TESTIMONY

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Susan C. Aldridge, PhD
President
February 22, 2010

A CONSTITUENT INSTITUTION OF THE
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND
Good afternoon Chairman Bohanan, Vice-Chairman Heller, and members of the House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development. I appreciate this opportunity to tell you why, with your continued support, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) will remain a tremendous asset to our state and its 5.2 million lifelong learners.

CELEBRATING YET ANOTHER YEAR OF REMARKABLE GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT

As we begin a new decade, UMUC is still the nation’s largest public university, with 157 on-site teaching locations (including 21 throughout Maryland) on four continents, and one of the world’s finest and fastest growing virtual universities. As such, we serve some 90,000 students—more than 30,000 of whom are Maryland residents—in 28 countries, all 50 states, the nation’s capital, and the three U.S. territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Through its outstanding faculty, cutting-edge programs, and groundbreaking services, as well as its global student outreach and small carbon footprint, UMUC is closing the achievement gap, expanding the professional talent pool, and forging a sustainable future—both here at home and abroad. And in 2009, UMUC celebrated yet another year of remarkable growth and accomplishment by

- Enrolling more than 37,000 students last semester—more than any other institution in the state
- Exceeding the University System’s full-time enrollment targets for fiscal years 2008, 2009, and 2010
- Reaching the highest re-enrollment rate in more than five years
- Adding three new graduate programs to its academic portfolio
- Providing $4.5 million in scholarship assistance, of which more than $1 million went to community college transfer students here in Maryland
- Expanding its scholarship funds by $5 million, thanks to an anonymous gift of $6 million
- Receiving a six-year $180 million contract to educate military servicemembers in Asia
- Increasing online course enrollments by nearly 7,000
- Awarding 6,682 degrees worldwide
- Enrolling more African American students than any other Maryland institution
- Opening a new academic facility in Largo, Maryland
MARKING 15 YEARS OF ONLINE EXCELLENCE

A Proven Leader in Distance Education

With a 62-year track record of outstanding service in adult and distance education, UMUC has defined and continues to shape the lifelong learning revolution, as Maryland’s resident expert in bringing affordable, high-quality academic opportunities to the people. Needless to say, technology provides an extraordinary tool for expanding our reach, enhancing our quality, and ensuring our success as both a preeminent state resource and a global academic enterprise. Moreover, UMUC is the only university in the United States that offers a master’s degree in distance education.

As a pioneer in online education, UMUC launched its virtual campus in 1994, with little more than 100 enrollments in only a handful of courses. But now, 15 years later, it boasts some 196,000 enrollments (an increase of nearly 7,000 over last year) in more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs that may be completed fully online.

UMUC is also harnessing the power of technology to provide its students with a comprehensive package of support services. We furnish one-stop online access to assistance—from enrollment, transfer credit evaluation, and financial aid, to library resources, career counseling, and academic advising. And UMUC’s virtual Center for Student Success links students with mentors and tutors, online clubs and honor societies, and experts and future colleagues in their fields of study.

Time and again, UMUC has been cited for its online standards of excellence, having garnered recognition from numerous sources over the years for the quality of both its programs and its faculty—with six such awards last year, alone. The 2009 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education also cites UMUC as an “international leader” in distance learning. And our university’s Master of Distance Education program received the highest international accreditation given for technology-enhanced learning programs in the field of management education.
Our Laser Focus on Quality

In keeping with its laser focus on quality, UMUC has planned well and invested wisely in preparing its students and faculty to successfully meet the challenges of teaching and learning online. UMUC’s award-winning Center for Teaching and Learning allows faculty members to experience e-learning first-hand, using an interactive, Web-based learning environment, through an abundance of professional development workshops, peer mentoring opportunities, and faculty resources.

Students also receive the support they need to effectively access our virtual campus, including online tutorials and a mandatory course in using digital information and library services. Our newest innovation—UMUC 411—actually allows prospective students to “test-drive” the online learning experience, at no cost, before they enroll, an important first step in student retention.
MAKING THE GRADE ACADEMICALLY

A Selectively Expanding Portfolio

As of fall 2009, UMUC offered more than 130 undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs, including two of only a few doctor of management programs in the country, as well as a variety of executive training opportunities. In keeping with our commitment to learning as a lifelong pursuit, we introduced three new graduate programs last semester.

In response to a request from the American Association of Community Colleges, UMUC inaugurated its Doctor of Management in community college policy and administration to help prepare the next generation of community college leaders. This three-year program—tailored to meet the needs of busy, working professionals—uses a flexible hybrid instructional format to deliver the practical knowledge administrators need to excel in today’s community college environment. Students in the program complete all of their coursework online, while attending three weekend-long residential seminars each year.

UMUC also initiated its online specialization in criminal justice management within the Master of Science in management program as a result of recommendations from Baltimore police officers who completed the university’s pilot criminal justice leadership certificate program.

