



**4 DAYS . . . 900 MILES . . . . ONE GOAL:  
POWERING MARYLAND FORWARD**  
**A Summary of Chancellor Caret’s October 12-15, 2015 Listening Tour  
Board of Regents’ 2015 Retreat**

**GOALS**

University System of Maryland (USM) Chancellor Bob Caret embarked on a four-day listening tour of Maryland, October 12-15, 2015. During the 900-mile tour, Caret met with USM external audiences, including businesspeople, elected officials, community leaders and activists, representatives from K-12 and higher education, and others.

The listening tour is a major component of Chancellor Caret’s initiative to reach out to USM audiences to understand their views of how the system is doing in serving its students and the state, and to gather suggestions on how the system can do better in the years ahead. The chancellor also is spending one full day at each USM institution to meet with the internal community—faculty, staff, students, and administrators.

The primary goals of the listening tour included the following.

- To increase: understanding of and appreciation for the system and its value to the state; partnerships designed to serve students and the state better; and prospective “friend-raising” and fundraising opportunities.
- To learn about regional concerns and begin to explore how USM and its institutions can help even more.
- To deliver key messages face-to-face under USM’s umbrella theme of partnering to advance the state.

Throughout the tour, participants welcomed the opportunity to meet with the chancellor face-to-face. In addition, many communicated in various ways that they expected USM, as a statewide entity, to help advance their regions—and the state as a whole—academically, economically, and socially.

**COMMON THEMES**

Emerging from the discussions were some common themes:

- USM should work with all levels of education to help students navigate the academic pipeline successfully and ensure the system’s alignment with K-12.
- Costs to attend college must be affordable.
- USM needs to leverage its resources and expertise to help more first-generation students and those living in poverty make a successful transition to higher education and succeed once they arrive on our university campuses.

- As an economic engine of the state, USM should help incubate new companies *and* help keep those companies in Maryland once they become profitable.
- Throughout the state, USM should make academic programs available that will further regional economic vitality.
- USM needs to promote and strengthen its partnerships with community colleges to make higher education more accessible and affordable.
- Higher education needs to move at a faster pace (catch up to the pace at which business moves) to ensure that its academic programs are aligned with workforce needs.
- The state’s agriculture industry views USM, and more specifically its (cooperative) extension service, as neglecting the industry’s needs.

## **SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HEARD BY REGION**

### **Southern Maryland (stops at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center (SMHEC) and Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, including a tour with Exelon Chairman Mayo Shattuck)**

- How can USM help to diversify our economy and help more people statewide appreciate the huge enterprise that we have in Southern Maryland?
- We need to agree on what the new SMHEC building will house, ensuring that regional needs are served well. Furthermore, we need to clearly define SMHEC’s changing role as well as USM’s possible position as a full partner in operating the center.
- What can USM do to keep the cost of education down and reduce the total cost of a bachelor’s degree?
- Calvert Cliffs managers said openings for electrical engineers are the most difficult positions to fill. They also talked about the power plant’s partnerships with institutions to provide ongoing employee training.

**Baltimore City:** With four stops in the city of Baltimore, the discussions were wide ranging. Stops included breakfast with community activists, a meeting with “One Baltimore” Director Michael Cryor, lunch with community leaders, and an extensive tour of Under Armour and a chat with CEO Kevin Plank.

### **Meeting with Community Activists**

- A focus on the college completion agenda is imperative.
- How can USM support research that actually impacts social issues in Baltimore City—criminal justice, social justice, and other areas?
- The issue for many first-generation students is “basic survival,” making programs more accessible, exposing students to college campuses early, minimizing cultural shock, providing guidance through the financial aid maze, helping students build relationships, providing mentors, and minimizing college debt.
- USM needs to help students and parents understand why postsecondary education is important, with particular focus on building social capital (who to call for help, networking, and landing internships).
- Teaching financial responsibility is critical.

### **Meeting with Michael Cryor, One Baltimore**

- A missing piece in moving Baltimore forward is connectivity between organizations and individuals working on common goals. USM can play a role in strengthening communications and collaborations.
- While it's good that some universities and other organizations have created partnerships with elementary/secondary schools in Baltimore, every school in the city needs an ongoing partner to help ensure student success along the academic pipeline.
- USM needs to develop one or two initiatives that could potentially have enormous impact on strengthening the Baltimore region.

### **Lunch with Baltimore Region Leaders (business, government, community organizations, healthcare organizations)**

- Higher education needs to serve part-time students better: Offer credit for time served in other activities, including working; also offer credentialing.
- Since changes in business happen more rapidly than those in higher education, USM needs to work nonstop to align its programs with workforce needs to ensure that students are graduating well prepared. Hospitality and construction jobs are important to the city.
- Related to health care, Baltimore needs more diversity in the workforce, more primary care physicians, and an emphasis on health literacy.
- USM and businesses/organizations in Baltimore need to work more closely to help students land internships.
- Also needed are alternative pathways to college degrees.
- One of the most important things that USM can do is to "fix" Coppin.
- At Under Armour, CEO Kevin Plank discussed his efforts to bring back some of the company's workforce to the United States, to have a greater impact on global health through technological innovation, and to build a new company campus at Port Covington.

