

CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

FROM JAY A. PERMAN



MAY 2021 ISSUE

Good Luck and Godspeed: A Tribute to the USM Class of '21

Without question, this pandemic has been tough on all of us. But when I think of the fallout, I think of those especially harmed: those who have lost family and friends, loved ones they miss desperately; those who fell sick with COVID and are suffering still; those who are isolated and lonely; those who are overwhelmed with care for others; and, yes, those who marked huge milestones without the fanfare they deserved.

So I was thrilled that the Class of '21 was feted across the University System of Maryland (USM), in ceremonies both live and virtual that celebrated the determination and drive that have made this class something special.



The Coppin State University Class of 2021 celebrated with the Class of 2020 at outdoor ceremonies.

I was honored to speak at a few USM commencement ceremonies, and one—gratefully—I was able to attend in person. Coppin State University's 2021 commencement took place on a beautiful day this month, before the Baltimore heat signaled the end of our always-too-short spring. The graduates' masks couldn't hide their smiles. I've never seen so many faces, partially obscured, radiate such pure joy.

I addressed about 400 Coppin graduates that day, but what I said applies equally to the 40,000+ who walked across USM stages (real and metaphorical) this spring.

I thanked the graduates for showing us what it looks like to face extraordinary challenges, and persevere anyway. Succeed anyway. Shine anyway. Despite an objectively terrible year, they fought through it. They achieved. They threw down the obstacles in their way, and somehow made a path forward.

I asked the graduates to remember what they accomplished this year each time new challenges present themselves—and to remember exactly what it took to do it: It took their focus, their resilience, their grit, and their hard, hard work. It took their talent, their brilliance, their undiminished belief in themselves and in the strength of their dreams.

I told them they were powerful, and I asked them to nurture that power in someone else—to give a little bit of their strength to the communities and people who need them.

And let me say this: We *all* need them. We *all* need leaders like the USM Class of '21, who can light a path forward in the darkness—and *shine*.

I'm overjoyed for the graduates of the University System of Maryland. Good luck and Godspeed.

Sincerely,



Jay A. Perman
Chancellor
University System of Maryland



At Salisbury, the Class of '21 crossed the stage in a Grad Walk and showed off their diplomas at Celebration Zones, like this one featuring Sammy Sea Gull.

AROUND THE USM

An Unprecedented Year—An Unparalleled Class

This month, the 12 institutions that make up the USM awarded more than 40,000 undergraduate and graduate degrees. The Class of '21 was celebrated at (safe) in-person ceremonies and at virtual events across Maryland—and, thanks to the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC), literally around the world.

This is the fifth consecutive year in which the USM eclipsed 40,000 degrees awarded, underscoring the system's vital contribution to Maryland's workforce and economy. And it's well worth noting that roughly half of USM undergraduates complete their degrees without taking on any debt whatsoever.



Graduates at the University of Maryland, College Park leapt for joy after outdoor ceremonies at Maryland Stadium, the first open-air graduations in 66 years.

Our sheer number of graduates highlights the USM's leadership in Maryland higher education, with system institutions responsible for more than three-quarters of all bachelor's degrees awarded statewide. And because 80 percent of USM undergraduates are in-state students, they often remain in Maryland following graduation, contributing to the state's wealth and well-being.

But while the system's educational leadership, affordability, and economic impact are longstanding stories in Maryland, the Class of '21 represents a unique chapter in USM history and deserves special recognition.

Whether attending a research institution, a comprehensive university, an HBCU, or one of the USM's three regional higher education centers, students in the Class of '21 have displayed incredible resilience, adaptability, and tenacity. For the last 15 months, these students faced

academic, emotional, and social challenges not one of them could have imagined at the start of their USM journey.

Last spring, when COVID-19 cleared USM campuses, students shifted suddenly to online learning, and college life as they knew it changed dramatically. And this year, even as students returned to campus, they faced a new reality defined by remote instruction, face coverings, physical distancing, and frequent testing. And yet they fought on and succeeded.

As they enter the next phase of their lives, many of these graduates will play a critical role in post-pandemic Maryland, contributing to the state's economic recovery and/or populating its health care corps.

The USM awarded more than 3,800 health professions degrees this spring, including nursing graduates from several universities: the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), Coppin State University, Towson University, Frostburg State University, Salisbury University, Bowie State University, and UMGC. Additionally, roughly 350 nursing students from 2020 graduated under a special early-exit option, allowing them to start work immediately caring for COVID-19 patients.



Towson held 10 commencement ceremonies to celebrate 9,150 graduates in the Class of 2021 and the Class of 2020.

