



**Friday, November 13, 2020**  
**Report to the USM Board of Regents**  
**Chancellor Jay Perman**  
**AS DRAFTED**

Thank you, Chair Gooden. And let me once again commend you and the regents for your hard work under these very difficult circumstances. As the academic year progresses, and COVID-19 escalates, we face grave challenges. This board has remained deeply engaged as we work together to meet those challenges. I thank you.

Let me also thank Dr. Nancy Shapiro, associate vice chancellor for education and outreach, and our student leaders for their presentation—and their impressive work—in civic engagement. It’s been gratifying to see so many students Systemwide so deeply invested in our democratic process.

As Chair Gooden mentioned, this year was indeed historic in terms of voter turnout—especially among our young people—and, of course, it was historic, as well, for the election of Kamala Harris as vice president. I do hope now is the time we might all work together to advance the causes we care about as Americans.

I echo Chair Gooden’s comments on Regent Bobby Neall, who has announced his retirement as Maryland Secretary of Health, effective next month. Regent Neall has been an invaluable asset to the state and to the University System, and I’m delighted that his service on this board will continue.

While it’s been only a few weeks since we last met, there’s been no shortage of notable developments across the System.

The **University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland (USMSM)**, the state’s oldest—and the System’s newest—regional higher education center, will soon welcome its inaugural executive director. Dr. Eileen Abel, most recently vice president of academic affairs at the College of Southern Maryland, will assume leadership of the USMSM on December 1. She brings the ideal skillset to this post; she knows the area, the student population, and the needs—and assets—of the region. I look forward to the impact of her leadership. I thank USM Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Jo Boughman for leading the search committee, and I extend my deepest gratitude to USMSM Chief Academic Officer Ben Latigo, who has been serving as interim executive director.

This is, of course, the second recent announcement of a new regional center director. Dr. Anne Khademian is attending her first board meeting since taking over as executive director of the **Universities at Shady Grove (USG)**. She began her tenure on October 19, after a 17-year career at Virginia Tech. Dr. Khademian has already launched a weekly video podcast, “This is USG,” featuring students, alumni, faculty, friends, and university and community leaders. I was delighted to be a guest on this week’s episode, and I hope you’ll tune in for all the great things happening at USG.

Today is also the first board meeting for Dr. Larry Leak as interim president of the **University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC)**. In a distinguished career spanning five decades, Dr. Leak has been a mainstay of Maryland education, serving as a high school teacher and principal, university professor and administrator, assistant state superintendent of schools, college trustee, and gubernatorial appointee. As you know, after successfully leading UMGC for the past eight years, Javier Miyares has transitioned into an advisory capacity, focusing on Systemwide data analytics and how to better position the USM for distance education during and after the pandemic. I know Larry's transparent and collaborative leadership style will serve UMGC well, as Regent Sam Malhotra chairs the search committee for the university's next president.

There's no other way to start the body of my remarks today than with the devastating news of COVID's spike in Maryland and across the nation. We're all acutely aware of the deteriorating numbers in terms of infections, hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and—yes—deaths. Maryland has seen several consecutive days with more than 1,000 new cases reported, and our positivity rate has crossed the 5 percent mark for the first time since June.

We're heeding the governor's warnings about the dangers of this virus and its quick spread—now taking a grave toll in rural areas that were once spared the brunt of the disease. We're conscious, too, of COVID fatigue, which baits us into lowering our guard and relaxing the very practices that have kept so many of us safe thus far.

In view of this escalation, it turns out we were prescient in our semester planning. Virtually all of our institutions had always planned to end their semester by Thanksgiving or to use the holiday as the transition point to online-only instruction.

And we're almost there. But just in case, in a phone call this week with the presidents, center directors, and their executive teams, I stressed that we must be ready—fully ready—for a possible pivot to earlier online-only instruction and student move-outs. We would need to accomplish this transition, should it come, quickly and safely. And as we prepare for this possibility, we have several things working in our favor, not the least of which is the fact that we have far fewer students on campus to return home in the first place.

For instance, with cases climbing in Allegany County, **Frostburg State University (FSU)** announced on Wednesday that all classes would move online immediately. **Bowie State University (BSU)** also announced an immediate move to online instruction, and the university is allowing students to begin scheduling their move-outs. And the **University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP)**—pivoting to online course delivery after Thanksgiving—has told students traveling for the holiday to stay home for the remainder of the semester.

