



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

University of Maryland, Baltimore County
1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250

umbc.edu

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget

Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis

Budget and Taxation Committee

Education, Business, and Administration

Senator Nancy J. King

Thursday, February 26, 2026

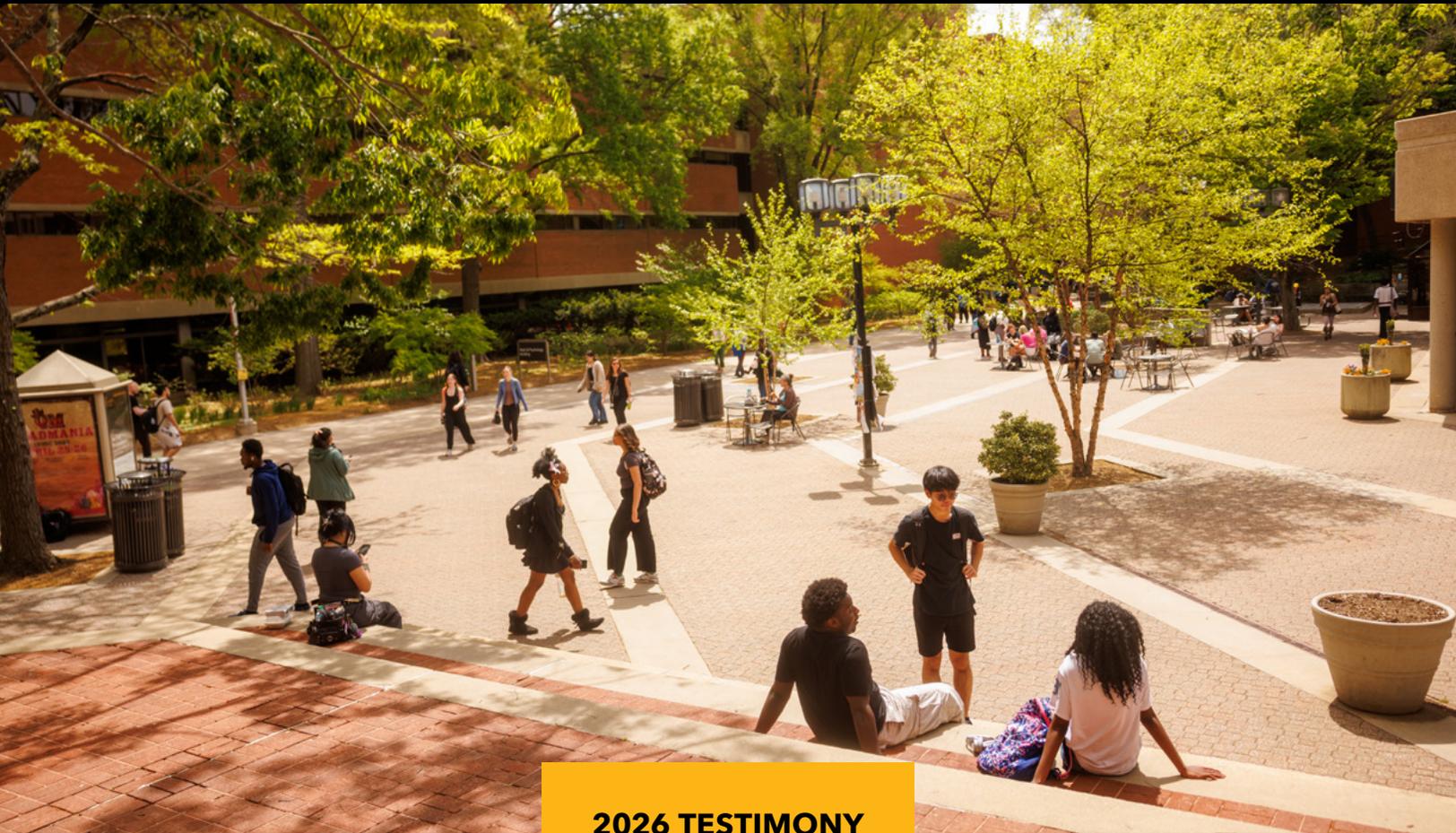
Appropriations Committee

Education and Economic Development

Delegate Stephanie M. Smith

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

DIFFERENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE



2026 TESTIMONY
to the MARYLAND
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Valerie Sheares Ashby
President
University of Maryland,
Baltimore County



UMBC

Public Research for the Public Good

Guided by the principle of “public research for public good,” UMBC researchers consistently apply their expertise to addressing complex societal challenges, sustaining impactful scholarship even as the broader research landscape evolves. What distinguishes UMBC is not only the scope and quality of its research output, but also the way that work is conducted—with purpose, collaboration, and public impact at its core.

