



Report to the Board of Regents

Chancellor Jay A. Perman

Salisbury University | September 19, 2025

Thank you, Madame Chair. I add my greetings to our new regents—Regent Stebbins, Regent Blount, Regent Speaks, Regent Rivera-Forbes. As we begin a challenging, but no doubt rewarding, academic year, I look forward to your guidance.

I welcome our new shared governance chairs—Mr. Vasquez-Reyes, Dr. King-White, Mr. Prouty. I'm excited for our partnership.

And I welcome Dr. Dale Nesbary, our new interim executive director of the USM at Southern Maryland. Dr. Nesbary has deep expertise in institutional effectiveness, the student experience, technology and planning. His leadership of Muskegon Community College in Michigan earned him national acclaim, and we'll look to him as we strengthen our partnerships with Maryland's two-year colleges.

Dr. Nesbary's arrival at USMSM coincides with the center's new strategic plan, focused on building academic and career pathways, catalyzing community collaborations, and promoting student success and social mobility. Dale, we look forward to your leadership as we make good on these promises.

Elkins Professorships

I congratulate our Elkins professors, whose critically important work in teaching, research, and service we advance through System-funded grants.

Through Bowie State's Autonomous Technologies Lab, Dr. Darsana Josyula will establish a Collaborative Hub for Adaptive Human-AI Teaming, ensuring equitable access to AI research and education, and advancing regional workforce development.

At the University of Maryland, College Park, Dr. Elisabeth Smela will team with colleagues across the university to develop an accessible certificate program in sustainability and to foster cross-campus collaboration in sustainability projects.

Prof. Rabiata Akande from UMB's Carey School of Law will continue her project exploring the history of European colonialism and its impact on contemporary international law.

We're also celebrating three Elkins Academic Transformation winners. This year, we asked faculty to focus their grant applications on generative AI, which is rapidly transforming the work we do. And so at Towson University, Dr. Amanda Jozkowski will enhance teaching and student engagement by integrating generative AI into course design. At UMBC, Dr. Eric Stokan will develop open-source training materials in computational social science and generative AI. And at UMGC, Dr. David Leasure will use generative AI to adapt and scale course-specific faculty coaching tools. I congratulate all of our winners.

The Excellence We Achieve

If you're paying attention, you might know that this is the month I typically offer a rankings roundup, bragging about where we stand on various "best-of" lists. I'm going to hold off this year, while we await the publication of a few more rankings. Don't worry, though: The rankings we *do* have are among the most impressive I've seen.

I do want to mention some accolades that say as much about us—and our values—as the more standard measures of excellence. For instance, Towson University and UMB have won the 2025 Excellence in Mental Health and Well-Being Award from *Insight Into Academia* magazine. The award measures programs and policies that integrate accessible mental health services enterprisewide; that significantly advance inclusive excellence and belonging; and that support emotional resilience.

College Park, UMB, and Towson are all ranked in the top 20 on *Forbes'* list of Best Employers in Maryland. And UMB made the magazine's list of America's Best Employers for Women, ranking 36th among all U.S. universities.

College Park ranks 13th among U.S. public universities for its graduation rate among Pell students—a six-year graduation rate above 82%. And the university is a top 5 producer of doctorates in tech areas critical to national security and science-driven innovation.

Towson is one of seven North American colleges earning Autism-Inclusive Campus Designation from the College Autism Network. The first-of-its-kind designation recognizes campuses committed to creating environments where autistic and other neurodivergent people can thrive, and it builds on TU's leadership in autism education and community support. Congratulations, President Ginsberg.

In a similar vein, I want to mention UMGC's inclusion in the Generation Hope FamilyU Cohort. The program will help UMGC foster a supportive environment for all students, but especially parents—so that students juggling child care can learn, and succeed, and enjoy the economic mobility that lifts up their families.

I want to end on *The Princeton Review*, which has again named the beautiful building that's hosting us today, Guerrieri Academic Commons, a U.S. top 25 college library.

