

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

University System of Maryland

Higher Education FY 2027 Budget Overview

Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

House Appropriations Committee

*Education and Economic Development
Subcommittee*

*Stephanie M. Smith, Chair
February 4, 2026*

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

*Education, Business and Administration
Subcommittee*

*Nancy J. King, Chair
February 5, 2026*

- I. The chancellor and presidents of SMCM, MSU, MICUA, and MACC should comment on outreach efforts to encourage high school students to consider college and programs or initiatives to increase accessibility, affordability, and student services to ensure student success. Also, comment on how institutions are re-engaging the SCNC population and efforts to keep students from stopping out.

OUTREACH

Access to the USM means little if prospective Maryland students don't know who we are and what we can offer them. In 2024, the General Assembly requested data from each of our universities showing their success in attracting and enrolling first-time students from every region of the state.

The request covered universities' in-state *outreach* (practices to recruit Maryland students) and their in-state *outcomes* (applications, admissions, and enrollment by every Maryland high school). Per HB678 (2024), each university now submits an annual report to the legislature updating their outreach efforts to communities of interest in Maryland.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES

The recruitment strategies our universities use are both narrow and expansive, traditional and contemporary, high-touch and high-tech, personalized and broad. For instance, they host high school counselors at university events and invite them to sit on advisory boards. Their admissions staff visit high schools, community centers, and churches. They partner in community events, and open up their universities to prospective students and their families. At the same time, they use geofencing to target and push messaging

to key audiences. They use multiplatform social media campaigns and texting sessions to engage prospective students and remind them to submit their applications on time.

Our universities don't just recruit students across the state, although they do that, too. They use data to understand whom they're *not* reaching. They work extensively with well-known nonprofits—like the CollegeBound Foundation and First Generation College Bound—as well as smaller community-based and religious organizations to meet students and families where they are. These partnerships have been particularly effective in attracting first-generation students.

One area of recruitment we've expanded is outreach to Hispanic students. Salisbury University, for instance, places Spanish-language radio ads and hosts a Spanish-language webinar for families. Frostburg State University has seen a 6% climb in Hispanic applications over last year—a credit, in part, to efforts like geotargeted digital and streaming radio advertising and a Spanish-language micro-website.

The University of Maryland, College Park, meanwhile, has focused attention on students from rural communities. UMD is among 16 founding universities in the STARS College Network (a group that's since doubled in size), which expands and coordinates efforts to engage, support, and build pathways into college for small-town and rural students.

Towson University and UMBC have stepped up outreach to Baltimore City students. Towson offers a three-day, on-campus residency experience for rising juniors and seniors from city schools. UMBC offers a summer bridge program for city students and partners with the college-access organization College Track to expand the university's pipeline of Baltimore City students and meet their full financial need.

ACCESS | AFFORDABILITY | SUCCESS

Our universities sponsor hundreds of initiatives to open access to a USM education and ensure students' success once they're enrolled. In addition to these university-specific efforts, the System Office works across the state to reinforce the student pipeline from Maryland K12 schools into the USM.

CONVENING THE PIPELINE

We convene high school counselors to make sure they fully understand transfer, dual enrollment, scholarships, and the strengths and characteristics of each USM university. For instance, we hosted the Maryland State Counselors Association to talk about encouraging Maryland learners to stay in state and about advising with dual enrollment pathways in mind. Another annual event brings together hundreds of staff at Maryland's two- and four-year colleges to improve the student transfer experience.

This education helps high school and community college counselors provide better advising to students. It helps counselors and advisors point their students toward pathways that align with their goals and that get them to those goals as efficiently as possible. The ultimate aim, of course, is to bring these students into the USM, fully equipped for success.

STRENGTHENING SUCCESS

Advancing that goal is another initiative we've recently implemented Systemwide: ABCs for Student Success is a peer-to-peer mentoring program helping first-time, first-generation, and underserved students

navigate sometimes-complex university structures. The City University of New York operates a comparable program and has seen an 11% improvement in retention among underserved students. We hope for similar results over time.

EARLY COLLEGE

Early College remains a USM priority because we believe strongly that it's among the most effective ways to achieve our access goal while addressing some of the state's most critical workforce needs.

Early College is a structured pathway into higher education, primarily targeting low-income students who might not have considered college an option for them. Early College reinforces access with wraparound support—intentional advising, tutoring, and clear course sequencing. It's tightly aligned to career pathways and builds transferable college credits up to an associate degree.

In partnership with Empower Schools, the USM has taken a close look at where Maryland stands in Early College access and participation. That analysis shows that Maryland is falling behind, ranking 43rd nationally in dual enrollment participation.

The USM remains fully committed to this work, and our universities are sustaining their Early College efforts. In partnership with Empower, they're focused on expanding high-quality, workforce-aligned pathways—particularly in education, health care, and cybersecurity—that *keep* Maryland students in Maryland. We look forward to continuing our work with the General Assembly to strengthen and grow these opportunities statewide.

REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CENTERS

Of course, we have a longstanding and unique *structural* strategy designed expressly to open access to the USM. Our three regional higher education centers (RHECs)—the Universities at Shady Grove (Montgomery County), the USM at Hagerstown (Washington County), and the USM at Southern Maryland (St. Mary's County)—allow thousands of students each year to pursue a degree that might otherwise be out of reach.

