MITC
MARYLAND IRELAND TRADE COMMISSION

Submitted by:

Maryland Department of Commerce

~~December~~ 2025

Dear Governor Moore,

On behalf of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission, we are pleased to submit this final report dated December 2025 as required by Economic Development Article §5-2504. This report reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment to deepen economic, educational, and cultural ties between the State of Maryland and Ireland.

With a critical mass of commissioners appointed, we began our work in July 2025. Our priority was to gain an understanding of the existing business, educational, and cultural relationships already established with Ireland. We then considered where opportunities lie for increasing those existing sectors and expanding into new areas where cooperation and trade may be appropriate. Looking at the expertise and experience of the commission members, we established subcommittees around economic and cultural sectors each chaired by a commissioner. Their findings and recommendations are detailed in the following report.

After our first meeting, we drafted and subsequently approved by-laws to guide our work. It also became apparent that the composition of commissioners prescribed by the original legislation could be improved to maximize our outreach to targeted industry sectors. Those recommendations are also included in the following report.

Again, we wish to thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission and look forward to continuing our work and building on the solid foundation we were able to establish in our first six months.

Yours in Service to Maryland,

Delegate Kenneth P. Kerr, EdD
Chair
Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission

Erin McNeally
Vice Chair
Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission

INTRODUCTION

On May 9th, 2024, in the presence of the Irish Ambassador to the United States, Governor Wes Moore signed House Bill 1206 into law as Chapter 409 (2024), which created the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission (MITC) to study and promote trade relations between Maryland and Ireland. This includes initiating joint action on policy issues of mutual interest, promoting business and academic exchanges, encouraging mutual economic support, and encouraging mutual investment in each respective infrastructure. On or before December 1st, 2025, the MITC is required to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last year, the MITC has been focused on promoting bilateral trade and investment, expanding academic and research collaboration, and fostering innovation ecosystems across shared sectors of strength between Maryland and Ireland. Chaired by Maryland Delegate Ken Kerr, the MITC is comprised of representatives from academia, business, and public service, specifically consisting of the following:

- The Secretary of Commerce, or the Secretary's designee.
- The Secretary of State, or the Secretary of State's designee.
- Two members of the Maryland Senate, appointed by the Senate President, who have knowledge of or involvement in organizations promoting Irish affairs or an interest in Maryland–Ireland trade relations.
- Two members of the Maryland House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House, with similar qualifications.
- Four members appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate:
    - One representative from a public institution of higher education.
    - One representative from the Maryland Chamber of Commerce or its successor.
    - Two representatives from the Irish–American community, who may not be of the same political party.

Early efforts have centered on identifying priority sectors of mutual economic and academic interest, while building networks with Irish counterparts. Subcommittees were established for each priority sector, supporting research, partnership development, and policy recommendations in their respective areas. Below is a list of the five subcommittees that were established:

1. Higher Education and Academic Partnerships

2. Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Artificial Intelligence and Related Sectors
3. Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences
4. Tourism, Cultural Arts
5. Agriculture

The MITC is now transitioning into an implementation phase. A central goal for early 2026 is the development of an Implementation Plan based on our findings in this report, aligning with legislative reporting requirements and growth targets. The Implementation Plan will create the foundation for a high-impact, sustainable transatlantic collaboration, and priority initiatives including joint innovation accelerators, workforce training partnerships, startup exchange programs, and soft-landing platforms to facilitate market entry.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: WHY IRELAND?

The Demand:

Maryland and Ireland share similar strengths in life sciences, information technology, defense, and especially cybersecurity. In 2025, both Maryland and Ireland are recognized as global technological powerhouses, and both have firms that are looking to diversify their sales revenue by directing investment into the international markets to do so. According to *The Bank of Ireland*, Ireland delivers an outsized economic impact to the USA in terms of investment, buying billions of dollars of American goods and services and creating jobs in the USA. And Enterprise Ireland (EI), the Irish Government's enterprise development agency, states that Irish multinational companies are deeply embedded and invested in the US market with significant manufacturing footprint and employment across the USA. This substantial investment underscores the commitment of Irish enterprises to the US market and reflects a deepening economic interdependence between the two countries. The demand for a bilateral trade map between Maryland and Ireland is long overdue.

The enduring friendship between Maryland, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is critical in the 21st century as we share many technological challenges and opportunities for both of our markets. Maryland and the Port of Baltimore are the gateway to the larger market of the United States, while Ireland is the entry point for many business opportunities in the European Union (EU). Engaging with each other opens up more than just our own customers, it helps to unlock entire continents.

Since the United Kingdom left the European Union, Ireland is the English-speaking access point to the EU. Many English-speaking and highly educated Irish can support our growing businesses in Europe, while Maryland's exceptionally trained and educated workforce can be the lifeblood of more Irish business endeavors in the United States. The cross-pollination of economic and cultural exchanges adds to our diversity and strengthens our societal fabric.

The Vehicle:

Maryland is uniquely positioned to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) from Ireland, over other states, because of the Global Gateway Program. Administered by the Maryland Department of Commerce, the Global Gateway Program is a vehicle designed to attract small and mid-sized international companies that are looking to test out the U.S. market at an affordable rate to Maryland. Maryland has already attracted three Irish firms to the state and has a pipeline of ten others.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Future Engagement with Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC) and Enterprise Ireland (EI)**

The Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC) in Dublin supports over 150 startups with a strong focus on international expansion.[1] Enterprise Ireland is the Irish Government's enterprise development agency with approximately $40B in export value for companies it supports.[2] Maryland sees strategic alignment with GEC and EI in areas like health tech, medtech, AI, and cybersecurity. Potential actions include establishing Maryland soft-landing desks at GEC and EI, creating reciprocal expansion programs for Irish firms, connecting universities and institutions, and co-hosting transatlantic innovation roundtables.

2. **Platform94 Partnership**

Platform94 is a key innovation hub in Galway with strengths in medtech, software, and engineering.[3] With over 30 years in business, Platform94 helps companies scale internationally and achieve their goals. Maryland officially executed a partnership agreement with Platform94 in May 2025, which has already supported the expansion of

[1] http://www.gec.ie

[2] http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/

[3] http://platform94.com

several Ireland-based companies to Maryland including Brightbeam and Pronav. Other potential engagements could involve bi-directional mentorship and accelerator programs, university-industry research collaboration, and joint support initiatives for underrepresented entrepreneurs.

3. **Maryland Vehicle Administration (MVA) Foreign Reciprocity Agreement**

Maryland does not currently recognize and accept an Irish driver's license. This creates friction for Irish workers traveling to Maryland for work. The MVA has entered into License Reciprocity Agreements with the below countries[4], and the MITC recommends further exploring a similar agreement with Ireland.

