SD* = 2.188). Finally, for *Behavioral Intentions,* Republicans mean scores (*M* = 17.00, *SD* = 6.928) were higher than Democrats (*M* = 8.82, *SD* = 4.530). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Conversely, a non-significant univariate main effect was found for party affiliation on *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply F*(1, 29) = .273, *p* = .605). Thus, Republicans (*M* = 15.00, *SD* = 6.083) and Democrats (*M* = 13.78, *SD* = 3.378) mean scores did not differ. The null hypothesis was retained.

In total, the results suggest that Maryland state legislatures whose party affiliation is Democrat had lower *Attitude Belief Strength, Attitude Belief Evaluation, Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, *and Behavioral Intentions* than that of those whose party affiliation is Republican. The results also suggest that there were no differences between Democrat and Republican Maryland state legislators regarding *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply.* Therefore, Republicans were more passionate about their beliefs in funding tuition-free community college education and were impacted by the constituents they

believed were important to them. Whereas, the passion of the belief on an issue as well as the feelings about the issue with the constituency who are important to the Republican elected official can impact the intentions of the legislator to vote for or against a bill. The results are presented in Table 5.

It is important to point out that the sample included only three Republicans. This small sample calls into question the findings reported below and in Table 6. The findings may not be reliable.

Table 6

Univariate Effects of Party Affiliation on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

Dependent Variable	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Attitude Belief Strength	103.043	1	103.043	10.107	.004	.258	1.000
Attitude Belief Evaluation	740.907	1	740.907	35.993	.000	.554	.867
Subjective Norms - What Experts Think	184.427	1	184.427	34.450	.000	.543	1.000
Subjective Norms - Motivation to Comply	3.539	1	3.539	.273	.605	.009	1.000
Behavioral Intentions	181.248	1	181.248	8.085	.008	.218	.080

Age. A nonsignificant Box's *M* test ($p = .079$) indicated that the homogeneity of covariance assumptions was met. Lavene's *F* tests revealed that the assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was justifiable for *Attitude Belief Strength* (.674), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* (.068), *Subjective*

Norms—Motivation to Comply (.430), and *Behavioral Intentions* (.331). The assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was not met for *Attitude Belief Evaluation* (.017). Although *Attitude Belief Strength* Lavene's *F* tests were statistically significant ($p < .05$), the homogeneity of variance was considered satisfied to proceed with all dependent variables.

A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effects by age, $F(5, 24) = 8.137$, *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) = .241, $p = .018$, $\eta p^2 = .299$, power = .898). The multivariate effect size was estimated at .299, which suggests that 30% of the variance in the dependent variables were accounted for by the independent variable. Power to detect the effect was .898. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education among the age groups of legislators. These results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Multivariate Effects of Age on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

	Wilks' λ	*F*	*Df*	*Error df*	*p*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Age	.241	1.980	20	73.916	.018	. 299	.898

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effects for age were obtained for *Behavioral Intentions*, $F(4, 26) = 5.471$, $p < .01$, $\eta p^2 = .457$, power = .946). *Post*

hoc comparisons, using Tukey test, were employed to determine which pairs of the five group means differed. The Tukey test showed that the mean score for Maryland state legislators whose reported age is between 56 to 65 years old (*M* = 15.60, *SD* = 5.079) were significantly different than that of those between 46 and 55 (*M* = 8.33, *SD* = 4.355), 66 and over (*M* = 7.22, *SD* = 2.386) and who are under 35 (*M* = 5.00, *SD* = 2.828) in their perceptions of *Behavioral Intentions*. However, the mean scores of Maryland state legislators whose reported age is between 36 and 45 years old (*M* = 15.00, *SD* = 6.557) did not significantly differ from those whose reported age are between 56 and 65 years old. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant difference in behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education among the age groups of legislators.

Conversely, no significant univariate main effects were found for age on *Attitude Belief Strength*, $F(4, 26) = .372$, $p = .826$), *Attitude Belief Evaluation*, $F(4, 26) = 1.169$, $p = .347$), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, $F(4, 26) = 1.046$, $p = .403$), and *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* $F(4, 26) = 2.552$, $p = .063$). The null hypothesis was retained. There was no significant difference in attitudes and subjective norms regarding funding tuition-free community college education among the age groups of legislators.

