

ENSURING EXCELLENCE: A CALL TO ACTION!

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE

FALL 2015 OPENING CONVOCATION

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Good morning HAWKS! Welcome back!

I hope you had a productive and enjoyable summer and that you return to campus with renewed energy! I hope you can see the many changes occurring on campus and that you feel the charge of excitement in the air! Are you ready?! I hope you are chomping at the bit, ready for the gates to open to begin the 2015-16 academic year. We are about to welcome a bumper crop of eager new freshmen, transfers and returning students. I am excited, especially after that rousing presentation by Delatorro! Let's give him another hand!

Let me start by stating, for the record, "The state of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore is SOUND"!

Before we look forward, I want to take some time to look back. 2014-15 was a year of challenge and change that is ushering in a new year of excitement and progress. Last year, for the third year in a row, we fell short of our budgeted enrollment target, resulting in a significant budget shortage. However, we pulled together, tightened our purse strings and finished the year with a balanced budget, as required. To help meet our enrollment target for this year, we

contracted with an external agency, Royall & Company, in mid-spring 2015. As a result, and through the hard work and dedication of UMES staff and faculty, we are expecting to meet or exceed our enrollment goal, which we modestly set at 4,434 students.

This past year saw many people come and go, but we know as we continue to build Team UMES, we do so with talented and committed team members. I want to welcome new members to the UMES family. The division heads will introduce their new team members at the end of the program. I would like to introduce new members of the executive leadership team. Kevin Appleton, vice president for administrative affairs; Dr. Jason DeSousa, vice president for student affairs & enrollment management; and Dominick Murray, Interim Executive Director of Business & Economic Development. Welcome to all new Hawks!

Because of all of you, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore is and will remain one of the best universities in the nation and a great place to learn and work. I am beginning my fourth year as president more excited and energized than ever. This is our year to make UMES all that it can be and to realize the great potential that resides within this university, its faculty, staff and students.

You all know by now my vision for the University of Maryland Eastern Shore: moving “From Excellence to Eminence” - distinction, fame and recognized superiority. I’ve said it before and I will say it again, “From Excellence to Eminence” is more than a slogan or mantra. It is a state of mind, a way of life, and a statement of expectation. It is UMES declaring to the world that we expect to start with excellence as the baseline. We expect to engage in continuous improvement. We aim high to move our university to its next level.

We can point with pride to a number of accomplishments for 2014-15.

- UMES ranked among the nation’s top 10 HBCUs on “return-on-investment” based on the average starting salary for graduates when compared to tuition.

- **UMES ranked among the top 10 most-diverse HBCUs based on student demographics.**
- **UMES ranked 23rd among HBCUs according to the 2014 U.S. News & World Report survey.**
- **The Association of Public Land-grant Universities named UMES a co-winner of its “1890 University of the Year” award in 2014 for overall excellence.**
- **UMES has been recognized as the nation’s best public historically black institution for its “green” efforts in utilizing alternative energy.**
- **UMES’ PGA golf management program gained national attention and support through its affiliation with legendary golfer, Charlie Sifford. And UMES became the nation’s first higher education institution to sponsor a collegiate chapter of the Executive Women’s Golf Association.**
- **UMES had the highest graduation rate of student-athletes in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, for the sixth year in a row.**
- **As a charter member of MEAC, UMES has 26 conference titles, including 2014-15 team titles in men’s cross country and women’s bowling.**
- **UMES’ Harry T. Hawk was voted the nation’s best college basketball mascot (Fall 2014) in an inaugural online poll that included many of NCAA’s Division 1 basketball powers.**

We also have numerous individual accomplishments by our students, faculty and staff. I will simply say to you all, “Well done; you have represented us well”.

I want to turn now to the future and to my challenge to you. As we move into the 2015-16 academic year, our most critical imperative is reaffirmation of accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In April 2016, a visiting team of peer reviewers will conduct an on-site visit to verify evidence that the university is doing what it says it is doing in our self-study report. They will be here to see whether we “walk the walk” or just “talk the talk”. The self-study report is our opportunity to frankly and thoroughly assess ourselves as measured against the 14 standards of excellence of the Middle

States Commission. This process requires the entire campus and its constituencies to be involved. The Steering Committee and Working Groups have been working diligently over the past year to prepare a draft of the self-study report, and I know many of you have been involved. Over the next weeks and months, it is critical that you become involved in preparation for the April visit. Everyone – administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni and the UMES community - must be knowledgeable about this process and how we are demonstrating our compliance. You will be hearing a lot more about the Middle States accreditation process between now and April.

TODAY, MY MESSAGE IS A CALL TO ACTION FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT - ENSURING EXCELLENCE. TO GO “FROM EXCELLENCE TO EMINENCE,” WE MUST ENSURE THE BASELINE—EXCELLENCE.