1. Republic of Korea (South) (December 16, 2010)
2. France (December 16, 2010)
3. Federal Republic of Germany (May 10, 2011)
4. Taiwan (Republic of China) (June 17, 2013)
5. Japan (January 4, 2016)

4. **Fastnet Tech Opportunities**

Amazon Web Services just announced Fastnet, a new state-of-the-art transatlantic subsea fiber optic cable system connecting Maryland, the U.S., and County Cork, Ireland.[5] When operational in 2028, Fastnet will add vital diversity for customers by building a new data pathway with unique landing points, keeping services running even if other undersea cables encounter issues. This enhanced network resilience will improve global connectivity and meet rising demand for cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI).

5. **Case Study: Precision Pharmaceutical Manufacturing & Quantum Computing**

In the last 40 years, Ireland has transformed its economy to become the world's leader in **precision pharmaceutical manufacturing**. Quantum computing, one of Maryland's strengths, has applications in this field for the development of customized patient diagnostics and drug treatments. Ireland's higher education plays a key role in this: It prepares students for the future technology-enhanced job market and draws students from

[4] http://mva.maryland.gov/drivers/Pages/international-applicants.aspx

[5] http://www.aboutamazon.com/news/aws/transatlantic-subsea-cable-us-ireland-fastnet-aws

all over the world who seek such degrees.[6] Maryland has such talent, too, but has not invested in industry partnerships to the same degree until now due to the availability and proximity of federal funding. The University of Baltimore and the Institute of Health Computing are engaged in research in this field and keen on developing manufacturing capacities in the state. Connecting Maryland's quantum capabilities with Ireland's know-how in precision manufacturing through higher education collaboration could serve as a case study on how to grow Maryland's economy.

6. **Maryland International Education Consortium (MIEC)**

The Maryland International Education Consortium (MIEC) is the premier advocacy and resource organization for the branding and internationalization of Maryland institutions. MIEC's initiatives focus on strengthening both recruitment and support services for international students and study abroad for Maryland students. For example, in 2025, MIEC presented a letter from Governor Wes Moore to welcome accepted international students to Maryland's universities and colleges, which anecdotally had a positive effect on commitments. This group could be engaged to support specific goals for higher education set out by the MITC.

7. **Maryland's Sister States Program**

The government-to-government relationship is managed by the Office of the Secretary of State. This program includes Cork which led to additional Friendship discussions with Tipperary. The program has traditionally reacted to inquiries from partners abroad and could be leveraged to proactively engage Maryland universities seeking partnerships with Irish counterparts. We have some educational exchange opportunities that we want to explore in the coming years. There is a strong connection with the equestrian industry that has been reinforced under Executive Order 01.01.2025.23 to establish the Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Planning Initiative.

8. **Maryland Tech Council**

The Tech Council is uniquely positioned within the state and with industry to "...drive innovation through advocacy, education, workforce development cost saving and connecting entrepreneurial minds." Their BioHub Training and Education Center plays an important role in meeting the needs of industry partners for world class talent. Leveraging this important asset to the state is vital.

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[6] The Pie. https://thepienews.com/why-ireland-is-becoming-the-ultimate-international-higher-education-hub/?utm_campaign=The%20PIE%20Weekly%202023&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9JSLguOlOpuey8s2qNwwdTZZR-TyTVaYuFdt8U_48VifhM-NbfWucMD8vJJVswFRzQacdPrAM0lwUOb-HPHMJ6XLjUAOHgvVnW2HpTFIaO1n5E4p0&_hsmi=385606966&utm_content=385606966&utm_source=hs_email

9. **Cultural & Heritage Partnerships**

There are many opportunities for Maryland to support heritage events and festivals. The State could provide small grant funding or sponsorships for events such as the Maryland Irish Festival, Celtic Festival of Southern Maryland, and the Emerald Isle Club programs. We also recommend encouraging state agencies such as the Maryland State Arts Council to offer heritage preservation grants specifically for Irish and Celtic cultural programming. Additionally, the State could engage in cultural exchange programs such as Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, Baltimore Irish Music School or Irish dance schools to host Irish artists-in-residence, musicians, or exchange performances. Maryland universities could host Irish visiting scholars or artists under a "Maryland–Ireland Cultural Fellowship."

10. **Tourism Promotion**

Opportunities to increase tourism promotion include cross-promotion activities between the Maryland Office of Tourism and Tourism Ireland for heritage tourism. We also suggest establishing marketing campaigns with Irish themed itineraries collaborating with appropriate Irish-American groups in Maryland. An additional opportunity lies in creating additional Sister States Programs with Ireland. Maryland currently has twenty Sister State relationships in seventeen countries, including County Cork established in 2013.

SECTION 1: HIGHER EDUCATION & ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

This section offers a baseline for understanding the scale of Maryland-Ireland academic exchange in comparison to the current U.S.-Ireland higher education landscape. It also presents a SWOT analysis for Maryland, including opportunities for Maryland's higher education institutions to increase engagement with Ireland.

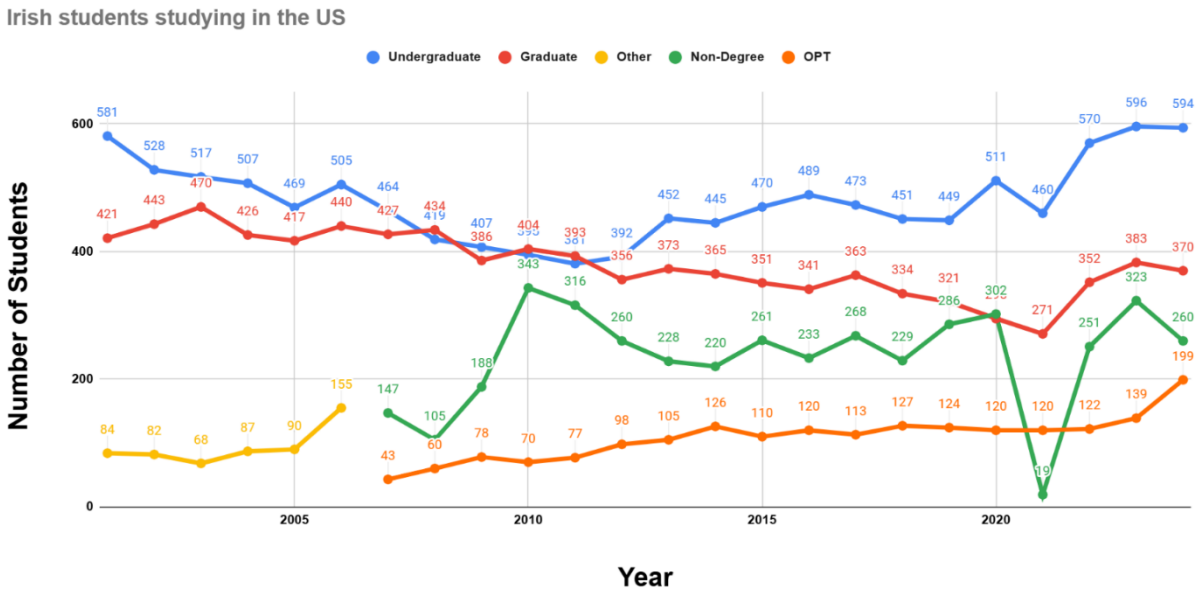
The U.S. National Higher Education Landscape

The Institute of International Education (IIE) publishes an annual report capturing international mobility trends of higher education institutions in the U.S. The data capture process involves colleges and universities reporting their own data to IIE on an annual basis. For incoming students and scholars, the data reported includes the entire prior academic year; for outgoing U.S. students there is a two-year lag. *The Open Doors Report 2024* was released in November 2024 and includes incoming student/scholar data from the 2023-24 academic year (AY) and outgoing student data from AY 2022-23.[7] Facts presented in this section were taken from this report unless noted otherwise.

