



**University System of Maryland
FY 2023 Operating Budget
Higher Education Overview
Response to the Department of Legislative Services' Analysis**

**House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development
Delegate Ben Barnes
Thursday, January 27, 2022**

**Senate Budget & Taxation
Subcommittee on Education, Business and Administration
Senator Nancy King
Monday, January 31, 2022**

Before I address the analysts' questions, I want to quickly acknowledge the enrollment landscape my colleagues and I face. As you know, the USM's 3.2 percent enrollment dip this year mirrors declines across the nation. While we have much that reassures us—an increase in first-time, full-time students; growth in applications—we recognize the challenges induced or exacerbated by COVID. We are working with our institutions where enrollment declines are most acute—our HBCUs and our smaller universities—and collaborating with them closely to improve recruitment and retention. We are directing new and significant funding to this work.

I also want to comment on students' mental health, certainly another challenge all of us are confronting. There is a spiking need for mental health services on our campuses. Our primary challenge is not only a dearth of counselors overall given growing demand, but difficulty in attracting and retaining them on campus, as state lines cannot compete with the income these professionals are able to generate in private practice. We are working to innovate delivery of care—through, for example, third-party providers, telehealth appointments, lay and peer therapists—so that we may expand our reach and meet this critical need.

Issues & Comments Requested:

- 1. Page 20—MHEC, USM, MSU, SMCM, the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA), and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) should comment on what steps are being taken to assist the transfer student population, specifically*

identifying actions that have been taken as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to more easily facilitate the student transfer process for these students.

USM Response:

ARTSYS, the statewide platform and course equivalency database maintained by the USM, is undergoing an update and expansion for 35 participating USM and non-USM institutions, including Maryland's 16 community colleges. The new ARTSYS platform will be implemented at all institutions between January and April 2022, scheduled according to each institution's student information system. The functional training period for the new ARTSYS is the first week of March through the second week of May 2022. However, for institutions that transitioned to the platform early in the implementation window, functional training may occur earlier. There are continued requests from institutions to obtain ongoing funding to support the new ARTSYS.

2021 Session Bill – Transfer with Success Act 2021:

In consultation with MHEC attorneys, MHEC and the five higher education segments completed the revisions to COMAR regulations and guidelines needed to meet the Transfer with Success Act's requirements for reporting the denial of transfer credits. COMAR regulations and guidelines are scheduled on the MHEC Commissioners January 26, 2022, meeting agenda.

- 2. Page 28—The USM Chancellor, presidents of SMCM and MSU, MICUA, and the Executive Director of MACC should comment on steps that have been taken to address education delivery and access for their students and spring 2022 instruction plans.*

USM Response:

Campuses generally are conducting in-person instruction for Spring 2022 and are employing high-flex course delivery for students who must quarantine.

- 3. Page 32—The Chancellor of USM and the Presidents of MSU, SMCM, and MICUA should comment on future plans concerning the usage of standardized test in the admissions process and how institutions determine the preparedness of entering freshmen.*

USM Response:

The current USM Admissions policy (III 4.00) requires a standardized test score unless the Board of Regents has granted an exception. UMGC is an open-enrollment institution, and therefore does not have that requirement. Salisbury University was granted an exception several years ago. And just prior to the pandemic, UMES presented well-documented data to support their going "test-optional."

When the pandemic interfered with the giving of standardized tests, the board granted the chancellor authority to permit exceptions to the current policy, and all USM institutions went to a test-optional admissions process. Each institution has its own internal admissions process, but all consider general level of preparation, high school transcript (including courses and grades), and several other individual factors in their admissions decisions.

Our institutions use placement testing heavily for entering students to ensure placement in courses in which the individual has a high likelihood of success. Within the Academic Affairs Advisory Council (USM provosts) and the Admissions Officers affinity group, we do regularly discuss similarities and differences among the institutions, so that good practices may be shared.

Given the national movement toward a test-optional approach, and the more comprehensive admissions processes developed and improved during the pandemic, a USM workgroup is now meeting to propose a change in the USM admissions policy to permit more campus flexibility. This policy change will be proposed to the regents in late spring.

In the meantime, with the ongoing COVID pandemic, our institutions have been temporarily granted the flexibility to remain test-optional. It is also important to note that admissions officers are working closely with financial aid officers, as many scholarship applications currently require an ACT or SAT score to qualify for the scholarship. New definitions in scholarship requirements are being explored.

Operating Budget Recommended Actions:

Instructional Faculty Workload Report: The committees request that the University System of Maryland (USM), Morgan State University (MSU), and St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) continue to provide annual instructional workload reports for tenured/tenure-track faculty and all types of faculty. Additional information may be included at the institution's discretion. Furthermore, the USM report should include the percent of faculty meeting or exceeding teaching standards for tenured/tenure-track faculty for the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus.

USM Response:

The USM will continue to provide annual faculty workload reports. Because there are no standards for teaching specific numbers of classes in professional schools, the USM is unable to report information for the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus. We will work with the state to provide relevant available information.