Certainly, for these universities—for any university—an accelerated pivot to online-only education is disappointing. But we knew all along that it was a possibility. We planned for it. We understood from the outset that our campuses wouldn't be COVID-free—and, of course, they're not.

But in committing to some on-campus instruction this semester, we got a lot of things right. Cases were managed effectively. Positivity rates were mostly down. Regular reporting kept students, faculty, staff, and neighbors apprised of disease prevalence and risk. Students who wanted to maintain the privilege of an on-campus experience did, by and large, follow our rules for doing so. Our institutions were able to resume robust research operations and make material contributions to combatting COVID

itself. I'm so impressed with the engagement and accomplishment of our research faculty. And, through it all, state and local health departments were our constant collaborators and guides.

Of course, we hope for a spring semester starting January 25 that looks very much like our fall—some classes online-only, some in-person, and some hybrid, with face-to-face instruction supplementing online work. Campus de-densification—together with a regimen of COVID testing, symptom monitoring, and disease prevention protocols—will continue to be central to our ability to control virus spread.

Our main advantage this spring is knowledge, experience, battle scars. Just as epidemiologists now know more about the virus itself and how to contain it; just as medical professionals now have better diagnostics and treatments available to patients, those of us in higher education have our lessons learned.

I've mentioned to you before our intention to take time, as a System, to reflect on what we've learned, and what lessons we can apply to our immediate and long-term efforts. We're compiling those lessons from the universities—in teaching and learning, in campus life and student services, facilities management, communication, IT, athletics.

There are major issues, like the fact that students very much want synchronous learning vs. asynchronous—meaning they want to be with their professors and classmates in real time; they want to interact. So we need to expand access to those platforms. We heard that promoting student compliance with health protocols is more likely achieved through an educational model vs. a punitive one.

I think every single institution said they needed more communication with students and employees and more ways to deliver information—on the platforms that students actually use. There are lessons in facilities capacity, ventilation systems, and water service. There are innumerable logistics issues—how to accomplish a streamlined move-in; where signage is most effective; how to get hot meals to students in isolation and quarantine. We have hundreds of lessons to sort through.

Which speaks to the complexity of what our institutions are managing, and who needs to be at the table when decisions are made. Never has shared governance been so important to the University System. I've been deeply engaged over the last several months with our shared governance bodies—our student, faculty, and staff councils—securing their advice on how to proceed with our work, and their feedback on how we're doing.

I'm thrilled that I've also begun monthly get-togethers with students across the System. This was something I used to do at UMB—host Sunday brunches at my house for a dozen or so students. The sessions are virtual for now, but I look forward to a time when we can be together again in person. These chats help me connect with students—better understand their experiences, their challenges, what they want from their education and whether they're getting it. Last month, I talked with a group of students leaders responsible for our huge Get Out the Vote effort, and later this month, I'll be meeting with some of our international students.

Of course, I continue to meet regularly with the presidents, center directors, and their cabinets. These meetings are the root of our collaboration, our solidarity, as a System. They help us understand the daily conditions and issues on each campus, and the remarkable things our students, faculty, and staff are achieving despite them.

And while it is undeniable that the challenges associated with the COVID pandemic have occupied a significant portion of our time and attention, I would be remiss if I did not take a few moments to highlight some of the remarkable activity that has taken place throughout the USM since we last met. I begin with something that is especially significant.

Bowie and UMCP have launched a partnership promoting racial and social justice, and honoring 1st Lt. Richard W. Collins III, who was killed on the College Park campus in 2017. UMCP President Darryll Pines and BSU President Aminta Breaux were joined via video by Lt. Collins' parents as they announced the BSU-UMD Social Justice Alliance. The alliance will host public programming to stimulate conversations about race and racism and steer action for change and will embed social justice education in the curricula and experiential activities of BSU and UMCP students.

As we all know, advancing racial equity and social justice is a genuine priority throughout the USM. Just last month, the Social Justice and Civic Engagement Committee at the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)** sponsored a virtual symposium, "Protesting Injustice: The UMES Experience." **University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)** President Freeman Hrabowski, his senior advisor, Dr. Peter Henderson, and Dr. Kate Tracy, professor at the **University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB)** School of Medicine, coauthored a must-read piece in *The Atlantic* on the academy's obligation to lead the dismantling of structural racism. And both UMB's School of Nursing and **Towson University (TU)** were honored by *Insight into Diversity* magazine with a Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. The HEED Award recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Also, at Towson, Dr. John Sivey, associate professor of chemistry, was one of just eight faculty members nationwide recognized as a 2020 Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar. This recognition, which comes with an unrestricted research grant of \$75,000, is awarded to young faculty in the chemical sciences who have created an outstanding body of scholarship and who are deeply committed to undergraduate research and education.

