



Report to the USM Board of Regents

Chancellor Jay A. Perman

Towson University | April 11, 2025

Thank you, Madame Chair. It's been a wonderful morning already, with the recognition of our faculty. It's an honor to thank them for their service.

I extend a special welcome to Dr. Darlene Smith, who joins us for the first time as interim president of Frostburg State. I look forward to our work together.

USM RISING

I'll begin today with some good news across the System. Earlier this week, *U.S. News and World Report* unveiled its 2025 Graduate School rankings. As always, our excellence shows.

The University of Maryland, College Park has more than three dozen top 25 placements. The College of Information moved up one spot to No. 3, the School of Public Health gained three spots to No. 22—with three specialties *newly* making the top 25—and the College of Education rose one spot, to No. 24.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore has a dozen placements in the top 25. The School of Nursing's Doctor of Nursing Practice is ranked 12th and its master's program, 17th, with three specialties in the top 10. Likewise, three specialty programs at UMB's Maryland Carey Law were ranked in the U.S. top 10.

UMBC was ranked for Computer Science, Fine Arts, Physics, Public Affairs, and more. In fact, virtually every eligible USM university was recognized: Education at Frostburg State, Social Work at Salisbury, Computer Science at Bowie State, Occupational Therapy and Audiology here at Towson, and Pharmacy at UMES. The Clinical Law program at UBalt ranks No. 4 nationwide.

In other Systemwide distinctions, the USM was recognized for its innovation capacity, ranking 22nd worldwide for patents awarded in 2024 and 8th among U.S. publics. Contributing to last year's 114 patents are inventions out of College Park, UMB, UMBC, UMES, and Bowie State.

Our international scholarship was celebrated with several Fulbright awards. Among master's universities, Salisbury was named a top producer of both Fulbright Students and Scholars, and among doctoral universities, UMD was a top producer of Fulbright Students. In all, the System had 33 student awards and 10 scholar awards across seven universities. Towson, UBalt, UMB, UMBC, and UMGC rounded out the list.

Four of our universities were named Voter Friendly Campuses by the Fair Election Center and NASPA. Frostburg, Towson, UMES, and UMBC were recognized for efforts yielding exceptional student registration and voting rates.

Finally, I thank several of our universities for reaching out to thousands of Marylanders laid off from federal agencies and contractors. Federal layoffs and cuts affect Maryland's economy more acutely than *any* other state's, and this help—in the form of education and retraining programs, career services, and support for entrepreneurs—are a lifeline for those newly out of work and rightfully anxious about their future.

UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE

Turning to our individual universities, I'll start with our host today. This spring, the Carnegie Foundation unveiled a new classification acknowledging research conducted at non-doctoral institutions. For exceeding \$2.5 million annually in expenditures, Towson was named a Research university. We know this is merely prelude to R2 status, a priority ambition for President Ginsberg and his team. I should note that Dr. Alexei Kolesnikov—honored this morning with a faculty award—is among those heading Towson's efforts to expand the reach and impact of *undergraduate* research.

Towson continues to lead as an anchor for its community and for the state. Towson's StarTUp coworking space is a model for community-based entrepreneurship and innovation. And as the home for Maryland's Center for Community Schools, Towson provides comprehensive support to a network of 600+ community schools statewide—schools that provide holistic, wraparound support to students and families. Maryland's K12 Blueprint identifies community schools as key to equitable, excellent education and strong families and neighborhoods. President Ginsberg, thank you for this important work.

The American university's role as an anchor institution is a concept that UBalt President Kurt Schmoke explored in a *Baltimore Sun* piece reflecting on the value of higher education. The ideal, he said, is that an individual's worth will be matched with their ability to contribute to the greater good; that what universities do well—his own included—is blend the abstract and the immediate to solve real and pressing problems. During UBalt's centennial year, we're celebrating these solutions—the work that enriches the quality of life *all* of us enjoy. President Schmoke, thank you for articulating what we do so well.

Speaking of materially improving people's lives, the School of Medicine at UMB has developed a CT scan technique to help oncologists better predict how head and neck cancers will respond to certain therapies. These cancers are rising in the U.S., especially among young people, and this study could tip the scales toward survival. UMB researchers also co-led a global health study that found a vaccine protecting against five strains of meningitis prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa is safe and effective for use in children as young as nine months of age. Provost Ward, thank you.

At Coppin State, the College of Business launched the Microsoft Scholars Program, offering select students invaluable exposure to career pathways in the technology and entertainment

sectors. And on the heels of his January profile in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, CSU President Anthony Jenkins made the cover of *Education Insights Magazine*, which called him one of 2025's Most Innovative Leaders in Education. Congratulations, President Jenkins.

