April 11, 2019

Dear University of Maryland community,

Earlier this week—just before the Maryland General Assembly session concluded in Annapolis—longtime House Speaker Michael Busch passed away, a deeply painful loss. Not only was he a consummate legislator and public servant; he was also a caring and decent person who put the people of Maryland first. Speaker Busch understood the importance of the flagship university to the State’s future, and provided a solid wall of support.

We send our heartfelt condolences to his family and colleagues. He will lie in state at the Maryland State House on Monday of next week, followed by the funeral service in Annapolis next Tuesday morning.

This year Governor Hogan and the General Assembly have again demonstrated their continuing support for UMD, increasing funds for higher education and support for faculty, staff, and students. The operating budget includes a three percent cost-of-living salary increase for state employees, beginning July 1. Tuition increases next year will be limited to two percent for in-state students.

In another action, the legislature took steps to plug a hole in retirees’ prescription medical coverage. Our Human Resources Office will have details in the coming weeks. Additionally, the General Assembly raised the state’s minimum wage, up to $15 per hour, phased in over five years.

The budget also provides funds to help us meet surging enrollment demand in computer science, cybersecurity, and immersive media design. It will also enable us to offer new degree programs at the new, state-of-the-art facility soon to be completed at the Universities at Shady Grove, including programs in embedded systems and the Internet of Things.

The General Assembly enacted legislation to provide ongoing research and educational funding for MPower, our strategic partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore. It will support collaborative research in areas such as brain and behavior, the use of artificial intelligence in medicine, and new applications for data science. It will also support research experiences for undergraduates and enable pre-law, pre-med, and nursing students to complete their programs more quickly.

The capital budget includes funds for design and planning for a new Chemistry building; for planning and construction of a new School of Public Policy building, leveraged with substantial philanthropic support; and for completion of the research and clinical facilities in the new Cole Field House, also leveraged with substantial non-state funding.

The legislature undertook important steps concerning the University System of Maryland Board of Regents. It increased oversight and transparency of the Board in its operation. It expanded the number of board members, including slots for another student and appointees named by legislative leaders. The Senate will now confirm the appointment of the Board of Regents chair. Also, the new law requires that certain meetings be conducted in public, streamed live on the internet, and available on tape.

Concerning athletic safety, the General Assembly required all Maryland institutions of higher education to establish policies and protocols for student athletes to share concerns with administrative officials. Our campus has already started to implement them as well as the recommendations of the independent consultants on safety and health.

To ensure fairness in Title IX gender discrimination and sexual misconduct cases in state higher education institutions, a new law creates a fund so that all parties in Title IX proceedings can have access to legal representation, if they are unable to afford counsel on their own.
Finally, the General Assembly approved substantial additional funding to make Maryland’s K-12 public schools among the best in the nation, as recommended by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (the “Kirwan Commission”). The reform proposals create opportunities for our College of Education, which is at the forefront of research and practice and maintains strong partnerships with public school systems in Maryland.

I thank the Hogan Administration and the General Assembly for their continued support of higher education and of the flagship institution.

I want to recognize all who advocated effectively for UMD: University System of Maryland officials; our state government relations staff; faculty, staff, and students; and the loyal alumni and generous supporters on our University of Maryland Foundation Board of Trustees.

To all, thank you for your commitment to the inclusive excellence of UMD’s education, research, innovation, and public service.

Sincerely,

Wallace D. Loh
President, University of Maryland