



SALISBURY  
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# 2022 Legislative Presentation

Presented To  
The House Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development  
The Senate Subcommittee on Education, Business and Administration

By President Charles A. Wight, Ph.D.  
February 2022

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# Re-Energizing for Salisbury University's Next Chapter

Throughout our nearly 100-year history, Salisbury University has taken pride in its ability to meet challenges and grasp new opportunities. The global pandemic is no exception. As we move toward a new normal, SU – and all of higher education – faces new opportunities and challenges, including the national trend of students deciding to stay closer to home when they make their college decision.

As a result, SU has experienced a decline in enrollment as have many public comprehensive institutions. SU's enrollment decline is in sharp contrast to pre-pandemic trends. We had enjoyed modest enrollment growth prior to the pandemic – in fact, fall 2019 saw the largest first-year class in over 10 years. We continued to fulfill our promise to those students despite the pandemic, **maintaining high graduation rates and outstanding student outcomes.** Indeed, the pandemic-related national enrollment decline was slightly magnified at SU as we celebrated relatively large graduating classes the last two years. These students are among the best in the nation as evidenced by nationally competitive fellowship

wins, licensure exam scores, NCAA championship wins and top-place performances by our vocal arts students (recent SU grad Jay Copeland is competing on *American Idol* later this month).

To enhance our ability to attract more students and to reflect our institutional identity of academic excellence and supporting student success, SU launched a **new branding campaign – Make Tomorrow Yours** – in fall 2021. Our year-long brand research and development process was informed by input from students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of our community – resulting in an authentic story and visual representation about the SU experience. The concept of “tomorrow makers” captures SU's long-standing commitment to providing students with rich and plentiful opportunities, as well as the dedication of



faculty and staff who change the trajectory of students' lives and open doors for graduates to thrive. SU offers a warm, friendly, inclusive environment, where expert professors provide life-changing experiences, propelling students forward to a better tomorrow in their careers.

As we look forward, early signs show that our enrollment management and branding efforts are paying off. Already, **our applications and deposits are trending up** and are consistent with pre-pandemic numbers from 2019. We also have recognized that the pandemic forced many to press pause on their pursuit of higher education. To transition those students back into the classroom, we've launched outreach initiatives to re-engage our near-completers.

Salisbury University is proud to share that throughout the pandemic we have continued to provide a quality education at a great value, as attested by our top national rankings. SU consistently places among the top rankings by *U.S. News and World Report* (Top Public Schools, Best Value Schools), *The Princeton Review* (Best Colleges, Green Colleges, Best College Libraries),



*Forbes* (Top Colleges, Best Value Colleges), *Money* (America's Best Colleges), *Kiplinger's* (Best Public College Values) and others. Recognized as an efficient and effective institution, SU was named a "Model of Efficiency" by *University Business* for four consecutive years and was highlighted for our productivity and strong graduation rates by Maryland's Department of Legislative Services.



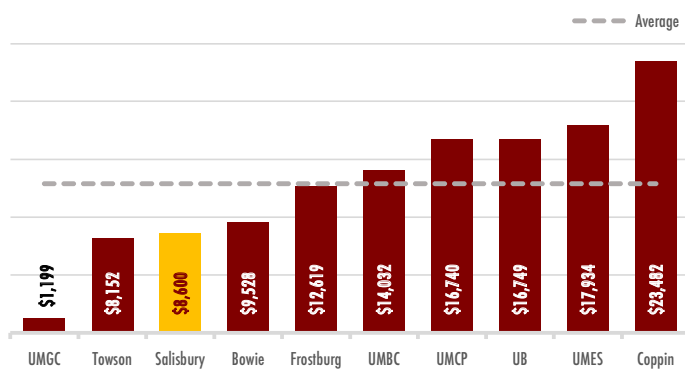
# A Return on Investment

Despite consistently receiving among the lowest State funds per FTES (Figure 1), Salisbury University continues to be among the most affordable options for Maryland students. SU has the third highest percentage of first-time, full-time students receiving institutional aid among University System of Maryland (USM) schools, with over 70% receiving aid. Recognizing this need among our students, we are focusing on **expanding our financial aid offering**. SU's current \$75 million "We Are SU" fundraising campaign – the largest in our history – has among its primary goals to provide scholarship dollars to support current students and enhance recruitment efforts. In addition, SU's new Sea Gull Pell Promise makes it easier for first-year students who qualify for federal Pell Grants to attend. The Sea Gull Pell Promise covers any tuition costs remaining once eligible students' scholarships, grants and benefits are applied.

It has long been a part of the SU story that we **achieve excellence and provide the State and our students with a high return on investment**. While among the lowest in State funds per FTES, the University remains at the State average for bachelor's degrees earned (Figure 2), while placing near the top for undergraduate degrees completed among our performance peers (Figure 3).