[7] https://opendoorsdata.org/

Irish Students Studying in the U.S.

In AY 2023-24, **1,423 Irish students enrolled in U.S. universities and colleges, representing a 1.2% decline from the previous year** and a mere 1.5% of European students in the U.S. Of those, 594 were degree seeking students at the undergraduate level, and 370 were degree-seeking at the graduate level. Another 260 were non-degree students (study abroad), and 260 were on Optional Practical Training (OPT). Irish students contributed U.S. $61 million to the U.S. economy.



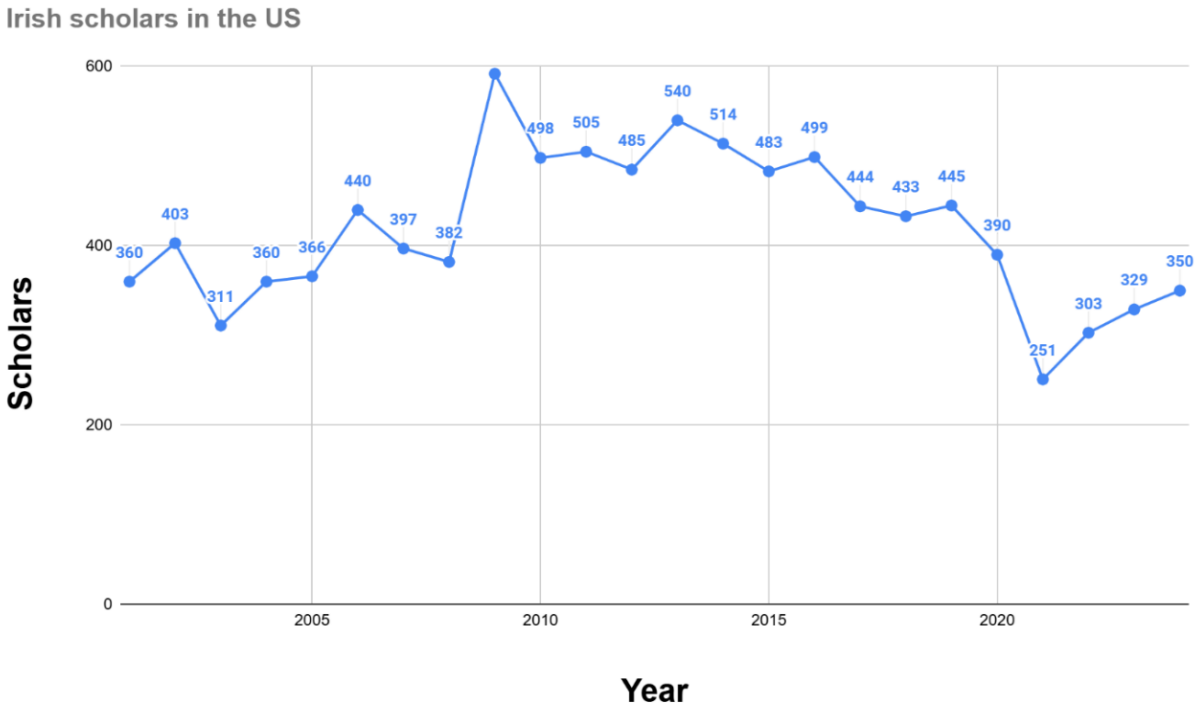
For comparison, the U.S hosted 1,126,690 students from abroad in the same year (AY 2023-24), with **Irish students representing less than 1% of the total**. Most international students (77.8%) enrolled in doctoral universities, with fewer than 5% enrolling at baccalaureate or associate/community colleges. A slightly higher percentage of students studied at private institutions (54.6%).

International students together contribute U.S. $43.8 billion to the national economy.[8] The top hosting states (institutions) for international students were New York (New York University), Massachusetts (Northeastern), California (University of Southern California), Indiana (Indiana University and Purdue), and Texas (Texas A&M University and University of Texas at Austin).

[8] NAFSA. https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2

Irish Scholars in the U.S.

In AY 2023-24, **350 Irish scholars conducted research and studies at U.S. universities and colleges, representing a 6.4% increase from the previous year**. They still represent less than 1% of the total number of international scholars in the U.S (112,552). STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields, including physical and life sciences, were the most common reported fields of study for Irish scholars in the U.S.



Maryland's Johns Hopkins University was among the top 10 universities hosting international scholars, hosting 2,405 from various countries.

