Testimony Presented To

The Senate Subcommittee on Education, Business and Administration

The House Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development

By Janet Dudley-Eshbach
President
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www.salisbury.edu
Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. For the record, my name is Janet Dudley-Eshbach, and I am proud to be completing my seventh year as President of Salisbury University. The past year has easily been the most memorable and successful of my presidential tenure, capped by a series of historic events that will enable Salisbury University to sustain its rise to national distinction. I am grateful for the opportunity to share the highlights of our banner year with the Subcommittee, to thank each of you for your ongoing support and to speak about the exhilarating opportunities that lie ahead for this great institution.

A Maryland University of National Distinction

In 2006, Salisbury University solidified its reputation as one of America’s truly great universities, garnering important recognitions from the nation’s leading authorities on higher education excellence. We were named by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top five public universities of our classification in the northern United States. For the eighth consecutive year we were designated by The Princeton Review as one of “The Best 361 Colleges” in the U.S., and for the third straight year we were named by Kaplan Newsweek as one of “America’s 369 Most Interesting Schools.” Finally, Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine named Salisbury University one of the “100 Best Values in Public Colleges” in February 2007.

We have earned national acclaim despite receiving less state funding than all but one of our national performance peers and ranking last among University System of Maryland (USM) institutions in combined state operating support. This stands as testament to the caliber of SU’s faculty and staff, the extraordinary culture of private giving that has guided our institution through challenging times, and a commitment to exacting fiscal stewardship that enables us to invest the maximum possible share of public dollars in our classrooms and students.

A Banner Year for Salisbury University

Salisbury University’s unique ability to accomplish more with less resulted in resounding votes of confidence in 2006 from our most important constituencies. The Chancellor and Board of Regents, the Maryland General Assembly, the students and families we serve, and the alumni upon whom we depend so heavily have offered enthusiastic endorsements of our progress to date and confidence in our ability to sustain this momentum in the years to come.
Balancing Quality, Diversity and Enrollment Growth

Based largely upon our ability to balance affordability, access and quality on a limited budget, the Board of Regents last year designated Salisbury University as one of three “enrollment growth institutions” within the USM. In response, the General Assembly provided Salisbury University with the operating budget support needed to accommodate 323 additional students in 2006-07. I am pleased to report that Salisbury University has met and exceeded our ambitious enrollment target—our total student enrollment for the fall 2006 semester stood at 7,383, an increase of 374 students above the previous year. Provided that the funding support remains to sustain the state’s policy of enrollment growth, we are excited by this opportunity to open the doors to higher learning—and to the extraordinary personal and professional opportunities that come with a university diploma—for a greater number of deserving students.

I am thrilled to report that Salisbury University’s current student body is one of the most accomplished and, by far, the most racially, ethnically and geographically diverse in our history. Our average SAT range of 1050-1210 and average GPA of 3.5 both rank first among our national performance peers. Furthermore, 56 percent of all current SU students graduated in the top quarter of their high school graduating class. We are competing for Maryland’s best and brightest students, and we are keeping them. Our second-year retention rate of 81 percent ranks second among our national performance peers, and our four-year student graduation rate has led the USM for 18 of the past 19 years.

Salisbury University vs. Our Performance Peers (2005)

![Graphs showing comparisons between Salisbury University and its performance peers in average high school grade point average, SAT ranges, second-year retention rate, and six-year graduation rate.](image)

Fall 2005 Data Source for Graphs: Salisbury University Office of University Analysis, Reporting and Assessment
One of the benchmark goals of my presidency has been the establishment of a student body that reflects the remarkable ethnic and racial diversity of our state. We are meeting and exceeding that goal. Our minority population increased by nearly 10 percent over this past year, and it has really doubled over the past decade. Our total African-American and Latino enrollments each grew by 10 percent over the past year and are now at all-time highs. Our Asian-American enrollment is also at an all-time high, having grown by over 140 percent over the past decade. Furthermore, the globalization of SU’s student population continued over the past year, with 49 nations now represented within our student body.