RHEC students enroll in a USM university but take their classes near their home, which defrays costs and prioritizes convenience. On average, our RHEC students are older than traditional undergraduates, and their credit load is lighter, allowing most to hold down a job. This is intentional: The centers are meant to help students with significant work and family obligations—students tethered to their communities—pursue a USM degree.

The centers maintain close relationships with the community colleges where most of their students start their education, and advance our efforts to provide clear and efficient transfer pathways. The System Office is working closely with each RHEC to grow the number of students taking advantage of its programs.

NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

As individual universities and as a System, we've invested significantly in financial aid as a means of attracting, retaining, and graduating students, especially those whose need might otherwise prevent them from going to college or remaining enrolled.

Last year, our universities awarded \$107.2 million in institutional aid to high-need students, a 68% climb in just five years. This growth has been a priority for us—and for the state. In FY23, \$20 million was included in the System’s budget to disburse more aid to high-need students. The following year, the General Assembly approved a \$150 million quasi-endowment established by our Board of Regents to provide additional support to Maryland learners with financial need. The investment income produced by that endowment adds up to \$6.4 million each year to the aid we provide.

This money does *more* than make a college education possible for Maryland students; it has a demonstrable impact on their success. Among first-time USM students who received university aid last year, 85% were retained to their second year, and 67% graduated within six. Without university aid, 74% of first-time students persisted to their second year, and 53% graduated within six. (This FY20 student cohort was the one whose college-going plans were most severely affected by the pandemic.)

Among students who came to the USM from a Maryland community college, the success gap is wider still: 85% who received aid were retained to their second year, and 74% graduated within six. Without aid, 73% were retained to year two, and 54% graduated within six.

We understand that access and success depend on more than money alone. And our universities engage in expansive efforts to recruit Maryland students and help them succeed. But we know that financial barriers are often the toughest to surmount: You either have the money to attend college or you don’t. If we can remove that barrier—both by keeping our tuition affordable and by meeting any financial need that remains for our students—then it’s our obligation to do exactly that.

SOME COLLEGE, NO CREDENTIAL

All of our universities have initiatives aimed at reenrolling students who have stopped out of college. These efforts are most intensive in the 18 months following the stop, the window during which non-completers are most likely to be reenrolled and most easily get back on their degree path.

With online options made available during the pandemic, many of our universities adopted digital platforms to engage with these students, accommodating their schedules and their unique pressures, goals, and needs. It bears mentioning that the University of Maryland Global Campus, whose structure and supports have always benefited older and part-time students, is a national force in this effort.

SIMPLIFYING READMISSION

Our universities have simplified readmission processes so that they don’t deter returning students, and some have developed interdisciplinary majors with built-in flexibility that allow students to complete their degrees without starting over in a major. USM universities serving a higher percentage of older and working students have developed more flexible continuous enrollment policies at the undergraduate level, so that students who have had to stop out of their education for a few semesters can reenroll without reapplying for admission.

NEAR-COMPLETER PROGRAMS

Every USM university has some version of a near-completer program, aimed at luring back stopped-out students who are within about 30 credits of graduation. Some have reached out to students with outstanding

balances and negotiated payment plans with them. In fact, the USM Foundation offers universities scholarship funds targeted to students in these near-completer programs.

REVERSE TRANSFER

Our universities also help students through the reverse transfer process, transferring credits from their university to a community college. Reverse transfer helps prevent students from leaving a four-year school—even for a short while—with no credential to show for the time and money they invested there.

2. The chancellor and presidents of MSU, SMCM, MICUA, and MACC should comment on efforts being taken to increase enrollment and completion in teacher preparation programs.

We're proud that 79% of all education degrees awarded in Maryland are conferred by a USM university. Still, we know that Maryland's critical teacher shortage demands that we do more. We're addressing this shortage through coordinated, statewide strategies that expand access to preparation programs, reduce barriers to licensure, and align pathways with districts' workforce needs—particularly in high-need subject areas and regions.

All USM universities with educator preparation programs meet every month to develop Systemwide strategies to bring more teachers into Maryland classrooms. Following are examples of these efforts.

USM ALTERNATIVE LICENSURE CONSORTIUM

This cross-institutional, online, asynchronous, and self-paced licensure-only program allows conditionally licensed teachers to flexibly access their teacher preparation coursework and receive specialized coaching. Salisbury University and the University of Maryland, College Park received MHEC grants to support this developing work.

TEACHING APPRENTICESHIPS

Salisbury University and Frostburg State University were selected by MSDE as early partners to develop teaching apprenticeship programs. With a grant from the National Association of Higher Education Systems, the USM will expand apprenticeship programs across Maryland.

PARAEDUCATOR PATHWAYS

Several USM universities have established paraeducator-to-teacher pathways (at the bachelor's and master's levels), accelerating entry into the teacher workforce while supporting degree completion.

TRANSFER ALIGNMENT

The USM convenes Maryland's Associate of Arts in Teaching Council to strengthen and streamline transfer pathways from community colleges to four-year teacher preparation programs.

