



FY 2026 Capital Budget Testimony
Presented by SU President Carolyn R. Lepre

It is my pleasure to provide testimony to the Maryland General Assembly for Salisbury University's (SU) Fiscal Year 2026 capital budget request. On behalf of the entire University, we are extremely grateful of the Governor's and General Assembly's ongoing support for SU's capital projects. The continued support you provide our University has positively impacted the lives of countless students across the state and strengthened many of the communities on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Today I will provide updates on three key projects that will enhance student services, expand access to the arts and arts education, and make critical improvements to health education facilities. Our FY 2026 capital budget request includes continued funding for the Blackwell Hall Renovation and planning for the College of Health and Human Services Building. While the Performing Arts Center is not part of the current FY 2026 Capital Improvement Plan, we seek future support for this project to expand access to the arts and enhance educational opportunities. Through these strategic investments, we will support student success, meet shifting workforce needs, and serve the broader community.

The **Blackwell Hall Renovation** is transforming SU's former library into a comprehensive student services center, specifically designed to serve and support the unique needs of each student on our campus. Your support and continued investment to maintain this project in its current place within the Capital Improvement Plan will guarantee thousands of students have access to vital resources like financial aid assistance, counseling services, and so much more.

The **College of Health and Human Services Building** will advance healthcare education and workforce development across the state and region. SU requests capital support that will see the creation of a building that replaces an outdated and ill-equipped building – Devilbiss Hall – with a new building that possesses sufficient space for SU to train and educate students pursuing careers in critical workforce needs like nursing, social work, and health sciences. Both the State, and the University, are experiencing a growing demand for healthcare professionals, and this new capital project would enable SU to better address those needs.

The **Performing Arts Center** is a transformative investment in the cultural and artistic landscape of both the University and the broader community. SU is seeking future support for the construction of a project that represents more than just the construction of a new facility – it is a commitment to expanding creative expression and enhancing educational opportunities for students in the performing arts. The State of Maryland has already made a \$2 million commitment to the development of this project through the Department of Housing and Community Development's SEED Grant Program.

Blackwell Hall Renovation Project Update March 2025

Project Description:

Renovate the 33,191 NASF/67,196 GSF former library and construct a 2,139 NASF/2,773 GSF addition to Blackwell Hall on the campus of Salisbury University. The former library will be renovated to become a Student Services Center. Registrar, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Career Services, Bursar, Admissions, Counseling Center, and Disabilities Resource Center services will be combined into one building to create a one-stop shop for student services. This will provide for better service while simultaneously freeing up space in other buildings that can be reallocated for much needed classroom, lab, and study space. The project will also replace the outdated mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems to bring the building up to current code and comply with the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022; and the building will feature new elevators and restrooms.

The FY 2026 budget includes funding to continue the construction of this project. The University does not intend to use institutional funds for the project at this time. The true costs of the sustainability components of the project are still being determined as several of those systems are still to be bid. Once those systems, such as the geothermal mechanical system, are operational, the University intends to pursue tax credits through the Inflation Reduction Act should those funds still be available.

Project Status:

The Blackwell Hall Renovation Project is currently in the first year of construction. The contractor has completed demolition and the installation of wells for the high-efficiency geothermal mechanical system. FY 2026 funding will allow the project to continue with the installation of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; construction of a new building envelope; and framing of interior walls. As stated previously, the University does not intend to use institutional funds for this project. However, the final piece of the construction contract, Guaranteed Maximum Price 4 (GMP-4), has not been bid and may exceed current funding. Should this happen, SU will investigate using either institutional funds or requesting additional CIP funding for FY 2027.

The construction is expected to be completed in October 2026. The completion date was moved from August to October due to delays in both the bidding and procurement process. Specifically, delays in the approval process of the second and third portions of the construction contracts have created delays for our contractor, Whiting Turner, to issue contracts to their subcontractors, which in turn affected their ability to order materials and schedule labor. The University of Maryland Service Center and Whiting Turner are working to regain as much time on the schedule as possible.

College of Health and Human Services Building Project Update March 2025

Project Description:

Construct an academic building on the Salisbury University main campus to house the School of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Center for Healthy Communities, and Medical Simulation Center. The project will consolidate academic departments dispersed across several different buildings and will allow the 55-year old, outdated Devilbiss Hall to be demolished. Additionally, the proposed project will allow academic spaces in the Maggs Center to be renovated. The existing facilities have insufficient clinical space and need modern instructional space to meet accreditation requirements. The proposed College of Health and Human Services building will include state-of-the-art health sciences labs and simulation spaces as well as general classrooms and faculty offices.

Project Status:

The College of Health and Human Services Building is currently in the programming phase.

Performing Arts Center Project Update March 2025

Project Description:

Demolish a 55,000 GSF property and construct a 40,000 NASF/60,000 GSF Performing Arts Center in downtown Salisbury. The property, which SU is in the process of acquiring, is the current site of the Wicomico County Public Library. The library is relocating to a new, improved facility that will better serve the community. The Performing Arts Center will include a 600-800 seat multipurpose theater with fly and wing space, 200-300 seat music and dance recital space, green rooms, scenery shop, classrooms, offices, and front-of-house and back-of-house support space. The project has received \$1 million in funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development through its SEED Grant program along with \$2 million in matching funds from the University. Additionally, SU's development team has obtained more than \$12 million in private philanthropic commitments towards the development of this project – the most private philanthropy ever raised for an SU capital project. Full funding will be requested in the University's FY 2027 CIP request.

Project Status:

Approvals for the acquisition of the Wicomico County property are in process and programming for the Performing Arts Center has begun. The University will issue a RFP for the planning and permitting for the demolition of the county library and initial planning for the Performing Arts Center during the summer of 2026 using current available funding.