



September 14, 2015

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Governor of the State of Maryland
Executive Offices
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

Myrna Cardin '65
Chair
Board of Visitors
Towson University
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252-0001

Towson University shines brighter now than ever as we celebrate our 150th year in higher education and look ahead to the next 150 years. One of my great pleasures as the chair of the Towson University Board of Visitors is to update you on our successes in fiscal year 2015 and share just a few of the achievements that make this university so valued in Maryland and in the University System of Maryland (USM).

Our national reputation continues to grow, and trusted publications and resources for parents and prospective students reflect that recognition. "Money Magazine" named us to their list of best colleges by measures of educational quality, affordability, and career outcomes. "Washington Monthly" put Towson 26th in 176 public colleges and universities on its "Best Bang for the Buck" list, crediting us with "helping non-rich students earn marketable degrees at affordable prices." The time-tested "U.S. News & World Report" once again ranked Towson one of the best public schools in the region, and in the top three schools for veterans – a distinction with which "G.I. Jobs Magazine" agreed for yet another year.

Between our December 2014 and May 2015 commencement ceremonies, we graduated about 5,800 students prepared for careers in health professions, STEM fields, education, the humanities, business, and more. Nearly 93,000 of our 150,000 alumni live here in Maryland, contributing to the state's economy, workforce, and future.

With Maryland open for business, Towson University serves not only as an outstanding producer of ready-to-work alumni, but as a catalyst for young entrepreneurs. Our Student Launch Pad lets students create their own businesses through a leadership-focused, interdisciplinary collaboration between academics, student life, and the larger Towson community. Its impact is demonstrated in success stories like Rachel Millman '11, who founded Reel Estate Media as a more streamlined, visual, online approach to



homebuying; and Vince Talbert '90, who cofounded Bill Me Later in 2000, sold it to PayPal in 2008 for \$945 million, and now develops and supports small educational technology start-ups in the Baltimore area.

As you know, Towson mourns the loss of Dr. Maravene Loeschke '69/'71, who passed away in June. Dr. Loeschke carried a deep passion for leadership development, particularly for women. It was her passion that launched the Professional Leadership Program for Women in FY15, a networking and development program that fosters growth and achievement for mid-level and higher professional women throughout the state. It is designed to equip Maryland women for leadership in business, education, nonprofit, and government organizations so that they can effectively lead, grow and strengthen the workforce, and elevate their own careers.

Our entrepreneurial and leadership development extends beyond our students with the Towson Incubator. Since 2007, TU Incubator and its members have given start-ups access to a network of educators, community partners and business leaders. The TU Incubator includes entrepreneurs in the local community; to date, it has created about \$50 million in total economic activity and supported more than 300 jobs. This work has earned it a nomination for Incubator Space of the Year in the Annual Baltimore Innovation Awards.

We have more student success stories than we can list, and we are immeasurably proud of the students who earn exceptional opportunities and recognition. Reema Riaz '15 was a finalist for a Rhodes Scholarship, and won a Fulbright U.S. Student Award for an English teaching assistantship. She is currently in Turkey, teaching English as she pursues her goal of providing educational opportunities to women, girls, and minorities, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East.

Reema joined Oumou Diallo '17, Bilcia "Jasmin" Rivera '15 and two more Towson students for the Clinton Global Initiative University Network conference in Miami to work with about 1,000 other students from all over the country on far-reaching, critical issues like the future of energy, the power of big data to address global challenges, and peace-building in the Middle East and North Africa.

Five business administration seniors from the College of Business and Economics beat out teams from the University of Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, Loyola University, the University of Maryland, American University and Georgetown University to earn top regional honors in the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute Investment Research Challenge.