A school that was once known primarily as an “Eastern Shore institution” has attracted an increasingly statewide constituency as our reputation has grown. Just a decade ago, 39 percent of our total student body came from the Eastern Shore, compared with 38 percent from the rest of Maryland. Today, 53 percent of our students hail from what we colloquially call the “Western Shore,” and eight of our top feeder counties are located on the other side of the Bay Bridge. SU’s growing reputation as a competitive yet affordable institution, the beauty of our campus, our small and interactive learning environments, and our convenient access to Maryland’s metropolitan regions have made Salisbury University a higher learning destination of first choice.

### A Statewide and Regional Economic Engine

Salisbury University’s rise to national acclaim has coincided with its emergence as one of the most powerful engines of Maryland’s knowledge-based economy. Our four professional schools are producing many of our state’s most sought-after health care professionals, high-tech workers, entrepreneurs and teachers.

Our concentration on workforce development is evidenced by our most popular fields of study. Currently, our five largest undergraduate majors are Business Administration, Communication Arts, Biology, Elementary Education and Nursing. Other workforce-oriented disciplines began with modest enrollment figures, but have experienced dramatic expansion in recent years as their reputations and market value have increased. Enrollment in our Respiratory Therapy program, for example, has grown by 150 percent since 2002, while our Marketing program has expanded from nine majors to 254 during that same period.
Closer to home, Salisbury University's Business, Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) provides our region's private sector leaders with information—such as consumer trends, demographic data and sector forecasts—that helps guide long-term business decisions. Two BEACON programs of note have proven extremely valuable in meeting the needs of our region's diversifying economy. The GrayShore initiative was established to educate service providers and local governments about the Shore’s growing aging population and to help them prepare for the effect of this demographic trend on our economy, workforce and service needs. Bienvenidos a Delmarva, a coalition of over 70 service providers, helps provide our region's growing immigrant population with the support services, community relationships and legal resources needed to secure stable, good-paying jobs. A recent study concluded that SU generates more than $350 million in annual, regional economic activity and sustains the equivalent of 3,000 local jobs.

Private Philanthropy for the Public Good

From its birth as a one-room schoolhouse in 1925, Salisbury University has been guided and sustained by a culture of private giving that is truly unique for public institutions of our size. For example, all four of our professional schools—the Seidel School of Education and Professional Studies, the Perdue School of Business, the Henson School of Science and Technology, and the Fulton School of Liberal Arts—are privately endowed, a relative rarity for schools such as ours.

This philanthropic ethic is a reflection of what SU has meant to the Delmarva Peninsula’s economy, culture and quality of life over the past 80 years. It also underscores the confidence that we have earned among our largest and most crucial stakeholders, and validates Salisbury University’s increasingly entrepreneurial approach to donor outreach. Without our ability to balance state appropriations with private support, Salisbury University could not have survived years of fiscal and budgetary uncertainty.

The Arthur W. Perdue Foundation: A Historic Investment in Maryland’s Economic Future

The SU community came together at several points over the past year to celebrate many extraordinary displays of generosity, each of which will shape our ability to balance affordability, access and quality for years to come. In March 2006, Jim Perdue announced an $8 million donation from the Arthur W. Perdue Foundation toward a new building for the Franklin P. Perdue School of Business. This contribution was the largest donation in Salisbury University’s history.

Along with anticipated State capital funds, this gift will be used to construct a state-of-the-art, 112,500 square-foot facility for the Perdue School’s academic, research and business outreach programs. Over the past decade, the Perdue School of Business has experienced 63 percent enrollment growth—by far the fastest rate of growth among our four academic schools—and is now ranked in the top 20 percent of all business schools in the United States. This building will equip our Perdue School with the learning technology it needs to solidify its growing national reputation while grooming tomorrow’s CEOs, accountants and finance officers for success in today’s global marketplace.