EARLY COLLEGE PIPELINE

The USM is working with partners in Southern Maryland to launch an Early College program, enabling students to earn college credit toward a teaching degree while still in high school.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES

These Systemwide initiatives are essential, but they're far from the extent of our efforts. For instance, our universities are expanding their teacher preparation programs to include high-need concentrations. They're expanding their fully online programs and programs that offer credit for prior learning. They're winning grants to boost the size and diversity—racial diversity, gender diversity—of Maryland's teacher corps.

They're building their own partnerships with school districts and community colleges to reinforce the pipeline into teaching careers. They're innovating how they engage and develop professionals coming to teaching in a variety of ways and smoothing their path into the classroom.

Through Feds to Eds grant funding, Towson University is supporting more than two dozen displaced federal workers pursuing a teaching degree. For licensure students, Coppin State University offers no-cost Praxis and edTPA testing vouchers, creative test-prep resources, and staff dedicated to wraparound support.

Bowie State University has won \$1 million in MHEC grants to support 43 underrepresented paraprofessionals toward licensure across six Maryland school districts. This summer, the University of Maryland, College Park will pilot ExploreEd, a one-week program of field-based learning, career exploration, and college-admissions support, targeting underrepresented high school students interested in a teaching career.

3. The chancellor and presidents of MSU, SMCM, and MICUA should comment on the potential impact changes to federal loans will have on affordability, enrollment, and the State's workforce; and what efforts being taken by institutions to help students.

The USM enrolls roughly 8,000 students affected by new caps or cuts to federal loan programs. About three-quarters of them are graduate and professional students who will lose access to the Grad PLUS loan, which will be terminated this summer. Of those 6,000 students, half are professional students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and they account for nearly two-thirds of the total loan amount.

Among the programs impacted is medicine, where 40% of our students borrow through Grad PLUS. Physicians are critically needed in Maryland, especially in rural regions. And we fear that dismantling access means we'll lose aspiring providers, who may alter their academic plans without the guarantee of sufficient funding.

Less harmful to the USM is the OBBBA's cap on Direct Unsubsidized loans for professional students—\$50,000 a year, with an aggregate cap of \$200,000. Our analysis shows that very few USM students—under 50—would have difficulty with those loan limits.

On a potentially positive note, while the graduate cap for Direct Unsubsidized loans drops from \$138,500 to \$100,000, undergraduate Direct loans are no longer included in that cap—a change that may benefit some borrowers.

On the undergraduate side, we have 2,000+ students affected by new caps to the Parent PLUS loan, which limits borrowing to \$20,000 a year—and \$65,000 total—for each dependent student. Families that qualify for the PLUS loans may have other options, but those options will almost certainly have higher interest rates.

It's a great credit to the USM's affordability that the overwhelming majority of in-state undergraduates simply don't have loan totals high enough to risk losing access to them.

But, of course, our universities' financial aid offices are working closely with *all* students potentially affected by these new federal loan rules to ensure they can access the funds they need to complete their degrees—without being harmed by private loans that come with few protections for the borrower.

ST MARY'S COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND

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Higher Education Overview

**House Appropriations Committee
Education and Economic Development Subcommittee
Delegate Stephanie Smith, Chair
February 4th, 2026**

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**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Education, Business, and Administration Subcommittee
Senator Nancy J. King, Chair
February 5th, 2026**



**Dr. Rhonda G. Phillips, President
Mr. Aaron Tomarchio, Trustee
Mr. Brandon Engle, Director of Government Affairs**

Introduction – The Public Honors College

As the State's designated public honors college, St. Mary's College of Maryland provides a premier liberal arts education that is both affordable and accessible. The College awards a variety of undergraduate degrees, as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching graduate degree. With a faculty of gifted teachers and distinguished scholars, a talented and diverse student body, and a low student/faculty ratio, St. Mary's College provides a challenging curriculum within an academically nurturing environment. In addition, the College fosters a sense of social responsibility and community among its students through its curriculum and campus initiatives.

*The Nation's 1st Standalone
Public Honors College*

Supporting the two goals articulated by the State's historical vision for the College – the educational requirements of an honors program and the promise of access – sets St. Mary's College uniquely apart in the State and in the national higher education sector. The College has been highly successful in supporting State-wide goals with among the highest retention and completion rates among Maryland public institutions, a commitment to diversity, and in providing financial resources for students with need.

As a public college that is both accessible and affordable, St. Mary's College provides the opportunity for academically talented students from a broad socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial spectrum to acquire a rigorous liberal arts education. This diversity creates a rich academic and social environment that enhances the education provided by the College. Thus, St. Mary's College students graduate with low debt and are well prepared to be productive and engaged citizens of the world.

The College continues to evolve as an innovator within the national higher education sector. Our core curriculum, Learning through Experiential and Applied Discovery (LEAD), provides every student with theme-based integrated learning experiences, practical skills, internships, research and/or international experiences, capstone projects, and other faculty-directed activities that integrate career preparation with an honors curriculum within the context of the foundation of a liberal arts education. Our national standing and successes make us the leader among public liberal arts institutions. St. Mary's College has become **The National Public Honors College.**

LEAD

As always, the College is grateful to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Maryland Higher Education Commission for their ongoing commitment to higher education in general, and to St. Mary's College of Maryland specifically.