The results suggest that Maryland state legislators whose reported age is between 56 and 65 years old had *Behavioral Intentions* higher than those whose reported age were between 46 and 55, 66 and over, and those under 35. The

results also suggest that Maryland state legislators with a reported age between 36 and 45 years old were the same as those whose reported age is between 36 and 45 in their perceptions of *Behavioral Intentions*. Therefore, older elected officials (between 56 and 65) had stronger intentions of voting the way they stated they would vote. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Significant Univariate Effects of Age on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

Dependent Variable	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Behavioral Intentions	379.933	4	94.983	5.471	.002	.457	.946

Gender. Box's *M* test (p = .073) indicated that the homogeneity of covariance assumptions was met. Lavene's *F* tests revealed that the assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was justifiable for *Attitude Belief Strength* (.104), *Attitude Belief Evaluation* (.379), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* (.302), *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* (.859), and *Behavioral Intentions* (.425).

A one-way MANOVA revealed no significant multivariate main effects by gender, $F(5, 25) = .366$, *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) = .932, $p = .068$). Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. Given that the overall test was nonsignificant, the univariate main effects were not examined. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding

funding tuition-free community college education between male and female legislators. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Multivariate Effects of Age on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

	Wilks' λ	*F*	*Df*	*Error df*	*P*
Gender	.932	.366	5	25.000	.068

Race. Box's *M* test (p = .839) indicated that the homogeneity of covariance assumption was met. Lavene's *F* tests revealed that the assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was justifiable for *Attitude Belief Evaluation* (.463), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* (.237), *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* (.162), and *Behavioral Intentions* (.334). The assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was not met for *Attitude Belief Strength* (.002). Although *Attitude Belief Strength* Lavene's *F* tests was statistically significant ($p < .001$), the homogeneity of variance was considered satisfied to proceed with the MANOVA for all dependent variables.

A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effects by race, $F(15, 65) = 3.620$, *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) = .183, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .432$, power = .997). The multivariate effect size was estimated at .432, which suggests that 43% of the variance in the dependent variables were accounted for by the independent variable. Power to detect the effect was .995. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Significant differences in the attitudes, subjective

norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education were found based on race (White, African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and Other) of the legislator. The results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Multivariate Effects of Race on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

	Wilks' λ	*F*	*df*	*Error df*	*p*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Race	.183	3.620	15	65	.000	. 432	.995

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effects of race were obtained for *Attitude Belief Strength*, $F(3, 27) = 8.370$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .482$, power = .860), *Attitude Belief Evaluation*, $F(3, 27) = 14.773$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .621$, power = 1.000), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, $F(3, 27) = 13.945$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .608$, power = 1.000), and *Behavioral Intentions*, $F(3, 27) = 4.702$, $p = .009$, $\eta p^2 = .343$, power = .846).

Post hoc comparisons, using Tukey test, were employed to determine which pairs of the four group means differed. The Tukey test showed that the mean score for Maryland state legislators who reported race as Other ($M = 24.50$, $SD = 7.778$) were significantly different than that of those who reported their race as African-American ($M = 14.33$, $SD = 2.440$), White ($M = 8.33$, $SD = 4.355$), and Asian ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 2.828$) in their perceptions of *Attitude Belief*

Strength. For *Attitude Belief Evaluation*, Tukey test showed that the mean score for Maryland state legislators who reported their race as Other (*M* = 30.50, *SD* = 2.121) were significantly different than that of those who reported their race as Asian (*M* = 13.00, *SD* = 7.071), African-American (*M* = 9.33, *SD* = 4,451), and White (*M* = 9.67, *SD* = 3.985). For *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, Tukey test showed that the mean score for Maryland state legislators who reported their race as Other (*M* = 17.00, *SD* = 1.414) were significantly different than that of those who reported their race as Asian (*M* = 9.50, *SD* = .707), African-American (*M* = 6.87, *SD* = 2,356), and White (*M* = 6.50, *SD* = 2.195).