Taking Excellence to New Heights

In June, we celebrated SU’s 80th anniversary by launching our second multi-year Capital Campaign. Led by our private Salisbury University Foundation, the Campaign—titled Taking Excellence to New Heights—aspired to raise...
$25 million by 2012 for student scholarships, new and enhanced academic buildings, our NCAA athletic programs, and our acclaimed visual and performing arts. Because of our early success, we have increased our target to $30 million.

The Lucy Tull Scholarship Program: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Our Region and State

In December, we celebrated the announcement of a $5.3 million gift from the estate of Ms. Lucy Tull. This award—the largest individual donor gift in SU’s history, as well as our largest planned gift—will be used primarily to establish the Lucy Tull Scholarship Program for Eastern Shore students who wish to pursue a degree in Nursing or another of our allied health sciences. A portion of the gift also will be used for classroom supplies, learning technology and faculty development.

As the only institution that offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Nursing on the Eastern Shore, SU is working aggressively to respond to the growing statewide demand for highly-trained health care professionals. Enrollment in our Nursing Department has nearly doubled over the past five years and now ranks as one of SU’s five fastest-growing undergraduate majors. This gift will help us respond even more effectively to Maryland’s acute nursing shortage and to ensure that deserving students from our home region will have the opportunity to pursue careers in this important and rewarding profession.

In spite of this historic gift, however, we are increasingly concerned about the challenges posed by our own success in the health care marketplace. We have struggled mightily over the past five years to meet the demands of market-driven enrollment growth with limited financial resources. Our Nursing Department’s ability to produce workforce-ready nurses in sufficient numbers is threatened by below-market faculty salaries, inability to hire new doctoral-level faculty, increased workload, reduced administrative staffing and an insufficient number of field sites for clinical education. Over the long-term, Salisbury University’s ability to keep pace with market demand—at a time when Maryland’s population is growing and aging significantly—will depend upon a substantial increase in funding support. We ask that SU be included in all statewide effort to enhance funding of nursing programs.

Building for the Future

In September, the Salisbury University community gathered to officially break ground on our new Teacher Education and Technology Center (TETC). Actual construction of the three-story, 165,000 square foot facility began in July. The TETC will be ready for occupancy in 2008 and will eventually replace our aging and outdated Caruthers Hall—a 53,500 square-foot building that opened in 1955 and underwent renovation in 1979. It will house SU’s Seidel School for Education and Professional Studies, along with several departments from the Fulton School of Liberal Arts.

Upon completion, the TETC will forever change the aesthetics of our campus and the manner in which teaching and learning occur at Salisbury University. The TETC will feature a mega-computer lab, an interactive distance learning center, an integrated, wireless media center, “smart classrooms,” teaching methods labs, a photography center and
state-of-the-art broadcast production studios. It will bring our renowned teacher education programs, as well as our Communication and Theatre Arts Department, to the forefront of the Information Age.

By virtue of its memorable design elements and prominent location at the intersection of U.S. Route 13 and College Avenue, the TETC will finally provide Salisbury University with a distinctive visual identity for regional travelers and will offer current and prospective students a more welcoming entrance to our main campus. We are grateful for the construction funds that the General Assembly approved last year for this transformational project, and we will respectfully request your support for the $9.6 million that is contained in Governor O’Malley’s proposed FY 2008 capital budget for construction, furniture and equipment.

The enrollment growth that we have accommodated in recent years has placed considerable strain on SU’s finite supply of classrooms, laboratories, parking lots and living areas. Recognizing this challenge, and anticipating the effects of additional enrollment growth, SU is implementing a plan to redistribute many of our non-academic facilities and student services across U.S. Route 13. This area—commonly referred to as “East Campus”—already accommodates our athletic fields and houses many of our most popular community resources, including SU’s public access television studio and the Nabb Research Center.

Over the past year alone, we have added 630 student parking spaces on two parcels of leased property, moved our University Police headquarters to East Campus and have purchased 9.4 acres of prime industrial property for future campus development. As a result, we have been able to provide a portion of our freshman class with parking, an amenity that makes SU an even more attractive option for many of Maryland’s top students. It also has enabled us to prepare for continued enrollment growth while ensuring that the traditional elements of student life—such as classroom learning, private study and social engagement—remain centered upon our historic main campus.

