

## PRESS RELEASE

# Congressman Higgins & Villa Maria College Announce \$1.98 Million U.S. Department of Education Grant

September 29, 2015



### *Federal Funds Will Support Villa's Efforts to Reach Underserved Students*

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) and Villa Maria College announce a federal grant totaling more than \$1.984 million for the College, provided through the U.S. Department of Education.

“Villa Maria College has a longstanding tradition of excellence in education and commitment to community service,” said Congressman Higgins. “This grant will support Villa’s outreach efforts and work guiding students through to graduation.”

“We are truly appreciative of the Title III Grant,” said Villa Maria College President Sister Marcella Marie Garus. “It will provide the necessary resources to advance our visionary plan goals to increase retention and graduation rates. As Villa continues to become the premier student centered college in Western New York, these additional resources will be applied at every level to focus more directly on student success and continue our trend of increasing enrollment.”

The federal award of \$396,870 annually for the next five years was provided through the Department of Education’s Strengthening Institutions Program, which supports higher education facilities’ efforts to expand their capacity to provide quality educational opportunities to low-income students.

Founded by Felician Sisters in 1960, Villa Maria College, located in the Town of Cheektowaga, provides quality higher education to a diverse student population through small class sizes and personalized attention. Of the students enrolled in the fall of 2014, 70% have parents who do not hold a college degree, 13% have documented disabilities, and 93% received need based financial aid.

Dr. Matthew Giordano, Vice President for Academic Affairs, added, “Villa Maria College prides itself on providing students a unique educational experience, characterized by individual attention, a caring community, and robust student support systems. Receiving the Title III grant not only affirms the value of this experience, it enables the College to take the student experience to an entirely new level. With Title III funding, Villa Maria will significantly improve the quality of instruction and support services, which will have tangible, immediate impact on our students. The real recipients of this grant are the students and community members of Western New York, who will have the opportunity to directly benefit in new and enhanced ways from the mission-driven, student-centered education that Villa Maria offers.”