In other honors, UMB boasted three recipients of the *Baltimore Business Journal's* first-ever Leaders in Health Care Awards. Dr. Jane Kirschling, dean of the University of Maryland School of Nursing, Dr. Natalie Eddington, dean of the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, and Dr. Leah Sera, associate professor in the School of Pharmacy, will be honored at a virtual awards celebration next month.

Janel Harris, a **Coppin State University (CSU)** admissions counselor, was named the Bernard Wynder College Representative of the Year for 2020 by the Baltimore CollegeBound Foundation. In addition, CSU's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee received a John Lewis HBCU Grant to support voter registration, education, and mobilization. The committee sponsored a massive Get Out the Vote effort that registered most of CSU's student-athletes. That effort—critical this election year—reflects long-term civic engagement and leadership among CSU's students.

Two USM professors—Dr. Thomas Longden from UMB and Dr. Colenso Speer from UMCP—have received the NIH Director's New Innovator Award. One of the organization's most competitive grants, the award is part of the National Institutes of Health's High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program, designed to support "exceptionally creative" early career investigators who propose high-impact projects in the biomedical, behavioral, or social sciences. Dr. Longden received \$2.3 million, and Dr. Speer received \$1.5 million.

In other grant news, UMBC received a three-year, \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to create the Maryland New Venture Fellowship for Cybersecurity. The fellowship will support the development of cybersecurity companies in Maryland, and will increase connections among technologists, mentors, and faculty at institutions across the state. In addition, NASA awarded a UMBC team \$1.4 million to develop artificial intelligence that improves how computers process climate data from satellites. And UMBC researchers have received a nearly \$150,000 planning grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study how telemedicine can be scaled more effectively, including to meet the complex training needs of medical professionals.

The **University of Baltimore's (UB)** Center for Drug Policy and Prevention has received \$2 million in federal funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The university will direct that funding into innovative incubator projects designed to reduce drug overdose across the country.

UMB has received \$2.3 million in awards to fund four endowed research professorships through the Maryland E-Innovation Initiative Fund, a state program created to stimulate basic and applied research in scientific and technical fields at Maryland universities. UMB raised private funds for each professorship, with the state providing matching grants.

The **University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES)** received a \$1.4 million NSF grant to help policymakers better understand changes to environmental quality in the Chesapeake Bay, how those changes affect policy decisions, and how those decisions affect quality of life throughout the region. The collaboration between UMCES and the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education will focus on driving more effective policies in water quality and estuary resilience.

**Salisbury University (SU)** received a four-year, \$2 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to establish the SU Eastern Shore Opioid-Impacted Family Support Program, expanding efforts to train community health workers to assist families affected by opioid use disorders. Salisbury has also announced a new integrated science major, the first in the USM. The major accommodates students who wish to develop programs of study in two or more STEM disciplines or create a major in a STEM discipline not offered by any department at SU.

Frostburg is also expanding academic offerings with a new bachelor's degree in Life-Cycle Facilities Management, which trains students to apply environmental, societal, and long-term sustainability goals to the construction and management of buildings, and to manufacturing processes and products.

The UMES graduate program in rehabilitation counseling is getting an infusion of \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Education. The funding will support 14 graduate students studying vocational, medical, social, and psychological rehabilitation for people with disabilities, and will help close counseling access gaps for underserved populations.

Bowie has been selected by Google as one of the first four historically Black institutions participating in the Grow with Google HBCU Career Readiness Program. Google has committed more than \$1 million to HBCU career service centers nationwide to help students and recent graduates develop the digital skills they need to secure internships and jobs.

Our institutions have also been engaged in impressive fundraising activities.

Towson University has received \$1 million from former physics professor and department chair Dr. Eddie Loh, who retired from TU in 2010 after more than 40 years of teaching. This is the largest planned faculty gift in the university's history and will fund scholarships for TU physics students.