Ted Smith '17 and Rhyan Vargas '17 were the only undergraduates to attend the 2015 Accessibility Hackathon in Washington, D.C., an event geared toward crowdsourcing solutions to digital accessibility problems that plague federal websites. The hackathon featured expert panels, networking opportunities and the chance to make a difference for persons with disabilities or challenges. Ted and Rhyan presented the SoundsRight CAPTCHA technology developed by fellow students Tim Brooks and Abiodun Olalere, as well as faculty members Jinjuan Feng and Jonathan Lazar, to make online CAPTCHA technology more accessible to persons with visual impairments. SoundsRight CAPTCHA was patented in early 2014. Chief Technology Officer of the United States Megan Smith found the CAPTCHA software promising and encouraged the Towson group to use SoundsRight for other applications of national interest.

Issues of national interest are nothing new for Towson students; the university was named a national center of academic excellence in cyber operations by the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command. The distinction, awarded for 2014 – 2019, gives students special, reserved access to otherwise difficult-to-attain cyber security internships with the NSA.

The university's first-ever tech transfer saw the multi-million dollar rights transfer of the world's most accurate closed captioning system, developed by Psychology Professor Ellyn Sheffield and several Towson students, to BTS Software Solutions. BTS is known for pioneering work in tactical cellular networks for American troops in Afghanistan. The closed captioning system, called VERB8™, is now one of BTS' headline products.

This kind of innovate work is a rule at Towson, rather than an exception. The nursing department's Incorporating Diversity Empowers All (IDEA) program uses grants to address a looming shortage of nurses and nurse educators while closing an inclusion gap between international/immigrant nursing students and native English speakers. The IDEA program lets students from all linguistic backgrounds study together, participate in workshops, and work with peer instructor coaches. So far, this has helped about 25 students from Africa, the Philippines, and Asia learn everything from how to read a syllabus to how to use English medical terms and calculate dosages.

Towson University's Presidential Scholar, Dr. Nancy Grasmick '61, was honored as an Innovator of the Year by "The Daily Record" for her work in teacher and leader education, earning the recognition for All SySTEMs Go, a coordinated, fully integrated research-based approach to launch Maryland students on a college and career pathway in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



Dr. Grasmick is just one example of the outstanding faculty and staff who serve the university and its students. Computer and Information Sciences Assistant Professor Wei Yu won a prestigious mid-six-figure grant to study how cyber-attacks impact smart grids and how communities can ensure security. He also earned the University System of Maryland Board of Regents' highest faculty honor, the Award for Excellence in Scholarship, Research, or Creative Activity for exemplary faculty achievement.

Dr. Yu's colleague in the Fisher College of Science and Mathematics, Physics Professor Raj Kolagani, earned the USM's Wilson H. Elkins Professorship to support her focus on engaging graduate and undergraduate students in applied condensed matter research in her laboratory; strengthening the Professional Science Master's Program in applied physics by developing its advisory board; investigating professional science master's programs expansion at TU; and exploring collaborations with other USM institutions in a five-year B.S./M.S. program.

Faculty dedicate themselves to issues larger than their classrooms, as well. Dr. Martha James-Hassan of the Department of Kinesiology was appointed to the Board of School Commissioners by Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. Dr. James-Hassan wants the university to work with city schools to address educational shortages, and allows some of her classes to meet with the board to get an understanding of how education policy is formed.

Before leaving his ten-year post as dean of the College of Education, Dr. Raymond P. Lorion was awarded the Society for Community Research and Action's award for distinguished contribution to theory and research in community psychology. Dr. Lorion spent the first 30 years of his career in that field, paying special attention to early detection of disorders in young people that may lead to mental illness, violence, or other community concerns. Dr. Lorion will now focus his time on leading the Center for Application and Innovation Research in Education, which he founded to help Maryland's Department of Education evaluate the effectiveness of the federal government's Race to the Top program.

From great education come accomplished alumni, and Towson University continually claims a place in the lives of people who go on to inspire, motivate, create and lead. Our young alumni are particularly impressive; there were perhaps no more public examples of this than actress, writer, producer and comedian Amy Schumer '03, and "American Ninja Warrior" Kacy Catanzaro '12. Kacy was a TU gymnast who took network television and the hearts of millions by storm, and is now a managing partner for Alpha Warrior, a technical obstacle course system for extreme athletes.

