



***Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analyst***

***Senate Budget & Taxation
Education, Business and Administration
Senator Guy Guzzone
February 28, 2020***

***House Appropriation
Education and Economic Development
Delegate Maggie McIntosh
March 4, 2020***

HSMC should comment on efforts to encourage school attendance and what caused the decline in scholastic tours.

Looking through our data/records we have determined that the cause in decline is associated with these major factors:

1. Dove Exhibit Out of Service 2018:
 - In the fall of 2018, the pier for the MD Dove was being repaired. The ship was not on exhibit. A number of schools did not book while the ship was offline. The pier is complete and this is no longer an issue.
2. Availability and Cost of transportation:
 - Many school districts mandate that schools take coach buses for long field trips which impact their ability to come.
 - In the spring months there is a lot of competition for coach buses in our region from tourists and excursion groups. Coach buses might not be available. In fact for this spring season, we have already seen the major cause of reschedules and cancellations is due to bus availability.
 - Competition also drives up the prices for buses seasonally.
3. Cost of Field Trips to Families:
 - Some counties require volunteer chaperones to pay for background checks and to have a minimum number of chaperones on a tour. This causes many schools to cancel and stop booking tours.

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- Hiring a coach bus increases the cost of the field trip for the school or the parents of the students. In some cases it might cost a family \$50-\$70 to send a child on a field trip to HSMC. When too few parents can or will pay the extra costs, field trips are cancelled.
 - HSMC is committed to keep its admission fee low, for P-12 school tours, to encourage greater attendance.
4. Testing:
- Standardized test dates fall on dates that a school as typically booked a tour and must cancel if they cannot reschedule.
5. Teacher turnover:
- New teachers are not aware of these opportunities and thus fail to book a tour for their students.
6. Weather:
- Tours are outdoors, and when schools cancel due to bad weather there is not always availability to reschedule the tour, because a bus is not available or prior bookings at HSMC. We do not hold rain dates as the weather is too unpredictable and we are trying to get as many schools booked as possible.

Methods to address the decline:

1. Marketing:
- Every teacher is asked to evaluate the school tour experience. With rare exceptions, teachers are pleased with their experience; we know it is not the quality of the product that causes a decline in tours.
 - The museum was without a Marketing Manager for four years until the position was included in the Governor's supplemental budget for FY2019. The Marketing Manager now assists the Education Department by producing promotional materials.
 - Direct to Educators:
 - Education staff attends the Middle States Social Studies Conference held this day to meet with teachers and advertise to them about our educational programs. While at the conference we will also be conducting surveys to learn more about why teacher are not books tours.
 - Education staff attends the Maryland State Educators Association Conference and have a table to market to teachers and conducting survey work as well.
2. Assisting Schools:
- The Historic St. Mary's City Foundation is seeking to raise money for a "bus drawdown account" to provide scholarships to schools to help offset the cost of the trip. The Foundation is researching funding prospects, including private grants and the State Aided Educational Institutions Program for nonprofit organizations.

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3. Broadening program:
 - Education staff has developed a new tour for high school students. This tour will complement our current offerings which focus on preschool and primary school grades.
4. Maryland Heritage Interpretive Center (MHIC)
 - The MHIC, scheduled for construction in FY2022-23, is part of the multi-year capital improvement project with St. Mary's College of Maryland, known as the Maryland Heritage Project. MHIC is designed to provide space for year round school programming and will allow HSMC to expand its outreach to P-12 educators and students.

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