Finally, for *Behavioral Intentions,* showed that the mean score for Maryland state legislators who reported their race as Other (*M* = 21.00, *SD* =.000) were significantly different than that of those who reported their race as White (*M* = 9.17, *SD* = 5.828), African-American (*M* = 8.80, *SD* = 3.427), and Asian (*M* = 7.00, *SD* = 2.828). Conversely, no significant univariate main effects found of race on *Subjective Norm—Motivation to Comply F*(3, 27) = .497, *p* = .688). Thus, Maryland state legislatures who reported their race as Other (*M* = 16.50, *SD* = 7.778), African American (*M* = 14.20, *SD* = 3.406), Asian (*M* = 14.00, *SD* = .000), and White (*M* = 13.25, *SD* = 3.406) mean scores did not differ.

Overall, the results suggest that Maryland state legislators who reported their race as Other had higher *Attitude Belief Strength, Attitude Belief Evaluation, Subjective Norms—What Experts Think*, *and Behavioral Intentions* than that of

those who report their race as African-American, Asian, and White. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Univariate Effects of Race on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

Independent Variable: *Race*							
Dependent Variable	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P*	ηp^2	*Observed Power*
Attitude Belief Strength	192.126	3	64.042	8.370	.004	.482	.984
Attitude Belief Evaluation	831.371	3	277.124	14.773	.000	.621	1.000
Subjective Norms—What Experts Think	206.444	3	68.815	13.945	.000	.608	1.000
Behavioral Intentions	285.288	3	95.096	4.702	.009	.343	.846

Years of Service. A significant Box's *M* test (p = .023) indicated that the homogeneity of covariance assumptions was not met. Since the null hypothesis using Box *M* was rejected, Mertler and Vannatta (2005) suggested that *Pillai's Trace* should be used "if the assumption of equal variances is violated" (p. 126). Lavene's *F* tests, on the other hand, revealed that the assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was justifiable for *Attitude Belief Evaluation* (.062), *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* (.064), *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* (.809), and *Behavioral Intentions* (.796). The assumption of the homogeneity of covariance was not met for *Attitude Belief Strength* (.050).

Although *Attitude Belief Strength* Lavene's *F* tests were statistically significant ($p < .05$), the homogeneity of variance was considered satisfied to proceed with all dependent variables.

A one-way MANOVA revealed no significant multivariate main effects by years of service, $F(5, 25) = 1.990$, *Pillai's Trace* (V) = .285, $p = .115$). Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. Given that the overall test was nonsignificant, the univariate main effects were not examined. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education between various years of service. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Multivariate Effects of Years of Service on the Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Behavioral Intentions

	Pillai's Trace (V)	*F*	*Df*	*Error df*	*P*
Years of Service	.285	1.990	5	25	.115

Relationship between Attitudes and Legislators' Behavioral Intentions

Research Question #2 asked: "Is there a difference in attitudes and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?" Research question two sought to assess whether there was a relationship between attitudes and legislators' behavioral intentions. A Pearson product moment correlation procedure was conducted. The correlation's strength was interpreted by *r* value: .0 to .19 (very weak), .20 to .39 (weak), .40

to .59 (moderate), .60 to .79 (strong), and .80 to 1.0 (very strong) as suggested by Evans (1996).

A two-tailed test of significance indicated that *Attitude Belief Strength* r (31) = .452, p = .011), and *Attitude Belief Evaluation* r (31) = .537, p = .002) were positively correlated with *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislatures. The correlation coefficient's relationship between the types of attitudes and *Behavioral Intentions* were moderate. The results suggest that increases in the levels of *Attitude Belief Strength,* and *Attitude Belief Evaluation* correlated with increases in *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislatures. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant relationship between attitudes and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. The correlation results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Correlation Between Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Behavioral Intentions	-		
(2) Attitude Belief Strength	452*	-	
(3) Attitude Belief Evaluation	.537**	.051	-

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Relationship between Subjective Norms and Legislators' Behavioral Intentions

Research Question #3 asks: **"**Is there a difference in subjective norms and legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education?" Research Question #3 sought to assess whether there was a relationship between subjective norms and legislators' behavioral intentions. A Pearson product moment correlation was conducted.