2007: A Year of Innovation and Possibility

While Salisbury University can look back with justifiable pride upon a historic year of accomplishment, I wish to reassure this committee that we will not rest on our laurels in 2007. Instead, the administration, faculty and staff of Salisbury University
Salisbury University will continue to approach our unmet challenges with a shared spirit of innovation and possibility. In our ongoing effort to compete successfully for Maryland's most promising students, for example, we have initiated a five-year pilot study to make submission of SAT and ACT scores optional for certain SU applicants. Under the proposal approved by the Board of Regents, prospective students with high school grade point averages of 3.5 or higher will have the option of submitting these standardized test results with their applications.

It is our experience that primary dependence upon such standardized tests has disqualified too many accomplished students from consideration for admission and has even discouraged them from applying to Salisbury University. In addition to being an unreliable barometer of academic potential, such tests have added an element of social stratification to the college admissions process. Simply put, students who are able to invest considerable financial resources into private tutelage and prep courses generally outperform those students who are not.

With these considerations in mind, Salisbury University's admissions policies have evolved in recent years into a more comprehensive process, one that places greater emphasis upon a student's academic body of work and record of civic engagement. Over time, these factors have proven to be stronger predictors of academic success than the SAT or ACT. It is worth noting that several prominent institutions in the Mid-Atlantic region—including Drew University, George Mason University and Gettysburg College—have adopted test-optional admissions policies, as have three of our national performance peers.

We recognize that this philosophy is not shared universally and acknowledge that it may not survive the test of time. For now, we are truly excited to be the first institution within the USM to test this innovative admissions strategy.

Over the next year, we will also continue to evaluate the merits of a course-based curriculum. Currently used at many private colleges and universities, this model uses courses instead of credit hours as the basic measure of academic content. While our current credit-based curriculum requires at least 40 courses of three credits each for a degree, students in a course-based curriculum would take 32-35 courses to satisfy major and graduation requirements. While there are compelling arguments in favor of a course-based curriculum, we are also mindful that there are significant practical challenges that must be addressed prior to implementation and, therefore, intend to proceed with due caution.

Salisbury University elevated its statewide presence in 2006 by establishing programs at several of Maryland’s distance learning centers, and we will build upon this progress in the coming year. We have negotiated an agreement to offer our Social Work program at both Cecil Community College and the Eastern Shore Higher Education Center in Wye Mills. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed and interactive courses officially began at both campuses last month.

Beginning this fall, Salisbury University will offer a bachelor’s degree in Social Work at the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown. We are also working with the Universities at Shady Grove to establish a Respiratory Therapy program at its Rockville campus beginning in Fall 2008.

This is one of Salisbury University’s most exciting and timely academic initiatives. Distance learning centers such as these introduce Salisbury University to a wider audience of students and families and provide opportunities for affordable and convenient higher learning in communities not served by traditional four-year institutions. By expanding some of our most sought-after degree programs beyond SU’s traditional campus walls, we intend to reinforce the message that we are a
true statewide institution.

Finally, we continue to explore management innovations that will enable us to contain costs and operate more efficiently. For example, we recently entered a 15-year partnership with Pepco Energy Services to implement a series of energy conservation strategies throughout campus. These measures will be neither glamorous nor highly visible—they include upgrades to 1,700 plumbing fixtures, the replacement of aging mechanical equipment and the installation of thousands of upgraded, energy efficient lightbulbs.

These and other relatively simple steps, though, will eventually save SU at least $5.3 million in energy costs over the term of the agreement. Perhaps even more importantly, they will conserve the amount of water consumed annually by nearly 500 households and enough electricity to power 1,600 homes. Our emissions reductions will be equal to that which would be achieved by planting over 2,100 trees or taking nearly 1,600 cars off the road.

