



Report to the USM Board of Regents

Chancellor Jay A. Perman

September 10, 2021

Thank you, Chair Gooden. It's wonderful to see all of you back together again. And it's gratifying to know that—because of the hard work of the entire USM community—reunions like this one are taking place on our campuses across Maryland.

Let me also thank Dr. Haynes for his presentation. It's clear that the national spotlight is shining brightly right now on this country's HBCUs. It's our job to make sure that this isn't just a "moment," but rather the beginning of a deliberate and sustained commitment to these institutions and to the students they serve. It's a commitment the USM firmly embraces.

I thank President Greg Fowler and the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) for hosting the first Board of Regents meeting of the new academic year. As President Fowler noted in his presentation, impressive things are happening at UMGC. From the new five-year contract with the U.S. Department of Defense to provide education to our troops on military installations overseas, to the new degree program in Data Science coming online next spring, UMGC continues to fulfill its mission at home and abroad. I'm also especially pleased that *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*—the foremost source on diversity in American higher education—has ranked UMGC #1 in conferring master's degrees to minority students in information technology. I think that's worth a round of applause.

I also congratulate our Staff Award recipients. These women and men embody the excellence and dedication found throughout the University System, and they're deserving of our praise all year long.

In addition, I congratulate the USM's 2021–22 Elkins Professors:

- Dr. Paz Galupo, professor of Psychology at Towson University (TU), whose work examines the legal and cultural factors that influence the health care experiences of transgender and nonbinary Marylanders, and that lead to health disparities for these populations.
- Dr. Radi Masri with the School of Dentistry at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), whose research explores the barriers that prevent adults of color from improving their oral health and seeks to expand their access to advanced dental care.

- Dr. Heather Congdon, co-director of UMB's Center for Interprofessional Education, who will collaborate with the Kirwan Center on a digital badging initiative aimed at strengthening Maryland's health care workforce.
- Dr. Lora Harris with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's (UMCES) Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, who will be working with multiple institutions to engage underrepresented students in the environmental and ocean sciences.
- And Dr. Don DeVoe, with the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), who's in year 2 of his award to involve graduate, undergraduate, and high school students in groundbreaking cancer research.

I thank our outgoing Elkins Professors from Bowie State University (BSU), Coppin State University (CSU), and the University of Baltimore (UB).

I join Chair Gooden in welcoming our new regents. I thank all of you for your willingness to serve, especially in challenging times. Of course, it's often the case that as we welcome new colleagues, we say goodbye to others. This summer, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development Tom Sadowski left the USM to become executive director of the Maryland Economic Development Corporation. Tom was with the USM for five years, and our success in company creation, business partnerships, and startup investment is a credit to Tom's leadership.

And then, just last month, University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) President Freeman Hrabowski announced his intention to retire following this academic year. I could talk until Freeman's *actual* day of retirement, and barely scratch the surface of what he's accomplished. When *Time* magazine names you one of America's top 10 college presidents and one of the 100 most influential people in the world, it's a pretty good indication that you've achieved great things.

But as we all know, Freeman takes the most pride not in his own accomplishments, but rather in those of his students and his institution. So permit me to share a few of them:

- UMBC is a mainstay in national higher education rankings—most innovative, best teaching, up-and-coming, best value. You name it, UMBC is recognized for it.
- Over the past 30 years, UMBC's six-year degree completion rate has doubled, and the gap in completion rates between white and Black students has disappeared.
- UMBC is the #1 baccalaureate institution for African American undergraduates who go on to earn MD/PhDs.
- UMBC graduates more Black students who go on to earn doctorates in the natural sciences and engineering than any other U.S. college.
- More than 1,400 Meyerhoff Scholars have earned their undergraduate degrees, 800 of those have earned advanced degrees, and 300 more are currently completing graduate programs at top institutions across the country.

Over the next year, we'll have plenty of opportunities to honor Freeman. And I know Freeman will turn that spotlight right back onto his university, his students, and their accomplishments.

While summer is traditionally a down time in higher education, you'd never know it looking at everything that's happened since our last board meeting in June. While working hard to prepare their campuses for the safe return of students, our universities also delivered on their broader education, research, and service missions.

GROWTH IN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND CAMPUS FACILITIES

Over the summer months, we've witnessed impressive physical and academic growth on our campuses. The ribbon was cut on Bowie's \$42 million Entrepreneurship Living Learning Community, creating an environment where innovation and collaboration can thrive, where student startups can be supported, and where an entrepreneurial mindset can be nurtured across the campus.

At Towson, not long after the new Science Complex opened, ground was broken on the six-story, \$175 million College of Health Professions building. The new facility—in the heart of campus—will consolidate under one roof the school's health programs, including audiology, nursing, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and health sciences. The building is slated to open in summer 2024.

Just last month, UMCP broke ground on its new \$116 million chemistry building. Scheduled to open in late 2023, the building will include 34 research labs, two core research facilities, and more than 30,000 square feet of workspace and collaborative space. Also at UMCP, the Research Instrumentation Fund, created to replace or upgrade research equipment, is investing more than \$10 million in equipment that will drive discovery and innovation in quantum technology, neuroscience, energy storage, and other areas.