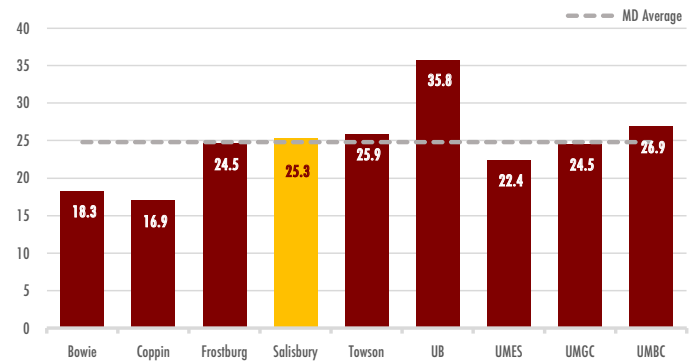
On a percentage basis, SU graduates more students than most other Maryland public institutions (Figure 4) and consistently boasts some of the highest graduation and retention rates, while maintaining among the lowest average time-to-degree. In fact, our four-year graduation rate is second highest in the USM (Figure 5).

**Figure 1: State Funds Per FTES (FY 2022 estimated)**



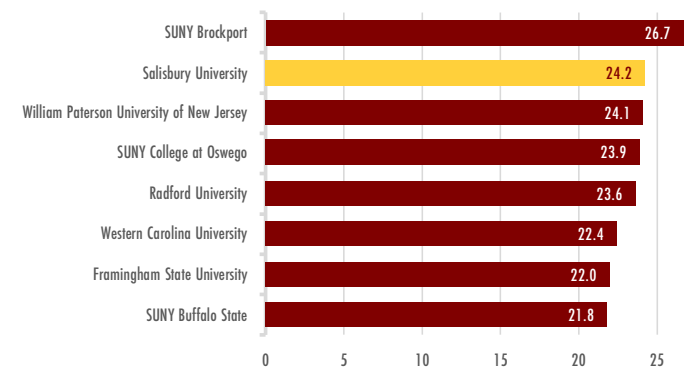
Source: USM Fiscal 2023 Budget Overview

**Figure 2: Bachelor's Degrees per 100 Students in MD Public Four-Year Institutions (2019-20)**



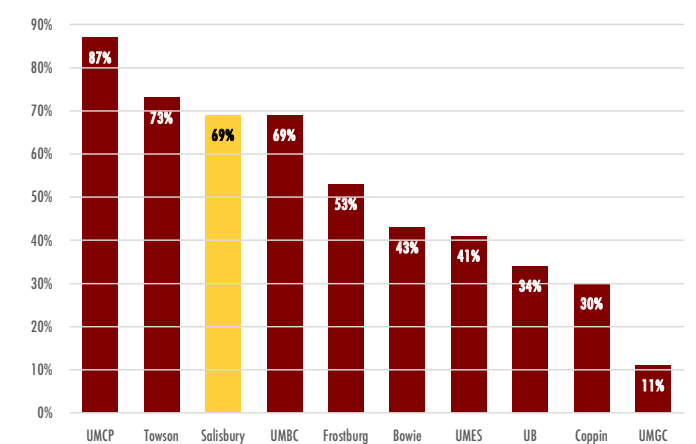
Source: Utilizing data from IPEDS database.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Three-Year Average Undergraduate Degrees Per 100 Undergraduate FTES to Performance Peers Academic Years 2018-20**



Source: Utilizing data from IPEDS database.

**Figure 4: Six-Year Graduation Rate (2014 Cohort)**



Source: Utilizing data from IPEDS database.

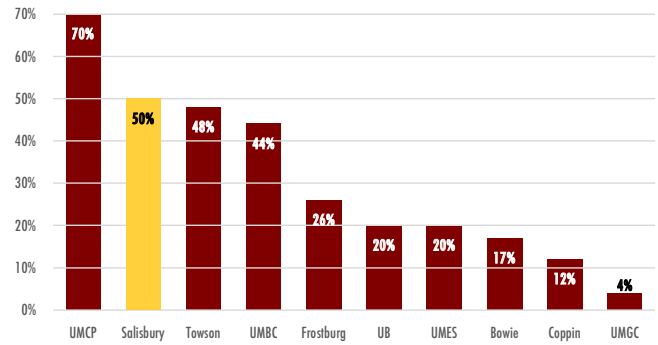
SU continues to produce among the highest four-year graduation rates of Maryland's community college transfer students among the USM institutions (Figure 6). We implemented a number of new initiatives designed to create a better experience for transfer students. This starts at the admissions process, where we have realigned counselor territory management strategies for transfer students to provide a more efficient experience. SU also has spearheaded a new cooperative venture to encourage students from the Delmarva Peninsula to attend college on the Eastern Shore. In collaboration with University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Wor-Wic Community College and Chesapeake College, our new collaborative web presence highlights academic programs and activities that promote transfer opportunities.

