



January 27, 2012

ONLINE EDUCATION BRIEFING GIVES PERSPECTIVE ON SCOPE OF GROWING TREND IN MARYLAND

On Tuesday, representatives from the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the University of Maryland University College, and other online-education providers presented testimony before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. The hearing covered a wide range of information including the status of online education in Maryland to MHEC recommendations for tighter regulations of for-profit institutions operating within the state.

Dr. Sue Blanchan, Director of Academic Affairs of the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), gave some perspective on the growth of online education over the course of the past couple of years. From 2006 to 2008, national online education enrollment grew nearly 118 percent, from 233,000 to 284,000 students. The number of online higher education institutions providing education also rose from 3,476 to 7,533 during this period of time.

Dr. Blanchan mentioned that the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) accounts for nearly 23 percent of all online courses offered in the state of Maryland. UMUC's student population represents roughly 52 percent of all students enrolled in online education. Interestingly, community colleges account for 46 percent of all online courses offered in the state and their student population represent 33 percent of students enrolled in online education.

Dr. Blanchan discussed the revised COMAR standards that were implemented this past year that set parameters for online education. A few of the changes included online institutions having to now supply an adequate infrastructure report, provide faculty members with professional development opportunities, and ensure that appropriate student learning outcomes are established and the institutions facilitate learning outcome evaluations. As of yet, only 475 institutions of the 1,300 institutions operating in the state, have verified their compliance with MHEC as a result of the legislation passed last year that sought to hold for-profit institutions more accountable.

It was also recommended that legislation be proposed to establish some sort of penalty system for diploma mills and institutions that are not regionally accredited and operate within the state without proper MHEC program approval. Dr. Blanchan believes that this would cut down on the number of “bogus” credentials offered to unsuspecting students and would put MHEC on the “proactive” not “reactive” in these types of situations.

UMUC’s Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Greg von Lehman, and General Counsel, Nancy Williamson, presented testimony on behalf of the University in response to several inquiries made by the Committee. They briefly gave an overview of the institution, concluding that in the fall 2011 semester, the university boasted close to 94,000 students worldwide. Within that figure, 37,000 students were United States citizens and nearly 62 percent of the student population represented Maryland citizens.

Dr. von Lehman mentioned that the University offered close to 3,700 sections this past semester and that almost 75 percent of enrollments were online students. Dr. von Lehman **said** UMUC offers 24/7 library availability, three residential campuses, and avid information technology support for distance learning students. Following UMUC’s testimony, several other online higher education institutions presented reports on their activity within the state. Among them included the University of Phoenix, Kaplan University, Strayer University, and others.

USM is tracking this issue closely and will report any negative effects any proposed legislation could have on students, faculty and staff.

UMBC PRESIDENT SPEAKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION INNOVATION

Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, President of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, presented testimony before the Senate Budget and Tax Committee on Wednesday that provided insight on innovation in higher education. As a recent recipient of the Carnegie Corporation’s Academic Leadership Award, Dr. Hrabowski was highlighted by Senator Kasemeyer as a national expert in higher education and a point of pride for the state of Maryland.

Dr. Hrabowski briefly discussed his opportunity to speak with President Barack Obama, along with Chancellor Kirwan and other higher education representatives, regarding strategies for expanding access to high quality, effective, and affordable education. Dr. Hrabowski lauded the fact that the briefing began with President Obama asking

Chancellor Kirwan about the USM's Effectiveness and Efficiency initiative (E&E), which allowed our system to achieve more than \$250 million in administrative, cost savings, while increasing enrollment and decreasing time to degree. Dr. Hrabowski concluded that the President is committed to not only college completion, but also efficiency and effectiveness in higher education.

Dr. Hrabowski discussed the importance of increasing the number of STEM graduates and encouraging underrepresented minorities to pursue this field. After integrating course redesign in chemistry classes at UMBC, the "C or Better" pass rate has risen from 61 percent to 85 percent. Courses were restructured to incorporate an "active learning model," allowing students to become hands-on in problem solving through group collaboration. Dr. Hrabowski also spoke on UMBC's planning grant received from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that is working with community colleges in Baltimore, Montgomery, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties to better address barriers to success for community college students who want to major in STEM fields.