That allows me to segue to our host this morning, Salisbury University.

I'm not sure if you've heard, but Salisbury is celebrating its centennial this year. SU's big birthday bash was joined by a fundraising gala and the debut of the SU Centennial Speaker Series, where President Lepre was joined by former leaders for a behind-the-scenes look at Salisbury's meteoric rise over the last quarter-century.

That rise is real, and Salisbury's students are at the heart of it. One of Salisbury's enduring achievements has been its incredible success in producing Fulbright Students. SU has two Fulbright recipients this year: Chemistry major Andersen Herman, whose experience with malaria in his native Haiti has shaped his plans to pursue malaria research in the Slovak Republic. And you might remember his classmate, ESOL and Spanish major Vicky Vazquez, who was one of our Regents Student Award winners last spring. She's now a Fulbright Student pursuing a teaching assistantship in Thailand. A former ESOL student herself, Vicky will bring her language-teaching experience back to her native Worcester County and serve vulnerable communities.

Salisbury's Lian Peach was named National Leader of the Year by the Omicron Delta Kappa honor society. Before graduating, the SGA chief of staff was vice president of Salisbury's food pantry, co-editor-in-chief of its undergraduate research journal, and a community activist, addressing "period poverty" in local schools with distributions of personal hygiene products.

Salisbury's Kay Funderburg has been named a Gilman Scholar by the U.S. Department of State. The program helps students with high financial need gain international experience, build global networks, and hone foreign language skills to advance U.S. interests in security and prosperity. Kay will study at Sweden's Linköping University. President Lepre, your students are an extraordinary credit to this extraordinary university. Thank you for hosting us.

Let me branch out to students at other schools. UMB's School of Nursing is celebrating its *first-ever* Fulbright Student. As part of her PhD studies, Abaneh Ebangwese will travel to Cameroon, where she'll analyze biometric and survey data on cardiovascular-disease risk factors to assess disease vulnerability.

I mentioned the Gilman Scholarship earlier. College Park was just ranked fourth in the nation for the number of Gilman scholarships awarded. Sixty Terps earned the distinction, enabling their study (literally) around the world. It's all part of College Park's plan for inclusive global experience. So very impressive, President Pines.

UMES has seen tremendous growth in its study abroad programs, with more students participating in programs over the last two years than did in the eight prior years *combined*. It's part of a push to grow international study—not only study abroad, but international scholarship and fellowship participation.

Let me expand to university achievements. None is more rewarding than something that UMB and Frostburg State are now celebrating: affirmation of their accreditation by the Middle States Commission. This is a years-long process requiring extensive self-study and expansive engagement inside and outside the university. Every function, every ambition, every achievement

is put under a microscope—as it should be. President Jarrell, President Smith, congratulations on the work—and on the outcome.

At Frostburg, every single student in its Physician Assistant Class of 2025 passed the national certifying exam. First-time pass rate is an important metric proving program effectiveness, and it doesn't get any better than perfect. Congratulations, President Smith.

UMES is celebrating full accreditation of *its* Physician Assistant program, together with outstanding student pass rates on the certifying exam. This was years of hard and methodical work, President Anderson. Congratulations.

The Scholarship We Produce

Academic program development is another endeavor requiring years of painstaking preparation. Salisbury has unveiled a Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major, maybe the most requested major—by students, by employers—that Salisbury *didn't* offer. Until now.

College Park and UMB have launched a BS–MD program to recruit more engineers and data scientists into clinical professions, where technology has transformed preventive and precision care, device development, diagnostics, and therapeutics.

At UMBC, faculty in Human Services Psychology have won a \$3 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to adapt a therapy that helps patients with PTSD process their trauma by writing about it. The faculty are developing and testing a version of the therapy with patients in residential treatment for substance use disorder.

A team of researchers at UMB's School of Medicine was among only four teams nationwide to win an NIH challenge to improve targeted genome editing. Their prize came after they successfully demonstrated a technique that delivers editing biotechnology across the blood-brain barrier.

