



Report to the USM Board of Regents

Chancellor Jay A. Perman

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science | September 20, 2024

Thank you, Madame Chair. First, let me extend a warm welcome to Regent Dhruvak Mirani. I look forward to working with you. And I'd be remiss not to mention another member of this Board. Yesterday, I was honored to speak at the dedication of the Catherine and Isiah Leggett Math and Science Building at Montgomery College. From what I could see, everyone in the county attended the dedication, as did dozens of elected leaders. The outpouring of admiration for Ike and Catherine's vision of higher education—their *support* of higher education—was not only extraordinary but, of course, entirely deserved.

I welcome our new Vice Chancellor for Communications and Marketing Mike Sandler. I congratulate the Staff Award winners we honored this morning, so illustrative of our System's excellence. And I thank Janet Judge for providing that important—and timely—Title IX update. We look forward to her partnership as we strengthen Title IX compliance Systemwide.

I'm delighted that this Board meeting is taking place at the Rita Rossi Colwell Center. It's a first for us. And it's overdue—because this center is a true USM community. As you know, it's home to the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology, a partnership of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES), the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). It's home to Towson University's (TU) Center for STEM Excellence, which enriches STEM education for local K–12 students. And, of course, it's also *my* home base, so I get to see all this work up close. It's very special.

I thank our host today, Dr. Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm, who's taken on not one but *two* critical roles: president of UMCES and USM vice chancellor for sustainability. As the U.S. higher education community takes decisive action to fight our climate crisis, I look forward to his leadership.

Dr. Miralles-Wilhelm has come aboard at an exciting time for UMCES. Earlier this summer, the university released its annual report card on the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The C+ grade awarded by UMCES is the highest in 20 years. That improvement is a credit to UMCES's influence in environmental science, policy, and practice, and signals the indispensable role that UMCES will play in the restoration and protection work that remains to be done.

Of course, UMCES's impact is felt far beyond Maryland. The university's new web application, Future Urban Climates, allows people around the world to appreciate the potential impact of climate change by matching the expected *future* climate of their hometown with the *current* climate of another city or region. By bringing greater clarity to the impacts of climate change, UMCES hopes to fortify our public will to stop it. I'll have more to share on our host university later in my report.

Let me broaden my remarks to the System as a whole. I'll start with our Elkins Professors. The Elkins professorship supports compelling scholarship that advances the System's public service mission. We recently announced our FY25 awardees.

- **Dr. Mahnaz Moallem** from Towson University will establish Girls Computing and Cybersecurity Clubs in the College of Education to close persistent racial and gender disparities in computing, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. The clubs will serve as a research and professional development hub for education faculty.
- **Prof. Rabiak Akande** from the Carey School of Law at UMB will explore the relationship between law and colonial power. The project will engage communities affected by colonial and postcolonial dynamics, and will generate scholarship, workshops, podcasts, and conference presentations.
- **Dr. Miao Yu**, from the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD), will begin Year 2 of her collaborative project involving UMCES and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), investigating novel sensing and robotics tools for the study of marine ecosystem dynamics. The research team will include graduate, undergraduate, and high school students.
- **Dr. Rosemary Shumba** of Bowie State University (BSU)—winner of the Elkins Academic Transformation Professorship—will conduct a feasibility study to establish an Experiential Learning Center within the Department of Computer Science to improve computing education access, affordability, and quality for underrepresented students.

EVIDENCE OF OUR EXCELLENCE

These projects are a testament to the dynamic and public-serving scholarship that advances our excellence—excellence validated each year in national rankings.

America's Top Colleges, put out by *Forbes*, measures affordability, quality, graduation success, and post-grad earnings. Towson, UMBC, Salisbury University (SU), the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC), and the University of Baltimore (UBalt) were recognized. And College Park rose to 12th among public institutions.

The Princeton Review lists three USM schools among its best: Salisbury, UMBC, and College Park. Among *Money's* Best Colleges, you'll find UMBC, UMD, Towson, Salisbury, Bowie, Coppin, Frostburg, and UMES.

The *Wall Street Journal* / College Pulse list considers student outcomes, learning environments, and diversity. Among their best you'll find Salisbury, UMBC, and UMD. Towson University led our System—ranked 40th overall and 15th among publics.

And *Washington Monthly*'s annual College Guide and Rankings—which measures quality by social mobility, public service, and research—includes every eligible USM school in its best-value list for the Northeast.