While fame made Kacy and Amy stand-out alumnae, other young alumni have been earning accolades.



Brian '09 and Matt '10 Vetter are executive vice presidents for Tessemae's, Inc., distributing organic and all-natural condiments based on their mother, Tesse's, original recipe.

Kate Watson '05 owns her own wellness consultation company, providing training to health care, psychological, social service, and criminal justice professionals nationwide and partnering with Princeton University, the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, the University of Massachusetts, the Philadelphia Mayor's Office, and the United States National Guard.

Khanh-Dung Nguyen '07, Ph.D., is a computational geneticist focused on neurodegenerative disorders at Biogen.

Accounting alumna Kristen Fleet '13 (M.S., Accounting) passed the American Institute of CPAs exam among the top 0.006 percent, earning her the 2015 Elijah Watt Sells Award. Fleet works for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington, D.C.

Van Brooks '12 just opened the Safe Alternatives Foundation for Education, or S.A.F.E., a community educational outreach center in the Franklin Square neighborhood of West Baltimore where Van was born and raised. Funded mostly through grants and donations, S.A.F.E. invites students in the neighborhood to come learn about science, technology, engineering, art, math, health, and fitness on weekends or after school.

Towson's proud tradition of teacher education once again proved our alumni to be the best teachers in the state. Four Towson University alumni were named Teachers of the Year in their respective counties or by the Knights of Columbus: Laura Potter '05 (Harford County), Colleen Manchester (Knights of Columbus), Sabra Szczyglowski '04 (St. Mary's County) and Rachel McCusker '93 (Carroll County). Jennifer Mullenax '00 was the Baltimore County Schools Principal of the Year.

As governor, you have named three Towson alumni to positions in your cabinet: Secretary of Planning David Craig '71, Deputy Secretary of Housing and Community Development K. Kandie Leach '09, and Secretary of Business and Economic Development Mike Gill '74. Ten Towson alumni serve as state senators or delegates.

Towson University continues to grow in its ability to serve Marylanders and students from all over the state and the country. In FY15, we officially opened Towson University in Northeastern Maryland, offering associate-to-bachelor's degree programs in business administration with a management concentration; early childhood and special education; elementary and special education; psychology; sociology with a criminal justice concentration; and information technology. The creation of this campus and



these programs are a direct result of seven years of work and the vision of previous leaders who knew that the northeastern region of the state had no four-year colleges with which to foster its workforce development; programs are implemented at TU in Northeastern Maryland with an eye toward those regional workforce needs. Enrollment for the first academic year totaled more than 200 students who had earned their associate degree before transferring to our bachelor's degree programs.

On our main campus, our focus on safety leads to continual improvements and recognition. The West Village Pedestrian Bridge was completed in FY15, reducing the chances of student pedestrian injury and auto accidents on Osler Drive between Towsontown Boulevard and Cross Campus Drive. The Towson University Police Department, with authority for 41 sworn full officers of law, maintained its outstanding reputation nationwide under the leadership of Chief Bernard Gerst; the department's excellence was recognized by the Towson Area Citizens on Patrol for the innovative approach that "has made Towson University the benchmark other universities are graded against." Once more, Towson claimed the lowest crime rate of any USM school, with the lowest number of Part I crimes for six years in a row.

We remain committed to the student experience, breaking ground on new residence halls that will eventually help house nearly a thousand more students on campus in West Village. Our Burdick Hall expansion project, which began in FY15, provides a health and fitness opportunity that makes Towson competitive with other universities and colleges, attracts athletes, and gives students and faculty access to better health, strength, and conditioning.

