



March 13, 2020

### **STUDENT REGENT TUITION WAIVER IN SENATE COMMITTEE**

On Wednesday in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, members heard USM testimony supporting Senate Bill 1022. The bill authorizes the USM Board of Regents to grant a tuition waiver to a student member. The tuition waiver may not exceed the amount of the tuition incurred by the student member during the second year of a two-year term.

The Board of Regents, including two student regents, governs the system. Appointed by the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, the regents oversee the system's academic, administrative, and financial operations; formulate policy; and appoint the USM chancellor and the presidents of the system's 12 institutions. With the exception of the student members, each regent is appointed for a term of five years and may not serve more than two consecutive terms. Student regents are appointed for a two-year term and may be reappointed. Regents serve on the board without compensation.

Regents are selected through a process that ensures that the most qualified, experienced, and committed candidates, representing a diverse set of backgrounds, are chosen for the position. Regents must share a personal or professional interest in the USM and possess the necessary qualifications needed to strengthen the board; demonstrate a willingness to devote adequate time and effort to the office; and display thoughtfulness and in working with others.

Tuition relief will help ensure that students who want to serve are not dissuaded by the large commitment that makes working and accepting other opportunities difficult if not impossible. This exemption will provide relief as well as incentive for students interested in this time-consuming but substantive and important role.

### **BILL FOR NOTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL INCOME UPON DEGREE COMPLETION**

On Tuesday in House Appropriations members heard House Bill 970. This bill would require each every USM institution to notify each accepted student of a reasonable estimate of the income the student may receive after completing each degree offered by the institution.

The USM testified that House Bill 907 would place additional burdens on USM financial aid and student affairs officers. There were also questions about the ability to gather and maintain income

data to determine a “reasonable estimate” of income after degree completion. Institutions systemwide have robust career and work-readiness programs and projects. Thousands of USM students accept internships into government, business and non-profits. This real-world experience allows them the opportunity to understand salary expectations.

The federal government last year released median salaries and median debt load broken down by academic programs in an attempt to give students more information as they make enrollment decisions. The data is an update to the [College Scorecard](#), the U.S. Department of Education’s consumer search tool that also includes information about graduation rates, average costs, and typical monthly debt payments.

## **CONTAMINANTS IN CAMPUS BUILDINGS FOCUS OF HOUSE HEARING**

On Tuesday in House Appropriations, University System of Maryland (USM) officials testified alongside colleagues at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) on House Bill 1052 and House Bill 1428. Both bills seek to address the regulation and reporting of contaminants in higher education facilities.

**House Bill 1052** would require the USM to establish an ongoing monitoring program for each campus building in which a specified contaminant is identified. The USM must develop a transparent and inclusive system-wide process for students, faculty, and staff to submit, in writing, specific concerns related to building contamination. In addition, the USM must conduct a comprehensive environmental review of each campus building within the USM. Based on the environmental review, the USM must prepare an environmental report with specified information, which must be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by Dec. 1, 2020.

**House Bill 1428** would require the Department of the Environment, in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Department of General Services, and Maryland Occupational Safety and Health, to adopt regulations to require periodic inspections and reports related to the presence of mold hazards and mold or moisture problems in higher education facilities in the state.

The USM supports the intent of these bills and remains dedicated to the same critical goals of protecting the health and safety of students, faculty and staff; as well as preserving the physical integrity of campus facilities. Ongoing actions to address the indoor environment of our campus buildings—particularly as they have been strengthened and enhanced by the Board of Regents, and by each campus president in the last few years—are sufficient to achieve the goals prescribed by these bills.

Last November, a USM press release outlined the findings from a group of independent experts (with deep experience in infectious diseases, public health and communication, facilities management, industrial hygiene, and mechanical systems) that were tasked by the USM Board of Regents with reviewing the issue of environmental health in buildings at UMCP. The expert panel relayed a finding that, in addressing these issues, campus officials followed all recognized federal, state and campus protocols in their efforts to inform the campus and maintain a healthy campus

environment. They made several recommendations that are helping to inform best practices at all USM institutions, including:

- Establish a broader culture of emergency management and training
- Develop better, more coordinated systems for tracking data, both on and off campus
- Improve campus-wide systems for communicating with faculty, staff, students, families and other outside stakeholders on health and wellness issues.

Ultimately, the USM Board of Regents committed to continue to monitor issues related to student health and work with USM presidents to see that resources continue to be available to address them.

Given the ongoing actions and focus by the USM and each of our campuses on these issues, the USM requested the legislation be amended into a requirement that the USM report to the Governor and General Assembly on the efforts in addressing these environmental hazards and plans to continue to monitor and address them in the future.