BOLD MOVES

Strategic Ambitions for the Future of UMBC

UMBC

From the beginning, UMBC was a bold move.

Conceived during an era of great expansion of access to higher education in the U.S., UMBC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1963, the result of numerous commissions that recommended expanding higher education in the state. One of those, in 1962, asserted in its report:







FROM THE COMMISSION · MARYLAND **1962**

"...the Commission is convinced that as many qualified young people as possible should actually be encouraged to obtain the advanced technical or academic training they will need to find career opportunities in our society. Both the economic development of Maryland and even our survival as a nation may ultimately depend upon a successful effort to upgrade the skills of our population."

– REPORT OF THE COMMISSION, 1962

On the day UMBC opened its doors, September 19, 1966, Chancellor Albin O. Kuhn wrote to students:

FROM CHANCELLOR ALBIN O. KUHN **SEPTEMBER 19, 1966**

"We do not expect UMBC to be quite like any other campus. Each of you brings individual backgrounds, talents, and education to our new campus. Collectively, you are a different student body from any previously assembled. In working with the faculty and staff of UMBC, make the most of this opportunity to help create a center of learning in which those who give their best in the laboratory and on the playing field develop a brilliance that is the mark of their efforts and the UMBC environment."

– TO THE FIRST STUDENTS · OPENING DAY

From the start, UMBC knew who it was, what it aimed to be…and that it was different. And that has made all the difference.

Expanding educational access, welcoming learners from all backgrounds, sharing in the creation of excellence in service to the public, and engaging deeply with communities near and far were all there at UMBC's founding and in its early days. In the 60 years that have followed, UMBC has made bold move after bold move, growing from a three-building campus with 750 students, 45 faculty members, and 35 staff members, to an institution serving students in multiple locations, including at the Universities at Shady Grove, and in multiple modalities, including online. Today, UMBC has graduated more than 100,000 students; we are a globally recognized model of inclusive excellence; an R1 research university with more than $180 million a year in research expenditures and distinctive strengths across the arts, humanities, social sciences, sciences, and engineering; and a national leader in community-engaged scholarship, research, and service.

Today, the world is changing rapidly in ways that are both profound and unpredictable. Society is more divided than ever; public institutions and democratic systems are under attack; and complex global challenges, including climate change, weigh heavily in our everyday lives and in the prospect for our future. At the same time, the value of higher education is being questioned, and inclusion is positioned in many places as a barrier to excellence instead of integral to it.

THE MOMENT DEMANDS OUR COMMITMENT, OUR FOCUS, AND BOLD MOVES.

UMBC is still clear on who it is and what it aims to be. We are still different. Boldly, proudly so. With this strategic plan, we honor the past and commit anew to pursue our public mission and our vision of inclusive excellence. We reaffirm our values and our purpose and set our sights on our highest priorities.

Across five key strategic pillars focused on student opportunity and success; teaching and learning; research and creative achievement; organizational innovation and vitality; and Maryland and its communities, UMBC will make bold moves.

We imagine a day when anyone admitted to UMBC can come to UMBC.

We imagine student success not just as completion rates, but rather as a Retriever Promise–a defined set of opportunities, experiences, and outcomes that every UMBC student can expect.

We imagine scaling the transformative impacts of our signature programs to all UMBC learners. We imagine building on our excellence in undergraduate teaching and community engagement to prepare all students for professional success, local and global engagement, and lifelong thriving.

We imagine a thriving research and creative achievement enterprise whose excellence is defined by its inclusiveness and its public impact.

We imagine an organization where employees from all backgrounds are supported in their thriving and growth, where we invest in what matters most, and where we cultivate sustained excellence for future generations of UMBC.

And we imagine our mission as advancing the public good in all we do and contributing to the vitality and well-being of the State of Maryland, especially our closest neighbors in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We imagine an educational ecosystem, Honoring the Potential, that will support the long-term educational success of Marylanders from their earliest years to and through college. We imagine our role as a launchpad and a leader in partnering with industry and the public sector, leveraging our distinctive expertise, location, and opportunities to fuel innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development.

These are among the bold moves we will make in UMBC's future, which begins now. This is worthy work, and we commit to pursuing it together, with steadfastness and with gratitude, on behalf of our students, the state of Maryland, and the world.