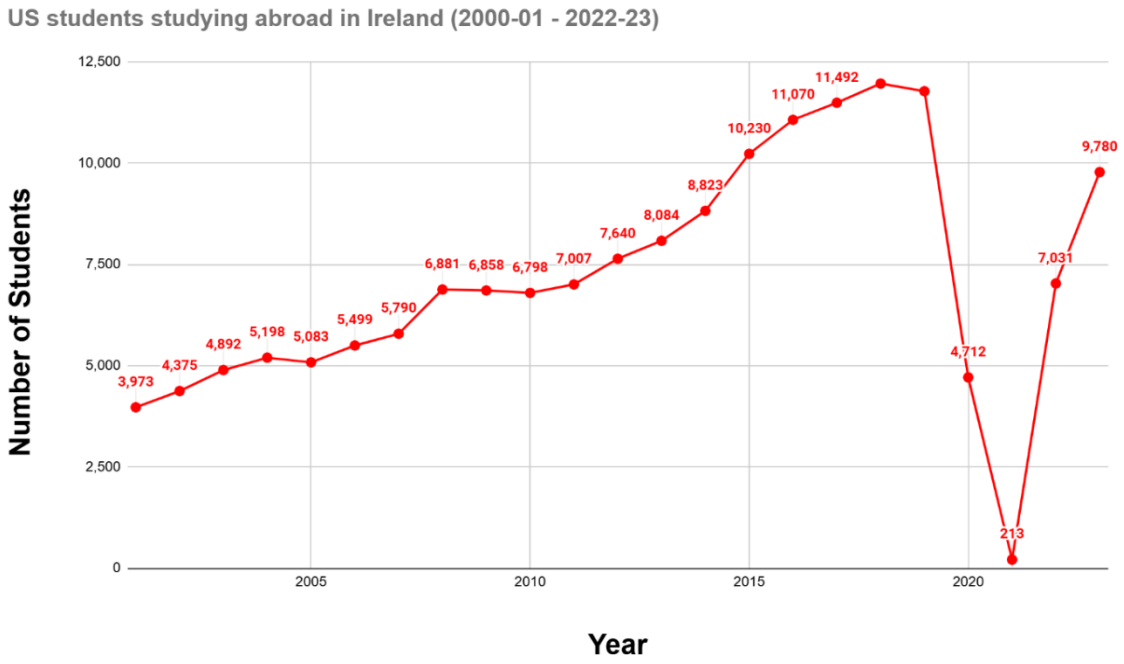
U.S. Students Studying in Ireland

In AY 2022-23, **5,655 U.S. students pursued degrees at Irish institutions, representing an increase of 11% over the previous year**.[9] The U.S. is the second largest sender of international students studying in Ireland. University College Dublin hosts the most U.S.

[9] Higher Education Authority. https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/key-facts-figures/

degree-seekers (34%), followed by Trinity College (22%) and University College Cork (12%).[10] Ireland enjoys positioning as a top destination for students studying abroad across the globe.[11]

In the same year, **9,780 U.S. students studied abroad in Ireland on credit-bearing, non-degree programs, representing a 39.1% increase over the previous year**. This **accounts for 3.4% of total U.S. study abroad students** (280,716 students). Programs ranged from a week to a full year in duration and took the form of study tours, semester exchanges, direct enrollment programs, internships, etc. An additional 703 students pursued noncredit opportunities, like alternative break programs. Ireland has been a top 10 destination for U.S. study abroad since 2000 and ranked number five in AY 2022-23.



Ireland is a top destination for study abroad globally, peaking at 6th in the world in AY 2018-19 and hosting 11,177 students.[12] Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that all but shut down

[10] Apply Board. https://www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/international-student-enrolment-in-ireland-reaches-all-time-high-in-2023-24

[11] The Pie. https://thepienews.com/why-ireland-is-becoming-the-ultimate-international-higher-education-hub/?utm_campaign=The%20PIE%20Weekly%202023&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9JSLguOlOpuey8s2qNwwdTZZR-TyTVaYuFdt8U_48VifhM-NbfWucMD8vJJVswFRzQacdPrAM0lwUOb-HPHMJ6XLjUAOHgvVnW2HpTFIaO1n5E4p0&_hsmi=385606966&utm_content=385606966&utm_source=hs_email

[12] Institute of International Education. https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/all-destinations/

student mobility programs worldwide, study abroad contributed €220 million to the Irish economy.[13]

The Maryland Higher Education Landscape

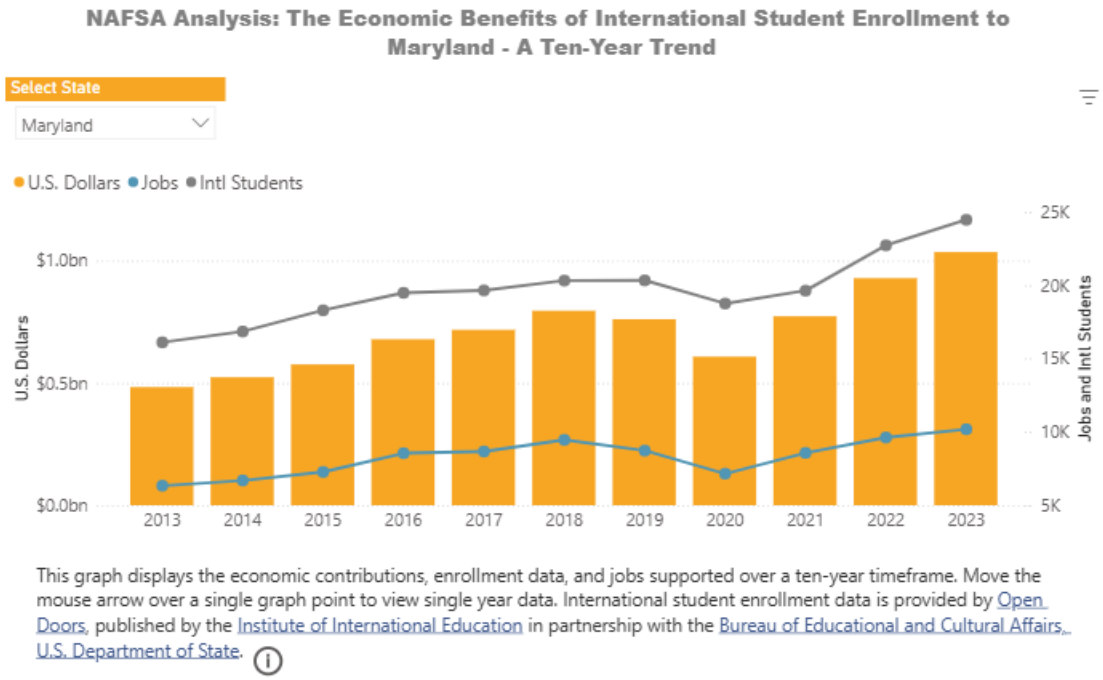
NAFSA (Association of International Educators) publishes its annual International Student Economic Value Tool, which provides data on international students studying in the U.S. per state and the economic value those students bring to the state economy. As with the IIE report, the data is presented following the end of the academic year; the 2024 report includes data captured in AY 2023-24. Facts presented here were taken from this report and the IIE *Open Doors Report 2024* unless otherwise noted.

International Students Studying in Maryland

According to NAFSA, **Maryland hosted 24,493 international students in 2023-24**, contributing U.S. $1 billion to the Maryland economy and supporting 10,180 jobs.[14] This marks an **increase of approximately 7.7% from the previous year** and places Maryland at 14 in the national ranking. The top five leading countries of origin do not include Ireland. Johns Hopkins University hosted the most international students among Maryland institutions with 10,054.

[13] ASAPI. https://www.asapireland.org/economic-impact

[14] NAFSA. https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2



Maryland Students Studying Abroad

According to IIE, **Maryland institutions supported 3,429 students to study abroad, representing a 97% increase from the previous year** and placing Maryland at 29 in terms of national ranking.[15] Ireland was not in the top five leading destinations. The University of Maryland College Park was the leading institution, sending 1,518 students abroad.

Maryland Higher Education Engagement with Ireland

Complete student mobility data between Maryland and Ireland has been requested from IIE. It was not received in time to be included in this report. Updates to the data provided below will be forthcoming and may change the analysis.

