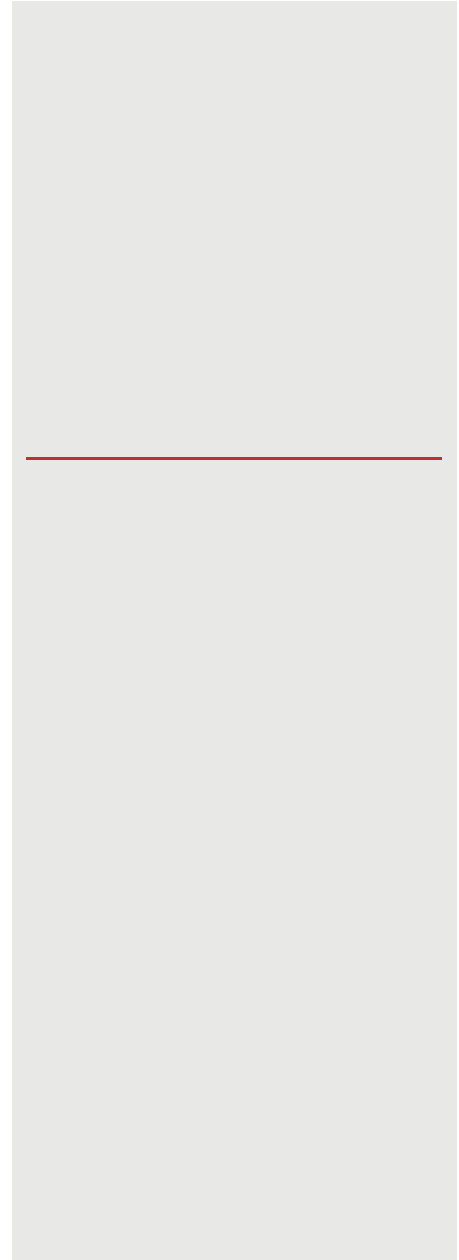


Looking Ahead With Hope. Doing the Work That Endures.

What a difference a year makes. As 2021 begins, we



like no other, USM students showed resilience and resolve. They engaged in their coursework when significant obstacles and distractions gave them good reason not to. They spoke passionately on issues of racial equity, economic and environmental justice, and civil rights. And with more than eight in every 10 USM students registered to vote, they took their passion to the ballot box.



The University of Maryland, Baltimore is serving as a community vaccination site, staffed by personnel from the University of Maryland Medical Center, as well as students from UMB's School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

You can learn more about our students and how we're serving them in the USM's [2020 Annual Report](#). I'm particularly proud that in a year of grave financial hardship for students, our institutions awarded \$174 million in financial aid, \$12 million more than the year before. I'm proud that need-based aid within the University System has climbed 62 percent since 2010; that half of all undergraduates graduate with *no* student loan debt; that, in an act of grace last year, universities used student emergency funds to distribute another \$2.4 million to those in financial distress.

I'm proud, too, of our work toward achieving racial equity and inclusion. We made a promise last year to explore issues of race and racism in our scholarship, and to redress racial injustice within our institutions and our communities. Students of color make up half of the USM's enrollment. In 10 years, we've grown our minority student population by 36 percent and our minority faculty population by 65 percent. Together, we're committed to the strength of our diversity, and to policies and practices that enable all to learn, contribute, and succeed *equally*.

The USM serves not only students, of course. We serve the state. Last year in particular, that service was indispensable. With our work in COVID testing, treatment, and vaccine development; public health advice and innovations; predicting and preparing for future pandemics, we've been vital to Maryland's COVID response. This is what our research and scholarship do—not just during a crisis, but every single day: They solve problems and save lives.

So, yes, I do look forward to getting back to "normal." Because our normal is pretty extraordinary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay A. Perman". The signature is written over a solid black rectangular background. The ink is slightly blurred, suggesting it was scanned from a document.

Jay A. Perman
Chancellor, University System of Maryland



USM OnTrack Transforms Online Learning

Last November, the *Chancellor's Newsletter* profiled *USM OnTrack*, a partnership between the University of Maryland Global Campus and the USM's Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation. The impact of this partnership, facilitating high-quality online learning in the era of COVID-19, is being felt in classrooms and labs—real and virtual—throughout the USM.

A key pillar of *USM OnTrack* is the course development assistance made available through an agreement with iDesign, an instructional design service provider. With iDesign offering thousands of hours of fundamental support to both faculty and students, USM institutions are able to more easily and effectively move courses online.

Dr. Denise Yost, director of Graduate Certificate Programs and Extended Learning at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES), was one of the first to see the potential this approach offered. Targeting graduate-level courses that already have online components and that enroll small cohorts of students, Dr. Yost and her colleagues shifted four UMCES courses to online delivery last fall, leveraging the support available from iDesign and USMx, the USM's partnership with edX.

