



June 14, 2024

## **USM Student Council's Report to the Board of Regents**

*June 2024 Full Board of Regents Meeting, Salisbury University*

Good morning Chair Gooden, Chancellor Perman, the Board of Regents, and University Presidents,

*Thank you Regent Parker for presenting this report on my behalf.*

In May, we celebrated 12 students who were awarded a Board of Regents Student Excellence Scholarship across four categories. I want to thank Chair Gooden and all the Regents who were able to attend and show support to the awardees, and Chancellor Perman for hosting the ceremony at Hidden Waters. We are very excited to continue this program in the future.

We have had two general meetings since the last Board of Regents meeting. A day before the May meeting, some representatives asked for a revote on the resolution calling for USM institutions to divest from arms-producing companies. In order to comply with Robert's Rules, a representative had to request for a motion to add this item to the agenda. That motion failed. At the end of the meeting, there was a request for a revote on this resolution to take place asynchronously. However, that motion was eventually tabled.

The resolution on International Graduate Student Housing needs was also voted on in May and passed unanimously. The document has been attached to this report, and I have submitted it to Associate Vice Chancellor Dr. Zakiya Lee for consideration by the USM Office. I hope to return with updates on this resolution in the following term.

Additionally, USMSC elections took place, and below is the leadership team for 2024-2025:

Vainavi Gambhir (UMCP), *President*

Arsalan Siddiqui (UMCP), *Vice President of Graduate Affairs*

Meghna Chandrasekaran (UMBC), *Vice President of Undergraduate Affairs*

Earlier in June, we held a special meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to vote on two motions– (1) to take the motion from the previous meeting off the table, and if that passes, (2) to hold an asynchronous vote on the divestment resolution. This meeting was not to vote on the resolution itself. The first motion did not pass, so that concluded our business for this term. I look forward to receiving some training on Robert's Rules this summer which will be very helpful for shared governance.

Some additional updates include meeting with Chad Muntz who shared the USM office's plan to review the current Board of Regents policy on tuition and update it to better reflect the system's current goals related to access, affordability, and achievement. Earlier this month, I shared the materials with the student representatives for their feedback via survey.

Finally, I wanted to share a brief overview of results from the Shared Governance Survey that was sent out to student representatives. There were submissions from 8 institutions, with greater graduate school representation than undergraduate. Questions covered general satisfaction with shared governance, communication with campus officials, interactions with senior administrators, decision making, meet and confer, and student fees.

- Overall satisfaction with the state of shared governance on campuses was rated **5.6 out of 10**.
- **Over half** of respondents believed senior administrators are supportive of student involvement in the shared governance process.
- **Over half** of respondents believed senior administrators are available to discuss student concerns with student leadership.
- **More than three quarters** of respondents had a good working relationship with the administrator directly responsible for undergraduate or graduate student organizations

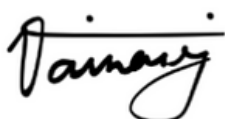
*However,*

- **Over half** do not believe that senior administrators take explicit steps to address and/or mitigate problems brought by student leadership.
- **Over half** do not believe that senior administrators utilize student involvement appropriately in planning major institutional changes.
- The satisfaction rating for Meet and Confer is only **5.8 out of 10**.

We are grateful that the Chancellor has agreed to meet with the Vice President of Graduate Affairs and some Graduate Student Government representatives to discuss these topics further, and we look forward to that discussion.

As this term comes to an end, I want to sincerely thank everyone in this meeting for the opportunity to share reports on behalf of the USM Student Council. I would also like to extend infinite gratitude to Regent Halal for all her leadership; we will greatly miss you at our meetings and wish you all the best with your future pursuits!

Best regards,



Vainavi Gambhir  
President, USM Student Council



**RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND STUDENT  
COUNCIL CALLING FOR USM INSTITUTIONS TO APPROPRIATELY ADDRESS  
INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT HOUSING NEEDS**

*Passed by the University System of Maryland Student Council on May 5, 2024 (10-0-0)*

**WHEREAS**, many international graduate students are experiencing a lack of affordable housing options on and off the University System of Maryland campuses.

**WHEREAS**, International graduate students enroll in USM institutions in hopes of obtaining a world-class education from one of the best higher education systems in the nation. These students anticipate to enjoy fair and equitable living conditions during their academic pursuits, without which the USM may forfeit its ability to attract globally-competitive human capital.

**WHEREAS**, International students maintain a stronger need to live in closer proximity to college campuses due to not having their own transportation, thus creating an accessibility issue when housing options closer to campus presents higher costs.

**WHEREAS**, The US housing market is now considered both the least affordable and accessible, as we are observing interest rates reach 8% (A). Above-average high rates such as this often cause landlords to increase their rent amounts, which significantly impacts international graduate students, especially those from countries with much lower living costs and who rely entirely on their stipend (if they have an assistantship).

**WHEREAS**, International students are more likely to be disproportionately affected when attempting to live on their stipend. Unlike those domestic students who may be able to seek periodic financial support from parents or relatives, international students often are unable to easily seek financial help from their home country. Due to exchange rate fluctuations, international student families can bear a significant amount of money to transfer funds internationally.

**WHEREAS**, “Below market” rent prices are still largely inaccessible for students, as the market benchmark is determined by median income of the region’s entire adult population, not just of graduate students.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the USMSC call upon the USM and all of its institutions to implement working plans that address inconsistencies in housing accommodations (both appropriate living conditions and price) between graduate international students and the greater student population by:

- Offering subsidized on-campus housing or partnering with private property management companies to facilitate housing options near campus at subsidized rates for transitional periods (not exceeding 4 weeks) for the purpose of enabling international students relocating to the United States to adjust to their new surroundings and initiate their required bank accounts and employment documentation.
- Collaborating with the state government or city council to persuade or enable private property management companies to adjust their policies and/or amenity offerings in exchange for a lower monthly per student rent rate so that areas near campus are financially accessible for international students, thereby retaining and attracting globally-competitive human capital within the USM.
- Constructing an international student sub-committee, consisting of both undergraduate and graduate students from across the system to better address concerns in real-time.

- Addressing the concerns regarding present inadequate stipend pay impacting both international and non-international graduate and teaching assistants across the System. This should be carried out through the encouragement by the System of System institutions to increase their levels of compensation so that students can better afford safe and sanitary housing options and should align with estimated costs of attendance.
- Universities are encouraged to design and implement off campus housing websites to offer a one-stop-shop location for students to be able to identify affordable and safe housing options, local to the university campuses.

**Contributors:**

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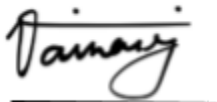
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