Approximately 50 of the 57 universities and colleges in Maryland, including public, private, and community colleges, were approached in spring 2025 with a **survey requesting information related to their activities with Irish universities**. They were specifically asked to report on formal Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs), study abroad activities for students, degree-seeking Irish student enrollment, research collaborations, and any other academic engagement or exchange with Ireland. Only nine of the 50 universities/colleges responded, which provides limited insight into the volume and nature of higher education engagement and exchange between Maryland and Irish counterparts.

[15] Institute of International Education. https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/state-fact-sheets/

The observations below provide a small window into what may be a more extensive level of engagement.

1. **There are likely few incoming Irish students being hosted at Maryland's universities and colleges.** **Fewer than 10 enrolled degree-seeking Irish students** were reported by the nine universities, representing less than 1% of total Irish students in the U.S. As only two of the 30 study abroad options reported were bilateral exchanges, it is unlikely that the number of Irish non-degree, visiting (or study abroad) students is substantial.
2. **There are likely few Irish scholars being hosted at Maryland's higher education institutions.** Only one of nine universities reported hosting Irish researchers on their campus (UMD).
3. **There are at least 150-200 Maryland students studying abroad in Ireland per year, representing less than 5% of the total U.S. study abroad population in Ireland.** Anecdotally, Ireland is a popular destination for Maryland students. There were **30 study abroad opportunities reported by just nine universities**. The vast majority of these are study tours, third party providers, or internship programs. This is significant, as these types of programs generally do not require a formal MOU with an Irish university. Further, most programs serve five or fewer students per year; the **largest program reported is a business internship program** offered by the University of Maryland College Park that serves 10 or more students per year.
4. **There is little formally documented collaborative research taking place between Maryland and Irish universities and colleges.** Only **one formal research collaboration was reported** by the University of Baltimore in law. This does not mean that no other joint or consortia research projects are underway. Many collaborations are not governed by university MOUs. Researchers often work with colleagues abroad, also presumably in Ireland, through informal publishing agreements and/or grants that do not require formal documentation and approval at the university level.
5. **Global higher education consortia could be another avenue for Maryland-Ireland academic exchange.** For example, Universitas 21 (U21), "a people-led university network" that brings members of research universities together with peer members around the world, includes both the University of Maryland College Park UMD) and University College Dublin (UCD). Membership in the U21 consortium is selective but does not forestall bilateral relationships among its limited members. UMD and UCD have developed a collaboration through UMD's School of Public

Health, which led a group of SPH graduate students to visit UCD with Delegate Ken Kerr in fall 2025.

6. **University tie-ups with other parts of the Irish economy are underreported – but impactful.** For example, BWTech at the University of Maryland Baltimore County is one of the 16 incubators participating in the Maryland Global Gateway Soft Landing Program. Similarly, the University of Maryland College Park, through its Center for Global Business, offered Maryland exporters free Irish market research to support the program in fall 2025. The latter program exposes Maryland students to the realities of doing business in Ireland.

SWOT Analysis for Maryland-Ireland Higher Education Exchange

Strengths:

- There are highly ranked universities on both sides of the Atlantic that participate in academic exchange. Among them are Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland College Park (UMD) in Maryland and University College Dublin and Trinity College in Ireland. All these institutions have been identified by name in IIE or NAFSA reports, or in the Maryland survey.
- Several Maryland universities have extensive infrastructure to support study abroad and academic exchanges, including UMD for outgoing students and Johns Hopkins for incoming degree-seeking students.
- Ireland is a popular study abroad destination for U.S./Maryland students due to a shared language and cultural similarities.

Weaknesses:

- There is trade deficit between the U.S./Maryland and Ireland in higher education. Ireland attracts more students than it sends to the U.S./Maryland for study of any kind, degree-seeking or non-degree study abroad.
- There is little direct exchange between Maryland and Ireland's universities, with most Maryland students participating in study abroad programs organized by third party providers.
- Many smaller Maryland universities lack infrastructure to support student study abroad, including scholarships and well-funded study abroad offices.

Opportunities:

- In the last 40 years, Ireland has transformed its economy to become the world's leader in **precision pharmaceutical manufacturing**. Quantum computing, a

strength in Maryland, has applications in this field for the development of customized patient diagnostics and drug treatments. Ireland's higher education plays a role in this: It prepares students for the future technology-enhanced job market and draws students from all over the world who seek such degrees.[16] Maryland has such talent, too, but has not invested in industry partnerships to the same degree until now due to the availability and proximity of federal funding. The University of Baltimore and Institute of Health Computing are engaged in research in this field and keen on developing manufacturing capacities in the state. Connecting Maryland's quantum capabilities with Ireland's know-how in precision manufacturing through higher education collaboration could serve as a case study on how to grow Maryland's economy.

- The **Maryland International Education Consortium (MIEC)** is the premier advocacy and resource organization for the branding and internationalization of Maryland institutions. MIEC's initiatives focus on strengthening both recruitment and support services for international students and study abroad for Maryland students. For example, in 2025, MIEC presented a letter from Governor Wes Moore to welcome accepted international students to Maryland's universities and colleges, which anecdotally had a positive effect on commitments. This group could be engaged to support specific goals for higher education set out by the MITC.
- **Maryland's Sister States program**, managed by the Office of the Secretary of State, includes Cork (inactive) and is pursuing a possible program with Tipperary. The program has traditionally reacted to inquiries from partners abroad and could be leveraged to proactively engage Maryland universities seeking partnerships with Irish counterparts.
- **Enterprise Ireland**, which has offices around the U.S. and a Senior VP for Education located in Boston, helps global companies and universities connect with Irish counterparts for collaboration. The organization could be a valuable resource for Maryland institutions seeking introductions to Irish institutions.
- **The Irish Consulate in Boston has welcomed a new diplomat into the role of Talent and Innovation Attaché**, Lillian Gisselquist, whose goal is to develop research linkages between Irish and U.S. institutions, innovation centers/launch pads, companies, etc. This role could be leveraged for research, startup, and/or company connections.

[16] The Pie. https://thepienews.com/why-ireland-is-becoming-the-ultimate-international-higher-education-hub/?utm_campaign=The%20PIE%20Weekly%202023&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9JSLguOlOpuey8s2qNwwdTZZR-TyTVaYuFdt8U_48VifhM-NbfWucMD8vJJVswFRzQacdPrAM0lwUOb-HPHMJ6XLjUAOHgvVnW2HpTFIaO1n5E4p0&_hsmi=385606966&utm_content=385606966&utm_source=hs_email

- The Fund for Education Abroad manages **the Education in Ireland Access Partner Scholarship in the form of a tuition waiver for U.S. students seeking to study abroad at one of four universities in Ireland** (Mary Immaculate College, University of Galway, University of College Cork, University of Limerick).[17] Additional scholarships of up to U.S. $5,000 are also available for U.S. students participating in other types of study abroad programs in Ireland. Awareness of this scholarship could encourage U.S. students to consider directly enrolling at Irish institutions.
- Virtual communication technology, like Zoom, has made it easier for scholars and students to collaborate with peers abroad. **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programs**, which connect classrooms/student with peers abroad without incurring the cost of travel, have taken off in the U.S. and around the world. These virtual exchanges could be leveraged to increase engagement between Maryland and Irish institutions at minimal cost.

