



Report to the USM Board of Regents

Chancellor Jay A. Perman

Universities at Shady Grove | November 22, 2024

Thank you, Madame Chair. I add my thanks to Dean Postmus, Associate Dean Celestine-Donnor, and Ms. Speaks for their presentation.

UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE

I thank our hosts this morning, Dr. Khademian and her team here at the **Universities at Shady Grove**, home to some outstanding recent achievements in access, service, and innovation.

- USG hosts the University of Maryland's Cyber-Physical Systems Engineering program, which has just won accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, the very *first* such undergraduate program to do so.
- USG's state-of-the-art dental clinic welcomed 35 fourth-year students from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry to provide critical care to more than 80 uninsured and underserved adults.
- Next month, USG will sign an MOU with the U.S. Treasury Department, designating USG a Center of Excellence and strengthening its role as a leader and convener in helping small businesses and entrepreneurs expand.
- And a few weeks ago, USG hosted the annual Montgomery County Business Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Over a dozen years, the event has raised \$1.7 million to fund scholarships for 2,500 USG students.

USG's fellow regional higher ed center, the **USM at Hagerstown**, has some scholarship news of its own. Last month, USMH announced this year's scholarship recipients—26 students awarded more than \$84,000 in aid.

Last week, the **USM at Southern Maryland** hosted an Autonomy Summit, drawing more than 300 leaders from the Department of Defense, the University of Maryland, and regional industry partners. Participants explored how to ensure the trustworthiness of autonomous systems.

Speaking of autonomous systems, **Bowie State University's** Autonomous Technologies Lab won \$800,000 in DoD funding to acquire cutting-edge robotic systems that will expand the lab's work using AI-enabled software for search-and-rescue operations. Bowie State is also celebrating a new agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, expanding career opportunities for BSU students interested in environmental conservation. And the university held its fourth annual HBCU+ Entrepreneurship Conference this month, welcoming 900 virtual participants and highlighting its expansive opportunities for student entrepreneurs.

Speaking of student entrepreneurship, **Frostburg State University** held its second annual Regional Bobcat Innovation Launch Pad. The theme was Revive & Thrive: Reimagining Rural Resilience, challenging 80 students across 20 majors to develop and test ideas revitalizing rural regions like Western Maryland. In a bid to swell the corps of primary caregivers in Western Maryland, FSU unveiled a streamlined pathway from its BS in Health Science to its master's in Physician Assistant Studies. And I know Frostburg is thrilled that enrollment has climbed for the second consecutive year. More than 4,000 students now call FSU home.

Meanwhile, the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** is celebrating a *four-year* growth trend. Total enrollment at UMES has eclipsed 3,000 students for the first time in five years. Innovation is also trending up: UMES is now home to the Eastern Shore's first Patent and Trademark Resource Center, helping the university's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation bring more value to aspiring entrepreneurs on and off campus. And UMES President Heidi Anderson is newly home from China, where she inked an agreement with Beijing's Zhongyuan Institute of Science and Technology, advancing study abroad, student and faculty exchanges, and joint degree programs.

The **University of Maryland, Baltimore** is—as always—focused on health equity. UMB's School of Pharmacy won a \$10 million NIH grant to support community-led health equity research. The School of Nursing won \$5 million from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission to reduce cardiovascular health disparities in West Baltimore and improve access to primary and mental health care. And the School of Medicine has launched a Rural Health Equity and Access Elective, training and placing incoming medical students in Eastern Shore practices to shrink rural health disparities. UMB's School of Social Work is building for growth: The school broke ground on a new \$120 million home in Baltimore and began offering in-state tuition to DC residents for its Master of Social Work degree, the only accredited social work program in Maryland to do so.

Towson University has announced a new million-dollar teacher induction partnership with Carroll County Public Schools, providing mentors to work with the county's new teachers. Meanwhile, a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership will help Towson train and retain teachers across Maryland. Finally, for the fifth year in a row, TU was recognized with a Higher Education in Diversity Award for its outstanding commitment to equity and inclusion.

Coppin State University is strengthening ties with its neighbors. CSU just reopened its Community Garden—a partnership with the American Heart Association and the University of Maryland Medical System—providing space for engagement in nutrition and sustainability. And the university just hosted its annual Closing the Wealth Gap Summit, promoting financial literacy and wealth-building for emerging communities. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that Coppin welcomed its largest first-year class since 2011. Among them is West Muhammad, a 14-year-old cybersecurity engineering major—the youngest freshman in Coppin's history.

Salisbury University is celebrating campus transformation. The new Henson Planetarium opens up opportunities for students studying astronomy and astrophysics, while a \$60 million renovation of Blackwell Hall will turn the former library into a student services hub. It's expected to open in 2026 as one of the System's first net-zero buildings, burnishing Salisbury's environmental credentials. *The Princeton Review* ranks SU among the nation's 30 most sustainable colleges, citing its strong academic programs in environmental studies and a green campus infrastructure.

Speaking of sustainability, the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory at the **University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science** has announced a landmark \$1 million gift from longtime supporters Brian Hochheimer and Marjorie Wax. The gift will establish the lab's *first-ever* endowed professorship.