Enrollment

In the past five years, enrollment growth at the College has persisted. As shown Exhibit 1, **overall enrollment has increased by approximately 9% from Fall 2021 to Fall 2025.**

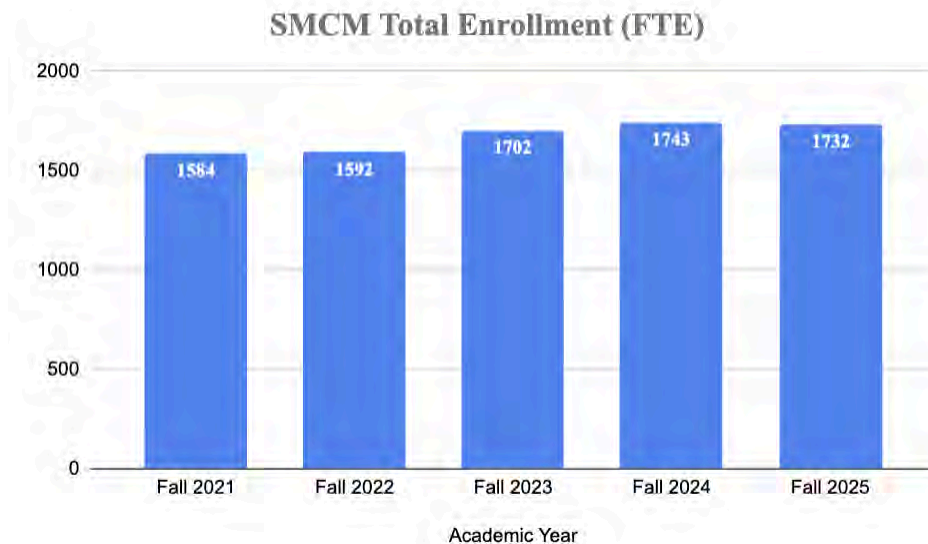


Exhibit 1

Enrollment increases are primarily the result of recruiting strong incoming classes of both first-year and transfer students, as well as strong retention rates. As shown in Exhibit 2, the number of **new first-year and transfer students has increased almost 5%** from Fall 2021 to Fall 2025. The entering class of 2025 was slightly larger than the entering class of 2024, demonstrating continued positive enrollment momentum despite significant disruptions during previous admission cycles.



Exhibit 2

The increase in new students is the result of the College's varied efforts to enhance its position within the higher education market. These include:

- Implementation of the *LEAD* curriculum, which integrates the proven long-term benefits of a traditional liberal arts education with the applied professional skills demanded in today's economy, and enhanced engagement with high-impact practices (HIPs)
- Implementation of new majors (e.g., Marine Science and Business Administration – the College's second and third most popular majors in just three years), as well as integrating new curricula such as embedding Data Science in multiple majors, and
- Enhanced nation-wide efforts to market the College as *The National Public Honors College*.

Together, these initiatives have made St. Mary's College increasingly relevant and more competitive compared to our peer institutions. As shown in Exhibit 3, over the past five years **applications to the College have increased almost 14%**, and have *more than doubled since our baseline of Fall 2019*.

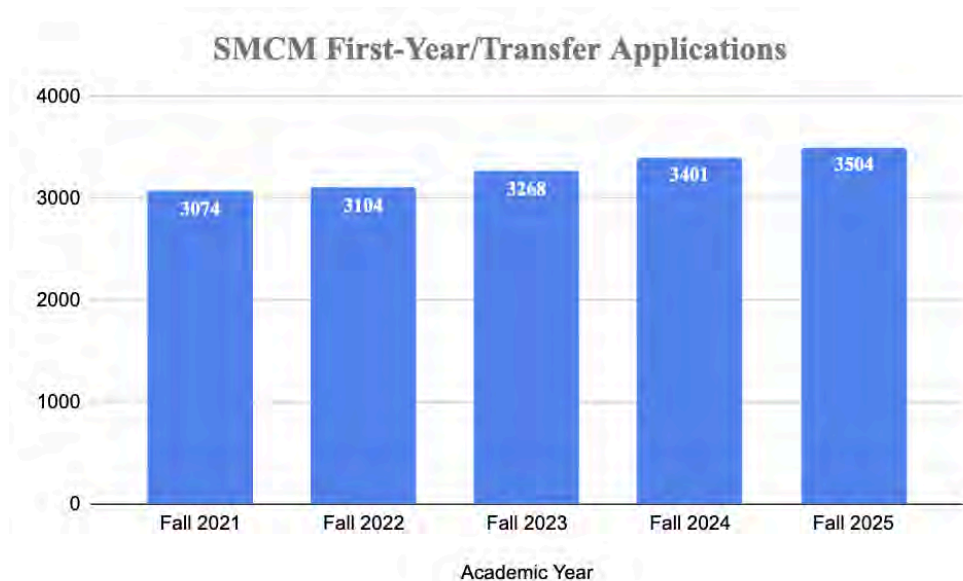


Exhibit 3

Affordability

St. Mary's College of Maryland's unique mission, to provide an honors-level liberal arts education that is both accessible and affordable to all Marylanders, is challenging since a liberal arts education is both the most intensive and expensive form of undergraduate education. Through a combination of institutional efforts to control expenses, coupled with

State support, tuition pricing was lowered by approximately 9% in FY15 and growth has since been successfully moderated, making St. Mary's College more affordable for Maryland families. As shown in Exhibit 4, the tuition rate for Maryland residents was **frozen for six consecutive years** between Fall 2019 and Fall 2024 without State tuition relief funding.