By combining online coursework with an on-site teaching internship and seminar, UMUC’s new Master of Arts in Teaching program is now fully accessible to UMUC’s large number of “career changers” and retiring military personnel. Moreover, the program’s design is drawing in new faculty members, who are extremely well-suited to address critical state teacher shortages in science, math, and technology.

What’s more, three UMUC graduate programs with project management specializations received seven-year accreditation from the Global Accreditation Center of the Project Management Institute, in recognition of the university’s demonstrated commitment to project management educational excellence.
A New Breed of Faculty

UMUC also continues to attract and retain an outstanding faculty of scholar-practitioners who, as renowned academics, superb teachers, and recognized experts in their fields, teach and work in literally every corner of the globe. They not only publish widely, but also participate actively in a broad spectrum of academic organizations and professional societies, often attaining regional, national, or international recognition for their accomplishments.

For example, UMUC recently welcomed world-renowned scholar-practitioner, Dr. Jay Liebowitz to fill its 2009–2010 Orkand Endowed Chair. A professor at the Johns Hopkins University Carey School of Business and the founding director of its graduate certificate program in competitive intelligence, Dr. Liebowitz is ranked as one of the top 10 knowledge management/intellectual capital research practitioners, out of 11,000 such professionals worldwide. He has also published more than 40 books and some 250 articles in his field.

And this year, two UMUC faculty members—Drs. Rana Khan and Tobe Levin—received prestigious University System of Maryland Board of Regents 2009 faculty awards, while the Maryland Distance Learning Association named Associate Provost Dr. Loyce Pailen distance administrator of the year.

Our faculty members are also bringing in major public funding awards. UMUC won a multiyear National Science Foundation grant to develop an online science resource center and interdisciplinary laboratory—called the Virtual Chesapeake Bay Watershed—to strengthen student achievement in online science courses. Moreover, the university received a second highly competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to develop an integrated, Web-based approach for boosting graduate program completion among Latin American students.
CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Our Exceptionally Diverse Student Body

As an open access university, committed to serving all qualified applicants, UMUC enrolls an exceptionally diverse student body, representing myriad ages, abilities, cultural traditions, professional backgrounds, and socioeconomic circumstances. Consequently, we have built a longstanding and indeed admirable track record when it comes to closing the higher education achievement gap for adult learners here in Maryland—one of the state’s highest economic development priorities.

This is particularly true among those students considered low-income or underserved and for whom prior academic experience, family obligations, and financial hardship have precluded college enrollment right out of high school. Last semester’s statistics speak for themselves.

FALL 2009 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

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<td>First Generation</td>
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<td>All Minority Group Members</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Married with Children</td>
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We also continue to enroll more African American undergraduates than any other four-year Maryland institution and almost twice the number of African American graduate degree candidates in all of Maryland’s historically black colleges and universities. And UMUC accounts for 39 percent of the Latino/Hispanic and 28 percent of the Asian/Pacific Islander graduate students currently enrolled in all of the state’s public universities combined.
The Necessary Tools for Success

Given our broadly diverse student population, we are careful to ensure that every UMUC student has the necessary tools to succeed academically. Thus, in addition to providing inclusive learning environments and cultivating a culture of continuous assessment and accountability, UMUC has developed a wide array of innovative courses and automated support services, designed to help all of its students hit the ground running:

- Customized support services to meet the unique and ongoing needs of specific student groups
- An elective course for returning and first-in-family students to familiarize them with higher education in general and UMUC in particular
- Mandatory courses for students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the use of digital library and information sources, along with around-the-clock access to UMUC librarians via e-mail, chat, or toll-free telephone
- Placement exams for new students in writing and math
- An online writing center that includes access to individualized tutoring services
- A Virtual Academic Integrity Lab (VAIL) to assist students in practicing proper citation and maintaining academic integrity.
EXPANDING OUR VAST GLOBAL LEARNING NETWORK

Our Community College Pipeline

Recognizing the enormous, yet relatively untapped, potential for building a longer and stronger academic pipeline here in Maryland, UMUC developed its Community College Alliance Program more than a decade ago. Since then the program has grown to include all 16 of Maryland’s community colleges, as well as 19 from out of state, to serve thousands of students, faculty, and staff and span the country from coast to coast.

With more than 300 articulated programs, offered both on-site and online; a vast array of support services; and Maryland transfer scholarships now totaling more than $5 million of our own funds ($1 million in 2009 alone), the Alliance reaps enormous benefits for everyone concerned. On the one hand, students in every local jurisdiction across the state can now move seamlessly from an associate’s to a bachelor’s degree without losing credits or ever leaving home, thereby boosting graduation rates, while also keeping those degrees here in the counties where they are needed.

Through these alliances, UMUC attracts a steady stream of qualified applicants, with a proven record of achievement. Indeed, they are consistently among our most talented students and successful graduates, serving as exceptional role models for their peers, their families, and their communities.

