

Orlan M. Johnson  
Chairman  
University System of Maryland Board of Regents  
University System of Maryland  
3300 Metzerott Road,  
Adelphi, Maryland 20783

November 30, 2011

Dear Chairman Johnson,

We write as Faculty Senate leaders to express our appreciation for the objective process that has been structured to assess the proposed merger between the University of Maryland, College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore. In particular we are grateful that the focus of the study has encompassed institutions within the System as a whole, and the two universities subject to the potential merger effort. As faculty leaders we wish to address core values and strategic concerns outlined in the USM 2020 Strategic Plan, subject to significant impact by a merger between UMCP and UMB. In this letter we wish to express our concern that the proposed merger between UMCP and UMB will destabilize the University System of Maryland as a whole; divert resources from campuses and existing inter-institutional collaborations in order to pay for the merger costs; impede the goal to establish 325 new Maryland businesses leveraging synergies with the USM (the Maryland 325 Initiative); and create unanticipated consequences that will affect the ability of USM Institutions and Regional Centers to educate the next generation of Maryland's diverse workforce as we meet national and international competitiveness challenges.

All of the campuses in the System have evolved robust research and teaching models that benefit the citizens of Maryland and 152,000 students enrolled therein, while addressing the particular needs of the communities that sustain them. For instance, Baltimore-area campuses are deeply interwoven into the social and economic fabric of the City and neighboring counties and are key partners in anchoring local k-12, healthcare services,

not-for-profits, and revitalization efforts. Our diverse student populations often return to serve and strengthen communities that have nurtured their academic success. We are concerned that a truly local focus on communities, sustainability, economic and neighborhood revitalization, and student diversity may be lost if the merger proceeds and decision-making is disconnected from local perspectives. Our campuses are also key economic engines, supporting local businesses and infusing the communities surrounding them with a well-educated citizenry apt to put down roots, purchase a home, and become involved in civic life, arts, cultural and faith institutions. We wish to strengthen these local alliances, shortening commuting distances rather than extending them to 40 or more miles. All USM institutions have signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, and we believe introducing more UMCP to UMB commuting further clogs our congested highway arteries, and runs counter to our sustainability vision and values. Working with our communities and peers throughout the System, we also strongly advocate action on efficiencies discovered in the merger study process, such as technology-enabled exchange and collaboration. Where such collaborative tools and modalities have been under-developed or structurally impeded in the past, we urge new effort at maximizing new approaches that are “greener” and more effective.

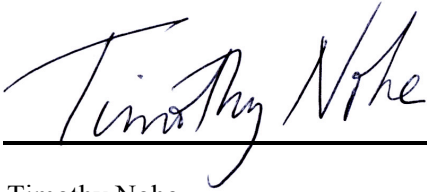
Through the merger study process USM campus leaders have been presented with an opportunity to identify barriers to collaboration and strategic deficits that must be addressed to meet the goals of the USM 2020 Strategic Plan. Demand for postsecondary higher education is projected to continue to rise, growing by almost 60,000 students, with 29,455 of that increase attending a Maryland public four-year institution by 2019. To meet that great demographic demand Institutions and Regional Centers throughout the State must be apportioned resources. USM institutions will increasingly be educating students who come from population groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education.

Baltimore area universities have built innovative and effective models for minority student success, especially in the STEM areas, which are absolutely key to the future economic development of Maryland. We are concerned that the resources that have

sustained these efforts, are recognized nationally, and which may serve as useful models for future innovations in higher education, may receive less support if a merger is to be implemented between UMCP and UMB. The merger may draw resources away from other Institutions and Regional Centers, creating a two-tier system of a powerful flagship and tertiary institutions. This new order may emerge just as the entire System faces significant demographic, pedagogical and economic development challenges.


We have received a charge in the 2020 Strategic Plan to forge close relationships with the private sector to seed new business developments in the State, producing a superbly educated workforce and translating our research efforts into products and innovations that improve life for all of Maryland's citizens. To be partners in the process of attainment the System must be equitably balanced to support faculty research and entrepreneurship, while we continue to promote success for students enrolled across all of the Institutions and Regional Centers. We believe that the System, State, and localities will be best served most fully through the support of research and teaching on each campus. If we are to sustain our national eminence by attracting, supporting, and retaining high-quality students, faculty, and staff we must remove impediments to closer inter-institutional collaboration *throughout* the System. We have produced a new map of these impediments through the merger study, and our campus leaders, working in concert with the System, can begin to renew and forge ties of collaboration, collegiality, and innovation in teaching, research and commercialization. We are thankful for this opportunity to examine our ties to each other, the localities that sustain us, and the State as a whole. We strongly encourage new efforts at building collaboration between our Institutions and Regional Centers, and discourage a merger between UMCP and UMB. We believe a merger between these institutions will imbalance the whole of the University System of Maryland, just as we have embarked on the unified work required to secure the goals of the 2020 Strategic Plan. In sum we believe that the success of our Institutions and Regional Centers will be linked to our nimbleness, responsiveness and creativity in the face of change, rather than in the size of our educational enterprise.

Signed,



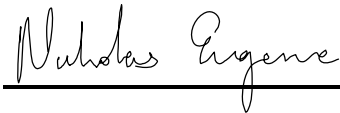
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