A two-tailed test of significance indicated that *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* r (31) = .537, p = .002), and *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* r (31) = .388, p = .031) were positively correlated with *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislators. The correlation coefficients between the types of subjective norms and *Behavioral Intentions* were weak to moderate. Altogether, the results suggest that increases in the levels of *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think,* and *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* correlated with increases in *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislators. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a significant relationship between subjective norms and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. The correlation results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Correlation Between Subjective Norms and Behavioral Intentions

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Behavioral Intentions	-		
(2) Subjective Norms—What Others Think	537**	-	
(3) Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply	.388*	.183	-

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Open-ended Interviews

Two 30-minute interviews were held with the Education Subcommittee Chairmen—one Democratic State Senator and one Democratic member of the House of Delegates. The first open-ended question referenced the name of the tuition-free community college program and legislation. The Delegate agreed with the name, Maryland Community College Promise Scholarships because of the reference to Obama's previous legislation "America's College Promise Act of 2015." The Delegate said calling the program Maryland Community College Promise Scholarships was politically correct. Democratic legislators had suggested that calling the program another name could attract more Republican legislators.

The State Senator also agreed with the name of the program and titled his legislation Higher Education Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act of 2018, which included Maryland Community College Promise Scholarships. Bills

are limited to one subject and the title of the bill should clearly describe the subject, because this helps constituents monitor a bill more easily (Maryland State Archives, 2017).

The top three concerns regarding tuition-free community college education legislation were explored. The main concern was funding. Funding Promise Scholarship Programs puts an extra burden on the state, especially since federal spending supporting education has decreased, the Delegate said. The State Senator agreed. The State Senator said while there was statewide belief supporting tuition-free community college education, “we were not sure how we were going to raise the money.”

Another concern was educating legislators on the issue. The Delegate said tuition-free community college was a relatively new issue and had only been discussed by legislators over the past few years. The Delegate said legislators needed to become more educated about the issue. The State Senator said he had spent the last two years meeting with other legislators, committee chairs, and community college presidents to get buy-in and to build consensus and support for tuition-free community college education.

A third concern for the Delegate was the need for a local interest group lobbying strictly on behalf of this issue. For example, Campaign for Free College Tuition is a national organization. Representatives from this organization, along with officials from the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, testified in support of this legislation during the 2018 Legislative Session.

Regarding what elements should be included in the legislation, both agreed the program should be a “last-dollar’ program; have a family income component; include part- and full-time students, and scholarships could be used for remedial courses. They both agreed that a student should not have to pay a small fee to attend the community college, at least not in the beginning. The Delegate was torn between requiring students to stay in the area after being awarded the scholarships. This concept is called place-based scholarships. The Delegate said: “On one hand it’s good because it encourages people to stay in the area, but on the other hand it limits employability especially if there are some areas that a student is interested in and Maryland does not have that industry.” The specifics on the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program are found in Chapter II. Overall, the State Senator said: “Tuition-free community college education can help bring people out of poverty and addresses income inequality.”

Summary

The findings of the analyses (MANOVA and Pearson correlation), abbreviated in this chapter, answered the three research questions delineated in this study. Descriptive statistics analyzed the demographic characteristics of Maryland state legislatures. Box’s *M* tests and Levene’s *F* tests of equality of error variance tested the assumptions of the homogeneity of covariance matrices. A *Wilks' Lambda* (λ) was interpreted for significance if the assumption of variance-covariance was met. *Pillai’s Trace* was interpreted for significance if

the assumption was not met. The effect size calculated using partial eta squared (ηp^2).

MANOVA tests analyzed the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions against party affiliation, age, race, gender and years of service. Regarding party affiliation, Republican legislators were more positive about supporting tuition-free community college education, and had very strong beliefs about the issue, as compared to Democrats. Their beliefs were also formed by whether the important individuals or groups in their lives would approve or disapprove of them performing the behavior. Regarding age, the older legislators—between the ages of 56 and 65—had higher behavioral intentions, or a higher readiness to perform the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Again, the higher the attitudes and subjective norms, the higher the behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Legislators who identified their race as Other had stronger beliefs about funding tuition-free community college education and were more likely to listen to those who had certain opinions about the legislation. There were no significant results for gender and years of service.