National Rankings

According to the National Science Foundation’s Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey, in fiscal year 2025, UMBC was ranked:

#10 in annual NASA support

#20 in federal support for Geosciences, Atmospheric Sciences, and Ocean Sciences

#44 in federal support for Social Sciences

#53 in federal support for Computer and Information Sciences

#55 in federal support for Physical Sciences

#93 in annual USDA support

#96 in federal R&D expenditures among public institutions

Driving our AI Future

UMBC researchers across disciplines are turning to AI to improve the process of science itself. Computer scientists, chemical engineers, and physicists are all building tools to navigate the vast body of scientific literature; assess the feasibility of scientific claims; write error-free and up-to-date code for scientific computing; and more.

Combining Research and Community Commitment

UMBC is both an R1 research institution—placing it among the top 5 percent of research universities nationwide—and a Carnegie Community Engagement-classified university, which recognizes institutions that systematically share knowledge and resources to enrich scholarship and contribute meaningfully to the public good. Together, these designations reflect the unified mission that defines UMBC’s research culture and its enduring commitment to making a difference locally and globally.

Protecting the Chesapeake with Data

A new set of AI-powered stream maps led by Matthew Baker and alumni at the EPA and Chesapeake Conservancy more than doubled documented stream miles in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, dramatically reducing the cost and time required for stream mapping at the same time. This breakthrough empowers stakeholders to effectively target restoration efforts across six states.

Public Research for the Public Good

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

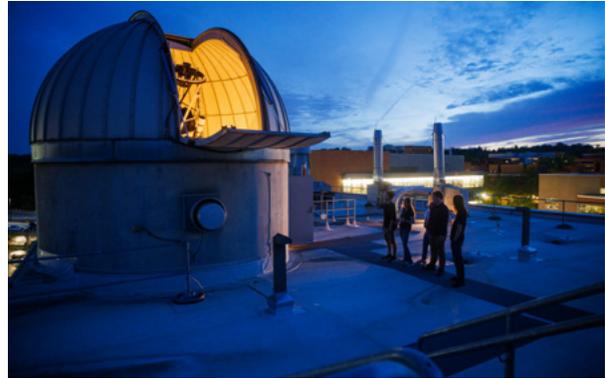


Doctoral students Ashley Splain and Sumaiya DeLane, working with Tasneem Khambaty, are leading one of the first research studies to use continuous glucose monitoring technology to investigate the precise associations between low and high glucose levels, cognitive function, and key Alzheimer's disease biomarkers in middle-age and older adults at risk for type 2 diabetes.

Putting Quantum to Work

UMBC's Quantum Science Institute, fueled by a \$1.5M NIST grant, brings together faculty and students in mathematics, physics, computer science, and more for quantum research and education. From pioneering entanglement-dependent ghost imaging in 1995, to modeling unpredictable train schedules with quantum devices in 2025, UMBC is empowering knowledge breakthroughs and training a diverse, quantum-ready workforce.

Tracking Air Quality and More



Atmospheric and astrophysics research at UMBC extends to the Physics Building roof, where a platform of advanced sensors tracks urban air quality, ozone transport, thunderstorm formation, and more, fueling findings that inform environmental policy. A recently upgraded telescope observatory enables observations of cosmic phenomena for research, and public outreach events invite the community to experience the stars.

Bringing Humanity to Science Through Dance

UMBC researchers led by Ramana Vinjamuri are discovering building blocks of hand motions, aiming to improve physical therapy for humans and find better ways to program robots. They've turned to a unique source material for these gestures: classical Indian dance. They've also forged an interdisciplinary partnership to explore how dancing robots could help humans improve their mental health.

Working to Improve Our Communities

UMBC nurtures small and growing businesses, helps staff critical public workforces, and gets Marylanders back to work.

77% of UMBC alumni stay in Maryland to live and work after graduation

Supporting Our Schools

The Sherman Scholars program supports and prepares high-quality teachers for urban schools. Scholars in early childhood and elementary education prepare to be experts in teaching and integrating STEM subject areas, while secondary candidates become experts in teaching their STEM discipline. Students either pursue an undergraduate certificate or a masters' degree in education.