Next month, I'll join a host of VIPs for the grand opening of the SMART Building at the USM at Southern Maryland (USMSM). As USMSM executive director Eileen Abel told the St. Mary's County commissioners when she briefed them last month, the SMART building isn't just a bricks-and-mortar facility; it's a way to fundamentally rethink education for the entire Southern Maryland region.

Our universities also celebrated new programs and initiatives. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and Frostburg State University (FSU) unveiled a partnership that offers an accelerated track to a doctorate in pharmacy. Students participating in the cooperative program can reduce time to pharmacy degree completion by up to two years. At the Annapolis Cybersecurity Summit in July, Gov. Larry Hogan announced the launch of the Maryland Institute for Innovative Computing at UMBC, which will address challenges related to computing and analytics, with an emphasis on cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data science. And

underscoring its leadership in the virtual space, the USM's Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation recently hit 1 million cumulative enrollments on the edX platform.

GRANTS, PARTNERSHIPS, and ECONOMIC IMPACT

Our universities have also received impressive grants, forged new partnerships, and strengthened the USM's economic impact.

Last month, the NSF announced that it's establishing five I-Corps Hubs, each funded at \$15 million over five years. These hubs will help scale up the National Innovation Network and provide experiential entrepreneurship training to academic researchers across all fields of science and engineering. The Mid-Atlantic I-Corps Hub will be led by UMCP. Also at UMCP, Stephanie Lansing in the Department of Environmental Science and Technology has been awarded \$6 million from the U.S. Department of Energy to establish a consortium of scientists and industry partners to develop sustainable products—like biofuels from food waste. And just this week, UMCP announced a \$20 million partnership with quantum computing startup IonQ to create the National Quantum Lab at Maryland—or Q-Lab—to facilitate research and innovation in this emerging field.

Earlier this summer, UMBC joined the University Innovation Alliance, a select consortium of public research universities committed to boosting student success by sharing and scaling approaches that work, especially among students from vulnerable groups. UMBC and North Carolina A&T became the first two universities selected to join the network since its founding in 2014.

At UMES, Victoria Volkis, professor of chemistry and director of UMES's Master of Science Program, has received \$1 million from the U.S. Navy to address biofilm formation, which causes millions of dollars in damage to naval ships and platforms each year. She'll be working with several minority students majoring in the natural sciences. Also at UMES, a \$500,000 federal historic preservation grant will help fund a \$1.5 million renovation of the iconic Trigg Hall. And earlier this week, UMES and NASA signed the Space Act Agreement, designed to build a pipeline of diverse STEM talent working at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia and to carry out a range of R&D projects at Wallops, including those in suborbital and aeronautical science.

Earlier this summer, Montgomery County, Montgomery College, and the USM came together at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) to sign an MOU creating the Montgomery/Maryland Life Sciences Education and Innovation Partnership. The agreement facilitates research collaboration between the academic partners and industry leaders, and gives students across Maryland opportunities to gain work experience and conduct translational research with Montgomery County science and technology companies.

Coppin will receive \$300,000 over the next three years from the PNC Foundation as part of the bank's effort to help end systemic racism. The funding will support several existing community

service programs at CSU's College of Business—programs that focus on small business development and fostering entrepreneurial activity in underserved communities—as well as a new program, Partners in Education, which offers direct services to preK–12 students in West Baltimore public schools.

In June, Salisbury University (SU) announced the William Church and John Washburn Endowment for Equity, Justice, and Inclusion. The planned endowment—expected to top \$1 million—will support its namesakes' dedication to the LGBTQIA+ community by providing funding for campus programming that addresses issues faced by its members.

And over the summer, the Maryland Momentum Fund made three investments: 1) A second investment in Veralox Therapeutics, a biotech company launched by UMB alumnus Jeffrey Strovel that's developing small-molecule therapeutics to treat the underlying causes of diseases that have significant unmet medical needs; 2) a new investment in Liatris Inc., a startup cofounded by College Park adjunct professor Arthur Yang that's developing advanced thermal insulation materials; and 3) an investment in AquaLith, cofounded by a College Park professor Chunsheng Wang, that's developing a cheaper, safer, higher density lithium ion battery. With the fund's continued success, it's no wonder that Claire Broido Johnson, MMF managing director, had a piece in the *Baltimore Business Journal* on how to strengthen Maryland's startup ecosystem.

INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE

As is our tradition, the USM's students, faculty, and staff have been singled out for their excellence.

President Biden has nominated Laurie Locascio, vice president for research at UMCP and UMB, to lead the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Also at UMB, Sarah Dababnah, an associate professor in the School of Social Work, has earned a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award and will be traveling to Egypt to continue her studies. Plus, UMB's clinical partner, the Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Maryland Medical Center has once again received the highest designation from the National Cancer Institute, placing it in the top echelon of cancer centers nationwide.

