ACM Family,

I hope everyone enjoys Valentine's Day weekend with their loved ones.

## Faculty and Staff Recognition
This week's nominee is **Richard "Dick" Soderman**! "Dick Soderman is one of the most kindhearted and generous individuals on this campus. He is frequently sought out for his deep knowledge, openness to new challenges, and sincere commitment to supporting the success of others. Dick has a rare ability to translate complex concepts into practical, meaningful work that strengthens the college, particularly in areas such as disability services and accreditation assessment forms for programs. Patient, responsive, and exceptionally thorough, he is remarkably generous with his time and talents and a true blessing to this college."
- Nominated by multiple colleagues.

## Leadership Allegany Rising
A heartfelt thank you to the ACM faculty and staff for your efforts in making ACM shine during the Chamber's *Leadership Allegany Rising* visit yesterday. Your dedication to hands-on activities and leadership experiences showcased ACM and our many programs.  A special thanks to the planning team, Miha W. and Karin S., as well as the many others who contributed, including Andréa B., Brenda M., Meghan P., Justin W., Steve H., Cassie F., Joy F., Scott D., Elizabeth S., Brandon H., Anne S., Susan H., Lori S., Tiffany W., Emily C, Connie M., and ACM Criminal Justice and Respiratory Therapy students.

## AI Task Force
I am pleased to introduce the AI Task Force. The purpose of this Taskforce is to support and guide the responsible, secure, and ethical use of AI tools by college employees. The Taskforce will be charged with reviewing and revising the current draft Artificial Intelligence Policy, providing practical guidance, vetting tools, recommending training and resources, and assisting employees with AI-related challenges and opportunities. This work will help ensure that AI is incorporated safely, strategically, and in alignment with the college's priorities.

Chair:  Jami Reynolds
Vice Chair:  Wendy Knopsnider
Miha Wood
Andrea Beall
Brian Slope
Devin Merrill
Jim House
Melanie Chapman
Jennifer Engelbach
Carolyn George
Lauren Winterberg

## Be My Guest
To maintain transparency, I'd like to encourage anyone with questions to visit me at my office on the dates below from 2:30 to 4 pm. If you'd like to stop by today, the 13th, please do so between 1:30 pm and 3:00 pm.
February 13
February 20
March 6
March 20
April 3

April 17
May 1
I warmly invite you to visit for an informal opportunity to meet, enjoy a cup of water/tea/coffee, connect, and answer your questions….or to say hello.

## Budget Update
The budget is still in the preliminary development stage.   ACM leadership will continue to update the ACM community as more details are provided by the State and County.   As part of the Governor's budget, a 3% increase to ACM is included, totaling $324,281.  Under maintenance-of-effort legislation, ACM is tentatively scheduled to receive this increase, as long as the County provides level funding.  It is important to note that any decrease from the County would not only eliminate the $324,381 increase from the State, but would further negatively impact the College budget.

As shared earlier, ACM is anticipated to see an approximate $1.4 million increase in health/Rx costs over the current year.  The College is working with CBIZ to address and evaluate all relevant and practical health/RX options before open enrollment in May.  Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

## Nelnet Issue Resolved
I am happy to report that the issues we were experiencing with Nelnet have been fully resolved. Earlier this semester, students' Nelnet payment plan account balances were not calculating accurately, resulting in some students seeing balances that were significantly higher than they should have been.

A special thank you goes to Shyann King for her diligence and persistence in working with Nelnet to identify and correct the problem.

## Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule
The Board of Trustees meeting schedule is listed below. As always, everyone is invited to attend, and anyone with questions can expect full transparency.

February 23, 2026
March 16, 2026
April 13, 2026
May 11, 2026
June 15, 2026
August 17, 2026
September 14, 2026
October 19, 2026
November 16, 2026
December 7, 2026

## Grant Highlight
Rural Maryland Council Partnership Grant
In partnership with the Community Trust Foundation, ACM's $45,000 request to the Rural Maryland Council was approved to fund a dual-use mobile trailer shared between Western Maryland Works and the Forestry program. The trailer will support field-based training, mobile demonstrations, and workforce outreach throughout the region.

## On a Personal Note

Gary Cook's funeral was held over the weekend, and in the quiet moments since, I've found myself reflecting on the steadiness, kindness, and deep sincerity he brought to ACM and our community. Gary had a rare ability to listen in a way that lifted others, and that generosity of spirit is what I will remember most.  His humility and encouragement left a lasting imprint on so many of us.

With ACM Pride,
David