Building the Future of Long-term Care

Designed to meet the real-world demand for educated, innovative leaders in the longevity market, UMBC's Erickson School of Aging Studies is the only program of its kind in the country to combine business management, public policy, and the study of human aging. With Maryland's population of older adults increasing faster than the national average according to recent census data, UMBC is helping train a workforce of leaders to ensure a comfortable, dignified aging experience for us all.



Working to Improve Our Communities

Informing Public Health Policy

UMBC hosts the Hilltop Institute, a nonpartisan research organization dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities. The Hilltop Institute's cutting-edge data analytics and translational research on behalf of government agencies, foundations, and nonprofit organizations informs public policy at the national, state, and local levels.

Incubating Innovation

The first of its kind in the state, bwtech@UMBC's business incubator fosters innovation, accelerates business growth, and drives economic growth in Maryland. bwtech@UMBC supports companies at every stage, from concept to scaling revenue, across a range of tech-driven industries, including AI, cybersecurity, health tech, med tech, environmental technologies, and bio-life sciences.

Providing Trustworthy Data for Decision Makers

Founded in Fall 2024, UMBC's Institute of Politics engages students in public affairs by collaborating with them on public-facing polls and media work. The focal point of the Institute of Politics work is the UMBC Poll, whose quarterly releases of high-quality data on Marylanders' attitudes on important issues facing the state, has quickly become a valued resource for journalists and policymakers.

Helping Workers "Paws & Pivot"



When Maryland's federal workforce was hit with massive reductions in 2025, UMBC was there to help workers get back on track—and keep them in the state. UMBC's Office of Professional Programs created Paws & Pivot, a webinar series that provides a crucial platform for recently laid-off federal workers and other affected professionals to connect, learn, and thrive. The expert-led sessions provide practical resources and foster a community of practice centered on successful career transitions, essential upskilling opportunities, and leveraging available community support.

"Today, I attended orientation day with the human resources team at my new organization. It has been 33 years since I was a 'new' employee!"

- Laid-off federal worker Patrick Shiridon, who attended Paws & Pivot trainings through UMBC

Investing in Student Success

UMBC students are the face of Maryland: focused, diverse, spirited, and ready to make a difference. UMBC meets them where they are and challenges them to push themselves farther than they ever thought possible.

97 student-athletes earned a 4.0 GPA (Spring 2025)

We're #1 UMBC is the nation's number one producer of Black undergraduates who go on to complete a Ph.D. in the natural sciences or engineering and number one for Black undergraduates who complete an M.D./Ph.D.

Learning Center of Excellence



With services such as tutoring and academic advocacy and more than 180 peer educators and student workers, UMBC's Academic Success Center is one of only 10 the International College Learner Center Association has designated as a "Learning Center of Excellence."

Serving Those Who Served

UMBC moved significantly up the U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges rankings list last year as a "Best College for Veterans" - in part due to the opening of a new Veteran's Lounge, and an ongoing practice of holistic support for veteran and military-affiliated students including help navigating educational benefits, access to mental health resources, professional development, and dedicated events.

Women Supporting Women

UMBC's Center for Women in Technology focuses on recruiting undergraduate women studying computing and engineering, and providing them with leadership opportunities, professional development, mentoring, networking, and a supportive community. Over the last 25 years, more than 95 percent of the undergraduate women in computing and engineering officially affiliated with the program have stayed in tech fields, providing a supportive network in Maryland and beyond.

Student Athletes Shine in the Classroom

Athletes who compete for the UMBC Retrievers take their studies seriously, with teammates routinely achieving impressively high marks. The combined UMBC athletic team GPA in Spring 2025 was 3.42, with an amazing 97 student-athletes achieving a perfect 4.00 GPA and another 108 students earning between 3.50 and 3.99.

Nurturing the Arts, Humanities, and Culture

UMBC is a transformative, inviting arts destination where creative interdisciplinary research and public-facing programming challenge, enrich, and inspire our students—and our community.

“Especially in dark times, art can bring things into focus that allow for reflecting, enjoyment, and processing.”

- Linda Dusman, UMBC professor of music and co-chair of Arts+ at UMBC

UMBC offers more than **100** public arts and culture events annually, including dance, music, and theatre performance, visual arts exhibitions, and distinguished lectures in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

Sharing Cultural Enrichment with Our Neighbors



In 2025, UMBC launched an ambitious new initiative, Arts+, designed to elevate the stature and visibility of our public art offerings. Over the course of four months, attendance at the university’s public arts events increased by more than 40%, drawing many first-time visitors to campus.