It is important for SU to be a transfer-friendly institution, and this includes answering questions on transfer credits and time-to-degree. SU's new policy gives credit to students who earn a Maryland community college associate degree, satisfying SU's General Education requirements and shortening their time to a bachelor's degree. Additionally, in light of COVID-19, SU also has been able to utilize existing housing capacity to guarantee on-campus housing for transfer students. This creates a friendlier transfer process for Marylanders and we are seeing a solid upward trend in our transfer deposits for the upcoming fall semester.

The money invested in SU by the State results in funds going toward the top priorities that have surfaced throughout the pandemic: keeping campus safe, providing support services to a student population not as well prepared as pre-pandemic classes for higher education, increasing recruitment and retention efforts, and ensuring our commitment to diversity and inclusion. As our modest employee-to-student ratios attest, SU is fulfilling its mission with fewer people and they remain dedicated to providing an excellent education and experience to our students (Figure 7).

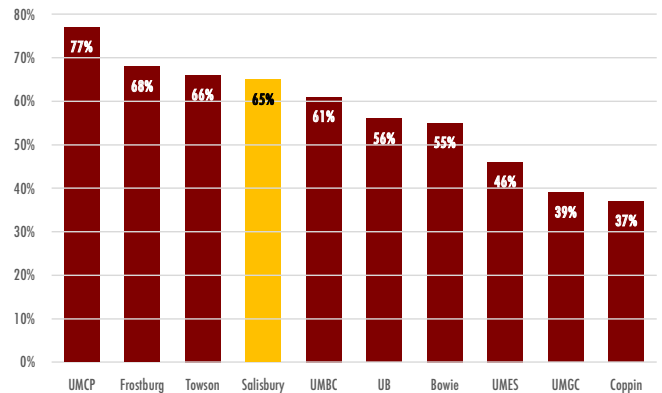
Clearly, additional investment at SU will increase the number of graduates in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

**Figure 5: Four-Year Graduation Rate (2014 Cohort)**



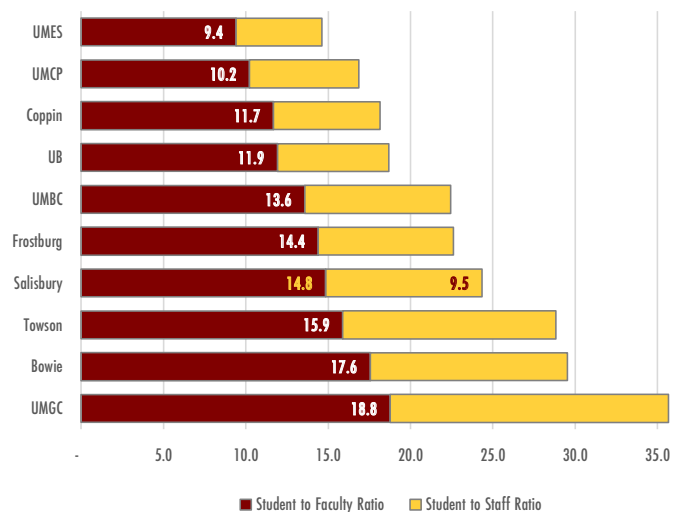
Source: Utilizing data from IPEDS database.

**Figure 6: Four-Year Graduation Rates of Maryland Community College Transfers (2016 Cohort)**



Source: Student Success - Retention and Graduation Rates - MD Community College USM Cohort for University System of Maryland - USM IRIS (usmd.edu)

**Figure 7: Student to Faculty and Student to Staff Ratios Fall 2020**



Source: Utilizing data from IPEDS database.



## Rebuilding for the Better

As stated in our mission, Salisbury University is committed to meeting the needs of our surrounding community and the State of Maryland. As the pandemic exposed several areas of concern in our region and across the State, SU again stands up to meet our obligation to **create a better tomorrow for all Marylanders**.

As small businesses struggled to launch and remain open, we expanded hours and resources at our Dave and Patsy Rommel Center for Entrepreneurship, which recently opened in Salisbury's growing Downtown business district. With SU's three decades of entrepreneurship competitions, which annually award \$300,000, and this new center, SU is uniquely positioned to **help businesses get back on their feet** and continue the pre-pandemic momentum of **innovation and creativity** across the State. These efforts are complemented by a growing focus on professional sales through SU's Mid-Atlantic Sales and Marketing Institute, which hosted in 2021 the National Shore Sales Challenge, the third largest professional sales competition in the country with teams from 45 campuses.