UBalt was selected for Phi Theta Kappa's 2024 Transfer Honor Roll, recognizing its dynamic pathways that support transfer students. College Park, UMBC, and Towson were cited in the *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings for their contributions to gender equality in education. Towson was named sixth-best university in the world and was the U.S.'s highest ranking university.

Now let me keep going to *individual* excellence.

- Mellany Sophia Morales Menéndez, Coppin State University Class of '25, is 2024 White House HBCU Scholar, recognizing her exceptional academic performance, leadership, and commitment to her community.
- Nicole Ibrahim, from UMCES's Appalachian Laboratory, is the first-ever UMCES student to receive a Boren Fellowship. She'll conduct research at the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences and then serve a one-year stint in the U.S. federal service post-graduation.
- Spoken word artist and UBalt MFA alumna Brion Gill was named the 11th Poet Laureate of Maryland.
- In July, a record-setting 122 teams—composed of thousands of students from colleges and universities globally—competed in the world's largest intercollegiate rocketry competition in New Mexico. The University of Maryland team was the big winner, taking home the Genesis Cup Trophy.

GROWING OUR IMPACT

STUDENTS

As we talk about university growth—in buildings, programs, resources, revenues—the most exciting aspect has to be growth in our student body. Last fall, USM enrollment grew for the first time in five years, rebounding from pandemic-era drops that affected all of U.S. higher education. We saw particular growth among first-time students, full-time students, and students attending our HBCUs.

This year, many of our universities are predicting sustained growth. Towson University had a record year for freshman applications. UMES expects its largest first-year class in six years and total enrollment that nears an all-time high. Salisbury University anticipates its second-largest freshman class in school history. UMBC is forecasting more first-year students than ever before. And new student enrollment at Frostburg should be the highest since COVID, with a climb in transfer students and students majoring in education, health, natural sciences—the very disciplines housed in FSU's newest academic building.

FACILITIES

The “facility effect” is real across the System. Last month, I joined President Breaux to dedicate Bowie State’s new Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, housing history, government, language, literature, culture—proof, yet again, that the liberal arts are alive and thriving.

At Towson, a state-of-the-art Health Professions building—a high-tech, high-touch masterpiece—is a model for interprofessional health and wellness education.

Salisbury’s Blackwell Hall renovation will centralize critical student services—counseling, advising, and financial aid and scholarships.

Similarly, UBalt’s coming Welcome Center will bring together public-facing functions for optimal student and customer service—admissions, financial aid, advancement, external and government relations.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Growth in our academic portfolio keeps the System responsive to emerging and high-need disciplines, benefiting our students and the state alike.

Salisbury students can now fast-track their way to careers in aerospace and nanotechnology through the university’s new Engineering Physics major.

Maryland Carey Law at UMB has launched the first defense clinic in U.S. law schools focused on supporting indigent clients susceptible to unvalidated or unreliable forensic evidence.

UMBC has opened the Institute of Politics to produce credible research on our political systems and electoral processes, to enrich our political understanding, elevate our public discourse, and prepare our students for informed, engaged citizenship.

College Park has joined the Welcome Corps on Campus program, which offers refugee students the chance to earn a degree while providing a pathway to resettlement and U.S. citizenship.

UMES has hired Dr. Stanley Robertson as the first permanent dean for its coming School of Veterinary Medicine. That was just one milestone I marked last Friday, when President Anderson, Regent Lewis, and I celebrated UMES’s Founders Week. Regent Lewis, I think I can speak on behalf of us *both* when I say how honored I was to share the university’s story of strength and fast-rising prominence.

UMGC just completed an 18-month partnership with St. Mary’s County Public Schools to grow the number of certified teachers in the county. And the university has just launched a more flexible MBA program, able to be completed in as little as 16 months. The program allows students to tailor the degree to their areas of interest. Next spring, the USM at Hagerstown will launch its own MBA program in partnership with UBalt.

The Universities at Shady Grove (USG) partnered with College Park last month for its second annual Demo Day. High school and community college students showed off their prototypes in Cyber-Physical Systems Engineering and got to connect with academic and industry leaders. *This* is the work of building pathways. It's the *same* work that animates USG's Achieving College Excellence and Success program, which links Montgomery County Schools, Montgomery College, and USG to speed college completion. USG has just announced additional support to the program, with a goal of increasing college enrollment among traditionally underrepresented students.