Vision and Values

In 2016, as UMBC reflected on and celebrated its 50th year as a public university in Maryland, our community looked to the future and articulated a vision for UMBC that boldly asserted our purpose. The vision statement continues to inspire us, and it is this shared imagining of the future that drives our strategic plan.

OUR VISION **2016**

Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.

The UMBC community shares a commitment to a set of core values that guide our work every day and inform our aspirations for the future. In the fall of 2024, the community reaffirmed these values through a campuswide Core Values survey. Five core themes emerged:

01 Inclusive Excellence — **MOST STRONGLY HELD**

02 Student Success — **CORE VALUE**

03 Academic Excellence — **CORE VALUE**

04 Community Engagement — **CORE VALUE**

05 An Innovation Mindset — **CORE VALUE**

Inclusive excellence was, by far, the most frequently cited value among survey participants, and it is the community's most strongly held commitment. It is, therefore, embedded meaningfully throughout the strategic plan; inclusive excellence is the lens through which we envision our future, and our aspirations for inclusive excellence live in every goal of this plan. The four other core values articulated by our community are deeply connected to inclusive excellence and to one another. This plan reaffirms these values and, across five mutually reinforcing strategic pillars, sets ambitious goals to more fully live them.

At UMBC, inclusive excellence is a shared commitment to building a community where every person—regardless of role, identity, or background—can participate fully, contribute meaningfully, and thrive. It is rooted in the belief that there is no hierarchy of human value, and that our excellence as an institution depends on every member's ability to belong, grow, and shape this community alongside each other. How we engage in dialogue, how we share responsibility, and how we hold ourselves accountable all flow from this recognition. We believe that excellence is only possible when diversity, inclusion, equity, access, belonging, and civic learning are intentionally woven into the daily life, policies, practices, and expectations of our entire community.

Inclusive excellence at UMBC includes developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to build communities where everyone can flourish. As a community, we listen deeply; reflect critically on the systems we inhabit; engage across differences with curiosity, honesty, and respect; build trust; navigate conflict constructively; and work together toward meaningful, equitable change. We hold ourselves accountable to these aspirations and to the people whose belonging and thriving depend on them.

Strategic Pillars

PILLAR 1

GROW — Grow Student Opportunity and Success

We will provide equitable access to a UMBC education and seek the success of every UMBC student. In pursuing these ambitions, we will serve more learners from Baltimore and from across the state, and we will boldly redefine student success and UMBC's role as a bridge to lifelong thriving.

PILLAR 2

TRANSFORM — Transform Teaching and Learning

We will foster a faculty that reflects the diversity of Maryland and our student body and nurture their growth as innovative teachers and mentors. We will advance pedagogies and curricula to prepare students for professional success, local and global engagement, and lifelong curiosity.

PILLAR 3

REDEFINE — Redefine Excellence in Research and Creative Achievement

We will build and nurture a research and creative achievement ecosystem that serves the public good, whose excellence is defined by its inclusiveness—reflected in the people who comprise it, the work they do, and the principles, practices, and methods they embrace.

PILLAR 4

CULTIVATE — Cultivate Organizational Innovation and Vitality

We will retain and renew a world-class employee community of staff and faculty and support its ongoing excellence. We will foster success by nurturing an inclusive, accessible culture and investing in tools, infrastructure, and systems that empower our people, strengthen effectiveness, and spark innovation.

PILLAR 5

STRENGTHEN — Strengthen Maryland and Its Communities

As a collaborative institutional anchor, a top attractor and developer of talent, and a national leader in ethical, community-engaged research and learning, we will advance the public good and contribute to the vitality and well-being of the State of Maryland and our neighboring communities.

PILLAR 1

GROW



Grow Student Opportunity and Success

We will provide equitable access to a UMBC education and seek the success of every UMBC student. In pursuing these ambitions, we will serve more learners from Baltimore and from across the state, and we will boldly redefine student success and UMBC's role as a bridge to lifelong thriving.