Threats:

- **Federal funding for international education is being cut.**[18] Federally funded programs such as the Gilman Scholarship, Centers for International Business Education, and Global Undergraduate Exchange Programs have been the backbone of international education and study abroad infrastructure in the U.S. Discontinuation of such programs will leave a gap in infrastructure and funding across U.S. higher education.
- The **high cost of study abroad programs** hinders many Maryland students from studying abroad. The **high cost of living in the U.S.** also deters Irish students from studying abroad in the U.S., especially considering the comparatively low cost of higher education in Ireland and the accessibility of European Union programs like Erasmus that allows students to exchange in other E.U. locations at low cost. The inflationary environment has exacerbated this.
- **International student interest in pursuing degrees in the U.S. is declining**.[19] This can be attributed to political rhetoric, an increasingly arduous student visa application process, changing Curricular Practical Training (CPT) rules, high tuition and living costs, as well as increased competition from alternative locations like the U.K., Canada, and Australia.

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[17] Fund for Education Abroad. https://fundforeducationabroad.org/scholarships/education-in-ireland/

[18] Cory Booker, U.S. Senator for New Jersey. https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-collins-urge-omb-state-department-to-reverse-funding-cuts-for-21-educational-and-cultural-exchange-programs

[19] Study Portals. https://studyportals.com/articles/international-student-interest-in-the-us-falls-to-the-lowest-level-since-mid-pandemic/

- An **increasing number of U.S. students are showing interest in pursuing degrees outside the U.S.**, which could result in a net gain for countries like Ireland and a net loss for the U.S.[20] This could result in financial constraints at U.S. institutions and result in decreased funding for international exchange and study abroad offices.
- Ireland is quickly becoming a hotspot for international students worldwide, positioning itself as an alternative to both the U.S. and the U.K. due to its easier visa application process, emphasis on tech and science degrees to feed its growing innovation ecosystem, and cost-effective and high-quality education.[21] While this may not have immediate implications for Maryland-Ireland academic exchange, it does introduce an **element of competition between the two higher education systems.**

The following individuals were consulted in the writing of this section:

- Sara Dart, Senior Vice President for Education in Ireland at Enterprise Ireland
- Mary Nitsch, Director of International Affairs at Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State
- Rachel Scholten, President of Maryland International Education Consortium and Director of International Admission at Loyola University Maryland
- Dr. Patrick O'Shea, Vice Provost for Research at University of Maryland College Park and former president of University College Cork

SECTION 2: CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Landscape

A baseline analysis was prepared to inform the current levels of trade and FDI flows between Maryland and Ireland including insights on hot sectors and trendlines.

Opportunities

1. Advancing bilateral trade and investment between Maryland and Ireland

[20] Ibid.

[21] The Pie. https://thepienews.com/why-ireland-is-becoming-the-ultimate-international-higher-education-hub/?utm_campaign=The%20PIE%20Weekly%202023&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9JSLguOlOpuey8s2qNwwdTZZR-TyTVaYuFdt8U_48VifhM-NbfWucMD8vJJVswFRzQacdPrAM0lwUOb-HPHMJ6XLjUAOHgvVnW2HpTFIaO1n5E4p0&_hsmi=385606966&utm_content=385606966&utm_source=hs_email

- Although strong alliances have already been formed between Ireland and Maryland in cybersecurity, information technology, and artificial intelligence, there is still work to do with opening additional trade corridors. Platform94 is a key innovation hub in Galway with strengths in medtech, software, and engineering.[22] With over 30 years in business, Platform 94 helps companies scale internationally and achieve their goals. Maryland officially executed a partnership agreement with Platform94 in May 2025, which has already supported the expansion of several Ireland based companies to Maryland including Brightbeam and Pronav. Other potential engagement could involve bi-directional mentorship and accelerator programs, university-industry research collaboration, and joint support initiatives for underrepresented entrepreneurs.

2. Initiating joint action on policy issues of mutual interest to Maryland and Ireland
    - There is a new green energy initiative from the European Commission to bypass Washington and work directly with US States.[23] We could lean into this and other directives in areas like cyber, AI and social media regulation.
3. Encouraging mutual economic support between Maryland and Ireland
    - The Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC) in Dublin supports over 150 startups with a strong focus on international expansion.[24] Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the Irish Government's enterprise development agency with approximately $40B in export value for companies it supports.[25] Maryland sees strategic alignment with GEC and EI in the cybersecurity, information technology, and artificial intelligence space. Potential actions include establishing Maryland soft-landing desks, creating reciprocal expansion programs for Irish firms, and co-hosting transatlantic innovation roundtables.
4. Encouraging mutual investment in the infrastructure of Maryland and Ireland
    - Amazon Web Services (AWS) just announced Fastnet, a new state-of-the-art transatlantic subsea fiber optic cable system connecting Maryland, U.S., and County Cork, Ireland.[26] When operational in 2028, Fastnet will add vital diversity for customers by building a new data pathway with unique landing points, keeping services running even if other undersea cables encounter issues. This enhanced network resilience will improve global connectivity and

[22] http://platform94.com

[23] http://www.ft.com/content/b03b1ffe-9fda-473e-988f-a2f1f757499c

[24] http://www.gec.ie

[25] http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/

[26] http://www.aboutamazon.com/news/aws/transatlantic-subsea-cable-us-ireland-fastnet-aws

meet rising demand for cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI). Infrastructure projects of this scale succeed when they're built in partnership with communities. From day one, AWS has worked closely with local organizations, nonprofits, and residents in both Maryland and County Cork to understand what success looks like for them. As part of their commitment to these communities, they are establishing Community Benefit Funds for both Maryland's Eastern Shore and the local community in County Cork. They will work directly with stakeholders to identify and support initiatives that address each community's unique needs and priorities. These community-driven funds could support a range of local initiatives, such as sustainability and environmental programs, health and well-being services, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) education, future workforce development, economic development and leadership training, inclusion and diversity initiatives, and programs addressing homelessness and hunger.

5. License Reciprocity Agreement
    - In speaking with several industry professionals in the tech space, Maryland does not currently recognize and accept an Ireland driver's license. This creates friction for Irish workers traveling to Maryland for work. The MVA has entered into License Reciprocity Agreements with several other countries, and the MITC recommends further exploring a similar agreement with Ireland.