The open-ended interviews stressed the importance of local organizations lobbying elected officials on issues. Both legislators agreed with the name, Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program.

Chapter IV presented findings of the analysis of the data, and explained each statistical method used to calculate the findings. Chapter V presents a

discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is presented in three sections. First is an overview of the study and discussion of the findings. Second, the conclusions and implications of the researcher as drawn from an examination of the data are presented. Lastly, details on recommendations for possible future research related to community college funding are identified. There is limited research on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of elected officials and how they intend to vote on issues. There is no research on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of elected officials and their views on tuition-free community college education. This is the first study that addresses this topic using the theory of reasoned action as the framework.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators regarding funding tuition-free community college education. Using a survey instrument based on a model from Fishbein and Ajzen (1980), 188 members of the 438th session of the Maryland General Assembly were surveyed. A total of 31 usable surveys were received by the researcher and were examined using a series of descriptive, and inferential statistical procedures. To examine the differences in attitudes, subjective norms and behavioral intentions of Maryland state legislators, five demographic variables were considered.

The first research question explored the demographic characteristics of Maryland legislators for differences in attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. The findings were examined using descriptive multivariate analysis of variance. A series of conclusions are drawn concerning the demographic characteristics and are presented below.

Hypothesis 1. When considering the political affiliation of Maryland legislators, significant differences were discovered. MANOVA results revealed significant main effects of party affiliation on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. The results suggest that Maryland's state legislatures whose party affiliation is Republican had higher *Attitude Belief Strength, Attitude Belief Evaluation, Subjective Norms—What Experts Think,* and *Behavioral Intentions* than those whose party affiliation was Democrat. Republican Maryland state legislatures' perception of *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* were the same.

In the *Attitude Belief Evaluation* section of the survey, Republican legislators believed state government should be involved with mandating funding tuition-free community college education; and they strongly agreed with funding community college education. Republican legislators agreed this legislation would give more people jobs and opportunities.

The findings demonstrated that Republicans were more passionate about their beliefs in funding tuition-free community college education and were impacted by the constituency they thought were important to them. Additionally,

the passion of the belief on an issue, as well as the feelings about the issue with the constituency who are important to the Republican elected official can impact the intentions of the legislator to vote for or against a bill.

The findings regarding political affiliation contradict what the literature says about party affiliation and beliefs about education. The literature has said that funding public education has traditionally been a Democratic issue (Petrocik, 1996). Having government less involved in education has been a view of the Republican Party (On the Issues, 2018). Delivering public services through the private sector is one perspective the Republican Party believes can reform government (On the Issues, 2018). Again, the sample included only three Republicans; therefore, the findings may not be reliable.

In Maryland, there are 141 members of the House of Delegates and 47 State Senators for a total of 188 legislators. Ninety-one members (65%) of the House of Delegates represent the Democratic Party, while 50 (35%) delegates are Republicans. Out of 47 state senators, there are 33 (70%) Democrats and 14 (30%) Republicans. The majority leaders in both the House and Senate (President, Speaker, Majority Leaders, and Majority Whips) represent the Democratic Party.

Hypothesis 2. Regarding age, there was a significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education among the different age groups of legislators.

According to the results of the study, elected officials between the ages of 56 and 65 had a higher significance in behavioral intentions. This means that this age group, compared to the other age groups, would perform a specific behavior. Therefore, if a constituent tries to influence a legislator between the ages of 56 and 65 this legislator would most likely vote the way he said he would vote.