Culture and Community



With specialized studies such as a minor in Public Humanities, UMBC engages students with innovative public scholarship and programming to develop holistic approaches to public scholarship and community collaboration. Public humanities students use the tools and methods of the humanities to build knowledge democratically and respond critically to challenges of the twenty-first century, ranging from social inequity to climate change.

Nurturing Well-rounded Leaders of Tomorrow

UMBC connects students to diverse, challenging arts and humanities studies, with countless opportunities for research, creative work, and internships that prepare them for a variety of careers and a lifetime of thoughtful citizenship and leadership in a complex world. While some UMBC students focus exclusively on creative careers such as dance or music, many UMBC students mix arts and humanities studies with STEM and other academic disciplines for a broader perspective.

Investing in Attainable Excellence

UMBC is redefining how to deliver world-class educational impact for every family in Maryland. We are excited to continue meeting Maryland's needs for a world-class university that is welcoming to all.

An investment in UMBC is an investment in the people of Maryland—their potential, their civic-mindedness, and their dreams. During challenging times, UMBC remains a beacon of hope for maintaining—and improving—our distinctive Maryland values and way of life.



UMBC Vision

Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.

"We are who we are because of where we are: in the great state of Maryland, where education is recognized as a precious public resource to be valued and shared. We have built UMBC hand-in-hand with our partners in the state who have always supported us as we have acted with intention to be bold, innovative, and inclusive. We look forward to moving forward together as we find new ways to share the transformative magic of education and knowledge creation with our students and communities."

- UMBC President Valerie Sheares Ashby



By The Numbers

Who We Are

13,530
total enrollment*

11,087
undergraduate students

1,443
graduate students

29%
First Generation Students

93%
In-State Students

90+
Countries Represented

**as of Fall 2025*

What We Offer

300+
degrees and programs

17:1
student to faculty ratio

88%
classes that have fewer
than 50 students

81%
of undergraduates participate
in applied learned
experiences, internships,
research, co-ops, service-
learning, or leadership roles
during their UMBC education

Our Impact

100,000+
proud Retriever alumni

93%
of degree recipients
are employed or pursuing
further education within
six months of graduating

90%
of employed alumni are
working in jobs directly
related to their career goals

77%
Stay in Maryland

\$186M
Campus-wide R&D
expenditures (FY25)

150+
Annual Public Arts
and Culture Events

The President should comment on the low graduation rate of full-time students who did not receive institutional aid who seem to be more adversely affected than community college students who did not receive aid, factors contributing to the higher graduation rate of community college transfers, and efforts being taken to improve student success.

UMBC has made student success and degree completion a central institutional priority and has implemented several evidence-based initiatives to support all students, including those who may face financial or transitional challenges. For instance:

- Through our partnership with the National Institute for Student Success (NISS), UMBC is implementing best practices to enhance academic advising, improve student communications, strengthen the use of academic progress data, and advance financial wellness support.
- As a member of the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), UMBC is advancing strategies to improve student success, including initiatives to strengthen the role of on-campus employment in supporting academic progress and career readiness.
- Through the Maryland Transfer Intensive, in partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the Aspen Institute, UMBC and our community partners have developed a Strategic Transfer Excellence Plan to further strengthen transfer student success and degree completion.

The higher graduation rates among community college transfer students, including those who do not receive institutional aid, reflect that transfer students have demonstrated the ability to succeed in a college environment prior to enrolling at UMBC. They have successfully completed college-level coursework, navigated academic requirements, and persisted through earlier stages of postsecondary education. This demonstrated experience and perseverance are strong predictors of success and graduation. Conversely, first-time students enter the institution without the opportunity to demonstrate college-level persistence. This coupled with potential financial challenges could lead to the lower rate.

The President should comment on the impact of the canceled federal grants, stop work orders and new compliance requirements, and the pace of the awarding of new contracts and grants.

As of February 12, 2026, nine awards have been reinstated. Despite this, our total impact remains a loss of approximately \$14 million. This represents about 4% of UMBC's annual federally funded research portfolio. Our research expenditures totaled \$151 million in FY24 and \$185.8 million in FY25. We anticipate that FY26, which closes on September 30, 2026, will not exceed FY25's total but will remain consistent with FY24.