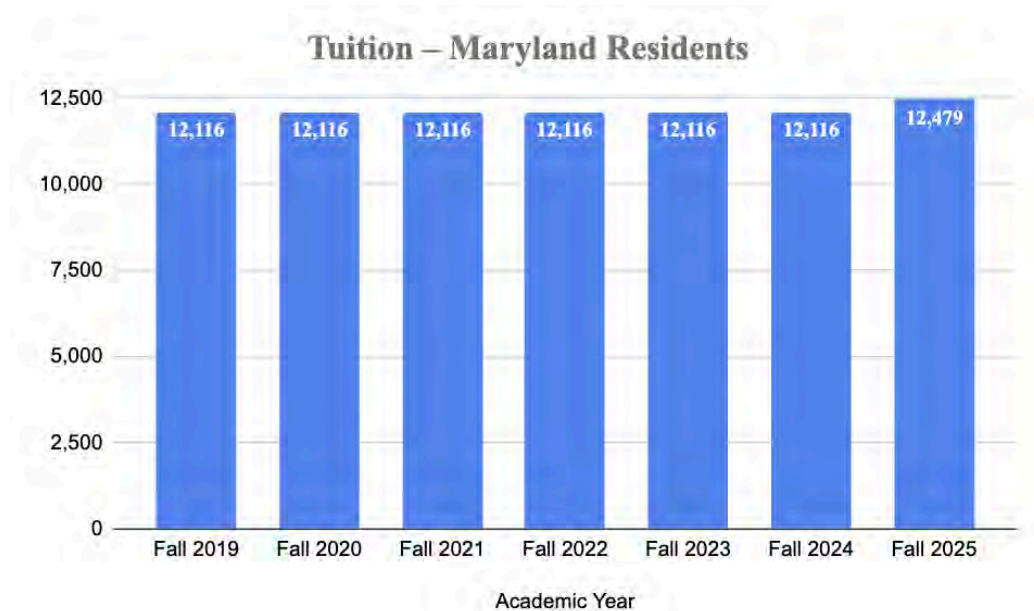


Exhibit 4

Responses to DLS Analysis

“The Chancellor of USM and the Presidents of SMC, MSU, the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA), and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) should comment on outreach efforts to encourage high school students to consider college and programs or initiatives to increase accessibility, affordability, and student services to ensure student success and also comment on how institutions are reengaging the SCNC population and efforts to keep students from stopping out.”

St. Mary's College of Maryland employs several strategies to encourage high school students, as well as students with some college experience but no credential, to pursue higher education. The College's Office of Admission, for example, hosts or attends more than 550 events annually across targeted markets – including Maryland high schools and community colleges, workshops for prospective students and counselors, and local, regional, and nation-wide college fairs. The Office of Student Financial Assistance furthers these efforts by conducting annual public information sessions in collaboration with public high schools and the Maryland County Library System to demystify the FAFSA process and share information related to the Maryland 529 Program and state scholarship opportunities. Additionally, individual academic departments intentionally connect with K-12 partners to stimulate college readiness. These include the Psychology Department's efforts to host local high

school classes for laboratory tours and faculty meetings, as well as the College's "Through the Lens" photography mentorship program, which allows 10th-12th graders to earn transferable college credits while building their own scholarly identity.

In addition to these robust outreach efforts, the College has implemented several initiatives to ensure that an honors-level liberal arts education remains accessible and affordable for Maryland students. Most notably, as referenced above, SMCM froze its tuition for six consecutive academic years between Academic Years 2019-2025, and approximately 95% of incoming students receive financial aid each year – supported by signature programs such as the Baltimore City Scholars Program, the Landers Scholars Program, and the Monument Scholars Program. Accessibility is further enhanced through a holistic admission process, which evaluates each applicant's academic and personal factors within the context of their environment, as well as the College's test-*recommended* application process.

Finally, to ensure student retention and success, SMCM utilizes a wide array of proactive support structures. For example, beginning with the Fall 2024 cohort, each student is assigned four on-campus advisors through the Seahawk Success Network prior to their first-year or transfer orientation. These advisors include faculty, co-curricular and financial aid counselors, as well as academic support services which are able to identify and address challenges as they arise. This network is complemented by the Office of Student Success Services, which centralizes academic coaching, tutoring, and the College's "early alert" system to support students who are at risk of falling off-track of their four-year graduation timeline. Moreover, flagship campus programs, such as the DeSousa-Brent Scholars, Pathway to Honors, and *Sum primus* programs, have strengthened the College's ability to provide enhanced academic, co-curricular, and professional development opportunities for students, particularly first-generation and/or Pell-eligible students which make up 28% and 29%, respectively, of the College's entering class of 2025. Taken together, these strategies result in strong outcome rates for SMCM graduates, with 90% of the most recent cohort finding employment or pursuing graduate-level education within six months of attaining their diplomas.

