

At Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester, Gov. Baker announces expanded aid program

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Posted at 1:46 PM | Updated Sep 24, 2018 at 3:33 PM

WORCESTER – Gov. Charlie Baker and other state officials visited Quinsigamond Community College Monday morning to tout the state's latest investment in financial aid for community college students, the largest such increase in that funding over two decades they said.

The \$7.5 million expansion of the state's existing MassGrant program is intended to provide small amounts of money to community college students, including for the first-time part-time students.

“It could be anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000,” said Luis Pedraja, Quinsigamond's president. “For our students, that really makes a difference.”

In a roundtable discussion with state officials at Quinsigamond's QuEST Center Monday morning, students at the college related how they and their fellow Quinsigamond students often struggle to afford everyday college costs on top of the other responsibilities they have in their lives. Two of the students who spoke with Mr. Baker, for instance, are working single mothers, and have to consider out-of-pocket expenses like daycare along with their tuition and fees.

One of those students, Shantel Rutherford, said she works nearly full-time in the college's financial aid office to make ends meet, and has come across many students who have to cut back on or even completely end their studies at Quinsigamond because they couldn't afford it.

“It’s a complete challenge that some of our students have,” she said, adding staff in her office do their best – sometimes even giving away their own money – to help those students manage.

Gov. Baker said the expansion of MassGrant is an acknowledgement of the fact that many community college students “need to be able to straddle more than one world,” and that the state’s college population is increasingly made up of non-traditional students like working parents.

“(College) is not a runway that is predefined as it once was,” he said.

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