In Maryland, the average age of a House member is 52, and the average age of a Senate member is 60 (Kurtz, 2015). Limited research exists concerning the age of the legislator and the impact on attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. However, this statistic—the age group between 56 and 65 with higher behavioral intentions—corresponds to the age of the average registered voter in the State of Maryland. The age range of the largest member of registered voter in the 2014 Maryland state elections was between 45 to 64 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Research also shows there is a relationship between age and party affiliation. From a Pew Research Center report, studies showed that older Americans, ages 60 and up, are Republican and are more conservative. While the 18- to 29-year-old is more liberal socially, about one-third are Republican, one-third are Democrats, and one-third are not politically involved. Research shows that most people's political outlook is formed in life early, and many voters adopt the political views of their parents (Desilver, 2014; U.S. History, 2018).

Hypothesis 3. When considering the gender of the Maryland legislator, there was no significant difference in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education between male and female legislators.

Hypothesis 4. When considering race, there were significant differences in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions among the races of the legislators. Legislators who identified themselves as Other showed significance in *Belief Strength and Belief evaluation*, *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think* and *Behavioral Intentions* than that of those who reported their race as African-American, Asian, and White. Therefore, multi-racial elected officials had strong beliefs about funding tuition-free community college education were concerned and impacted by people important to them and intended to vote for tuition-free community college. Limited research exists about multi-racial elected officials; however, more research is in the process of being conducted (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2005).

Historically, race has always been an important factor in political campaigns. Traditionally, African-Americans have voted for African-Americans and White/Caucasians have voted for White/Caucasians. The election into office of the first African-American president, Barack Obama, changed this traditional voting dynamic. In fact, the way he campaigned was non-traditional, using e-mail to raise funds and social media. Not only did Obama change campaign strategy, the results of his elections changed what the voting numbers traditionally

reflected regarding race. Similarly, African-Americans and Latinos have voted Democratic (U.S. History, 2018). Asian Americans have voted more conservatively. Since issues such as education have been addressed by the Democratic Party, people of color have tended to vote Democratic.

Regarding the race of lawmakers in Maryland, minorities make up 33% of the legislature consisting of 1%, American Indian/Native Alaskan; 4%, Asian/Pacific Islander; 23%, Black/African American; 3%, Hispanic/Latino; and 3%, Multiracial/Other. Sixty-seven percent are White/Caucasian (Kurtz, 2015).

Nationally, non-white groups are achieving higher levels of representation (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2005). There has been a consistent rise of African American elected officials in federal and state legislatures, with African American women comprising the highest number in this demographic (Hardy-Fanta et al., 2005). There has also been growth in the number of Hispanic and Asian elected officials.

Hypothesis 5. When considering years of service, there were no significant differences in the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. When studying years of service, most researchers are studying the concept of term-limits. State legislators in Maryland do not have term limits; however, they are elected into office every four years. Overall, studies show that lawmakers in term-limited legislatures are three years younger than those in other states. Therefore, term-limited legislatures have fewer long-serving—and therefore

older—members (Kurtz, 2015). Maryland is not a term-limited legislature. Senators are generally older and more seasoned. "The Senate is supposed to be a more deliberative, thoughtful institution and intended to be a check on the House, which could be swayed by the hot passions of the public" (Fitch, 2010, p. 41).

Hypothesis 6. The findings from the study demonstrated that legislators' attitudes do impact behavioral intentions. Correlation tests demonstrated relationships between attitudes and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. The results suggest that increases in the levels of *Attitude Belief Strength,* and *Attitude Belief Evaluation* correlate with increases in *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislators.

Hypothesis 7. Regarding subjective norms, the findings from the study demonstrated that legislators' subjective norms do impact behavioral intentions. Correlation tests demonstrated relationships between subjective norms and the legislators' behavioral intentions regarding funding tuition-free community college education. The results suggest that increases in the levels of *Subjective Norms—Motivation to Comply* and *Subjective Norms—What Experts Think correlate* with increases in *Behavioral Intentions* for Maryland state legislators.

The data analyses confirm the relationship between the components of attitudes and subjective norms and demonstrates that as these two variables increase behavioral intentions are heightened. Therefore, as attitudes and

subjective norms increase regarding an issue, the behavioral intentions of legislators will increase. Similarly, as the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of the elected official increased regarding funding tuition-free community college, the more likely that elected official would vote in support of tuition-free community college education.