The following individuals were consulted in the writing of this section:

- Mark O'Connell, Executive Chairman for OCO Global
- Kevin Ryan, Head of US East Coast, Enterprise Ireland
- Joe O'Murchadha, Privacy, AI Governance & Digital Trust - Attorney | International Corporate Compliance & Risk Leader, SAP

SECTION 3: PHARMACEUTICALS & LIFE SCIENCES

Maryland and Ireland both have a specific focus on fostering and expanding their life sciences sectors and ecosystems emphasizing geographic positioning, world-class talent, strong compliance expertise and collaboration. These shared goals, objectives and commitment create a significant opportunity for partnerships, access, and investment for growth for Irish companies in Maryland and opportunities for Maryland companies to leverage access that Ireland has to offer to international markets.

Opportunities

Maryland has curated a strong ecosystem and hub which provides several key advantages to attract pharmaceutical companies and especially those in the life sciences.

Access to a highly educated workforce particularly focused on research and development and other needs to industry is important.

Also important is the access to leading academic universities' research programs and opportunity for collaboration including the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.

Existing infrastructure in the form of lab and research and development capability and capacity is an essential component for smaller companies that don't have the ability to make such investments or readily available access. This access and availability are a critical component for development and innovation.

Geographic proximity to federal agencies including the FDA and NIH allows for increased access to experts, as well as increased in-person communication and collaboration.

Montgomery County is home to a significant and growing Life Sciences ecosystem that presents multiple opportunities to leverage.

Finally, in-person access to policy makers, scientific and medical experts, and their institutions increases the ability to raise awareness, as well as inform and educate key decision-makers.

Other Recommendations

The Maryland Department of Commerce has elevated life sciences as a key industry with a focus on creating an "innovation ecosystem." Recognizing the importance of funding, Maryland has a strong set of incentives, including matched investments, tax credits to drive investment, innovation, and research and development.

The Maryland Tech Council is uniquely positioned within the state and within the industry to drive "…innovation through advocacy, education, workforce development cost saving and connecting entrepreneurial minds." Their BioHub Training and Education Center plays an important role in meeting the needs of industry partners for world class talent.

Ireland made a strategic decision to adopt policies that have attracted top life sciences companies and created impressive growth through investment, infrastructure and a

cultivated ecosystem. The country's policy decisions certainly act as important case study of success.

It is clear to the commission that the pharmaceutical and life sciences sector is not just a key focus for Maryland and Ireland, but one that offers some unique advantages on both sides of the Atlantic. The commission will continue to explore how to better leverage these important Public-Private Partnerships to grow and expand this sector.

SECTION 4: TOURISM & CULTURAL ARTS (Connections)

The Irish-American community is significant in Maryland. Approximately 10% of the state's population claim Irish heritage. Roughly 25 groups currently exist in Maryland focusing on Irish culture, ancestry, language, charity, music, and dance. Additionally, there are specific groups for women, youth baseball, and law enforcement. Groups such as these help preserve Irish culture and build community bonds for residents with Irish roots or those who have an interest in Irish heritage.

In 1606, King James appointed George Calvert the Clerk of the Crown and Assizes in County Clare, Ireland. George Calvert later served on royal commissions to investigate religious and political grievances in Ireland. The source of the "Baltimore" name is the anglicized gaelic phrase ***Baile an Tí Mhóir***, which simply means "townland of the big house." Despite much confusion, Baltimore City is named after the Baltimore Manor in County Longford, Ireland, not the village Baltimore in West Cork. Baltimore City was granted to George Calvert in 1623. The land was granted on the condition that he settle it with people loyal to the Church of England, however, in 1625 he converted to Catholicism and should have lost the land. Instead, the King allowed him to surrender the title in return for keeping the land without religious restrictions. George Calvert then took the title Baron Baltimore when the lands were designated as the Manor of Baltimore. This title lived on for another five generations despite the Calvert family never actually living in the "big house" their namesake derived from.

The most prominent example of Irish Americans in Maryland is the Carroll family. Charles Carroll of Carrollton's grandfather Daniel emigrated from Ireland in the 1680s. Charles, who was one of the wealthiest Marylanders during the revolutionary period, died late in life during November of 1832. He became the only Catholic and the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. His cousin, John Carroll, became the first Catholic bishop (and later archbishop) of the United States, and Baltimore was designated as the center of his diocese starting in 1789.

Not long after Carles Carrol died, Frederick Douglass, our first escaped enslaved author and orator from Maryland, toured Ireland for four months, and was well received in Cork County and other parts of Ireland. After the publication of his autobiography where he explicitly detailed his brutal treatment as an enslaved man born on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, Douglass was forced to flee America to avoid recapture from slave hunter kidnappers. He spent a month in Cork, where he provided strong denunciations of slavery, and told his firsthand account to raptured audiences. He spoke in front of thousands of people with openness to hear from an escaped slave but was horrified at the poverty he encountered during the beginning of what would later be called the Great Famine in 1845. He befriended Daniel O'Connell and set himself up for a successful career as a public speaker. To this day when you walk into the Irish Ambassador's Residence in Washington DC, your eye may fall upon a portrait of Douglass and O'Connell together on the far back wall as you enter the building. This symbolic gesture of his portrait with one of their greatest leaders is a signal to the rest of the country and the world that Frederick Douglass was indeed America's first black citizen ambassador to the world.

The Irish cultural presence in Maryland is strong. Right around the time that Douglass was touring Ireland and the UK, the Irish sought refuge in Maryland. Baltimore's Fell's Point and Locust Point neighborhoods became the primary ports of entry for Irish fleeing starvation. Their "coffin ships" sought refuge and a new life in Baltimore where they settled other parts of the city including Hampden and Canton, as well as Fell's Point where their tight-knit communities centered around newly built Catholic parishes.

Immigrant Irish labor provided the essential workforce that built the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad, and they also toiled away in the factories, on the docks, and in the copper and oyster-canning industries. Much of this history can be seen firsthand at the Irish Railroad Workers Museum in Baltimore.[27] This group of Irish Americans became a powerful political force, especially in Baltimore's Democratic Party where they established many social and charitable organizations, such as the Hibernian Society of Baltimore, to support new immigrants and to preserve their heritage.

These cultural connections helped to spur our Sister State with Cork County. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on May 10th, 2013, to help encourage business and industry, arts, culture, education, research, health, commercial cooperation and creating exchange among both regions. The Maryland Sister State relationship with Cork County, Ireland, is gearing back up with engagement with the Secretary of Agriculture meeting county leaders during his mission to Ireland. There were also plans for a youth-led

[27] https://www.irishamericanmuseum.org/

and adult-guided cultural and international civil rights movement exploration that would connect Oxford, UK, Maryland and Cork, Ireland. The Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association is working to develop and implement a symposium to work with youth in Talbot County. The symposium is intended to include the histories and stories of forged friendships.