We also have implemented an online bill payment system that will, in due time, virtually eliminate the cost of postage, paper bills and invoices, along with credit card costs that have previously been paid by the University. These initiatives, together, offer measurable progress toward real cost containment and environmental sustainability—two of the most compelling and urgent policy goals of our time.

The Fiscal Year 2008 Budget

The Governor’s proposed Fiscal Year 2008 operating budget is important to Salisbury University’s ability to balance enrollment growth with academic excellence and institutional diversity. The Governor’s allowance, which would increase our base budget from $32.9 to $34.8 million, would allow SU to stay on course in our efforts to become more accessible to more deserving students. If approved, this budget will help provide Salisbury University with the means to sustain enrollment growth, preserve our high academic standards and prepare deserving students for success in today’s workforce.

We commend Chancellor Kirwan for his steadfast advocacy for funding to support enrollment growth. We remain concerned, however, that our cumulative level of state funding support—defined as our state appropriation per student, combined with Salisbury University’s in-state tuition charge—remains the lowest in the entire University System of Maryland.

Over the long term, our ability to accommodate a growing student population, attract and retain quality faculty and staff, dedicate more funds to need-based financial aid, and offer a distinctive student experience—those very goals that will determine our future success—will depend upon the adoption of an adequate funding protocol. We are hopeful that this issue of funding equity will be addressed in the coming months by the Commission to Develop the Maryland Model for Funding Higher Education.
Response to DLS Recommendations for USM

As you know, the Department of Legislative Services has issued a series of recommendations that would affect the University System of Maryland’s proposed operating budget:

- Reduce general funds for enhancement funding by $9.3 million;
- Mandate the USM to increase the transfer to fund balance by $9.3 million in FY 2008;
- Reduce the general fund appropriation for enrollment funding by $4.1 million.

I believe these recommendations, if adopted by the legislature, would hinder Salisbury University’s ability to compete successfully with our national peers, undermine our shared goals of access and quality, and jeopardize our ability to train workers for success in the knowledge-based economy. I would respectfully ask you to reject the analyst’s recommendations.

We are particularly concerned with the recommendation to reduce funding for enrollment growth from $7.2 million to $3.1 million. I believe the DLS analysis dramatically underestimates the full cost of enrollment growth at institutions that are approaching capacity. Our enrollment growth designation in 2005 came with the expectation to increase our student population by as many as 1,500 students over a five-year period, beginning with the 374 students that we accepted last fall.

When fully implemented, this initiative will increase Salisbury University’s student population by more than 20 percent. A multi-year commitment of this magnitude will require additional faculty and support staff; expanded classroom, laboratory and research space; an adequate supply of student housing; and increased funding in priorities such as public safety, student parking, counseling and dining services. Failure to make these corresponding investments would greatly diminish the quality of Salisbury University’s academic programs and overall campus experience.

Governor O’Malley’s budget proposal recognizes the unique cost obligations that come with enrollment growth and therefore would provide Salisbury University with a modest increase in funding for this purpose. Conversely, if the DLS recommended action is accepted by the General Assembly, our state support for enrollment growth in 2008 would drop to $1,598 per student—compared to the nearly $5,500 that we currently receive. This would further reduce our overall state appropriation per FTE— which at $5,035 currently ranks next to last within the USM—and would widen the existing gap between Salisbury University and the system average.

We simply could not accommodate enrollment growth in Fiscal Year 2008 under those circumstances. It is in the spirit of our shared commitments to access and quality that I personally ask you to reject this cut.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your consideration.
Salisbury University’s Teacher Education and Nursing programs are among our largest and most prominent, and they make an essential contribution to Maryland’s knowledge-based economy by producing highly-skilled, workforce-ready graduates. Given the importance of these programs to SU’s mission, we are not satisfied with passage rates that are consistently below our standards. Several timely initiatives have been developed to ensure that SU graduates in both fields are better prepared to pass their professional exams on the first attempt.

