



## UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS

**Bill:** House Bill 1 – Maryland’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding  
**Sponsor:** The Speaker  
**Committee:** House Appropriations  
**Date:** January 19, 2021  
**Position:** Letter of Information

Contingent on the final settlement of *The Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Maryland Higher Education v. Maryland Higher Education Commission*, House Bill 1 provides an additional \$57.7 million annually in funding over the next 10 years to Maryland’s four historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The bill also requires University of Maryland System’s William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation, in collaboration with the University of Maryland Global Campus’ UMUC Ventures divisions, to work with Maryland’s HBCUs “with the goal of developing and offering online academic programs”. Each HBCU is required to submit a report by December 1, 2021, outlining the steps that have been taken to comply with this requirement.

Mounting pressures on higher education call for new methods and learning modalities that offer equitable **access**, affordability, and opportunities to earn high-quality credentials for the Maryland students served by our HBCUs. With the increase in viable digital teaching and learning programs, online learning has moved from the periphery of higher education to become a central component for increasing access and flexibility for students in higher education. But rather than viewing online education as a panacea for enrollment challenges, a more strategic approach **capitalizes on the benefits offered by online instruction to more effectively reach students we already serve**. When implemented well, online education promises to **expand access** to students unable to regularly commute to a campus, reduce the overall cost of attendance, and improve achievement through personalized, modular content and credentials. In other words, online education affords HBCUs the flexibility to envision new ways to fulfill their missions of supporting student success and access.

In order to support *strategic* online growth for the HBCUs, UMGC believes the goal of this directive is best implemented with a collaboration between the University System of Maryland (USM) Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation and UMUC Ventures, and each HBCU. In 2013, the USM Board of Regents established the William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation to lead statewide efforts to implement, evaluate, scale, and sustain innovations aimed at improving access, affordability, and achievement of high-quality credentials for Maryland students. The Kirwan Center is creating a collaborative culture of academic innovation across the state’s higher education institutions that catalyzes new ways of thinking about student success, translates ideas into action, and scales and sustains promising practices. The collaboration between USM Kirwan Center and UMUC Ventures would create a digital teaching and learning platform designed to enrich the learning environment and increase degree attainment at Maryland’s HBCUs.

In response to the challenges and opportunities outlined above, USM Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation and UMUC Ventures propose to support the institutions' efforts to:

- Examine where online programmatic gaps exist and consult on ways to create and/or leverage new and existing programs to improve educational access for students of Maryland's HBCUs.
- Analyze investments needed to move existing under-enrolled and under-utilized programs to online modality development and distribution.
- Review marketing and enrollment needs for new and under-enrolled programs.
- Perform a needs assessment for both academic support and back-office operations.
- Perform data collection and analysis for strategic decision-making.

Armed with the results of this analysis, the USM Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation and UMGC Ventures collaboration would move forward to outline a more specific online, programmatic approach, designed, developed, and supported by UMUC Ventures and its associated portfolio companies and assets. Pending further analysis, it is estimated that the development and ongoing management and support of prospective HBCU programs would cost five million per year over a ten-year period. UMUC Ventures will play a foundational role in collaborative program development, online learning back office enterprise technology, instructional design and learning assessment, and data systems and associated learning analytics for intervention and overall student success.

### **The Kirwan Center and UMGC**

The USM Board of Regents established the William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation in 2013 to lead state-wide efforts to implement, evaluate, scale, and sustain innovations aimed at improving access, affordability, and achievement of high-quality credentials for Maryland students. The Kirwan Center is creating a collaborative culture of academic innovation across the state's higher education institutions that catalyzes new ways of thinking about student success, translates ideas into action, and scales and sustains promising practices.

The University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) is a public university in the University System of Maryland focused on online education. UMGC serves over 90,000 students worldwide and is one of the largest distance-learning institutions in the world. UMUC Ventures, a 501(c)(3) organization affiliated with UMGC UMUC Ventures is dedicated to developing new strategies and resources to support accessible, affordable, quality education for adult students in Maryland and beyond.

In June of 2020, the Kirwan Center and UMGC formed a \$2.6M partnership called USM *OnTrack* to support the expansion of online learning across system institutions in response to COVID-19. This partnership, funded through CARES Act resources, has leveraged the combined strength of both entities to support USM institutions' efforts to produce an optimally effective online learning experience for their students. The initiative has delivered more than 75 professional development workshops to faculty and staff, provided thousands of hours of instructional design/development

support for transitioning courses to online delivery, licensed virtual technologies to provide high-fidelity digital simulations to supplement lab courses, and enhanced high-enrollment courses through the use of more engaging and data-informed asynchronous technologies, like adaptive courseware. More information about USM *OnTrack* is available here: <https://www.usmd.edu/cai/usm-ontrack>.

Further, in light of the provisions of this bill, a large focus of USM *OnTrack* has been to support the system's HBCUs, both to meet immediate needs and to address longer-term efforts to leverage online learning to build resilience and address ongoing challenges. In particular, USM *OnTrack* has specifically set aside additional funding for the HBCUs for enhanced technology infrastructure and student services needed in making the abrupt shift to online delivery as well as provided dedicated instructional design and development support to move full academic programs online. This experience has provided a model for how this collaboration might evolve further into the kind of additional support for the HBCUs envisioned in House Bill 1.