"The Chancellor of USM and the Presidents of MSU, SMCM, MICUA and MACC should comment on efforts being taken to increase enrollment and completion in teacher preparation programs."

St. Mary's College of Maryland remains deeply committed to addressing the state's need for highly-qualified educators through its intensive and accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. The College has made significant progress in restoring this program to its historical enrollment levels, with Fall 2025 enrollment rising to 24 students after several years of pandemic-related declines in enrollment. To support enrollment growth, and to ensure that students meet both federal and state requirements, the College has also recently completed a hiring search within the Educational Studies Department to expand academic offerings, and has centralized the department within the newly completed Learning Commons facility. Finally, to promote successful completion and workforce readiness, MAT faculty engage in regular programmatic innovation to ensure that coursework accurately

reflects the contemporary needs of teachers. The program also maintains a formal partnership with St. Mary's County Public Schools, which provides students with essential experience leading classrooms during their study, and which offers a clear pipeline for employment in the region.

“The Chancellor of USM and the Presidents of MSU, SMCM, and MICUA should comment on the potential impact changes to the federal loans will have on affordability, enrollment, and the State's workforce and what efforts are being taken by institutions to help students.”

As a primarily undergraduate institution, St. Mary's College of Maryland is closely monitoring the potential impact of federal policy shifts, as well as federal workforce reductions, on enrollment, retention, completion, and financial aid. Although these impacts are still subject to tremendous uncertainty, the College anticipates that they will primarily affect students from middle class backgrounds, especially those from families where at least one parent is a federal employee, and may manifest as increased rates of “melt” as students who have made deposits reconsider their ability to afford higher education.

To mitigate these pressures, the College has prioritized the processing of financial aid appeals to ensure that students affected by federal policy shifts receive timely adjustments to their financial offers. Beyond administrative support, the College will continue to uphold its long-term commitment to affordability through the moderation of tuition growth and has intensified its private fundraising activities through the St. Mary's College of Maryland Foundation to further expand scholarship availability. These efforts are designed to ensure that median student indebtedness remains low relative to the state and national median.



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Delegate Stephanie Smith, Chair
Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
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Senator Nancy J. King, Chair
Thursday, February 5, 2026

Morgan State University
Dr. David K. Wilson, President

ISSUES

Comment 1 (Page 24): The President should comment on outreach efforts to encourage high school students to consider college and programs or initiatives to increase accessibility, affordability, and student services to ensure student success and also comment on how institutions are reengaging the SCNC population and efforts to keep students from stopping out.

Strengthening Outreach to High School Students

Morgan State University is fully aligned with the state’s desire to increase the number of recent high school graduates going to college. Between Fall 2019 to Fall 2025, the number of Maryland residents coming to Morgan as first-time, full-time freshmen has increased by 50% (from 801 to 1198).

Morgan State University continues to invest in intentional, equity-driven outreach to high school students to ensure they understand that a college education is both accessible and essential. As Maryland’s Preeminent Public Urban Research University and its largest HBCU, much of our outreach is focused on students from historically underserved communities. Through partnerships with K–12 school districts, state agencies, and community-based organizations, we expose students to the value of college, provide admissions guidance, offer financial literacy sessions, and deliver hands-on support to students and families.

Our outreach efforts in Maryland include a dual-enrollment partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools, approximately 200 recruiting visits to Maryland high schools annually, participation in college fairs hosted by high schools and over 50 community-based college fairs, hosting thousands of Maryland students and families for on-campus tours, and offering FAFSA completion workshops. We have also partnered with EAB on a robust marketing effort focused on sophomores and juniors to further support engagement with Morgan State at the early high school level. These efforts are targeted towards all Maryland high school students, but particularly among communities that have been historically underserved and advance our strategic goals around low-income, first-generation and multicultural student enrollment.

Together, these strategies help demystify the college experience, clarify academic expectations, and reduce barriers to enrollment.

Initiatives to Increase Accessibility and Affordability

Morgan is one of the most affordable four-year institutions in the State and is committed to remaining so. Our tuition and fees for in-state students are the second lowest of all traditional public four-year institutions in the state. We dedicate over \$40M in merit and need-based awards to our students each year.

We also recognize that for many high school students, selecting to begin their postsecondary journey at a community college is a practical and intentional pathway. We strongly support this option and have committed to making the transfer to our institution clear, affordable, and seamless. Through articulation agreements, guaranteed or priority admission pathways with Community

College of Baltimore County and Anne Arundel Community College, and proactive advising partnerships with other community colleges, we ensure that students can transition efficiently without losing momentum or credits. We also offer two transfer-specific scholarship programs. By positioning transfer as a valued and supported route to a baccalaureate degree, we expand access, respect affordability considerations, and affirm that there are multiple on-ramps to achieving a four-year degree.

