

Dear ,

We are writing to ask you to support the college sector by urging the Scottish Government to ensure that the “additional” one-off £26m being given to colleges in the 23-24 budget has no strings attached.

Colleges in Scotland are being left on a cliff-edge, with no security about how they’ll be supported. Staff are already overworked, with both support staff and lecturers struggling to maintain the quality of the student experience.

Students are also suffering as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. We are in education to improve our chances of success in what is an increasingly competitive labour market; but a real-terms reduction in funding, and a further, somehow separate, pot of money, seemingly pigeon-holed by the Scottish Funding Council for specific projects will only increase attainment gaps and mean a further deterioration of the student learning experience.

On top of the challenges in maintaining the quality of teaching for students, whose lecturers are experiencing increased workloads, the continued cuts in funding mean that the quality of materials students have access to won’t be able to keep up with industry standards.

All this is having a direct impact on students: the ‘Thriving Learners Report’ from the Mental Health Foundation also indicated that a majority (64%) of college students are experiencing mental health difficulties, with 37% of these being a result of food insecurity. Colleges are being left to pick up these pieces without any wider support from the Scottish Government.

Putting unidentified strings on the £26m promised to the sector, is leaving colleges in a position where they’re being forced to cut resources vital to support teaching staff and students’ mental health, and to maintain courses essential in plugging the widening skills gaps across the country.

We urge you to put pressure on the Scottish Government to make this funding to the sector strings-free so that colleges are able to address these growing issues at the roots, instead of being forced to attempt to retroactively repair them.

It is simply unfair to the students of these colleges to leave them in the dark about the future of the sector and to provide no promise of genuine support.

Yours sincerely,