### **Harford County**

- USM needs to increase its assets in the region and strengthen its connection with Northeast Maryland.
- USM needs to ease students' transition from community colleges to our four-year institutions, including offering transfer scholarships.
- Also in need of improvement is communication between the Northeast Maryland Higher Education Advisory Board and USM. *(According to the online Maryland Manual, UMCP President Wallace Loh and UMUC President Javier Miyares serve on the board. Towson's seat on the board is vacant.)*
- USM needs to reengineer its "cost equation" to ensure affordability.
- Other suggestions included creating a USM industry advisory board, offering an MBA program in the region, and strengthening outreach to the K-12 community.

### **Eastern Shore: Stops here included discussions about the academic pipeline; academic, business, and community needs (Jim Perdue of Perdue Farms attended this session); support of the agriculture industry; and USM's role in environmental sustainability.**

- USM should work more closely with K-12 to help ensure that students are prepared for higher education and to help develop, recruit, and retain qualified teachers. We often lose teachers to the Western Shore since we can't compete with the salaries offered.
- Also important is recruiting and retaining more minority teachers.

- USM should respond to the region’s health-care needs. The Eastern Shore has a critical need for a medical school presence.
- Partnerships with USM/its institutions are very important.
- Equally important as building workforce-ready skills is building “character” and ensuring that university students become effective, contributing members of society.
- USM needs to help students reduce time-to-degree to save money.
- Farmers expressed an urgent need to have “the universities behind us in our efforts to feed the state, country, and the world.” They said that the universities, especially the extension service, have neglected the needs of the agriculture industry due to cutbacks. The research stations are no longer performing the unbiased research that the industry desperately needs. In addition, the farmers want extension officers to return to the fields to work more effectively as helpful partners.
- Eastern Shore residents genuinely appreciate the work of UMCES’ Horn Point Laboratory on environmental issues. Those present at the Horn Point stop challenged USM to look more closely at the compelling nature of the work done at the lab and suggested that any marketing done by USM should highlight this work. In addition, some asked for USM’s help in marketing food caught/raised/produced in Maryland to Maryland restaurants.

**Prince George’s County: Stops here included a tour of Whiting Turner’s (W-T’s) MGM Grand Casino construction site at National Harbor, with W-T CEO Tim Regan, and a dinner with county government and business representatives.**

- How can USM help Prince George’s County keep companies in the county? Any county economic development strategy must include a role for USM institutions.
- USM needs a campaign to educate people about the many pathways it offers to a college degree.
- In addition, USM needs to work more closely with K-12 to help students be more prepared for success.
- One difficulty is that too many students are not getting “pushed” at home. Parents are not advising them to take AP courses; they also are not advising their children to take other steps to be more prepared for college. How can our universities help with this?
- How can USM increase collaboration between historically black institutions and other institutions?

**Western Maryland: Stops in this region included a discussion with community leaders, a meeting with the external advisory board of the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown (USMH), and a meeting with representatives of Maryland’s wine industry.**

- Western Maryland needs USM to be its economic engine. Furthermore, West Virginia University is stealing too many of our potential graduates. How can USM help turn that around?
- There is a lack of a major industry in Western Maryland; however, “energy” is an industry in which we could excel (wind, coal, gas, etc.) How can USM help with that?
- Governor Hogan and the USM Board of Regents should move up the Frostburg State University center for education and health sciences in the capital budget queue.
- How can we accelerate USMH’s growth to attract new industries to our region? Adding STEM programs to the offerings would serve as a magnet, and also would help elevate our regional brand.
- USMH is key to the city’s revitalization.

- Strong and clearly articulated 2+2 programs are important.
- USM needs to take a position on a proposed regional higher education center for Frederick County, understanding that “building up” USMH must be our priority.
- Representatives from the state’s expanding wine industry: USM extension services are key to a thriving wine industry in the state. We need experts in the field “to let us know what’s wrong and what’s right.” We also need to make sure that the universities have the relevant programs needed to support the industry—programs in plant pathology, fermentation research, and soil testing and erosion.
- In addition, industry partnerships with USM could help raise awareness of the wine industry and help increase consumption of Maryland wines.

### **Montgomery County**

- USM needs to help the region create an ecosystem that encourages businesses to stay in the region.
- More creative partnerships between USM, the business community, and others will lead to more opportunities for all.
- With fewer dollars available from the federal government, the region needs more support from USM to fund research.
- USM needs to consider investing its fund balance to enhance revenues.
- USM, its regional centers, and its institutions need to take full advantage of the role of community colleges in the academic pipeline.
- Higher education’s response time to regional needs is too slow.
- USM needs to bring more programs to the Universities at Shady Grove. How can USM help make this area one of the country’s top bio-health regions?

### **Next Steps**

- Develop, adopt, and implement a workable number of impactful strategies in response to identified critical needs that align well with USM’s mission.
- Determine how best to keep communications open with representatives from different regions of the state, demonstrating that USM listened and is responding within its available resources.

**10.20.15**