PILLAR 1

GROW

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 1:

Expand equitable access and advance our mission as a public institution in Maryland by growing the student body strategically and serving more students from Baltimore and throughout Maryland

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will build and expand pathways to UMBC, strengthening partnerships with public schools, community colleges, and other institutions, creating clearer routes to credentials, undergraduate and graduate degrees, and lifelong learning.
- We will address financial, housing, administrative, and other barriers to access that stand between students and a UMBC education.
- We will grow with purpose, creating a comprehensive enrollment strategy across undergraduate, master's, PhD, and non-degree programs.

GOAL 2:

Foster belonging, well-being, and holistic thriving by strengthening coordination among student-centered programs and supports and addressing barriers to success

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will know our students and meet their needs early, using data, technology, and meaningful relationships to enable informed decision making and provide personalized support.
- We will create a coordinated student experience, connecting academic support and advising, basic needs, mental health, engagement, and other services to ensure a continuity of care and connection.
- We will invest in welcoming, well-maintained, accessible, and safe campus environments and experiences that anticipate students' needs, strengthen belonging, and foster well being.

GOAL 3:

Support academic development and career readiness for every UMBC learner and reimagine our work as preparing graduates for lifelong success and engagement in a global community

OUR COMMITMENT

- Embodied in a new Retriever Promise initiative, we will boldly redefine student success, articulating and focusing on delivering a set of opportunities, experiences, and outcomes that every UMBC student can expect. We will take the best of UMBC's signature educational opportunities and scale their impact for all students. We will ensure that all UMBC learners have equitable access to meaningful, high-impact experiences, and that students leave UMBC equipped with the capacities, perspectives, and practices to navigate and thrive in a changing world.

PILLAR 2

TRANSFORM



Transform Teaching and Learning

We will foster a faculty that reflects the diversity of Maryland and our student body and nurture their growth as innovative teachers and mentors. We will advance pedagogies and curricula to prepare students for professional success, local and global engagement, and lifelong curiosity.

PILLAR 2

TRANSFORM

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 1:

Grow the diversity of the faculty, broadly conceived, to advance excellence in teaching and learning

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will strengthen and expand diverse pipelines to the professoriate, challenging traditional practices and creating pathways to identify, attract, and retain outstanding faculty.
- We will cultivate a culture of excellence, innovation, and inclusion in which faculty from all backgrounds are welcomed, valued, supported, and empowered to thrive, contribute, and lead.
- We will invest in faculty success throughout their UMBC experience, providing purposeful onboarding, mentoring, and professional development.

GOAL 2:

Develop and support pedagogical technologies and innovative, inclusive approaches to teaching and mentoring

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will modernize accessible learning environments, technology, and infrastructure that enables innovative and inclusive teaching and learning.
- We will advance a culture of excellence that rewards and integrates outstanding teaching and mentoring with research, scholarship, and creative achievement.

GOAL 3:

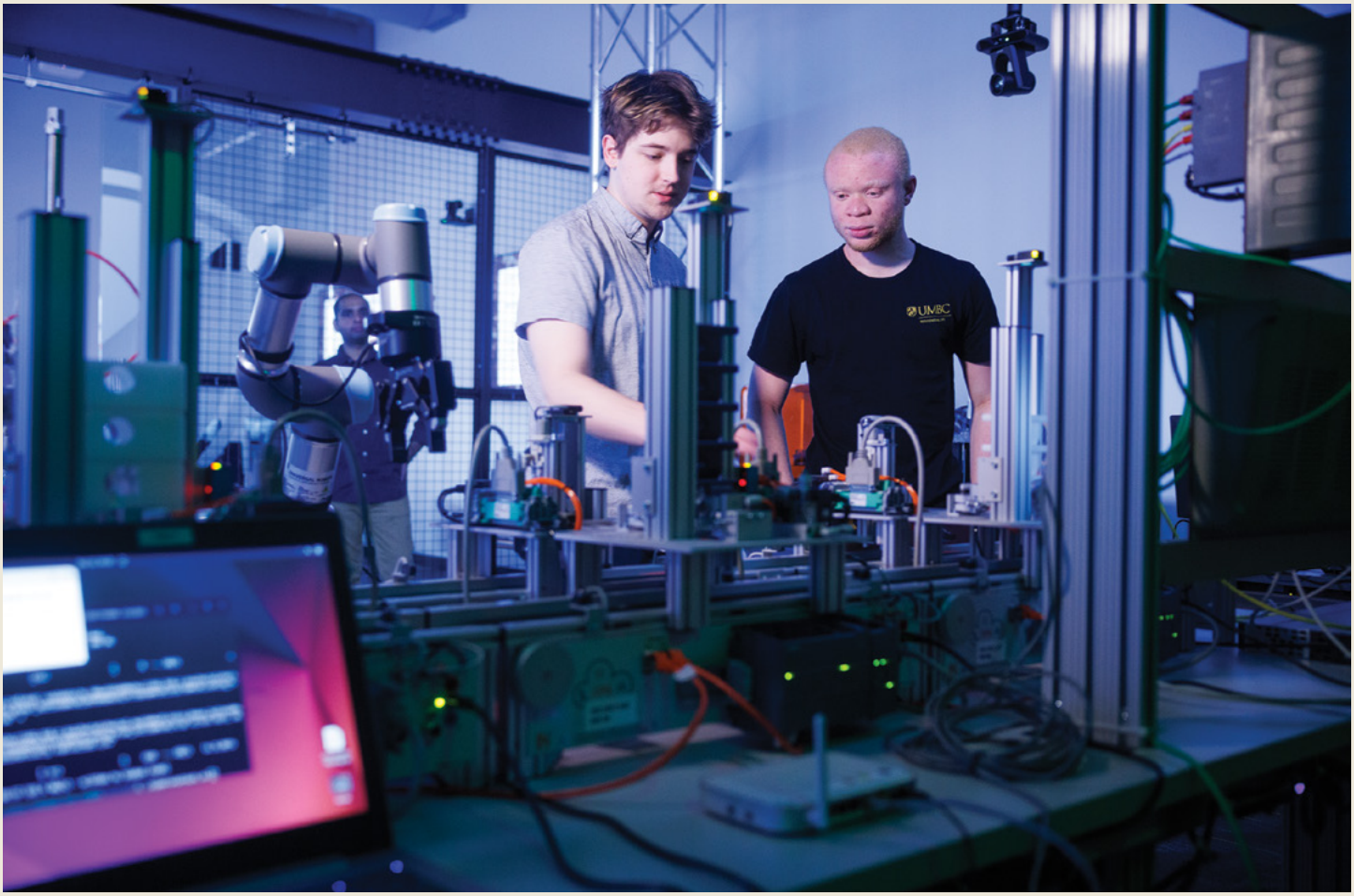
We will make the integration of academic learning, research, community engagement, and career-connected experiences a hallmark of a UMBC education, and we will grow doctoral education into a distinctive strength of UMBC.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will expand global learning and engagement, developing the cultural fluency, perspectives, and empathy our students need in an interconnected world.
- We will examine and renew our curriculum to keep pace with a changing world, integrating emerging fields, interdisciplinary approaches, and experiential learning.
- We will set a course for the future of graduate education at UMBC, supporting an inclusive environment for graduate study and strengthening career pathways from it.

PILLAR 3

REDEFINE



Redefine Excellence in Research and Creative Achievement

We will build and nurture a research and creative achievement ecosystem that serves the public good, whose excellence is defined by its inclusiveness—reflected in the people who comprise it, the work they do, and the principles, practices, and methods they embrace.

PILLAR 3

REDEFINE

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 1:

Advance excellence in research and creative achievement by becoming and being recognized as a destination for those seeking a welcoming, vibrant, and diverse research and creative community

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will nurture an inclusive culture that attracts and supports a diverse community of scholars throughout research and creative achievement.
- We will invest in physical and administrative infrastructure to sustain and grow our research activity and enable researchers and scholars in all disciplines to produce their most consequential work.
- We will ensure that undergraduate and graduate students are integrated into every aspect of our research and creative enterprise.
- We will make UMBC's research and creative excellence visible regionally, nationally, and internationally, elevating the people, work, and impact that distinguish our university.