Consistently on the cutting edge of energy efficiency, Towson's SECU Arena, which opened in FY14, earned a gold LEED building certification in FY15. This is our fifth building to earn LEED certification, and the third to earn the gold. We also garnered praise from the U.S. Department of Energy at the annual Better Buildings Challenge Summit in Washington, D.C. for reducing campus energy consumption by 13 percent since calendar year 2010. This puts us ahead of schedule in meeting our Better Building Challenge goal to reduce energy consumption by 20 percent by 2020.

While Towson's capacity for excellence in education centers on our beautiful Baltimore County campus, community outreach remains one of the pillars of our vision. This is clear to you every year when our Tigers descend on Annapolis for Tiger Pride Day, which brought with it more than 100 students, faculty, and staff in FY15 to advocate for the university's interests.

Our students are passionate and committed to improving the community, which is never more evident than during The Big Event, which sends our students out into surrounding communities to provide clean-up work and other fixes for neighbors and businesses. More than 1,900 students turned out for the event in April 2015 – double



the number who came out last year – in temperatures so low that snow flurries were flying when they left campus early on a Saturday morning.

We bring a little fun to the larger community, as well, particularly with WTMD's First Thursdays concerts in the summer, in collaboration with Baltimore City's Department of Recreation and Parks. Friendly crowds pushed into the thousands at the free music shows at Canton's Waterfront Park after years in Mount Vernon. The move earned WTMD a spot in "Baltimore Magazine's" Best of Baltimore issue for engineering the "Best Change of Scenery."

This engagement, plus the outstanding and selfless work our students, faculty, and staff do all year-round, earned Towson a Carnegie Foundation 2015 Community Engagement Classification for the second time. Towson is one of only three institutions in the entire state, the only one in the University System, and one of only 361 nationally, to receive the classification.

Of course, none of this work is possible without funding. Towson University tuition, fees, and state support cover about 60 percent of its operating expenses, and FY15 was a particularly challenging year for those budgets. Towson prides itself on its fiscal efficiency and responsibility, even in light of a mid-fiscal year budget cut that forced a 2-percent tuition hike for students.

Towson had an outstanding year in development efforts in FY15, raising close to \$10 million after last year's highly successful campaign, in which we surpassed our goal by more than \$1 million. One highlight of our FY15 development efforts is the success of our newly redesigned student philanthropy program. The number of student donors and the amount of money raised through this program surpassed all of the other System institutions' student philanthropy efforts combined. This exemplary achievement bodes extremely well for the future. As we look ahead in our 150th year, with robust momentum for the FY16 campaign, we are on pace to surpass the goal of \$1.5 million in scholarship funds.

Scholarships bring many student-athletes to Towson University. In FY15, we held the highest graduation rate in the nation for Division I African-American student-athletes. Our overall student-athlete graduation rate was first in the USM among Division I institutions, and ten of our programs scored perfectly in single-year academic eligibility and retention. Ten of our teams (baseball, men's swimming and diving, women's swimming and diving, women's lacrosse, women's cross country, women's tennis, women's soccer, women's outdoor track & field, softball, and women's indoor track &



field) also earned the highest retention scores in their sport among the Division I schools in the USM.

There is no question that Towson University is an exceptional institution for higher education. Our dedication and drive keep us moving forward as we celebrate 150 years making Maryland, the nation, and the world better with our exceptional alumni and the academic foundation on which they stand. We consistently outperform the state's expectations and meet the increasingly challenging fiscal demands on our growing university. I am privileged to serve on Towson University's Board of Visitors, and honored to be an alumna. On behalf of the entire board, I thank you for your support of Towson University, and look forward to our partnership in making Maryland stronger throughout your time in office.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Myrna Cardin".

Myrna Cardin '65
Chair
Board of Visitors

c: Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, President of the Senate
Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House
Maggie McIntosh, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Edward J. Kasemeyer, Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Jennie C. Hunter-Cevera, Acting Secretary of Higher Education
Robert L. Caret, Chancellor, University System of Maryland
James L. Shea, Chair, USM Board of Regents
Johanne H. Greer, Department of Legislative Resources
Warren G. Deschenaux, Director, Office of Policy Analysis