You may recall that in past opening sessions I quoted Tom Friedman, acclaimed New York Times columnist and author of the best-selling book, *The World Is Flat*, who said, “Average is over”; “Add value, everyday”; “Find your unique value contribution”; and “Be creatively non-routine”. Well, today I want to quote a few famous leaders. At the 1963 March on Washington, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about “the fierce urgency of now”, as a way to describe the need for “immediate, vigorous and positive action” on civil rights. We have arrived at a “fierce urgency of now” in the future of our university. Mahatma Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world”. And President Obama, among others, said, “If not now, when? If not me, who?”

ARE YOU THE ONE? Are you the one who is going to take action “now” to change our world by making EXCELLENCE the baseline for yourself, your unit, our students and our university? **ARE YOU THE ONE?**

Let’s do a little exercise. Let me have 10 people stand up to my left and 10 to my right. Now, suppose any one of you in the audience just found out that you had a life-threatening condition and you had to undergo surgery. You have a choice between two doctors. One doctor is fairly easy to get an appointment with,

charges reasonable fees, and usually had a good bedside manner; but on average only 3 out of 10 of patients that he operated on survived six years out. So for the 10 folks standing on my right, seven of you sit down. You're dead.

By comparison, the other doctor is not that easy to get in to see, costs more, and does not have the best bedside manner; but after six years, 8 out of 10 of his patients are still alive. So, patients on my left, two of you sit down. You're dead.

Which doctor would you choose? For the past several years, our six-year graduation rate has hovered around 30 percent - or 3 in 10.

Our students have choices. Our competitive advantages of access, affordability, and a vibrant, interpersonal learning environment will be irrelevant if we do not place greater emphasis on student success. You want a good outcome when you go in for surgery and our students want a good outcome when they go to college. We must Ensure Excellence in our student success outcomes.

This is your call to action: Ensure Excellence is the baseline for everything we do. We cannot be mediocre, average, or even good. We must begin with a baseline of Excellence. If you see something, say something, or better yet, do something. Don't assume that because it has always been that way, it has to be that way. Albert Einstein said the definition of insanity is doing something over and over again and expecting a different result. "If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got." Some things we need to continue doing; some things we need to start doing; and some things we need to stop doing. In Ensuring Excellence, we will identify what to continue, what to start, and what to stop.

I challenged you to BE THE ONE: THE ONE to show up; THE ONE to realize your unique value contribution; THE ONE to be creatively non-routine; THE ONE to make a difference. As individuals, we must BE THE ONES to ENSURE EXCELLENCE for our students.

I want to briefly touch on four imperatives for this upcoming year:

1. TO ENSURE EXCELLENCE IN OUR SELF-STUDY & ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Our number one goal this year is to ensure a successful accreditation process. Our future depends on it. In the process, we will ensure that our mission guides everything we do. We will provide evidence for the things we are doing well, and pat ourselves on the back as we continue looking at ways to move from Excellence to Eminence. We will identify things that need improvement and we will develop strategies for continuous improvement as we Ensure Excellence in these areas. And we will form the basis for our next strategic plan as we chart the course for the next 5 years in the life of our great university.

2. TO ENSURE EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT SUCCESS OUTCOMES

We must do a better job in improving student success outcomes. In addition to the needs and expectations of our students, state and federal accountability standards demand improvement. This year, we will implement several new initiatives to improve student and faculty engagement, intrusive advisement, and curricular and co-curricular activities focused on student success.

3. TO ENSURE EXCELLENCE IN OUR CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

Creating a positive campus climate, built on trust is critical to our success. We must ensure the pillars of Hawkspitality – the I-CARE core values of Integrity, Commitment, Accountability, Respect and Excellence - are enforced and reinforced campus wide. Those core values must undergird everything that we do.

We must continue initiatives to improve working conditions for faculty and staff. These include professional development and implementation of the Campus Climate Survey action plan.

4. TO ENSURE EXCELLENCE IN OUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING AND LEARNING

We are committed to providing resources to support a strong learning environment. We are in the process of developing a new 10-year facilities master plan, which will chart the footprint for an ever-expanding campus. This year, we will occupy the new state-of-the-art engineering and aviation sciences building. At 163,500 square feet, it will be the university's largest and will feature a geothermal energy system. We had to push back our request for a new library within the University System of Maryland and the state Department of Budget and Management capital projects list to accommodate our urgent need for a school of pharmacy and health professions facility. The Board of Regents has approved planning funds for 2017 with construction completed in 2020. We need to continue to lobby our legislators to support our capital project needs.

It will take ALL OF US, giving our best efforts, every day, to Ensure Excellence. UMES is important and impactful to the lives of everyone on the Eastern Shore, in the state, the nation, and the world. HOW we do our job here matters.

I enter this new academic year, my fourth year, excited and energized, ready to create the future for UMES that I know we can reach. I need you to believe that we can achieve it. I need you to be "The ONES" who will make a difference for our students and our university by ENSURING EXCELLENCE.

THANK YOU!!!