UMB also awarded 600+ professional practice doctorates to students attending its schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and pharmacy. Today, more than half of Maryland's practicing physicians are graduates of UMB's School of Medicine.

Along with leadership in the health professions, USM institutions led the way in STEM degrees. Across the system, about 11,500 STEM degrees were awarded, including more than 7,000 degrees in cybersecurity. Of all STEM degrees, roughly 8,500 went to undergraduates, and nearly half of those were earned by minority students.

Maryland ranks among the nation's best educated states and is a leader in the knowledge economy. It's the state's system of public higher education—the USM—that's the foundation for that success. And, as USM Chancellor Jay Perman has said, it's this very special class of USM graduates that will not only secure Maryland's strength, but reshape our state and our nation—making it more innovative, more creative, and more compassionate.

A Unique Model Promoting Access, Affordability, and Success

This commencement season, well over 1,000 USM graduates completed their degrees at one of the system's three regional higher education centers—affordable and convenient campuses that allow students to live, work, and study closer to home. For students with jobs, families, and other demands on their time, the centers are an attractive alternative to faraway USM universities. And for the region's employers, they're a way to develop and retain talent in the communities that need them badly.

Established more than 20 years ago, these centers are unique in the United States: They're not "satellite" campuses of a single university, but rather strategically located sites where multiple USM universities deliver their most in-demand undergraduate, graduate, professional degree, and certificate programs.

Students at USM regional centers take the same courses and have the same curriculum as those enrolled at the participating universities. And while students attend class at these non-residential community-based campuses, they receive their degrees from the USM institutions at which they're enrolled.

All three of the USM's regional centers are closely aligned with local community colleges. Most students attending the centers have already completed 60 college credits or earned an associate degree from a community college or another institution before applying for transfer into a university program, enroute to a bachelor's degree. This approach allows for seamless transfer opportunities into junior- and senior-level coursework, enabling students to complete their degree while remaining in their local community. The centers also work in tandem with local businesses, designing programs to be nimble and flexible, tailored to the education needs of students and the workforce needs of employers.

These expansive partnerships—with USM institutions, community colleges, and businesses—serve each of the USM's regional centers and their students in a powerful way.



At USG, the University of Maryland School of Dentistry offers the B.S./M.S. Dual Degree Clinical Dental Hygiene Leader Track, providing students clinical experiences in a state-of-the-art facility with 20 dental chairs and four surgical offices.

The [Universities at Shady Grove](#) (USG) in Montgomery County offers about 80 programs from nine USM institutions, preparing students for careers in regional high-demand fields like biotechnology, cybersecurity, engineering, hospitality, nursing, and social work. Through the Montgomery College-to-USG Pathway, students earn an associate degree at Montgomery College, then transfer to USG to earn a bachelor's degree—without ever leaving Montgomery County.

USG's newest building, the Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Education Facility, expands enrollment capacity in high-demand programs in health care, biosciences, engineering, and computational science, and houses a full-service community dental clinic operated by the University of Maryland School of Dentistry.

Serving central and western Maryland, the [University System of Maryland at Hagerstown](#) (USMH) offers more than 20 undergraduate and graduate programs from five USM institutions: business, criminal justice, social work, information systems management, nursing, and more. The center partners closely with Hagerstown and Frederick community colleges to enroll students with roots in the region.

USMH's Agnita M. Stine Schreiber Health Sciences Center, housing Frostburg State's physician assistant program, responds to the region's need for primary care providers, and simulation labs added in the USMH main building expand the nursing program offered by Towson University. To support the area's tourism industry, USMH offers the University of Maryland Eastern Shore's Hospitality and Tourism Management program, housed in USMH's new Hospitality Center.

The [University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland](#) (USMSM) offers 40+ degree and certificate programs, primarily at the graduate level, from five USM universities, but it also partners closely with the College of Southern Maryland, the center's primary feeder institution for bachelor's degree completion.

USMSM will soon open its Southern Maryland Autonomous Research and Technology (SMART) Building, an \$86 million academic and research center that will nearly double USMSM's footprint. The building will feature a massive unmanned autonomous systems research facility managed by the University of Maryland, College Park.



Take this video tour of the 84,000-square-foot SMART Building at USMSM, scheduled to open this fall.

Working with key St. Mary's County assets like the regional airport, Patuxent River Naval Air Station, defense contractors, and technology companies, the facility will catalyze regional economic activity and job growth.

By meeting students where they are, the USM's regional higher education centers prove that you don't have to leave home to find success. They prove that we can nurture local talent to meet local needs. They prove the USM's power—in every community in the state.



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