The following steps have been taken within our Seidel School of Education and Professional Studies to improve performance on the PRAXIS assessments:

- Requesting that faculty undertake a concerted study of PRAXIS II examinations in their content areas, both in terms of content tested by different portions of the exam and how that content knowledge correlates with required content-area courses;

- Careful review of student transcripts and plans of study to determine if there is an optimal time for candidates to take the PRAXIS II exam based on courses they have already completed and when they plan to complete other key courses. Based on that review, faculty will recommend the most meaningful and appropriate time for candidates to take the test(s);

- Offering PRAXIS II workshops to students in early methods courses. These workshops will review the ETS Test (At a Glance) materials, specifically focusing on areas of the test and the kinds of questions the test requires;

- Given the importance that PRAXIS II places upon subject-specific knowledge, and that social studies is the largest of all secondary content areas, Seidel School faculty are considering requiring candidates to complete the social studies minor; and

- Analysis of test results for patterns of performance so that future adjustments to this plan can be made.

With an 83 percent first-time passage rate, SU’s Department of Nursing has already experienced improvement in this year’s National Council Licensure Examination - Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) results. However, SU’s Nursing faculty is working closely with the Maryland Board of Nursing in an effort to ensure consistent progress and has also taken internal steps to prepare candidates more effectively for the NCLEX-RN. They include:

- Revising the curriculum to address areas identified as weak when NCLEX-RN results were analyzed;

- Completing online test item writing courses (basic or advanced) through the National Council of State Boards of Nursing;

- Revisiting the early admission policy with the goal of eliminating any person from the program—regardless of their admission status—if their performance is sub-standard in prerequisite courses;

- Increasing emphasis on individual and peer tutoring;

- Providing all graduating seniors the opportunity to take the online NCSBN Review for the NCLEX-RN and the MedsPub four-day review (held at SU) at no cost to the student; and

- Administering the HESI Exit Exam to graduating seniors in March 2006, which gave both faculty and students information on areas where students need increased preparation and provided students with a first-hand sense of what it is like to take a 150-item exam on a computer.

A more comprehensive seven-page follow-up report has been filed with the Maryland Board of Nursing that provides the details of the program changes. We are confident that, as a result of these changes, SU will experience continued improvement in this critical performance benchmark.
The President should comment on future plans to increase the need-based award.

The 2004 Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Higher Education called for Maryland’s higher education institutions to “review their aid programs and to target more funds to support students, including transfer students, with financial aid.” Consistent with that guidance, Salisbury University has significantly increased its commitment to need-based financial aid in recent years. In the 2000-01 academic year—my first as President—Salisbury University committed just $133,250 to need-based financial aid. In 2005-06, that number increased to $885,600—an increase of 565 percent. This year, we expect to award more than $1.1 million in need-based aid, an additional increase of 26 percent. We are proud of our aggressive efforts to become a more affordable institution for deserving students. As a result of our funding constraints, however, we continue to lag far behind our national performance peers in our delivery of need-based financial aid.

The DLS analysis correctly states that the average merit-based award was more than double the average need-based award in FY 2005. It must be pointed out, however, that a significant percentage of our merit-based dollars—45 percent in FY 2005—were actually granted to students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $10,000 or less. Therefore, over 65 percent of our total institutional aid dollars were granted to the students with the most need. From a recruiting standpoint, it is preferable to offer a qualified student with demonstrated need a merit-based award whenever possible. In FY 2007, Salisbury University intends to award more than 70 percent of its overall financial aid dollars to students with demonstrated need.

The President should comment on the current number of students accepted under the new admission policy for fall 2007.

Given that our Fall 2007 class will be the first to be admitted with our pilot test-optional policy in place, I believe it is too early to measure its full effect on the composition of our student body. It should be noted, however, that freshman applications have increased by more than five percent over last year. Of the 3,160 applicants that have been accepted to date, nearly 20 percent requested “testing optional” consideration. Once the recruiting season is complete and successful applicants have made their decisions for the upcoming academic year, we will be able to update the Subcommittee on the number of students that will enroll at SU due to this pilot program.