

Howard Community College: The Story of Us and The Power of Local Politics

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From Grassroots to Greatness: How Howard County Built a College and a Community

When local citizens believe in education enough to build it themselves, history follows.

- Howard Community College (HCC) began as a **county-level initiative**, not a state mandate.
- The founding vision: education as a **pathway out of inequality**, not just a career track.
- The **Howard County Board of Education and County Commissioners** worked hand-in-hand to prioritize public welfare through learning.
- The push for HCC aligned with the **War on Poverty era**—a national moment where local governments acted to close opportunity gaps.

Today, HCC's social mission continues: over **27,000 residents** engage in degree, workforce, and community programs annually.



The groundbreaking ceremony for the college took place on Tuesday, June 24, 1969 at 2:00pm. Mrs. Gertrude Crist was the Vice Chair of the newly formed Board of Trustees, and she was the first to speak

How Things Came to Be - Built by the People, for the People

Long before Annapolis took notice, Howard County's citizens were already designing their own future.

- In the 1960s, **Columbia, Maryland** was booming — a new planned community with new challenges: **education, equity, and opportunity**.
- As families settled in, **education gaps widened**, especially for working-class and minority residents.
- Local advocates and parents demanded a **community college close to home** to keep their young people learning — not leaving.
- The **Howard County Commissioners** secured land near Columbia's growing downtown, aligning education with the county's vision of inclusion and progress.



On the weekend of October 10 and 11 faculty, students, and administrative staff came in dressed in work clothes and did everything they could to make the place ready for our students

On **October 12, 1970**, **Howard Community College** opened its doors to **593 students**, becoming **Maryland's 14th community college** and a triumph of local self-determination.

The College That Grew With Its County

Howard County didn't outgrow its college — its college helped define what the county would become.

- The campus expanded to include **The Horowitz Visual & Performing Arts Center**, **The Kate Heathering Health Sciences Building** and the **Kahlert Foundation Complex**.
- Deep ties to local industry led to **career pathways in healthcare, cybersecurity, and public service**.
- Partnerships with **Howard County Public Schools** and **Howard County Government** create a talent pipeline.
- Civic engagement remains central hosting **public lectures, voter registration drives, and community dialogues**.



The Future Is Still Local

If the past proves anything, Howard County's next big leap will start at the community table, not the state capitol.

- HCC continues to expand **online learning and workforce retraining** programs for post-pandemic recovery.
- Local partnerships support **affordable housing for students** and **transportation access**.
- The college is central to **Howard County's equity and inclusion initiatives**, especially for first-generation students.
- Emerging collaborations with **local nonprofits and small businesses** promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Future plans envision HCC as the **anchor institution** for Howard County's "Lifelong Learning" agenda.



Democracy at Work: Lessons from a County That Said ‘We Can!’

You don't need a state capital to make history just citizens who show up.

- **Local tax investment** built long-term community infrastructure that still thrives.
- County leadership listened conducting **public hearings and civic advocacy** which has shaped every phase of HCC's creation.
- Collaboration between **residents, educators, and government** proved democracy can be pragmatic.
- Prioritizing **access over prestige** created an inclusive institution that reflects its community.
- The lesson: Empowering local voices leads to institutions that last for generations.



The Power of Local Hands

Howard Community College stands as proof that when everyday people participate in local government, they don't just influence policy: **they build futures.**

- HCC remains a **model for community-driven development** across Maryland.
- Its success illustrates how **local democracy fuels equity and innovation.**
- The story invites every county to ask: *What could we build if we believed in ourselves first?*
- The next generation of civic transformation may already be waiting at your local council meeting.
- **Change doesn't start in Washington... it starts at home.**