The national health care crisis also has accelerated the demand for more and better trained medical professionals and the need for equitable access to care. In the midst of the pandemic and beyond, SU is committed to **increasing our output in critical health care professions**, such as nursing. SU's School of Nursing continues to hold the top pass rate (95%) of all Maryland baccalaureate programs on the National Council Licensure Exam, and the graduates in our other health care programs also have higher than national average pass rates on their certification exams. Our recently established Center for Healthy Communities in our College of Health and Human Services was created with the goal of **providing resources and support to historically under-resourced communities**. Through workforce development grants, professional continuing education opportunities and partnering in community-based learning, some of the region's most vulnerable populations are receiving the services they so desperately need.



SU's commitment to health care and human services extends beyond the Eastern Shore. Recognizing the shortage of qualified mental health professionals, SU is increasing enrollment in our social work programs offered at multiple satellite locations around the State. By expanding access to our nationally accredited social work programs, SU is doing its part to **improve the practitioner pipeline.**

With our school systems struggling to meet the needs of students who have been in and out of the classroom throughout the pandemic, SU continues to prepare educators to work in PK through post-secondary settings and to serve in important leadership roles. SU's Seidel School of Education is well positioned to support priorities in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and its alumni are routinely recognized as Teachers of the Year. **Training teachers and leaders well prepared to support the needs of increasingly diverse learners** is a key focus for the Seidel School. Indeed, the diversity of PK-12 populations continues to grow at a faster rate in Maryland (+4.9%) than the U.S. (+3.3%). Caroline and Talbot counties (two of SU's seven partner districts) are among the top five counties in the State with the fastest growing English Learner populations. Currently, Maryland has more than 50 vacancies for PK-12-certified teachers in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). SU is the only institution of higher education in Maryland that offers a bachelor's degree in ESOL/K12 certification. More broadly, the State will need an additional 8,800 early childhood educators by the year 2025 and SU is well equipped to do its part to meet that need.



## Keeping All Safe and Sound

Throughout the pandemic, the primary goals for Salisbury University's response are to protect our students, faculty and staff, and to continue our vital missions of education, scholarship, service and community engagement. To realize these goals over the last two years, we have had to set up our own, on-campus comprehensive public health operation to serve both students and employees – and it has been a resounding success. **We have stayed open and our community has remained safe.** We continue to test, contact trace, and provide vaccinations and other health care services on our campus. SU has kept the public health operations on our campus because we believe in the guiding tenant that if we are going to remain open, we are committed to doing so safely and in a way that does not present a burden to our region's health care system.

SU has focused its attention on the growing challenges related to the mental health and wellness of our students. In addition to providing in-person resources and services, SU expanded operations to include on-demand telehealth visits, which many students prefer over traditional appointments. SU is meeting students in crisis where they are and providing much-needed support for those struggling.

The University also recognizes that the pandemic has affected everyone differently, particularly those who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. SU has ensured that **our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion** is reflected in our COVID-19 policies and our actions overall. Fostering an environment where everyone can feel a sense of belonging on our campus is paramount as we enhance our Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Its programs and partnerships provide the campus with the tools needed to ensure that SU is a welcoming and inclusive living and learning environment that prepares students to excel in a global workplace and in diverse communities.





## Conclusion

We are thankful for the leadership and support shown by the USM, helping Salisbury University navigate the pandemic while also maintaining our commitment to the important initiatives and programs that our students depend upon. SU continues to build on our strong foundation for student success and maintain our commitment to **access and affordability, diversity and inclusion, community engagement, and fiscal and environmental stewardship.**

We are proven stewards of the State's resources and achieve our goals through the hard work of our committed faculty, dedicated staff, and our bright and talented students – no matter what challenges come before us.

As President Wight's tenure as SU's president comes to an end, he is thankful for the support of our State's leaders and elected officials, strong engagement from alumni and philanthropic supporters, as well as the commitment of the USM Board of Regents, the Chancellor and USM staff. Over the last four decades, Wight has served in various academic roles across the country, and he believes, without reservation, that the ongoing and continued support of students' pursuit for higher education makes Maryland stand out. It's a major reason Maryland continues to be a state with high educational attainment, high income potential and one of the best places to be in the nation.

Presented By:  
President Charles A. Wight, Ph.D.

**Salisbury**  
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**Make Tomorrow Yours**

**UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**  
of MARYLAND

Salisbury University is a proud member of the University System of Maryland.

Salisbury University is an equal educational and employment opportunity institution. Please Note: Social distancing and mask wearing are absent in some photos in this issue as they were taken either prior to the COVID-19 pandemic or following applicable protocols at the time they were taken.

