

CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

FROM JAY A. PERMAN



Our Global Literacy Imperative in an Interconnected World

“To educate and serve the people of Maryland.” These are the first words of the USM’s mission statement. But if you go to any of our universities, you’ll find more than Marylanders there. You’ll find people from across the country—and around the world.

The USM is an international community of students, scholars, and researchers. This year, we’ll welcome more than 10,000 international students to our campuses, while sending thousands of U.S.-based students and faculty to every corner of the globe—yes, every continent—where they engage in learning and training, scholarship and research, clinical care and community-engaged service.

We do this because we are mutually dependent and inextricably linked. In terms of our global economy, security, and sustainability, what happens in Maryland affects the world, and what happens in the world affects Maryland. Certainly, there’s an immediate *practical* need. Nearly one in five U.S. jobs is reliant on international trade, and global learning develops in students the cross-cultural skills these jobs require.



Bowie State University students mark International Education Week with a Parade of Flags from their home countries.

But the global imperative isn't merely an economic one. With world affairs and conflicts roiling our country and our campuses, global learning is critical for fostering the mutual understanding and cross-border collaboration essential to addressing our shared existential challenges and to deepening our humanity. Global education and engagement enrich the academic experience for *all* students—domestic and international alike—broadening their perspectives, challenging their thinking, connecting us across divides (geographical, cultural, ideological), and illuminating what unites us as a human community.



What a Pandemic Taught Us About Global Learning

The importance of global education and engagement was thrown into stark relief during COVID's early days. As the virus spread, the first activities brought to a halt were those that sent American students overseas and those that welcomed international students to America. More than 800 USM students had to come home after only a few weeks studying abroad, and countless international students were prevented from returning to our universities.

We didn't know then how quickly we'd recover from this international shutdown. In fact, the USM has more international students enrolled now than before the pandemic, and study abroad participation almost matches pre-COVID levels. But these measures of global engagement are only half the story. Because our universities used the pandemic to innovate *how* we engage globally and how we open international opportunities to students historically shut out of them.

Global classrooms skyrocketed, with USM students joining students from around the world in virtual learning experiences. Internships, too, went virtual, as students worked on global projects alongside scores of international collaborators. With the stratospheric rise of video-conferencing, faculty routinely brought international speakers and perspectives into their USM classrooms.

Paradoxically, the abrupt stop in travel actually fast-tracked global learning. And it's not something we'll forget now that borders have reopened. We must advance a "new" international education—one that exploits technologies to allow rich, lower cost global experiences; one that's accessible to all students, regardless of circumstances; one that emphasizes global collaboration and connection; one that develops not only students' global skills but their global *understanding*.

We'll do this most effectively when we do it *together*. So we're focused on building partnerships among USM universities, using the System's strength to expand our reach around the world, grow our international—and interdisciplinary—collaborations, and amplify the System's impact on the challenges that most threaten our global community. A convening next month of USM leaders and university-based international officers will jumpstart that work.

In the stories that follow, I offer just the smallest snapshot of our global efforts.



Faculty from the University of Costa Rica teach UMB colleagues about the Nicoya Peninsula, known for the longevity of its people.

To Improve the Human Condition

The mission of the University of Maryland, Baltimore begins with a grand ambition: “To improve the human condition.” It’s broad—intentionally so. The human condition transcends U.S. borders, and so does UMB’s work. Over the past five years, UMB has taken part in nearly 200 international collaborations in 50-plus countries.

UMB’s Center for Global Engagement (CGE) supports the university’s international initiatives by creating pathways for faculty and students to engage with their global peers. CGE facilitates international research and service initiatives, establishes education-abroad opportunities, supports faculty development programs, and serves UMB’s international students and scholars.