Salisbury also celebrated Fulbright recognition: Dr. Andrew Martino, dean of SU's Glenda Chatham and Robert G. Clarke Honors College, was selected for the Fulbright International Education Administrators Program.

Last month, Gov. Hogan appointed three UB School of Law graduates to judgeships across the state. Incredibly, more than one-third of the state's judges are UB Law alumni.

Three UMCES graduate students have been named finalists for the prestigious John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship program sponsored by Sea Grant and NOAA.

The Washington Post featured an extensive (and glowing) profile of UMCP president Darryll Pines reflecting on his first year in office—his successes as well as the challenges that remain.

The Daily Record's list of 2021 Influential Marylanders features BSU President Aminta Breaux and TU President Kim Schatzel.

And UMES President Heidi Anderson was invited to testify before a congressional committee earlier this summer, where she stressed the importance of a federal commitment to long-term investments in HBCUs, especially historically Black *land-grant* institutions.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Finally, USM institutions distinguished themselves through outreach and community service.

USG welcomed Montgomery County's public summer school students to its Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Building for a STEM summer program. Thousands of elementary and middle schoolers took part in the program intended to jumpstart post-pandemic learning.

UB hosted a free COVID vaccination clinic for city residents.

SU leadership and local VIPs celebrated the opening of Salisbury's brand-new Newton Community Center. The university played an important role in the center's development, helped with the initial operation, and will continue to be a partner moving forward. In addition, we're all thrilled that SU's Sea Gull Century bike ride is returning as an in-person event on Saturday, Oct. 9.

Likewise, the Spirit Run at the University System of Maryland, Hagerstown (USMH) is returning as an in-person event this weekend. But participants can still complete a 5K, 10K, or half marathon virtually throughout the race weekend—which, honestly, sounds a lot easier. All proceeds benefit the USMH Scholarship Fund. Speaking of which, this summer, USMH announced the 22 students from its partner institutions who have been awarded scholarships for the 2021–22 school year. We congratulate them all.

Erin Moran has begun her service as the inaugural executive director of the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute at Towson University. The institute supports the recruitment and development of visionary leaders, and should be a key asset to the state and the region, always hungry for leadership talent.

Both Bowie and Coppin have committed to using federal CARES Act funds to relieve students of millions of dollars in outstanding tuition and mandatory fee debt. Bowie will provide \$3 million in relief, and Coppin has committed to clear \$1 million in student balances. Also at Coppin, the new Freddie Gray Student Success Scholarship—supported by McDonalds—will provide access and opportunity to graduates of Carver Vocational-Technical High School.

Once again, the USM was well represented among the 2021–22 class of Newman Civic Fellows, which recognizes and supports community-committed students. This year’s honorees are Delanie Blubaugh from Frostburg, Daniel Khoshkepazi from UB, Ayotomiwa Fashola from UMES, and Faith Davis from UMBC.

AN IN-PERSON EXPERIENCE THIS FALL

I can’t end my report without expressing how happy we are to have welcomed students back to campus—back to *actual* campuses—this fall.

We’re grateful to have a high vaccination compliance rate across the System, with most of our universities recording rates between 94 and 98 percent. The universities are all working toward 100 percent compliance, meaning every individual—student, faculty member, staff member—is either vaccinated or has an authorized exemption from the mandate. Many institutions have on-campus vaccination clinics, and all are hosting vaccination days, bringing in personnel and mobile units to provide easy access to the vaccine doses.

I’d like to give College Park as an example. The university’s compliance rate is 97.7 percent. What that means is that, among students, fewer than 300 are out of compliance. That’s fewer than 300 students out of nearly 40,000. And a good portion of those are international students who are being vaccinated once they arrive on campus. That’s incredible.

For unvaccinated populations—including those with authorized waivers—all campuses are conducting testing at least weekly, and many require daily symptom monitoring. Of course, all universities are testing anyone who’s symptomatic and anyone who’s captured in contact tracing.

We can see that vaccination is paying off. We have very low positivity rates across the System—under 1 percent, far lower than county and state averages.

Essentially, we’re doing what the pandemic playbook tells us to do: Ensure you have a highly vaccinated population. Verify vaccination status. Require rapid and frequent testing for the unvaccinated. Improve indoor air quality. Use masking when needed. I should add that masking is, indeed, needed right now. All institutions are following CDC guidelines, which means universal masking indoors—in classrooms, labs, and study spaces, and at indoor events.

The truth is, we hoped we’d be in a better situation this fall than we were *last* fall. But the Delta variant puts *all* of us at risk—even on a highly vaccinated campus. So our COVID Workgroup of university experts will remain active all year long and continue to provide System leadership with the best evidence-informed advice. We’ll continue meeting regularly with the university presidents and regional center directors and their teams to share challenges and approaches. And we’ll continue to follow public health guidelines.

We all know we have to *work* together to *be* together. And I can tell you that our students want to be exactly where they are—on campus and in classrooms.

Madame Chair, this concludes my report. Thank you.

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