Researchers at UMD are teaming with colleagues at Cornell to develop wearable AI that helps people with visual impairments access nonverbal cues like nods, gestures, and glances, nuances often critical in workplace collaboration and personal relationships. Real-world testing could begin within 18 months.

And UMD's Sean B. Carroll just won his third Emmy for outstanding science filmmaking for his documentary following an evolutionary biologist's quest to find DNA in a 2 million-year-old soil sample. "If we don't tell our stories," he said, "how does anyone know what we do? Scientists need to get their stories told." I couldn't agree more.

The Students We Enroll

Several of our universities are celebrating strong incoming classes. Coppin State welcomes its largest first-year class in more than 25 years. In all, 1,000+ new undergraduates are flocking to Eagle Nation. And Coppin is bucking national trends, with climbing enrollment among men.

Male enrollment at Coppin has jumped 54% since 2021, reflecting strength not only in recruitment but in retention, where Coppin well outperforms national averages.

This work dovetails with Coppin's new five-year strategic plan, *Courageously Soaring*, whose goals include becoming a university of choice, nurturing students' holistic development, and improving their completion rates. Well done, President Jenkins.

UMBC is celebrating a record-breaking incoming class, more than 3,100 first-year and transfer students—and its biggest-ever wait list. There's a lot of work behind the numbers. For instance, UMBC is building relationships in Baltimore City, offering guaranteed access for qualified city students and full funding for those whose families make under \$80,000 a year. The payoff? Enrollment of Baltimore City students is up 30% this year. Congratulations, President Sheares Ashby.

Towson is welcoming more than 5,700 new students this year—nearly 3,000 freshmen, 1,600 transfer students, 1,200 graduate students—an area of promising growth. Retention has been a great success story at Towson: Ninety-one percent of eligible undergraduates return to TU for another year.

UMES is eyeing its fifth-straight year of enrollment growth. An extraordinary achievement, President Anderson.

And without getting ahead of the final totals, we're confident that our Systemwide enrollment this fall will exceed last year's. In these numbers, we have persuasive evidence that Marylanders want what we provide. *Still.*

The Talent We Develop

Of course, at the *other* end of the college pipeline are the careers that make the degree worth it. And so our universities keep innovating how they connect students to employers, how they produce the talent that Maryland needs, how they partner to get students—and the state—the very best return on their investment.

Through a partnership with BioHub Maryland, Bowie State students are being trained in biopharma manufacturing and earning certificates valuable to employment in the life sciences.

The Universities at Shady Grove partnered with UMD's Smith School and all nine of USG's partner universities to showcase the academic programs offered on campus and meet with industry leaders across sectors. Employers shared their talent needs, and USG shared how their students and alumni can—and will—fill them. Thank you, Dr. Khademian.

UMGC is partnering with the Montgomery County Police Department to accelerate degree completion for department employees and their families, offering discounted tuition, waived application fees, and college credit for police training and prior learning.

You'll recall that UMGC piloted a similar program for military learners. Through the Credit for Military Rank program, students earn transfer credit for skills acquired through military experience. To date, more than 70,000 credits have been awarded to 14,300 U.S. service members, saving these students \$17.5 million in tuition costs. Well done, President Fowler.

Continuing its commitment to displaced federal employees, UMGC staffed a Career Expo explicitly for former DC workers, and offered no-cost registration for professional exam prep courses. Towson's College of Education *also* has federal employees in mind. With a \$1 million MHEC grant, TU is supporting former federal workers who want to transition into teaching. With 600+ applicants, this is the kind of program that can make a real dent in classroom shortages.

At College Park, a nearly \$3 million gift from alumnus Brendan Iribe will open pathways to computing careers by supporting not only the university's computing majors but local middle and high school students, as well, catalyzing an inclusive computing community.

The Communities We Serve

Of course, "community" is an important word for us, and service to our neighbors animates much of our work.