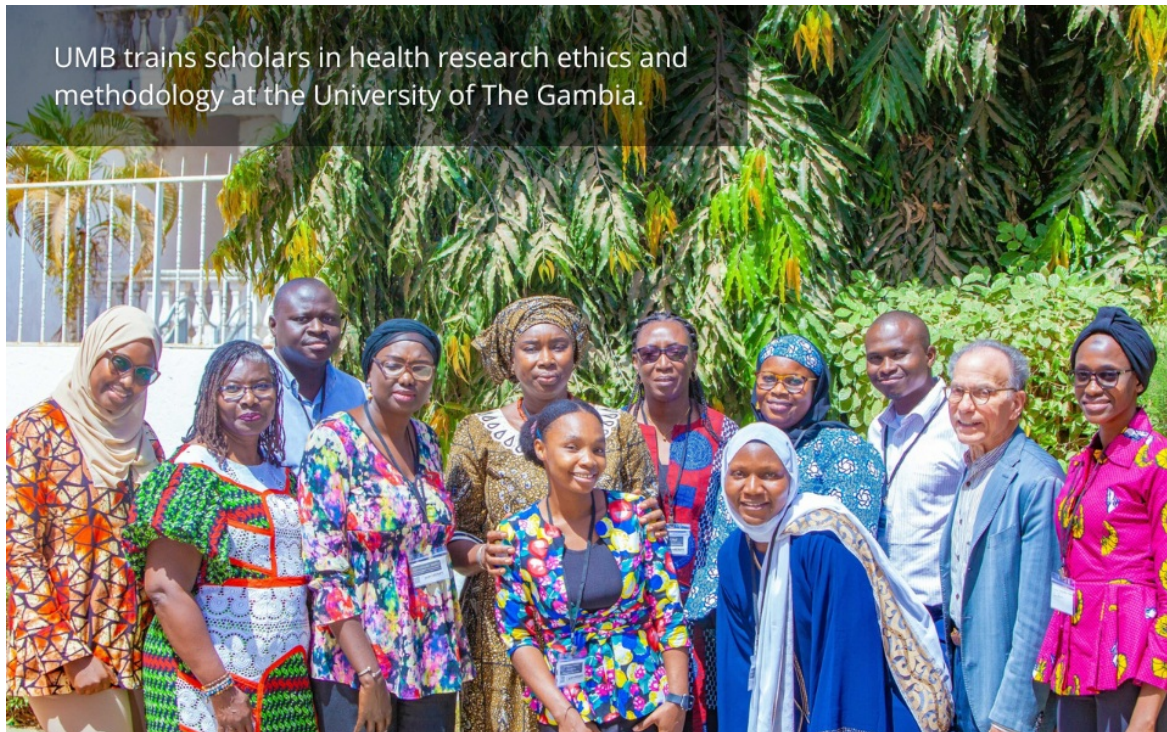
A key focus of the center is helping faculty across disciplines incorporate global comparisons into the classes they teach in Baltimore, allowing students to engage with different perspectives without ever getting on a plane. And through CGE’s Global Scholar Program, UMB students are able to engage in global health, law, or social work experiences of their own choosing.

UMB’s academic diversity enables CGE to draw on expertise and perspectives from multiple disciplines to more effectively address global challenges. For example, the Alicia and Yaya Initiative in Global Aging Research, launched last year, is a partnership between UMB and the University of Costa Rica (UCR), focused on teaching, research, and service in gerontology and aging.

Costa Rica is known for the Nicoya Peninsula “Blue Zone,” one of five areas worldwide where

people live exceptionally long and healthy lives. UMB faculty and students from social work, medicine, graduate studies, nursing, and pharmacy have launched research collaborations with UCR, seeking insights into aging that will benefit not only Maryland and Costa Rica, but scientists and clinicians around the globe seeking ways to extend life expectancy.

The President's Global Impact Fund helps CGE grow these sorts of partnerships, providing early seed funding to get them off the ground. The fund recently supported a collaboration between UMB faculty in nursing and medicine to deliver professional development in health research ethics and methodology to scholars in The Gambia. This initial funding from CGE led to a five-year NIH Fogarty International Center grant, supporting UMB's ongoing collaborative efforts to strengthen The Gambia's systems of health education, research, and practice.



To Make the World Your Classroom

The Center for Global Engagement at UMBC invites students and faculty to make the world their classroom. The center coordinates study abroad and international exchange programs in 50 countries, supports 2,000-plus international students and faculty from 100 nations, and drives collaborations and formal partnerships with leading academic institutions around the globe.

Many of these partnerships are long-standing and extend beyond the university. For instance, decades ago, Maryland established a sister state relationship with Japan's Kanagawa Prefecture. UMBC takes the relationship seriously. University students travel regularly to Kanagawa for internships and study abroad. This year alone, UMBC hosted nearly 100 students and teachers from Kanagawa high schools, offering specialized programs for intensive English instruction and facilitating cultural exchange. And UMBC recently signed an agreement expanding and formalizing its partnership with nearly 140 high schools across Kanagawa.

University faculty and researchers benefit from the relationship as well. Much like Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula, Kanagawa is a "super-aging society," with the largest aging population in the world and the highest number of centenarians. To explore the holistic management of aging societies, UMBC brought together researchers, government leaders, and practitioners from Kanagawa and Maryland for an expansive summit. Faculty in sociology, anthropology, public health,

and gerontology examined the environments, policies, practices, and technologies that facilitate proactive health management and support populations in “aging well.”

