

WITH OUR PROGRAMS AND OUR PARTNERS, UMB WORKS TO IMPROVE RURAL HEALTH CARE

By Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
President, University of Maryland, Baltimore

As you might know, I was raised in Goldsboro, a small farming town in Caroline County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. From when I was very young, my parents — a farmer and a teacher — taught me the importance of education and the value of serving your community.

The Eastern Shore is a beautiful place, home to picturesque landscapes, charming small towns, and truly incredible people. But as is often the case in rural areas across the United States, the Eastern Shore grapples with a significant health care shortage.

My mother knew this. Even if she hadn't known that nearly the entire Eastern Shore is designated both a medically underserved area and a health professional shortage area by the federal government, our community experienced the challenges of finding

good, affordable care firsthand. Once I decided to pursue a career in medicine, my mother started to ask me, "How do you plan to fix the health care shortages at home?"

Here at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), our twofold mission to improve the human condition and serve the public good is by no means hemmed in by our city's boundary lines. As a preeminent health and human services university, we account for more than half of the medical and pharmacy degrees granted in the state of Maryland. We also account for nearly one-third of the master's-level nursing degrees and nearly half of the doctoral nursing degrees granted by all Maryland colleges and universities. Further, our entry-into-practice Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program graduates more than 400 students each year.



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UMB President Bruce Jarrell speaks to the University's unique position to address the health care access challenges that disproportionately affect Maryland's most rural counties.

This means we are uniquely positioned to address the health care access challenges that disproportionately affect Maryland's most rural counties. To do this — to make real, lasting impact — we not only need to continue to educate world-class health care providers, but we also need to create and maintain a pipeline that draws leading clinicians and practitioners to the Eastern Shore.

That is why we are working in partnership with the University of Maryland Medical System, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and others to implement an ambitious plan to bridge the rural health care gap in our state. Central to our commitment is the development of an educational ecosystem supported by unique scholarship opportunities for UMB students who agree to serve on the Eastern Shore after graduation; clinical rotations and professional training opportunities that immerse UMB students in hands-on experiences in a rural setting; and student mentorship and curriculum input from health care providers on the Eastern Shore.

With nearly \$3 million in state support and additional funding from private donors, our School of Medicine established the Rural-MD Scholars Program to train and place students in rural health care settings. Having just wrapped their first year in the program, the inaugural cohort has already benefited from interactions with Eastern Shore health care professionals and hands-on clinical experiences. In the future, the program aims to provide full scholarships for up to 10 new students a year who will go on to serve the Eastern Shore's medically underserved areas.

To address the severe nurse workforce shortage in the region, our School of Nursing is in the planning stages with University of Maryland Shore Regional Health, working toward establishing a holistic nursing education pathway and a dedicated clinical excellence center to recruit, educate, and retain nurses.

Our School of Dentistry also is sensitive to the needs on the Eastern Shore. After all, up to 25 percent to 30 percent of children in the region do not receive

regular dental or oral health care. This gap in care can have long-term impacts on a patient's overall health; dental decay correlates with significantly increased risks of heart disease mortality, chronic dental pain, and overall quality of life.

Our School of Pharmacy (UMSOP) and School of Graduate Studies (UMSGS) also are expanding their reach in Maryland's rural communities. UMSOP's Pharmapreneurship model and partnership with Salisbury University provide outstanding career options for students, and, throughout the Eastern Shore, students in the UMSGS Physician Assistant Program are providing hands-on, direct patient care in family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, emergency medicine, pediatrics, and behavioral health.

And our efforts won't stop there. Over time, each of our seven schools — and many of our partners across the state — will play a part in UMB's Eastern Shore Pathways initiative. These efforts demonstrate our University's dedication to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and public service, and the impact of this work will be felt throughout rural Maryland for generations to come.

My dear friend Lawrence Hayman is as adamant as my mother was that Maryland's Eastern Shore can become — and will soon become — a place where residents can access the highest quality health care. Three years ago, Lawrence, a lifelong Eastern Shore resident and a childhood friend of mine, made a transformational bequest to help make this vision a reality.

Thanks to the support of folks like Lawrence and that of the state, our partners, and countless other donors, this vision — and my mother's — is coming into clearer view.

TO LEARN MORE about opportunities to help address the urgent need for health care professionals across Maryland's Eastern Shore, please contact:

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