Dr. Hrabowski mentioned the USM's success in ensuring millions in support from the National Science Foundation for K-12 partnerships that address professional development for STEM teachers and build the pipeline of students prepared for STEM majors in college. He also highlighted UMBC's work with Project Lead the Way, which provides professional development in engineering curricula for more than 300 middle and high school teachers across the state.

Dr. Hrabowski mentioned incorporating a "nurturing" environment in the formative, or beginning, years of a college education and how that translates to success in the long run. He encouraged the creation of a "climate that encourages asking good questions; being honest about both strengths and challenges; and developing innovative problem-solving strategies and initiatives" in all USM and higher education institutions.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WILL BOAST COLLABORATION, COMMERCIALIZATION, AND BETTER SERVE MARYLAND'S WORKFORCE

After presenting the Senate Budget and Tax Committee with the detailed report of the merger study, conducted during the Interim, Chancellor Kirwan, Vice Chair of the USM Board of Regents Patricia Florestano, UMB President Perman and UMCP President Loh shared their findings and comments on forming a "strategic alliance" between the two universities at a hearing on Wednesday.

After the Board of Regents initiated a comprehensive, six-month study examining the feasibility of a total merger between UMB and UMCP, it concluded that the disadvantages of a merger far outweighed the advantages. The Board of Regents researched all issues related to the mission, quality of learning, reputation and rankings, institutional cultures, administration, and costs of a possible merger. The board also

studied similar cases nationwide and consulted higher education experts, elected officials, business and community leaders, and the general public before coming to **its** conclusion.

Chancellor Kirwan outlined the structure of the strategic alliance and concluded that this would serve as a roadmap to greater collaboration among all institutions within the USM. This **initial** relationship, between UMB and UMCP, would better address Maryland's workforce needs through joint academic programs, attract more research funding to the state because of the collaborative efforts, and create more opportunities for technology transfer and commercialization.

Upcoming 2012 Legislative Budget Hearing Schedule

January 30th

House Appropriations: Subcommittee on House Education and Economic Development Committee

3pm

Higher Education Overview Budget Hearing

January 31st

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee: Subcommittee on Capital Budget Committee

4pm

Capital Budget Fiscal Briefing

February 1st

House Appropriations: Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development Committee

1:30

University System of Maryland Overview Budget Hearing

February 3rd

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee: Subcommittee on Education, Business and Administration Committee

1pm

Maryland Higher Education Commission Budget Hearing

February 8th

House Education and Economic Development Committee

1pm

Maryland Higher Education Commission/Morgan State University/University of Baltimore Budget Hearings

February 9th
Senate Education, Business and Administration Committee
1pm

University System of Maryland Overview, Morgan State University/University of Baltimore Budget Hearings

February 13th
TBA
1:30

Issue Hearing

February 16th
House Education and Economic Development Committee
1pm

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Studies Budget Hearing

February 22nd
House Education and Economic Development Committee
1pm

University System of Maryland Office Budget Hearing

February 23rd
TBA
1pm

Issue Hearing

February 27th
Senate Education, Business, and Administration Committee
1pm

University System of Maryland Office/University of Maryland Center for Environmental Studies Budget Hearings

March 1st
Senate Education, Business, and Administration Committee
1pm

University of Maryland, College Park/University of Maryland, Baltimore/Coppin State
University Budget Hearings

March 5th
House Appropriations Committee
3pm

University of Maryland, College Park/University of Maryland, Baltimore/Coppin State
University Budget Hearings

March 6th
Senate Budget and Tax Committee
1pm

Senate Operating Budget Decisions

March 6th
Senate Budget and Tax Committee
4pm

Senate Capital Budget Decisions

March 13th
House Appropriations Committee
1pm

House Operating Budget Decisions

March 14th
House Appropriations Committee
4pm

House Capital Budget Decisions

March 26th
Joint Senate and House Committee
TBD

Budget Conference Committee Begins

April 9th
12am

2012 Session Ends