Other Partnerships Worldwide

UMUC has also forged academic exchange programs with more than a dozen universities and technical schools around the world. At the very least, these relationships greatly enrich our academic programs, expand our enrollments, and strengthen our faculty research efforts. But they also provide a unique opportunity for our students and faculty to reach beyond their local communities and expand their international horizons. For instance, working in conjunction with Athabasca University in Canada and Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico, UMUC’s North American Alliance of Innovative Universities is already well on its way to developing a series of collaborative online graduate programs in global entrepreneurship and sustainable development.
PROMOTING ECONOMIC VITALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce-Relevant Programs

UMUC has consistently proven both its willingness and its ability to quickly and effectively meet critical workforce development needs here in Maryland. And because these needs sometimes vary from one part of the state to another, we work closely with our students, faculty members, and institutional partners to identify opportunities as and where they emerge.

For instance, given the critical need for 30,000 qualified cyber professionals in the Washington metropolitan area alone, UMUC is gearing up to become the nation’s center of gravity for cybersecurity education and training. Collaborating with some of the country’s leading experts in the field, UMUC has developed a cybersecurity curriculum and articulated a series of related degree and certificate programs that it plans to launch this year. These programs promise huge dividends for both UMUC and the state of Maryland, as they will serve not only as a tremendous draw for prospective students, but also an extraordinary boon to economic development.
“Green” Campus Development

Over the years, UMUC has taken the lead in environmentally sustainable and responsible development and design. With only a few buildings to heat and cool, UMUC uses much less energy than its sister institutions and, because the vast majority of our students learn online, the university also produces far fewer carbon emissions. According to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment survey, UMUC’s total emissions of carbon dioxide has been estimated at 23,017 metric tons—a rate significantly lower than the average among all master’s degree institutions, which stands at 26,471 metric tons.

By the same token, UMUC is fully committed to supporting the state’s “green” building initiatives, by creating clean and healthy spaces with minimal impact to the environment. Having built the very first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)–certified hotel and conference center in North America, we renovated our new academic facility in Largo to achieve LEED silver certification. Moreover, we are incorporating a variety of “green” features in our new Merritt Art Center, which is scheduled to open soon.
SERVING OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM

On Base, Online, and On the Ground

As one of the nation’s leading providers of postsecondary education for the armed forces, UMUC has successfully developed a flexible and affordable range of academic programs and services geared specifically to meet military lifestyle and educational needs. For starters, we offer classes, advisory services, or both at every U.S. military base, giving Maryland yet another competitive advantage over other states when base realignment and closure decisions are made.

Military servicemembers, veterans, and their families also take full advantage of our online delivery system, which allows them to continue learning as they move from duty station to duty station. And over the years, UMUC has received tremendous accolades for establishing temporary classroom sites for our soldiers on the ground in such dangerous war zones as Vietnam, the Balkans, Kuwait, and now at 36 locations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Another Major Contract

This year, the Department of Defense awarded the university yet another major service contract in Asia, estimated at around $180 million and renewable for up to six years. Having faced stiff competition this time around, the award certainly affirms UMUC’s stellar reputation for providing our men and women in uniform with the quality education they so richly deserve.
LEADING AHEAD OF THE FUTURE

The Current Challenge

We are extremely proud of our accomplishments here at UMUC—having made enormous strides in expanding the university’s global reach and enhancing its global reputation while simultaneously making an enduring impact on Maryland and its 24 local jurisdictions—providing extraordinary access to quality degree programs for all qualified residents, closing the achievement gap for minority and other underserved students, and successfully meeting critical workforce development needs.

But as innovative and responsive as it has been, UMUC must continue to work harder and smarter than ever, given the rapidly mounting competition for so-called “nontraditional” students in the face of today’s expanded focus on continuing education. Still another challenge lies in the increasing number of online enrollments among traditional-age students, as tuition rates rise and financial aid tightens, forcing many to work at least part-time to help pay for college.

So in successfully meeting the needs of all of its students, UMUC must continue to lead ahead of the future, by providing students with both the learning flexibility they seek and the “next generation” education they expect. That will require even greater near-term investments in high-demand academic programs, first-rate student services, state-of-the-art learning technologies, and robust marketing.

The Future Need

There is no doubt that the need for what we offer at UMUC will become increasingly more acute in a world where lifelong learning is absolutely essential to our economic growth, our national security, and our quality of life. Over half of all college students in Maryland today are busy, working adults—a percentage that will most certainly rise as workforce demands evolve.

Additionally, as Maryland communities become more diverse—both ethnically and economically—the number of first-generation and minority students will undoubtedly grow. And continuing disparities between tuition costs and family income, coupled with the allure of online learning opportunities, will make UMUC an even more attractive higher education option among younger students.

Needless to say, these realities demand innovative approaches to higher education, which, with sufficient resources, UMUC is uniquely positioned to pioneer and evaluate. However, it will need solid and substantial public support to leverage and optimize revenues from enrollment and retention growth, as well from private funding sources.

Therefore, in the spirit of collaboration, we respectfully request that you approve in its entirety our fiscal year 2011 Governor’s Allowance in the amount of $31,782,150. In return, UMUC promises to deliver an exceptional return on that investment—one that will greatly benefit our state now and in the years to come.