GOAL 2:

Lead in community-engaged research and creative work that contributes meaningfully to the public good and strengthens public trust in higher education.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will make Baltimore City and Baltimore County a defining focus of UMBC's community-engaged research and creative achievement to advance shared priorities and the public good.
- We will connect and coordinate the university's community-based research, learning, and civic engagement to expand and deepen its collective impact.
- We will model community engagement grounded in trust and respect, setting a standard for how universities and communities work together.

GOAL 3:

Advance interdisciplinary collaborations and inclusive inquiry across the arts, humanities, social sciences, sciences, and engineering to create knowledge that serves humankind in the age of AI

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will transform internal structures and cultures to reduce barriers to interdisciplinary and interdivisional research and creative endeavors.
- We will enhance opportunities and pathways to discipline-crossing work and ideas with the potential to redefine fields and create knowledge in service of humanity.
- We will bring the full breadth of UMBC's expertise to bear in addressing consequential challenges, building signature areas of research and creative achievement in the process.

PILLAR 4

CULTIVATE



Cultivate Organizational Innovation and Vitality

We will retain and renew a world-class employee population and support its ongoing excellence. We will foster success by nurturing an inclusive, accessible culture and investing in tools, infrastructure, and systems that empower our people, strengthen effectiveness, and spark innovation.

PILLAR 4

CULTIVATE

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 1:

Instill a culture of long-term fiscal planning and strategy and a shared understanding of our financial model

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will develop and execute a multi-year financial strategy that positions UMBC to achieve its long-term ambitions.
- We will redesign and communicate a clear and consistent annual budget process that aligns resources with our values and priorities, strengthens accountability, and provides flexibility to respond to changing needs and opportunities.
- We will build data- and technology-enabled financial systems that provide timely insight, inform decision-making, and advance responsible stewardship of resources.
- We will grow a more diverse and sustainable revenue base, expanding philanthropy and other sources of support for UMBC's strategic ambitions.

GOAL 2:

Cultivate the recruitment and success of a diverse workforce and its sense of belonging and well-being in an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming environment

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will expand and strengthen our recruitment practices and pipelines to attract a talented workforce that reflects the diversity of Maryland and our world.
- We will make UMBC a destination workplace, creating an experience in which staff and faculty at all stages of their careers feel valued, supported, and connected to our mission and community.
- We will invest in accessibility enhancements and a workplace that fosters belonging and well-being broadly.

PILLAR 4

CULTIVATE

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 3:

Equip employees to excel and evolve through consistent professional development and learning opportunities and the technology and infrastructure they need to succeed

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will enhance UMBC's professional development, including leadership and supervisor training, to ensure effective management and coaching, stewardship of resources, and accountability.
- We will invest in technology, infrastructure, and training–including in the effective, ethical, and appropriate adoption of AI in the workplace–to help every employee to thrive.
- We will create and expand opportunities for staff and faculty to engage with one another in coaching, mentoring, and peer-learning.

GOAL 4:

Strengthen systems, policies, and processes to promote efficiency, environmental sustainability, innovation, and informed decision-making

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will implement robust, data-informed decision-making practices to align resources with institutional priorities and ensure effective, sustainable allocation of resources.
- We will develop comprehensive institutional strategies and policies to support effective data management and the use of AI-supported technologies.
- We will create enterprise-wide internal communications strategies and strengthen communications systems, tools, and practices.
- We will model environmental responsibility as an organization and a community, employing best practices in how we build and operate and how we procure, use, and sustain resources.

PILLAR 5

STRENGTHEN



Strengthen Maryland and Its Communities

As a collaborative institutional anchor, a top attractor and developer of talent, and a national leader in ethical, community-engaged research and learning, we will advance the public good and contribute to the vitality and well-being of the State of Maryland and our neighboring communities.

PILLAR 5

STRENGTHEN

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 1:

Partner in continuing to strengthen public education in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and across the state through initiatives that help educators and students flourish

OUR COMMITMENT

- We will launch Honoring the Potential, partnering with educators, communities, and families in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and beyond as we commit to the long-term educational success of Marylanders, from their earliest years through college completion. We will envision and develop a transformative new ecosystem that invests in public educators, strengthens student supports, and advances policies and practices through educational research. We will honor the potential of students and help them envision their paths to and through college and career.