UBalt faculty are leading an experiential learning project that engages young students with art history in a new way. Partnering with the Walters Art Museum, UBalt is transforming museum visits into interactive, gamified adventures, with high school and middle school students working through challenges that deepen their understanding of the artwork and its context. It's a model that could preserve meaningful field trips in public schools, as funding for them is increasingly jeopardized.

President Miralles-Wilhelm at UMCES continually stresses that we must show the economic impact of our work. You've heard me share that UMCES has seeded billions of juvenile oysters in Chesapeake Bay reefs. It's one of the world's largest oyster restoration projects. And it's paying dividends. Since the restoration, watermen are bringing in, on average, 475,000 bushels of oysters every year—for a dockside value of more than \$18 million. In the five years prior to restoration, harvests averaged 116,000 bushels, at a value of just \$3.5 million. And now the state has said it will formally meet its commitment to restore five oyster tributaries in the Bay. Well done, Fernando.

With Williamsport High School in Washington County undergoing asbestos abatement, the USM at Hagerstown is the neighbor it needs. The school's most vulnerable students—English language learners, students receiving special education services, students experiencing housing instability, students with special medical needs—are now using critical space at USMH. Because that's what good neighbors do. Thank you, Dr. Ashby.

UMGC is awarding full scholarships to caregivers of wounded, ill, or injured service members, helping them restart lives they've put on hold and bring greater financial security to their families.

With this year's class, UMGC has awarded 90 scholarships, covering full tuition for as long as it's needed. Forty scholars have earned their degrees.

UMB's Carey School of Law, in partnership with the Public Defender's Office, has launched Maryland's *second* Innocence Project. The first, of course, is famously hosted by UBalt. The aim isn't just to free innocent people behind bars, but to prevent wrongful convictions.

UMBC is deepening its work with the Baltimore nonprofit Building Steps, bringing Baltimore City high schoolers to campus for weeks of lab-based exploration.

And Bowie State is eyeing MDOT's plans for transit-oriented development at BSU's MARC station as a chance to grow affordable housing, and connectivity for students, and economic development in greater Bowie. The plans call for a mixed-use community on five acres of state-owned land, which President Breaux envisions as a conduit to the opportunities that come with connection. Congratulations, Dr. Breaux.

I want to end these achievements by saying that every single one of them is made possible by our USM staff—program development, student recruitment and success, strategic planning, accreditation, research and development. Chair Gooden mentioned at the meeting's outset that we've just honored 10 staff members across the System for their enormous contributions to our work.

And so it's on this note that I'll mention UBalt, which has just won gold for its new website in the national UCDA Design Awards. From nearly 800 entries, fewer than 20 earned the highest honor. And that's not all. UBalt won the Award of Excellence for its body of creative work celebrating the university, its students, its programs, and its centennial anniversary. To our staff across the System, I thank you for doing the work and for telling our story. And please, President Schmoke, thank your team as well.

Making Maryland

I'll be telling our story, too. On Monday, with President Breaux and our student council leader, Mr. Vasquez-Reyes, I'll be briefing the Maryland House Appropriations Committee on the impact federal actions are having on our operations and our budget. But more than that, I'll be making the case that, when it comes to Maryland's fiscal challenges, the USM is *not* part of the problem. We're part of the solution. A *big* part.

Because college degrees correlate with economic strength, and we awarded a record number last year, more than 45,000. Because we're a primary supplier of talent to Maryland's highest need industries: health care, computing, cyber, teaching. Because our \$1.6 billion R&D enterprise doesn't only safeguard our health, security, and sustainability; it grows our GDP. Because the technologies we invent and the startups we launch make Maryland a state of innovation. Because with the right tools and the right support, *we* can be the lure for companies that want proximity to our people, our ideas, and our partnership.

I thank all of you for your work and your counsel as we prove, every day, that this System *makes* Maryland.

Madame Chair, this concludes my report.

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