Opportunities

Numerous opportunities exist for the State of Maryland to promote Irish heritage through its agencies, universities, and cultural programs. Maryland can partner with Irish heritage groups, both to strengthen local communities and to foster international cultural and economic ties with Ireland.

The State of Maryland could partner with Irish groups, divided into three key areas: Cultural & Heritage Partnerships, Education & Academic Collaboration, and Tourism Promotion.

Opportunities in Cultural & Heritage Partnerships include supporting heritage events and festivals. The State could provide small grant funding or sponsorships for events such as the Maryland Irish Festival, Celtic Festival of Southern Maryland, and the Emerald Isle Club programs. It could also encourage state agencies such as the Maryland State Arts Council to offer heritage preservation grants specifically for Irish and Celtic cultural programming. Additionally, the State could engage in cultural exchange programs such as Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, Baltimore Irish Music School or Irish dance schools to host Irish artists-in-residence, musicians, or exchange performances. Maryland universities could host Irish visiting scholars or artists under a "Maryland–Ireland Cultural Fellowship."

Opportunities in Education & Academic Collaboration include partnerships with state universities to introduce or support current Irish language or Irish studies programs. Additionally, the State could further support collaboration between Maryland universities and Irish universities by sponsoring Maryland-Ireland Student Exchanges under programs such as Study Maryland. The State could offer scholarships to those of Irish descent and/or those enrolled in Irish studies programs collaborating with various established Irish-American groups in Maryland. The State could also partner with Irish language organizations for workshops or immersion weekends for various age ranges.

Opportunities to increase tourism promotion include cross-promotion activities between the Maryland Office of Tourism and Tourism Ireland for heritage tourism. This could include marketing campaigns with Irish themed itineraries collaborating with appropriate Irish American groups in Maryland. An additional opportunity lies in creating additional Sister States Programs with Ireland. Maryland currently has twenty Sister State relationships in seventeen countries, including Cork County established in 2013.

SECTION 5: AGRICULTURE

The Agricultural connections between Maryland and Ireland are strong and ever-growing. Maryland was established as an agrarian society with tobacco then controlling as the cash crop in the south and east. In the northwest the soil was better for growing grain, and the processing of grains would propel Baltimore's growth as a city. Rye served as a cover crop, with spent rye used to feed livestock. It was easier to haul to market and provided a value-add with higher profits. Marylanders perfected the art of making rye whiskey. The Irish appreciate the flavor differences in our whiskey.

Today, Maryland exports more distilled spirits to Ireland than ever, and the potential for more market share is ripe. Ireland imports $172 million distilled spirits from the United States. The volume of trade of distilled spirits has grown 3449% over the past 10 years. Irish importation of U.S. corn is also up 550% in the past decade, reaching $58.7 million nationally.[28] Both of these growing Irish markets are opportunities for Maryland farmers.

The strong agricultural ties between Maryland and Ireland includes the equine industry. This has become a foundational touchstone for our sister state relationship with Cork County. The Maryland Department of Agriculture conducted an Equine Genetic & Agriculture Trade Visit to Ireland in 2024. Secretary Kevin Atticks and Kim Egan of the Maryland Horse Council engaged with the Irish equine community with a focus on sharing knowledge and best practices for the sport horse industry. They learned about advanced techniques such as genetic testing in livestock. Previous efforts of sharing best practices include the 2022 Maryland-Ireland Equine Trade mission under the prior administration to enhance commercial agricultural connections.

The Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Maryland Horse Council were proud to note the kinship with Ireland. Governor Moore has since strengthened Maryland's commitment to the horse industry, signing Executive Order 01.01.2025.23, which observes that the Maryland horse industry contributes significantly to Maryland's economy through jobs, tourism, education, and land stewardship with more horses per square mile than any other state in the United States, generating an annual economic impact of $2.9 billion and maintaining vitally important open space. Growing interest in the Preakness and agricultural tourism will create new economic opportunities for Maryland businesses.

[28] https://www.fas.usda.gov/regions/ireland

The former chair of the Cork Ireland Committee, Candice Kelly, and Patrick Capurro, who is on the Sister States of Maryland Board of Directors, visited Ireland in January 2023 to continue to reinforce the established sister state relationship following the Maryland Horse Industry Board's equine trade mission to Ireland in June 2022. The prior agreement from 2022 established cooperation for branding both markets as equestrian educational destinations, an exchange program for equine students, promoting education, tourism and knowledge transfer, and bilateral events including Horse Month in Maryland and Irish Derby week and Irish Grand National. They met with the Mayor of the County of Cork, Mayor Danny Collins, Chief Executive of Cork County Council Tim Lucey, and other senior officials.

OPPORTUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS

- Irish whiskey will always be sold to Marylanders but there is also increased interest in rye whiskey from Maryland in Ireland. Rye was the first American whiskey, and it was first crafted in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks has particular insights into this growing value-added sector for Maryland exports.

- Governor Moore signed Executive Order 01.01.2025.23 "Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Planning Initiative" that serves to strengthen our equestrian relationship with Ireland and ensures Maryland is recognized globally as a leader in the equestrian sector.
    - Based on this EO, the commission recommends enhancing the Maryland Horse Industry Board's support for a unique young event rider exchange between the Maryland International Horse Trials at Loch Moy Farm in Adamstown, Maryland and the Millstreet International Horse Trials at the Green Glens Arena in Millstreet, County Cork, Ireland.

COMMISSION DIRECTION IN 2026

- Remove the sunset date for the MITC, which is currently set for September 30, 2026
- Finalize Implementation Plan based on this report
- Request additional membership seats to strengthen the Commission's expertise

IN CLOSING

Maryland and Ireland share deep cultural and economic ties. The MITC is the platform to build on those ties for stronger economic and cultural relationships.

The English founders of Maryland laid claim to titles of landholding in Ireland, but it was Maryland itself that welcomed many Irish descendants as citizens. Our cultural and economic connection to Ireland remains strong and this body has the ability to create a catalyst to help spur future cooperation and growth. It is essential that we have partners around the globe that recognize the importance of our ingenuity and system of values.

Enlightenment values, economic ingenuity, and cultural richness pull us together and deepen our ties. Subnational diplomacy and the ability for Maryland to speak as one voice on the international stage will help us to brand ourselves as a friend and business partner. Seeking more exchange of goods and services with the requisite investments in education, infrastructure, and welfare will not only lift our boats, but this commission and the work it has just begun will also put wind into our sails.

Maryland and Ireland share a sisterhood in Cork County, a brotherhood in Douglass and O'Connell, and a friendship that will endure with mutually beneficial exchanges. This effort would not be possible without the support of the Maryland General Assembly and the leadership of Governor Moore and the Irish Government. When we lean into our values and shared prosperity, we will find support from our steadfast partner, Ireland.