At the **University of Maryland, Baltimore County**, the UMBC-led GESTAR II center has clinched a two-year, \$47 million extension of its cooperative agreement with NASA, advancing the agency's space missions and enriching earth science scholarship. UMBC also won a \$900,000 grant to investigate whether a popular AI technology, called "digital twinning," can help in the battle against diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and multiple sclerosis. And UMBC's new Institute of Politics made a mark this election season. The inaugural UMBC Poll was featured in several state and national news outlets, and Director Mileah Kromer was in high demand for political analysis.

The **University of Baltimore** was also prominently featured in the run-up to the election. Its work in civic engagement has earned a *raft* of national awards—the latest, its third gold medal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, recognizing UBalt for having the highest voting rate among U.S. four-year universities, the highest voter registration rate, and reliably strong programs in civic education and engagement.

The **University of Maryland Global Campus** knows something about civic and national service. UMGC has launched Credit for Military Rank, a program motivating active-duty and retired enlisted service members to complete their undergraduate degrees. Service members earn academic credit for the skills and experience they gain as they rise through the military ranks.

The **University of Maryland, College Park** is celebrating its rank among the nation's top schools for student innovation and entrepreneurship. In the 2025 rankings put out by *The Princeton Review* and *Entrepreneur* magazine, UMD placed seventh across all U.S. universities—and fifth among publics. It's UMD's 10th straight year in the top 10. In addition, College Park is part of a \$7 million award to help AI-powered large language models improve on writing code for supercomputers. And with a \$1.8 million U.S. Department of Transportation grant, UMD is launching a drone-delivery program to bring essential medications to residents on the remote Smith Island. Finally, UMD alumnus Jason Reynolds, bestselling author of young-adult novels, is one of 22 MacArthur "genius" grant winners.

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

At our September meeting, I took a few minutes to celebrate the excellence of our universities, as reflected in national rankings. Since then, *U.S. News and World Report* has released its annual *undergraduate* rankings. And again this year, our universities didn't disappoint.

College Park ranks 44th among National Universities, and 17th among publics. Its undergraduate engineering program is 16th overall, and several programs had Top 15 showings, including Management Information Systems, Aerospace, and Artificial Intelligence.

UMBC is ranked 15th in Best Undergraduate Teaching and 14th in Most Innovative Schools. UMB's School of Nursing is No. 13 in the nation. In the rankings of Regional Public Universities in the North, Frostburg State is 32nd; UBalt, 29th; Salisbury, 17th; and Towson, fifth. In the rankings of HBCUs, Bowie State (11th), UMES (16th), and Coppin State (27th) all took their place in the nation's top 30. It also bears noting that half of our universities—Bowie, Salisbury, Towson, UMD, UBalt, and UMGC—were named among the *Military Times*' Best for Vets.

THE COST AND VALUE OF THE USM

I want to mention another ranking that's particularly important right now. Each year, the College Board breaks down the in-state cost of attending a public university. For Maryland undergraduates, that in-state cost—tuition and fees together—averages just over \$11,000. That's in the middle of all 50 states, below the national average, and *well* below our neighboring states.

In part, that's a tribute to our efficiency as a System. And here I'll cite another ranking: According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the USM Office is the fourth most efficient central office in U.S. higher ed. Central administrative costs comprise well under 1% of the System's overall budget.

But our affordability is largely a credit to the vision and generosity of state leaders, who have long valued higher education, and long invested in it. Certainly, we're concerned about Maryland's forecasted \$2.7 billion deficit. At the same time, with our voices, our programs, and our partnership, we've supported worthy legislative priorities: the K12 Blueprint, the ENOUGH Act and associated anti-poverty initiatives.

So we do understand the state's budgetary position. Still, in every meeting I have with Maryland's leaders, I stress what significant cuts would mean for us and for those we serve, and what those impacts, in turn, would mean for Maryland's workforce and our wealth, for the innovation that lifts the state and the economic mobility that lifts its people.

ENROLLMENT STRENGTH

And, finally, lest I end on a challenge, I'll turn, instead, to a triumph. I've mentioned throughout this report the good news of enrollment at our various schools. But that good news doesn't reflect only *pockets* of growth. With apologies to Associate Vice Chancellor Muntz, I'm going to steal just a portion—the *best* portion—of his enrollment report.

With another year of growth, our undergraduate numbers are back to pre-pandemic levels, and we have our second highest undergrad total in USM history. That's not all: We have our *largest-ever* first-time, full-time class—breaking last year's record. Together, our HBCUs have their largest first-year class in 16 years.

This is good news any way you look at it. But if you consider our numbers in the national landscape, they're incredible. Nationwide, first-year enrollment dropped 5% overall—plummeting 8.5% at public universities. At U.S. colleges with high Pell-eligibility rates, first-year enrollment was off by more than 10%.

Our good news amid all the bad suggests that, for the many headlines about disengagement from higher ed, skepticism of higher ed—in Maryland, anyway, we're making the case that college *is* worth it; that what we offer students will affordably get them to where they want to be. I'm deeply grateful to everyone doing the work that holds us to that promise.

Madame Chair, this concludes my report.

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