During an informal—and socially distanced—reception at the UMES Engineering and Aviation Science Complex, President Heidi Anderson accepted a \$10,000 gift from ASRC Federal to support the engineering and aviation sciences program. ASRC Federal is a prime contractor at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility, where UMES students get hands-on experience and job opportunities.

The **University System of Maryland at Hagerstown's (USMH)** second annual Spirit Run—held virtually due to the pandemic—attracted 128 participants from across the country who ran (or walked) and raised nearly \$10,000 for scholarships.

It's gratifying for me to see that—especially in these stressful and difficult times—our universities and centers continue to engage in the communities around them. For example, UMB has entered into a partnership with Comcast to sponsor one year of internet connectivity for up to 1,000 families with children in 14 West Baltimore schools. UB is joining the Virtual Maryland College Application Campaign to increase the number of first-generation, low-income, and other underrepresented students in higher education. And UMBC re-enrolled 123 “near-completers” through its Finish Line initiative this semester. The students are taking advantage of the increased availability of online courses to finish their degrees—including some students returning after a decade away from college. In addition, UMBC—in partnership with the Digital Harbor Foundation—has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant to transform selected rec centers into tech hubs and makerspaces for Baltimore City youth.

And just as our institutions have worked hard to remain engaged with their communities, I've worked to remain engaged with our institutions. Over the summer and into the fall, I've gotten out for some campus visits and seen firsthand how our institutions are teaching, discovering, innovating, and serving—all in the midst of a pandemic that's put obstacles in the way of each of these missions.

I have a short slideshow of these visits—over the summer to the USM at Southern Maryland, and this fall, to Bowie State, UMBC, Coppin, and College Park. I was supposed to visit Towson University just yesterday, but Tropical Storm Eta foiled those plans. I look forward to rescheduling that visit soon.

Of course, my aim is to get to every campus and regional center and to make regular visits a priority in my schedule. COVID has obviously thwarted those plans somewhat. But as soon as it's safe to, I'll be visiting the campuses as often as I can, and meeting with students, faculty, and staff. Because this University System—as deeply affected as it's been by the COVID crisis—is not defined by it. And I look forward to talking not only about how we're weathering this pandemic but about our vision for the USM long after it ends.

Before I play the slideshow, I want to give you just a little context.

At USMSM, Dr. Latigo and I toured the new academic building that's going up. I visited the UAS test site, where they're innovating drone technology, and the TechPort incubator, which has been a hub for COVID solutions.

At UMBC, President Hrabowski showed me the new Interdisciplinary Life Sciences Building. We met with research staff and talked with students. I also threw in a couple of photos from UMBC's COVID

testing pilot this summer. It was the first time we attempted to collect baseline data on COVID prevalence.

At College Park, President Pines took me on a tour of campus dorms and dining halls so I could see firsthand how the university is keeping students and employees safe. We dropped in on some classes, too, and it was great to see everyone distanced, masked, and learning.

At Coppin, President Jenkins showed me the university's incredible Science and Technology Center. And I was glued to a nursing class, where they were doing some state-of-the-art simulations. It made me feel like I was back at UMB.

At Bowie, I got to meet with a great group of student-athletes, who have a unique perspective on this pandemic—and unique challenges in dealing with it. When you see them in the photos, remember they're all on teams together; that's why they're not distanced. President Breaux and I also talked about the Entrepreneurship Living-Learning Community that's opening next year.

Let's play the slideshow. It's just 90 seconds; don't worry.

As you're looking at the photos, I do want to mention that you'll see a picture in here of President Pines and me talking to a student in a corridor of the Edward St. John Teaching and Learning Center. We asked her what she was working on—what class she was heading to, or coming from. She lives at home. She told us she didn't actually have any in-person classes this semester. They're all online.

But she came to campus every day, to this quiet space, where she could concentrate on her virtual courses—where she had the silence and calm and safety she needed to put in her best work. This is what keeping our campuses open has allowed.

I've said many times that this virus doesn't grant anyone a "mission accomplished" moment. I can't see the future, and I don't know whether our best efforts in this fight against COVID will be enough.

But I'm glad we've tried to fulfill our missions in education, research, and service. I'm glad we've tried to support the students who need what our campuses provide, and to keep them safe when the very concept of safety is threatened.

I'm glad I put my faith in the System's faculty and staff, who've worked so hard to provide an education worthy of the USM's name. And I'm glad for the trust of our students, who remind us every day why we took on this work in the first place.

Thank you, Madam Chair. This concludes my report.

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