At the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, researchers have found that hurricanes can stimulate toxic algal blooms. These blooms can lead to red tides, fish kills, shellfish poisoning, and respiratory problems in humans. With climate change accelerating stronger and wetter tropical storms in coastal regions, this research is critical to our mitigation and adaptation strategies. Thank you, President Miralles-Wilhelm.

Speaking of climate change impacts, saltwater intrusion is threatening the Eastern Shore's biggest crops—corn, soybeans, wheat—and UMES is stepping in to fight it. As the lead recipient of a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, UMES researchers are working with farmers to study the viability of switchgrass as an alternative crop. Salt-tolerant switchgrass can be used for feedstock and biofuel production, and could reduce nutrient pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. Thank you, President Anderson.

Let me round out this coastal theme with Salisbury University. This fall, SU will offer Maryland's *first* coastal engineering major, featuring project-based instruction in physics, engineering, geosciences, and geographic information science. Program graduates will be prepared to protect our shorelines, fight climate change, and build sustainable coastal communities. And a corollary: A new grant worth nearly \$1 million will help Salisbury grow the clean energy generated on campus. Congratulations, Provost Couch.

With \$1.5 million from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, UMBC will build a Quantum Science Institute. The funding will support graduate fellowships for quantum research, the development of new quantum courses and programs, and equipment to enhance existing quantum labs and to start new ones. Thank you, President Sheares Ashby.

The University of Maryland Global Campus has teamed up with Amazon Web Services to promote the AWS Cloud Institute, where learners with little to no technical background can train for entry-level cloud computing roles. Learners can build a digital job skills portfolio and take advantage of skill and career services throughout the program. In addition, the Council of College and Military Educators—the nation's foremost advocate for high-quality education serving military members and their families—has honored UMGC with its 2025 Institution Award, recognizing the university's significant contributions to military education. Provost Pomietto, congratulations.

It's busy times at Bowie State. This spring, Bowie again hosted the CIAA Basketball Tournament, bringing a lot of excitement—and, yes, money—to the city and state. Last month, Bowie hosted a summit for aspiring teachers from the state's four HBCUs, offering resources and support as they prepare for careers in education. Last week, the university brought together HBCU leaders, policymakers, advocates, and community partners for the inaugural HBCU Prison Education Summit to scale the work they're doing in Maryland correctional facilities. And last

Saturday, Bowie celebrated 160 years of excellence with its Anniversary Gala. Congratulations, President Breaux.

Last month, I was delighted to join Frostburg State's faculty, staff, and students in welcoming Dr. Smith to the interim presidency. Her tenure is starting off on a high note, as new data show that enrollment and retention are on the rise at Frostburg—for the third-straight year. This summer, we'll launch the search for Frostburg's permanent leader, and I'm confident that FSU's trending enrollment numbers will help us attract a strong pool of talented candidates. Thank you, President Smith.

College Park is celebrating three new fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Professor Xin-Zhong Liang is honored for his work modeling ways to understand climate change impacts; Professor Jeffrey Lidz, for his contributions to linguistics and language science, particularly in child language acquisition and the psychological basis of semantics; and Professor Emerita Ann Wylie, for her work in mineralogy and economic geology, plumbing the relationship between mineral properties and human health. The new additions bring UMD's total AAAS fellows to more than 110. An incredible distinction, President Pines.

At the USM at Southern Maryland, I helped welcome leaders in regional K12 and higher education, as Dr. Abel hosted a summit on expanding new teacher pathways and strengthening teacher preparation and support. The innovative work and tight collaboration of these leaders in Southern Maryland is a model I believe we can replicate for statewide impact. Thank you, Dr. Abel.

The Universities at Shady Grove celebrated National Children's Dental Health Month with 40 of UMB's dentistry students providing free oral health care to more than two dozen young patients at USG's state-of-the-art facility. Thank you, Dr. Khademian.

And the USM at Hagerstown welcomed prospective students to explore programs in business, health care, education, IT, and social sciences, showcasing the partnerships that bring Systemwide excellence to local students. Thank you, Dr. Ashby.

USM RESPONSE TO FEDERAL ORDERS

I'd like to pivot now to the landscape of federal orders affecting higher education—orders still causing significant confusion and concern at our universities.

At our Board meeting in February, I addressed the proposed cut to the NIH indirect cost rate—a cut that would cost the System more than \$60 million and cost the state far *more*, as the economic impact of our R&D would shrink alongside our research dollars. Maryland joined a lawsuit to block implementation of that rate cut, and a permanent injunction was just granted this week, barring NIH from capping indirect costs at 15%. The administration has appealed the ruling.

