



## Business

### Letters to the Editor

November 2, 2007

#### Higher education needs dedicated state funding

Gov. Martin O'Malley's plan to resolve the state's \$1.7 billion "structural deficit," with its mixture of tax reform, budget cuts, and new revenue sources, has understandably generated a great deal of discussion.

Somewhat lost in the conversation, however, is the governor's proposal to — for the first time in the history of Maryland — establish dedicated funding streams to provide sustained revenue enhancements dedicated to higher education. As the General Assembly convenes for a special legislative session to consider the governor's plan, the significance of this proposal cannot be underestimated.

First, it recognizes the indispensable importance of higher education in today's economy, through education, research and economic impact. The institutions that make up the University System of Maryland are educational centers with enrollments of more than 140,000 students.

A robust system of undergraduate and graduate education is necessary in the increasingly complex technology arena. As the demands placed upon higher education increase both in terms of the number of students looking to enroll and the number of businesses in need of well-educated graduates, a stable and predictable state investment in higher education is a common-sense measure.

The impact of public higher education extends well beyond educating Maryland citizens. The system's research universities are hubs of discovery and development. Groundbreaking research is applied for the benefit of citizens in our state, across the nation, and around the world. Our universities are also vital engines for economic growth all across Maryland. The research dollars invested by federal government agencies, like NASA, NIH, the Department of Defense and FDA, in Maryland's public research universities is \$1 billion annually.

High-paying jobs and regional businesses cluster around the research investments, providing more direct benefits to Marylanders. Meeting critical work force needs, both in the "new economy" (high-tech, info-tech and bio-tech) and in the "traditional economy" (teachers, nurses, pharmacists and others), requires a vibrant and productive system of higher education.

Second, the dedicated funding proposal acknowledges that the impact of higher education in general and the University System of Maryland institutions, in particular, reaches far beyond our campuses and is, therefore, worthy of designated funding streams. Just as USM is vital in meeting work force and economic development challenges, so, too, do we step forward to address vital environmental challenges, cultural concerns and societal needs. We are an engine of both economic productivity and social progress.

As university presidents, we recognize that our students are our primary obligation, but they are not our only obligation. We have a responsibility to elevate the intellectual, social and cultural well-being of the state of Maryland. Our institutions are not simply in the community; they are of the community. Wherever you look — in the Baltimore/Washington corridor, in Western Maryland, on the Eastern Shore, in Southern Maryland — USM institutions are active and engaged in numerous ways serving the people of Maryland.

Every year at University of Maryland, Baltimore, faculty members, students and staff provide more than 2 million hours of community service. University of Baltimore legal clinics provided free legal help to people in the community who couldn't afford it otherwise. University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute has a growing outreach effort into our schools to support biotech education in Maryland. Coppin State University and Towson University are involved in innovative partnerships to improve urban schools in Baltimore.

The University of Maryland, College Park — the system's flagship campus — has trained thousands of entrepreneurs across the state to be successful through its annual boot camp for startup companies. In fact, the flagship's entrepreneurial programs have generated \$14 billion in economic impact and 5,300 jobs since 1984. Bowie State University is involved in a partnership to prepare, recruit and retain a high-quality teaching force in Prince George's County public schools. University of Maryland University College brings permanent and touring art exhibits directly to the public. The Shriver Center at University of Maryland, Baltimore County is a national leader in promoting service-learning, civic engagement, and community-based service delivery.

In Western Maryland, Frostburg State University has been recognized by both the Corporation for National and Community Service and by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities as a national model for its public service and community outreach programs.

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science is the largest single institution studying the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. On the Eastern Shore, at Salisbury University, the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement touches the entire Delmarva region. The Rural Development Center at University of Maryland Eastern Shore reaches out to strengthen and diversify the rural economy of Maryland's Eastern Shore. And the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension uses its agricultural research to teach farmers from North to South how to boost their profitability, from grapes and wine to poultry.

In communities, schools, businesses, health centers, legal clinics, farms and anywhere else people are in need across the state, USM faculty, staff and students have always been a force, partnering with government agencies, nonprofit organizations and community groups to meet unmet needs and provide vital assistance.

With his plan to provide higher education with ongoing, dedicated streams of funding, Governor O'Malley has indicated that what we do — both on our campuses and beyond our campuses — is manifestly worthy of state budget support. We encourage the approval of this historic proposal.

*William E. Kirwan, Chancellor, and the presidents of the university system  
University System of Maryland  
Adelphi*

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### Higher ed funding would boost state

For more than a decade, biotechnology and life sciences employment has led Maryland's remarkable growth as one of the wealthiest states in America.

While many other sectors have contributed, biotechnology is a unique field that generally creates high-wage jobs in a relatively clean industry. As our world becomes increasingly aware of the challenges of greenhouse gas emissions; carbon sequestration; and feeding, housing, and healing a growing human population, biotechnology is both a catalyst for change and a hope for many solutions.

Since 1985, UMBI, the biotechnology institute of the University System of Maryland, has played an important role in the growth of biotechnology in Maryland. In past years, our researchers returned more than \$2 each year, on average, from competitive outside research grants for each dollar of state resources invested. These funds work to solve real problems like unwrapping the mysteries around blue crab spawning so we could grow blue crabs in captivity for the first time.

UMBI scientists are developing biofuels that may offer decreased dependence on petroleum and are addressing the role of the oceans in mitigating global climate change. They are delving into the molecular functions of many human afflictions such as heart disease, Alzheimer's and juvenile diabetes to develop early diagnostics and cures. A planned Eastern Shore green research facility will help sustain and enhance the value of Maryland's agriculture-based economy.

Many UMBI discoveries are licensed by industry, generating economic development for our state. Over the past nine years, UMBI has spun out nine new companies. Several have thrived and are employing Marylanders and generating tax revenue.

UMBI's educational and work force training program is expanding and reaching out to all parts of Maryland. Although UMBI does not grant degrees, comprehensive K-16, graduate and postdoctoral programs are necessary and important components of producing an educated biotechnology work force for the state, while opening doors for African-Americans and other historically underrepresented minorities to work in the biosciences arena.

Continuation of UMBI's cutting-edge research and technology may be threatened seriously by a state budget crisis that, if not attended to, will most likely lead to substantial program cuts.

Every Marylander needs our governor and legislators to work together to solve the state's structural deficit. Governor O'Malley has put forth a recommendation to create a dedicated funding source for higher education.

A dedicated funding source would afford the University System of Maryland institutions the opportunity for real planning, without the fluctuations commonly experienced in higher education. More important, a dedicated funding source also invests in preparing the future work force.

When I became president of UMBI nine years ago, Maryland's competitors were other states. Today our competition is global with burgeoning biotechnology industries in India, China, Singapore, Western and Eastern Europe, and Australia. If Maryland's leaders shrink from the challenges facing our state by failing to fund higher education, there are many, many players that will take Maryland jobs and opportunities elsewhere.

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