In the Morgan Completes You program within the College of Interdisciplinary and Continuing Studies (CICS), the curriculum has been intentionally redesigned to expand both access and affordability for adult learners. By allowing students to distribute course requirements over an extended period, the program reduces financial barriers and enables learners to fully leverage employer tuition remission benefits. In addition, the program incorporates multiple forms of credit for prior learning (CPL), including portfolio-based assessments and other recognized CPL pathways, allowing students to receive academic credit for college-level learning acquired through professional, military, and life experiences. Together, these strategies shorten time to degree, lower overall educational costs, and acknowledge the value of adult learners' existing knowledge and skills.

Enhancing Student Services to Support Success, Prevent Stop-Outs, and Improve Retention

Morgan recognizes that access alone is not enough — students must also have the financial, academic, and social supports necessary to persist and graduate. To strengthen affordability and reduce stop-outs, the University has expanded institutional aid, emergency micro-grants, and targeted financial support for students with the highest unmet need. Our new scholarship management platform, Scholarship Universe, matches students to institutional and Morgan State Foundation scholarships for which they may be eligible through one application. The platform also identifies external scholarships that meet students' profiles and provides information on applying for those funds. We also have two Scholarship Coordinators who work with students to identify funding to support their continued education.

We also continue to enhance financial literacy programming, including the hiring of a full-time Financial Wellness and Aid Counselor. We engage in proactive and intrusive advising and have significantly strengthened our advising structure, advisor training, and usage of our advising platform, Navigate360 with the hiring of an Assistant Director for Advising Training and Technology and an Assistant Director for Academic Advising. The University also has increased staffing in the University Counseling Center as well as partnered with UWILL to provide 24/7 mental health services for our students. We also have 24/7 remote tutoring available through NetTutor, in-person and virtual tutoring through our Center for Academic Success and Achievement, tutoring in our residence halls through our Academic Enrichment Program, as well as select academic department-based tutoring.

One of our newest initiatives, launching this spring, is the hiring of graduate students to serve as success coaches for academically at-risk students. Other vital supports include our Food Resource Center, Writing Center, and robust peer mentor initiatives. Our student success model emphasizes early alerts, intrusive advising, and coordinated care across Enrollment Management, Academic

Affairs, and Student Affairs. These efforts ensure that students receive timely interventions and personalized support throughout their academic journey.

Reengaging the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) Population

To reengage the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population, the College of Interdisciplinary and Continuing Studies implemented a coordinated, student-centered strategy focused on clear pathways, affordability, and proactive outreach. CICS develops individualized curriculum maps that align remaining degree requirements with students' professional and personal goals, providing transparent and achievable routes to completion. This approach was paired with an intentional emphasis on credit for prior learning (CPL), including portfolio reviews and other approved CPL mechanisms, enabling students to earn academic credit for college-level learning acquired through work, military, and life experiences. Targeted email and phone outreach campaigns complement these efforts by directly reengaging former students, clarifying degree progress, and connecting them with advising and financial resources. Participation in the Maryland Higher Education Commission's One Step Away grant further strengthened this work by providing resources for outreach and direct financial support, helping to remove immediate financial barriers and support successful re-enrollment among returning students.

The University has also partnered with ReUp, a national organization focused on helping stopped-out students return to and complete their degrees. ReUp works in close collaboration with the university to offer one-on-one coaching that helps returning students address academic, financial, and personal barriers that may have interrupted their studies. This includes assistance with re-enrollment processes, financial aid navigation, balance resolution where applicable, and connection to campus resources once students return. By pairing proactive outreach with individualized support, the partnership allows us to meet students where they are and reestablish momentum toward degree completion.

Comment 2 (Page 27): The President should comment on efforts being taken to increase enrollment and completion in teacher preparation programs.

The School of Education and Urban Studies (SEUS) at Morgan is committed to supporting the state's efforts to ensure that all children have access to high quality instruction provided by caring, competent and well-qualified teachers. The School has a well-known history of producing teachers who are well-prepared to meet the needs of the state's diverse K-12 student population. We are currently the only HBCU in the country to win accreditation by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), in recognition that all graduates of our initial teacher preparation program, the BS in Elementary Education, are skilled in promoting literacy in children experiencing reading difficulties.

Several initiatives have been developed and implemented in an effort to address the current shortage of certified teachers in the state. We have developed and maintained close partnerships with school systems in the state and collaborate closely with them in pursuit of our common goal of addressing the teacher shortage. Following are some of these initiatives.

The Explore SEUS @ Morgan State University Day (Spring 2024) was an inaugural high school recruiting event for students enrolled in the Teacher Academy of Maryland program in Baltimore City Public Schools or Prince George’s County Public Schools. These students are interested in pursuing a degree that leads to initial teacher certification (i.e., state licensure to teach K-12 schools in various disciplines and subject areas). Approximately **175 high school students** participated in this event.

Teach Maryland Conference, Sheraton, Towson (Spring 2024): Approximately **450 Maryland students** who are interested in education attended this conference. SEUS was an exhibitor and highlighted our undergraduate education programs and the Master of Arts in Teaching degree program. The conference is scheduled to be held again in Spring 2026.