This isn't the only NIH-related lawsuit we've joined. Last Friday, a coalition of 16 states, including Maryland, filed suit to end delays in the NIH grant application process and restore

grants terminated by the administration. Both the slowdown in new grant funding and the revocation of awarded grants are causing irreparable harm to our indispensable science—science that underpins human health and well-being and, literally, saves lives.

Maryland joined another suit last Friday—this one to stop the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and six more small federal agencies.

And we suffered a loss that same day—at least temporarily—as the Supreme Court ruled that grants under two federal teacher training programs could be terminated as our lawsuit winds its way through the courts. The ruling lifted a temporary restraining order that Maryland and other states had won to protect the Teacher Quality Partnership and SEED programs, which recruit and prepare teachers for hard-to-staff schools. This is a blow to our work in addressing the teacher shortage and filling Maryland classrooms with capable, caring teachers. Still, we persist—and we hope, ultimately, for a favorable outcome.

Meanwhile, a preliminary injunction remains in place barring the Office of Management and Budget from freezing federal grant disbursements. Maryland joined this lawsuit with 22 states, arguing that the funding freeze affecting health care, disaster relief, and education puts vital services—and lives—in jeopardy, and that the move halts congressionally approved spending without legal authority.

In another lawsuit, I submitted a declaration attesting to the material harm that will likely be done to our students and our universities should the U.S. Department of Education slash its personnel by 50%. Our students rely on the department for Pell grants, for student loans, for work study: 85,000 USM students receive federal aid—*fully half* of our student population. We saw last year the consequences of disrupting that process, and I believe that cutting department staff by half would eclipse the FAFSA disaster. It also puts at risk millions of dollars in grants, vital data collection, and our students' civil rights.

And, finally, two days ago, the System signed on to support an amicus brief submitted by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. The brief supports a preliminary injunction to stop the administration from revoking student visas without cause, and arresting, detaining, and deporting noncitizen students and faculty.

The revocation of visas is already happening at our USM universities, and our students are scared. Not just visa-holding students, but any student with noncitizen status. I've heard from some who carry their documents at all times, lest they be detained. The AG's office has issued guidance for our universities on immigration enforcement, and the immigration clinics at both of our law schools—UMB's and UBalt's—have offered their services to affected students. But anxiety remains. Of course, it does.

AFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT AS A STUDENT-CENTERED SYSTEM

And so I'd like to end with our students—always appropriate. At our Systemwide Student Success Symposium last Friday, I addressed student-serving teams from every one of our

universities—the people who work most closely with our students. Over the weekend, I met with the USM Student Council and other student leaders. They shared with me how vulnerable and isolated they feel. They shared a fear that the diversity we’ve long cherished might now be seen as a liability.

And so I’d like to reprise a portion of what I said to our students and to those who support them. It’s a theme you’ve *already* heard me speak to: what it means to be a student-centered System. It means that our policies, programs, partnerships, and practices serve an essential goal—that all students can come to the USM for their education, and all students can succeed once they’re here.

Student-centeredness is still our mantra because student-centeredness is still our *mandate*. It’s *still* the foundation of our strategic plan. Students are *still* the beating heart of who we are and what we do.

And if you embrace student-*centeredness*, then you have to embrace the full diversity of our *students*: different in race and ethnicity and first language; different in age and income and disability; in ideology and experience and religion; in gender and gender identity and sexual orientation; in their status as veterans and parents and immigrants.

Our diversity isn’t a matter of belief. Our diversity is a *fact*. And our mission is to create the conditions, and lay in the supports, and develop the strategies that help every single one of these students thrive.

Not through monolithic action, because there is no student monolith. There is no typical student. No exemplar. Our students aren’t totems. We are—all of us—different from one another. And so our commitment to equity means that we *see* these differences, and how they might influence the way our students learn, and the barriers they might throw into our students’ paths. And we dismantle them. One by one, we dismantle them.

Because that’s what a student-centered System does. It puts students above structure. It puts students above politics. It puts students above *everything*.

So, no, our values haven’t changed. They don’t need to. Not if we tether ourselves to the commitment that all students will get from us what’s fair and just—a valid chance at what we’ve long called the American dream.

I’m deeply grateful to everyone across the System doing this vital work. I’m grateful for their commitment, their collaboration, their courage; for their undimmed belief that what they’re doing matters. Because it always has.

Madame Chair, this concludes my report.

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