GOAL 2:

Serve as a national model for university-community partnerships and experiences that foster connection across difference and civic and global engagement

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will expand and deepen opportunities for students to develop, practice, and apply leadership skills through meaningful experiences that foster collaboration, civic engagement, and a commitment to the public good.
- We will develop a consistent framework for creating and sustaining external partnerships that builds upon our excellence in community-engaged research and service.
- We will earn and sustain trust as a convener and partner in advancing dialogue, understanding, and the public good.
- We will raise UMBC's profile as a globally engaged public institution that values difference.

PILLAR 5

STRENGTHEN

Our goals and commitments

GOAL 3:

Become a sought-after partner with industry and the public sector to fuel innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will create and strengthen partnerships with Maryland-based employers to equip students with career-ready knowledge, skills, experiences and networks.
- We will shape Maryland's future workforce in partnership with industry and the public sector, developing a broad and diverse talent base to address evolving workforce needs.
- We will build an inclusive innovation community that brings together people and ideas from UMBC, across the state, and around the world to launch and grow new ventures.

GOAL 4:

Advance ethical, inclusive adoption of emerging technology to help ensure that Marylanders thrive equitably

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will convene public dialogue on the ethical and societal implications of emerging technology
- We will model responsible and inclusive adoption of emerging technology, demonstrating how institutions can innovate in service of their values and human thriving.

How the Plan was Developed

As we set our sights on a bold future for UMBC, we have been inspired and guided by the aims articulated in the 2026-2030 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education and the University System of Maryland's Vision 2030. The latter, a system-wide 10-year strategic plan, approved by the Board of Regents in June 2022, established a framework for our own institutional planning efforts and an overall focus on elevating Maryland's position as a national leader in higher education.

UMBC's new strategic plan is grounded in learnings and lessons from a robust set of community listening sessions, UMBC Bold: Campus Conversations, held in the spring of 2023. More than 1,000 participants attended 22 sessions that invited the broad UMBC community to share their perspectives on the state of the university and consider its aspirations for the future.

A series of critical surveys further informed the plan, including: a fall 2023 Shared Governance survey; the 2024 Core Values survey; and a 2025 Campus Climate survey. Along the way, a strategic plan steering committee guided campus conversations and gathered feedback from all stakeholder groups.

In the spring of 2025, President Valerie Sheares Ashby articulated in a campus conversation five emerging themes that would serve as strategic pillars for the new plan and invited the community to engage in refining those themes and shaping the goals and objectives that would live within each of them.

Throughout the academic year 2025-26, the steering committee led the development of the plan, forming subgroups for each of the five strategic pillars and drafting plans for each through extensive engagement and collaboration and additional surveying of the broad UMBC community.

What results is a set of strategic ambitions for UMBC that is deeply rooted in shared values and enriched by a multitude of voices. We are grateful to all who participated in the development of this plan. Your questions, ideas, and perspectives have shaped its creation. Your collective partnership will ensure its success.

Implementing the Plan and Tracking Our Progress

UMBC's vision statement is our North Star. Bold Moves is our strategic roadmap to reach the future we imagine together. We anticipate this plan will guide us for several years and that the goals and commitments comprising it will endure for the life of the plan. We will, however, review it on a regular basis and adjust as needed to address new challenges, respond to new opportunities, and adapt to evolving contexts.

As we embark upon this journey, we will develop annual action plans that set out a finite number of ambitious yet achievable objectives to advance toward our strategic ambitions. These action plans will be focused, developed by university academic and administrative leadership in collaboration with units across the organization. We will determine where investment is needed to advance this work, whether new or reallocated, and develop resource plans to support it. Success will be measurable–across a set of agreed-upon key results for each objective–and we will track and regularly share updates on our progress with the UMBC community.

Appendices

UMBC Bold: Campus Conversations Committee Co-Chair Report

Core Values Survey Summary

Campus Climate Survey findings and recommendations materials

UMBC Inclusive Excellence Framework

Self-Study for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (submitted January 2026)

2026 – 2030 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education: Maryland's Moment: Lighting the Way Forward

University System of Maryland Vision 2030: From Excellence to Preeminence

BOLD MOVES

Strategic Ambitions for the Future of UMBC

umbc.edu/strategic-plan

UMBC