

# Pioneers and Optimists

**USM**Foundation  
SERVING THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

Strategic Plan 2024



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are excited to present the University System of Maryland (USM) Foundation's five-year strategic plan, *Pioneers and Optimists*, mapping our path forward in a world of uncertainty – and opportunity.

Our drive to achieve more is inspired by those we support – students and faculty – and from you: volunteers, donors, thought leaders. Together, you are the pioneers and optimists who carry the future of higher education forward for the USM.

The hard work of higher education is an investment and a risk, but one with huge dividends. Across the USM, students – often the first in their families to attend college – take a leap of faith in us and in themselves to pursue degrees that will open doors and open minds. Our affordable and excellent System gives more than 185,000 students each year access to a bright, enriching future. Our faculty broaden knowledge in the classroom and the lab, producing research and innovations with far-reaching impact.

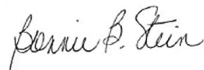
Yet, increasingly, higher education is threatened, its value dismissed. For every story about how college has transformed a life, there is a story about burgeoning student debt. Valid concerns about graduation rates and costs overshadow the USM's progress in shortening time to graduation, improving graduation rates, and keeping average student debt below \$25,000. And, to bring this back to our role at the USM Foundation, stories about the transformative impact of philanthropy and the incredible work of our partnering institutions need to be elevated and celebrated.

As Oscar Wilde said, "A cynic is a person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." It is our job to sustain and, in some cases, regain the public's trust in higher education, and specifically the USM. The diligence we bring to our work – stewarding and investing private funds, supporting USM priorities, and elevating the culture of philanthropy – can counter the voices of cynics and ensure access to life-changing education for generations to come. To that end, we have set a goal of doubling the USM Foundation's endowment by 2027, to \$2 billion. Every aspect of this strategic plan will work toward that ambitious goal.

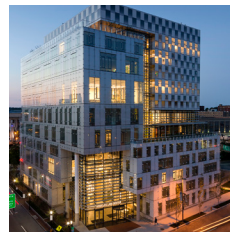
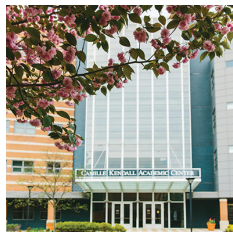
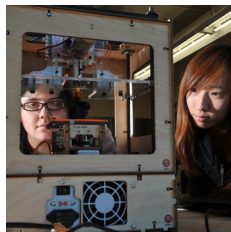
We are glad that you, our pioneers and optimists, are with us on this journey.



Leonard R. Raley



Bonnie B. Stein



# Pioneers and Optimists

## Our Partnership to Advance Higher Education in Maryland



For 40 years, the USM Foundation has helped to fulfill the dreams of those who seek a better life through education and a better world through research and innovation.

Partnerships and relationships have defined the Foundation. We are in the helping business: we respond to emerging needs across our partner institutions, identify ways to build philanthropic capacity, and steward the private funds entrusted to us. As the landscape of higher education changes, we must change with it.

***Pioneers and Optimists***, our five-year strategic plan, will build on our history in ways that will help us best rise to the challenges facing higher education today. There are three commonalities across the five main themes of the plan.

**Alignment and Partnership:** The Foundation exists to facilitate the mission of the USM and its institutions, and our focus must track with USM priorities. The strategic plan reflects this imperative, supporting priorities in entrepreneurship and innovation and strengthening an emphasis on building a culture of philanthropy, especially through areas of endowment and alumni engagement.

**Communication and Trust:** The public's perception of higher education is declining, with questions of affordability and relevance drowning out messages about the value of a degree. The USM Foundation will work to build trust in higher education, bolster donor confidence, and add a vital voice to inform legislative leaders why public higher education matters.

**Leadership and Governance:** Understanding that a rising tide lifts all boats, we will leverage our Board and our resources to raise the bar across the USM. We will share best practices and expertise and create tools that enable leaders, volunteers, and front-line fundraisers to attract transformative private support.

### MISSION

*The University System of Maryland Foundation promotes, galvanizes, and supports the advancement of public higher education in Maryland through leadership and engagement in philanthropy, asset management, and stewardship.*

### VISION

*Inspire a long-term, sustainable culture of philanthropy across the University System of Maryland. Serve as an indispensable resource and an effective advocate for innovative solutions, best practices, and trusted values that stimulate increased private support.*

### VALUES

*Collaboration.  
Excellence.  
Innovation.  
Integrity.  
Trust.  
Accountability.*



# Asset Management

The Foundation will work to build an investment structure and team that supports the long-term goals of the endowment.

- Continue to build a nimble and talented investment management staff.
- Expand the footprint of investment management services.
- Implement a new governance model that strengthens the Investment Committee and enhances cooperation between the Investment and Spending Policy Committees.
- Build confidence in our work through education to boards of USM affiliated foundations and to fundraisers across the USM on how we invest endowment and operating funds.



# Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The Foundation values the innovation and entrepreneurship coming from students and faculty across the University System of Maryland and will support these endeavors in a manner consistent with its fiduciary duties.

- Support the USM's innovation and entrepreneurship goals by leveraging Board relationships, providing visibility to USM start-ups and research seeking private investment, and highlighting student entrepreneurship.
- Consider a coordinated fundraising effort with USM partners to raise private support to seed or capitalize work with commercial promise.



## Culture of Philanthropy

The Foundation will help drive higher levels of giving and engagement across the USM, work with USM institutions to ensure that philanthropy is a valued priority, and provide the resources and knowledge to build advancement staff skills to more effectively execute their important work.

- Encourage leadership-level investment in advancement through greater alignment and communication among volunteer boards and senior leadership.
- Improve infrastructure related to philanthropy in areas such as data analytics and information technology, effective boards, and campus involvement.
- Accelerate fundraising success with enhanced professional development programs.

## Communication and Advocacy

The Foundation will act as a powerful advocate to communicate the importance of stewarding and growing the endowment, supporting the USM in its efforts to convey why college matters.

- Work with the USM to build trust in higher education and ensure that the USM Foundation's role is understood and valued.
- Strengthen effective advocacy in Annapolis with improved communication tools for Board member advocacy and more flexible and targeted advocacy opportunities.
- Improve communication about the value of endowment through "stories and stats," toolkits, and education of key stakeholders.

## Sustaining a Great Foundation

The Foundation will strengthen and grow its role as a resource to its USM partners, continue to build an engaged and productive Board, and diversify its revenue streams to assure financial stability.

- Evaluate the business model and diversify revenue streams by seeking increased income through expanded assets under management and seeking business operations efficiencies.
- Broaden the reach of our services, such as the Advance Database, prospect research, and professional services such as planned giving.
- Improve Board nomination and orientation/continuing education processes.
- Strengthen focus on succession planning for Board and staff leadership and on talent development.





## **STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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