Educators Rising Conference in Washington, DC (Summer 2024): The School of Education and Urban Studies was an exhibitor at the Educators Rising Conference in Washington DC in the summer of 2024. Over 3,300 students attended this conference, ranging from middle school through college.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC): SEUS was an exhibitor at several college fairs hosted by NACAC. We prioritized fairs held in Maryland, including Baltimore, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County.

Together these programs touch several thousand high school students each year and seek to expose them to teaching as a viable and fulfilling career.

Perhaps our most successful venture has been our collaboration with Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford and Howard County School systems in the implementation of an accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching program (MAT), designed to provide a path to certification for the approximately 3,000 conditionally licensed teachers currently employed by the state.

In response to a call for proposals by the Maryland Higher Education Commission, Morgan proposed a one-year MAT program as a pathway to certification for teachers currently employed by the state’s public school systems but who lack the qualifications needed to be licensed. The program received funding from MHEC under the Teacher Quality Development Project.

Upon completion of the program, participants will earn the master’s degree and meet all state requirements for teacher certification. While the traditional MAT requires 33 credits completed over two years, the accelerated program maintains the 33-credit requirement but includes summer and winter terms to enable completion within a single academic year without compromising content or pedagogical rigor. **This change has brought about a nearly 250% increase in enrollment in that program in one year (from 18 to 62).** Recruitment efforts targeted both displaced federal employees and conditionally licensed teachers. The program, currently in its inaugural year, has been welcomed by the partner school systems, who are already seeking to make arrangements for an AY 26/27 cohort.

Comment 3 (Page 34): The President should comment on the potential impact changes to the federal loans will have on affordability, enrollment, and the State’s workforce and what efforts are being taken by institutions to help students.

The recent changes to federal loans will impact all student borrowers, particularly graduate and professional students, as well as parents of dependent undergraduate students. The OBBBA eliminates the Grad PLUS program and imposes new annual and aggregate loan caps: for graduate students, \$20,500 per year and a lifetime total of \$100,000; for professional students, \$50,000 per year and a lifetime total of \$200,000. Morgan's graduate programs are among the most affordable in the state, but there are some students who currently borrow more than the maximum amount that will be allowable under the OBBBA. Institutional data indicates that for the current academic year roughly 2% of our graduate students borrowed Grad PLUS loans more than the new maximum loan limit for direct unsubsidized loans.

The impact of the new annual and aggregate loan caps for the Parent PLUS loan, set at \$20,000 per year and \$65,000 for a lifetime per student, are potentially more dire. For the current academic year, 11% of our undergraduate students have Parent PLUS loans above the new \$20,000 limit. And, because the lifetime amount per student is only \$65,000, there are likely to be many students whose parents will be unable to borrow enough to support them for the full four years it takes to complete a degree. There is significant concern about the impact on student retention.

The institution is diligently monitoring guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and we are committed to providing support to students and families throughout this transition. The Office of Financial Aid has created a webpage to share all information pertinent to OBBBA and the impacts on our students. We also have a comprehensive communication campaign involving one-on-one counseling, presentations, website updates, social media, and email campaigns to both prospective and continuing undergraduate and graduate students.

The University has allocated additional scholarship dollars to assist students. Our new scholarship platform, Scholarship Universe, will also be helpful as the need for scholarship dollars grows. In addition to simplifying the scholarship application process for internal scholarships, Scholarship Universe also provides students access to 17,000 vetted external scholarships, curated based on their profile.

There is significant concern about the potential impact on enrollment, retention, and the state workforce, as well as concern about students and parents taking higher interest alternative loans to pay for college. Despite these challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to expanding access, strengthening affordability, and ensuring that every student has the support needed to complete a degree and contribute to Maryland's economic vitality.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommendation 1 (Page 35): *The committees request that the University System of Maryland (USM), Morgan State University (MSU), and St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) continue to provide annual instructional workload reports for tenured/tenure-track faculty. By focusing on these faculty, the committees gain a sense of the teaching activities for the regular core faculty. However, there are other types of instructional faculty at institutions, such as full- and part-time nontenured/nontenure-track faculty including adjunct faculty, instructors, and lecturers. Focusing on only tenured/tenure-track faculty provides an incomplete picture of how students are taught. Therefore, the report should also include the instructional workload when all types of faculty are considered. Additional information may be included at the institution's discretion. Furthermore, the USM report should include the percentage of faculty meeting or exceeding teaching standards for tenured/tenure-track faculty for the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus.*

Response: Morgan consistently provides a detailed analysis and breakdown of instructional productivity and teaching load trends of Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty in its Annual Joint Chairmen's Report and agrees to continue to provide the annual instructional workload report and the additional information suggested.

Recommendation 2 (Page 36): *The budget committees requested that BSU, CSU, MSU, and UMES submit a report on their plans to use fiscal 2026 HBCU settlement funds. Further discussion of the HBCU settlement fund can be found under the HBCU Settlement Fund section of this analysis.*

Response: Morgan consistently provides a detailed analysis of annual HBUC Settlement funds utilization and agrees to provide a breakdown of Historically Black Colleges and Universities funding plans for FY26 by November 1, 2026.