Conclusions and Implications

Overall, the study found significant relationships between political affiliation, age, and race of elected officials and attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. Also, there was a strong relationship between attitudes and subjective norms and behavioral intentions. As attitudes and subjective norms increased, behavioral intentions of the elected official increased.

The overall premise of the theory of reasoned action is that if adjustments are made in attitudes and subjective norms, behavior can change. The results from this study demonstrated and confirmed this premise.

Results from the open-ended interviews found additional conclusions and implications: The name of the legislation was important and can compel the lawmaker to vote for or against the bill. Constituents' personal stories do have an influence on the legislators' decision-making process (Fitch, 2010). They can see the impact of legislation on people when they hear the personal stories. If the story is impactful enough, the legislation may become entitled the name of the person who experienced the issue. Both lawmakers agreed with the name, the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program. The Maryland

Community College Promise Scholarship Program will continue to be a priority for Maryland lawmakers, as they seek additional revenue streams, so the program can grow and develop each year. Having an organization with a local presence advocate for legislation was of the utmost importance to the Delegate. The main role of elected officials is to represent the interests of constituents in their district. Therefore, if an organization outside of the state is advocating for an issue, the impact may not be as great as if a local organization is pushing the issue. Two organizations, Maryland Association of Community Colleges, a Maryland non-profit organization, and the Campaign for Free College Tuition, a national organization, both testified in support of tuition-free community college education.

One conclusion and implication was the timing when an elected official is approached about their attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions on an issue. This became apparent from the researcher collecting the surveys for this study. Fitch (2010) said, constituents should approach lawmakers when they are undecided about how they will vote. Because if legislators have already decided, the constituent will have a difficult time convincing them to change their mind. Fitch (2010), said, reporters have labeled elected officials who change their minds, “flip-floppers.” For many lawmakers, once they have decided on a position they will maintain that position.

Another implication of this research is that while there is some information available, some legislators did not feel they had appropriate or accurate

information concerning tuition-free community college education. An issue that was a concern to the researcher at the time this topic was decided upon, involved the use of this research in a political manner. This research provides broad claims about specific demographics of legislators. These claims could be used to criticize or disparage legislators of one demographic or another. For example, from the research in this study, the three Republicans were supportive of funding tuition-free community college education. This conclusion may infer that Republican legislatures may want to see an increase in tuition levels because they support tuition-free community college education. However, this may be an inappropriate and deceptive interpretation of the findings since there were only three legislators who were Republicans compared to 28 legislators who were Democrats in this study. Along with other recommendations that have been outlined throughout this study, a tuition increase is only one possible measure to support tuition-free community college education.

The results from this study can give stakeholders insight into designing targeted lobbying efforts and campaigns to influence elected officials in voting intentions. For instance, in lobbying a legislator on an issue, first, it is essential to know the beliefs the legislator has about the issue. The beliefs legislators held about tuition-free community college education were included in the survey. The questions ranged from if they believed “tuition-free community college education would give more people an opportunity to attend college” to a belief that “funding tuition-free community college education is too expensive for state government to

support." The second step is to figure out how strongly the legislator feels about these beliefs. One can help to change a legislator's voting intention if one can change what the legislator believes about the issue and how strongly the legislator feels about his or her beliefs. In reversing the voting intention of legislators, it is essential to know who their influencers are. For instance, is the elected official influenced by colleagues, constituents, lobbyists or personal beliefs? Knowing who their influencers are can also help a stakeholder develop a targeted campaign. When identifying their influencers, how likely are they to comply with what their influencers think? From this study, party affiliation impacted attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. In particular, Republicans were more passionate about their beliefs about tuition-free community college education and listened to the constituency they believed were important to them. Elected officials between the ages of 56 and 65 were stable in how they intended to vote regarding legislation related to tuition-free community college education, and attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions influenced multi-racial legislators.