The addition of new asynchronous learning modules (students and faculty *not* engaged at the same time, with no real-time interaction) into existing synchronous learning models (students and faculty engaged at the same time in either a shared physical or online environment) presented some challenges. But by accommodating these different learning approaches, emphasizing patience, and working collaboratively with the *USM OnTrack* group, the team at UMCES successfully implemented the shift—a shift Dr. Yost says provides the “best of both worlds” for students and faculty. It augments the experiential learning and personalized education of UMCES's courses with improvements in interactive engagement and flexibility.



Last fall, USM OnTrack provided more than 750 hours of instructional design support to help our institutions adapt courses for effective online delivery. In addition, more than 1,400 faculty participated in professional development seminars to strengthen their online teaching skills.

While a full assessment of asynchronous online learning is pending, the reaction has been very positive among UMCES faculty and among students, especially adult learners. And, tellingly, other USM institutions are following UMCES's lead: This spring, iDesign is providing Coppin State University with instructional design and development services to facilitate the transition of all eight courses in Coppin's Early Childhood Education program to online learning platforms.

Another innovative aspect of *USM OnTrack* is its partnership with Labster, a leading provider of virtual science labs.

Dr. Jennifer Bobenko teaches biochemistry at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). Under COVID restrictions, she faced a critical challenge: A total of 24 students could enroll in each of her lab sections, but with six-foot distancing guidelines, a lab could physically accommodate only 12 students at a time.

So Dr. Bobenko found a way to “parallel” the lab experience virtually. Students spent half of their lab time conducting virtual experiments and the other half conducting the bench experiment. Using Labster, Dr. Bobenko was able to introduce the topic, explore relevant concepts, put the lab work into real-world context, and familiarize her students with process and protocols, all *without* being in the lab. With students conceptually well-prepared for the actual lab work—having virtually walked through the experiment in advance (multiple times if they wished)—they could efficiently complete the work in the time afforded.

And Coppin State University School of Nursing Professor Charlotte Wood has been appointed to the state's COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group. The group is focusing on communication strategies targeted to diverse populations throughout Maryland.

In many ways, supporting COVID vaccination is a point of pride for the USM. The team of scientists that developed the Moderna vaccine included Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, an alumna of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). The clinical trials to determine safety and efficacy of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were led by the School of Medicine at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). Dr. Bruce Jarrell marked his first day as UMB president last fall by taking part in the vaccine trial. UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski and his wife Jacqueline also took part in the trial—expressly to highlight the urgent need for African Americans, Latinx, and other people of color to participate in medical studies.

And in recognition of her pioneering work in vaccine development, *The Baltimore Sun* named Dr. Kathleen Neuzil, director of the Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health at UMB, a **2020 Marylander of the Year**. Dr. Neuzil is one of two principal investigators for the COVID-19 Prevention Trials Network launched by the National Institutes of Health, and led the effort to develop and test COVID vaccines under the country's Operation Warp Speed initiative.

Institutions throughout the USM are supporting Maryland's vaccination effort in other ways, too. UMCES will give the state access to its freezers, needed for the ultra-cold conditions in which the Pfizer vaccine must be stored. Meanwhile, several universities are in discussions with the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments to serve as vaccine distributions sites for their own students, faculty, and staff, and in some cases, for residents in the surrounding communities as well.

Over the last year, the USM has led a coordinated, comprehensive, and compassionate response to COVID-19. With this vaccination effort, the system remains dedicated to ending the pandemic for good.

Record-setting Philanthropy Brings Hope in Difficult Times

There's no doubt that 2020 will be remembered as a challenging year, marked by struggle and loss. For the USM, COVID-19 cleared campuses, short-circuited research, intensified students' stress, and sapped university resources. But as is often the case in times of darkness, the good news shines that much brighter.

For the USM, that good news is the humanity and generosity shown to students in need.

The pandemic has caused enormous financial hardship for USM students, many of whom lost work-study and other jobs when campuses and businesses closed. To relieve the strain on their students, USM universities tapped their emergency funds, helping students pay for necessities like food, rent, and medications, and covering unexpected expenses that can spell financial disaster for students living week to week.

As these emergency funds were painfully stretched by COVID, institutions began fundraising campaigns, winning incredible support from alumni and friends. Within the first few months of the crisis, USM universities and regional higher education centers saw more than \$800,000Waterceil q

gifts for our universities.



Last spring, the University of Maryland Global Campus received the largest single contribution in its history, a \$16 million gift that nearly doubled the university's endowment. UMGC put the gift to immediate use, helping students struggling financially.

At Salisbury University, gifts and gift commitments from Bob Clarke and Glenda Chatham—longtime supporters of SU—approached nearly \$5 million last year, including a \$1.5 million endowed gift commitment to benefit the Honors College.

In 2020, Towson University (TU) received the largest planned faculty gift in its history, \$1 million from former physics professor and department chair Dr. Eddie Loh, whose gift funds scholarships for TU physics students. Towson also received its largest single donation from an alumnus/a, a \$5.3 million gift from Dr. Fran Soistmwn fa ships f