GIFTS AND GRANTS

Fueling this work is the generosity of our friends. Let me start with some very good friends, indeed. Regent Yvette Lewis and her husband Ed helped launch the Fresh Start scholarship program at Bowie State. The scholarships help formerly incarcerated students earn their degree. The Lewises' investment of \$10,000 put the funding total over the endowment mark—meaning the money can now be grown for generations. Educating incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is a huge priority for us, and I thank you, Regent Lewis.

Also at BSU, \$300,000 from the McMillan-Stewart Foundation endows a scholarship in honor of the late Rep. Elijah Cummings—a great friend of this System—to support to Bowie State students.

At College Park, alumnus Albert P. Carey, has made a *second* \$1 million gift to the Maryland Promise Program, providing need-based scholarships for underrepresented students from Maryland and Washington, DC.

Frostburg has received \$300,000 from the USDA to create an implementation-ready design for woody biomass heating on campus, replacing an aging set of oil-fired boilers.

With an MHEC grant of \$2 million, Frostburg will hire more nursing faculty and support staff in a bid to expand its LPN-to-BSN pipeline. The School of Nursing at UMB was awarded nearly \$5 million through that same MHEC program. And *another* \$5 million from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission expands the school's program in West Baltimore to improve health care access and outcomes, while reducing cost.

The Museum of Eastern Shore Culture at Salisbury University has won a \$36,000 Maryland Heritage grant to make the museum's exhibits and artifacts accessible to visitors with disabilities. Meanwhile, a \$400,000 NSF grant will help Salisbury deploy AI to solve problems faced by the university's government, business, and nonprofit partners.

College Park is celebrating a number of new awards:

- A partnership with IonQ to mature quantum computers so they can be reliably used in national security. The \$5.7 million project has a potential second phase valued up to \$12 million.

- A major engineering research center established with five fellow universities to investigate the environmental costs of refrigeration technologies and develop better cooling systems. The project is supported with a \$26 million NSF grant.
- A \$10 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Energy to evaluate a next-generation hydrogen-vehicle fueling station to support advanced clean-fuel technology.
- A five-year, \$388 million agreement with NOAA, funding UMD's Cooperative Institute for Satellite Earth System Studies. A consortium of researchers from more than three dozen U.S. academic and nonprofit organizations are investigating how human activity interacts with the Earth's environment.

UMES will receive \$2.3 million in federal funding to expand its Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and support economic development, revitalization, and entrepreneurship in Princess Anne.

UMGC and OpenClassrooms have won a \$3.9 million U.S. Department of Labor grant to scale up apprenticeships and degree pathways in high-demand technology fields.

And researchers from UMCES's Appalachian Laboratory have won an NSF grant of \$1.1 million to employ remote sensing and other big data tools to support conservation efforts for migratory birds throughout Appalachia.

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

With a commitment to social, environmental, and economic justice, our universities are living their mission of service-leadership.

Bowie State is a leading voice in criminal justice, hosting its fourth annual conference on Restorative Justice Practices, drawing hundreds of participants from the bar, the courts, law enforcement, and education. And President Breaux, I was thrilled to see your Black Male Teachers College get some well-deserved national recognition.

Coppin State's Pathways to Professions program is celebrating some remarkable success. The program offers teachers post-baccalaureate certificates and other credentials toward advanced degrees. The program has more than doubled enrollment and achieved nearly perfect scores for course completion and content mastery.

Coppin is also leading the redevelopment of W. North Avenue. It's the first HBCU in the nation to oversee the revitalization of a major urban corridor. Leaning into Coppin's role as an anchor institution, President Jenkins is proving the university's commitment to a comprehensive investment in Northwest Baltimore and its people.

UMB has long championed this work in West Baltimore. Its School of Medicine is spearheading a Community Health Village at a reimagined Mondawmin Mall. It's part of a much larger partnership with West Baltimore residents to develop and deliver health care based on

neighborhood needs. And it's a wonderful partnership opportunity for two universities—UMB and Coppin—both deeply engaged in West Baltimore.

Once again, our campuses were teeming with young learners over the summer, as camps and competitions connected them to college and got them excited about learning. Here I want to mention an institution that does this work particularly well. The USM at Southern Maryland (USMSM) hosted a camp for local students learning mechanical design, electronics, robotics, and coding. But I was particularly touched that USMSM stepped up to host students and teachers from Esperanza Middle School while their classrooms were being remediated. It's a testament to our lived mission that we are consistently *of service*—that we eagerly open our doors to *all*.

Madame Chair, this concludes my report.

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