In persuading elected officials to change their voting intentions, stakeholders must consider various modes and methods of communication. While styles of communication were not directly studied, several strategies were found to be effective when the researcher collected the data and surveys. They include the following:

- Stakeholders should approach legislators before they have taken a stand on an issue.
- Stakeholders should research legislators before meeting with them. For instance, the stakeholder should know the legislators' district; if they serve in a leadership capacity; what committees are they members of, and what is their role on the committees.
- The legislator should have information about the stakeholder. Does the stakeholder represent himself, a neighborhood association, a non-profit organization, or even a union?
- Stakeholders should get to know their legislators' staff and schedulers because they serve as the gatekeepers to the legislators and schedule their meetings.
- Stakeholders should aim for face-to-face meetings with legislators. Do not just email or call elected officials to voice concerns regarding an issue.
- After the meeting, leave a simple document that includes local numbers. The legislator will be able to reference this document when deciding on an issue.

Recommendations

From this research, a series of recommendations were developed.

1. This research focused on just the legislative process of tuition-free community college education. Research on the executive role in

budget development and advocacy is needed to better understand funding Maryland's community colleges.

2. Research could be conducted measuring the effectiveness and impact of the local and state tuition-free community college education programs.
3. The framework and survey instrument could be used as a model to explore and research other proposed statewide legislation.
4. Timing is a very important element when interviewing elected officials and it is important that a researcher is familiar with the seasonal calendar of statewide elected officials. Surveys should be sent out and interviews conducted before the beginning of the legislative session.
5. This research sought only to define the current attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland legislators regarding tuition-free community college education. A separate research effort could extend this study further and examine the behavior of the legislator, comparing the attitudes, subjective norms and behavioral intentions to the outcome or actual behavior of the legislator. This research could enhance the ability of community college stakeholders to better understand the influences in the decision making of Maryland legislators.

6. Other demographic variables could be analyzed to determine if there are other elements that may influence the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland elected officials.
7. A qualitative research study collecting information through face-to-face interviews with the legislators could add to the understanding of perceptions of Maryland state legislators.
8. Cost was a part of this discussion, since tuition-free community college education is being paid for by the State of Maryland. Further studies are required to explore other possible funding models for tuition-free community college education in the State of Maryland.
9. For this dissertation, tuition-free community college education primarily focused on two-year colleges. Providing certifications and continuing education courses is another strong role of the community college. Additional research could be done exploring the concept of tuition-free community college education as it applies to certification and continuing education courses.
10. The final recommendation is to study the overall impact of attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions on behavior. This next step links beliefs and intentions to behavior. The study focused on attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of state legislators about potential legislation to implement a tuition-free community college education. The study did not analyze behavior.

The theory of reasoned action suggests that intentions decide behavior. Belief strength and belief evaluation define an individual's attitudes. The belief strengths are the negative or positive feelings/beliefs an individual has regarding a concept, and belief evaluations are how strong an individual believes in the idea (Fishbein & Azjen, 2010). Subjective norms explore the thoughts of the experts in their lives who are important to them, as well as the elected officials' motivation to comply with the beliefs of the experts. Behavioral intentions are the plans of a person to perform a specific behavior. Behavior is the last element of the theory. According to the theory of reasoned action, based on the subjective norms and attitudes, a legislator intends to display a specific behavior, and will, in turn, exhibit that behavior. Studying the influences on behavior will confirm the effectiveness of the entire theory of reasoned action framework in analyzing the behavior of elected officials.

Summary

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions (policy positions) held by state legislators about potential legislation to implement a tuition-free community college education. Guided by the theory of reasoned action, from this study, one can better develop a strategy to advocate for funding for Maryland's community

colleges by understanding the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland's elected officials.

The data revealed significant results regarding political affiliation, age, and race. The results suggested that Maryland's state legislators whose party affiliation was Republican were more passionate about their beliefs in funding tuition-free community college education and were impacted by the constituency they thought was important to them as compared to those whose party affiliation was Democrat. The behavioral intentions of older legislators—between the ages of 56 and 65—were higher than other age groups. The legislators who identified themselves as multi-racial were more influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. There was a strong correlation between attitudes and subjective norms, and behavioral intentions of Maryland's elected officials regarding funding tuition-free community college education. Also, the discussion included recommendations for further research.

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