Sometimes opportunities for international collaboration open up in unexpected ways. Over the last decade, the Atlantic blue crab has established itself in Southern Portugal. So UMBC is collaborating with Portugal’s University of Algarve to help the region develop blue crab as a resource. Last summer, Dr. Yonathan Zohar, who heads UMBC’s Department of Marine Biotechnology, developed a course module on Maryland’s blue crab industry with his USM colleague, UMCES’s Dr. Eric Schott, who then traveled to Algarve to tour aquaculture facilities and meet with local fishermen. Their Portuguese partners made a reciprocal trip to Maryland to learn about our crab industry and crab research.

Scholarly collaborations continue with faculty from the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology—a partnership of UMCES, UMB, and UMBC—analyzing bioinformatic data collected on the blue crab diet in Portugal.



To Serve Those Who Serve Us

In a System rich in global programs and international collaborations, one university stands apart—in history, and mission, and evolution, and footprint: Our only university with “global” in its name.

The University of Maryland Global Campus was born in 1947 as the College of Special and Continuation Studies, an extension program within the University of Maryland College of Education. Its establishment coincided with a ballooning U.S. college population, thanks to returning World War II service members taking advantage of the GI Bill.

Many returning GIs pursued traditional higher education, stretching classrooms and resources to capacity. Many others, however, were managing careers and families, making traditional classrooms an unrealistic option. UMGC became a pioneer in adult higher education, offering evening and weekend classes at locations close to where these learners lived and worked.

Two years later, this approach expanded into a global mission, when the Department of Defense

called on U.S. universities to send faculty overseas to teach troops still stationed in post-war Europe. UMGC was alone in answering the call, and over the decades, its global presence expanded, reaching Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Today, UMGC has 190 classroom and service locations in two dozen countries and territories, enrolling more than 90,000 learners each year, most of them active-duty military, national guard, veterans, or their dependents.

UMGC has served students on all seven continents, adjusting its operations in response to changing needs and geopolitical conflicts. In 2023, when U.S. troops were deployed to Poland and Romania, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, UMGC expanded its operations in those locations. Today, UMGC is the only university providing education support to service members deployed to Poland and Romania as part of broader efforts to deter Russian aggression.

And UMGC often uses its global reach to engage its *local* neighbors. The university's Asia Division features a Bridge Program designed for learners in the communities that host U.S. bases. Residents with limited English language experience can take classes to reach the required proficiency scores for admission to UMGC—and many do, in fact, go on to earn certificates and degrees from the university.



UMGC educates U.S. service members at eight locations in Japan, including Fuji's Combined Arms Training Center.

Fostering Fulbright Excellence

The Fulbright is the world's largest academic exchange program and one of its most prestigious, offering students and scholars the chance to work with, live with, and learn from the people of their host country, sharing knowledge and culture through sustained and direct interaction in the classroom, in the field, and in the home.

For the past 10 years, Salisbury University has integrated the Fulbright Program into its mission, helping students and faculty win these coveted scholarships. The results have been extraordinary. Salisbury is now ranked among the nation's top producers of Fulbright Students and Fulbright Scholars, and is one of few universities recognized as a top producer of *both* in the same year.

But Salisbury's work doesn't stop at Fulbrights. SU students and faculty win an exceptionally large number of other national fellowships dedicated to global concerns—more than you'd expect from a

university of Salisbury's size. On a practical level, much of the credit is due to SU's Nationally Competitive Fellowships Office, which offers one-on-one mentorship to students seeking global opportunities. But more than that, SU's success can be attributed to its student-focused faculty and to a culture of academic excellence and global exploration.



Salisbury University alumna Melanie Staszewski won a Fulbright award to conduct breast cancer research in Poland.

Building the Global Health Network

The University of Maryland, College Park is a member of Universitas 21, a network of 29 global research-intensive universities who believe in the value of collaboration and internationalization and who share resources and ideas to co-design solutions to shared global challenges.

So it's not surprising that UMD has dedicated hubs for global learning, global community, and global partnerships. But a new effort to address global health is a first for UMD—and for Maryland. The university's BS in Global Health, launched this fall, is the first such undergraduate program in the state. It uses a multidisciplinary curriculum to explore biological, cultural, environmental, linguistic, socioeconomic, and other factors influencing public health around the world, and incorporates global virtual classrooms and in-country experiences to explore public health issues and solutions.

For undergraduate students, many still exploring career paths, the new major offers an opportunity to learn about public health and human rights in a cross-cultural context, and to benefit *early* from the knowledge, skills, and experiences that will help them improve health—for everyone, everywhere.

Photos courtesy of Ryan Pelham, Bowie State University; Dr. Lee Cooper, UMCES; Lauren Taylor, UMB; Dr. Veronica Njie-Carr, UMB & GamREMTI; Dr. Eric Schott, UMCES; Bob Ludwig, UMGC; and Anna Liminowicz, Fulbright Poland.