MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF ADVISORS MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, OCT 6, 2026, AT 5:00 PM, USMSM

In Attendance: Dr. Sybol Anderson, Jim Chandler, Bonnie Green, John Hartline, George Hurlburt, Glen Ives, Kaprece James, Shontay Kincaid (sitting in for Dr. Rhonda Phillips), Brianna Madigan, Dr. Maria Navarro, Dr. Dale Nesbary, Dr. Marcus Newsome, Dr. Jenny Owens (USM), Thomas Saul, Dr. Theresa Shafer, Brad Stover (Office of the Attorney General), Dr. J. Scott Smith, and Dr. Yolanda Wilson.

Not in Attendance: Joe Anderson, Senator Jack Bailey, Cindy Greb, Gary Kessler, Philip Melton, Julie Oberg, and Dr. Evalyne Bryant-Ward

Call to Order: Chairman George Hurlburt welcomed and called the Board of Advisors (BoA) to order at 5:07 p.m. He noted a majority was present.

Chair Remarks: Leadership Transition: Dr. Dale Nesbary was formally introduced as the permanent Executive Director of the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland (USMSM). Mr. Hurlburt briefly summarized established workforce needs, noting that Artificial Intelligence had a cross-cutting effect on all disciplines.

Introductions:

Ms. Brianna Dawson was introduced as the new Communications Coordinator at USMSM, leading marketing and event organization.

Dr. Jenny Owens: New System Academic Lead for USM (as of July 1), brings a background in clinical education and academic program building from University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB).

Glen Ives: Board member with a deep background in the Navy and defense industries, active in regional higher education.

Shontay Kincaid: Representing the Office of the President at St. Mary's College of Maryland (sitting in for Dr. Rhonda Phillips).

Approval of Minutes: Bonnie Green made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2026, meeting, seconded by Dr. Yomanda Wilson. The motion carried.

Executive Director's Report:

Dr. Dale Nesbary reported Education remains foundational across Southern Maryland, with ongoing focus on dual enrollment, early college programs, and initiatives in partnership with the College of Southern Maryland (CSM).

CSM is actively working on workforce development for quantum technicians, which is noted as a potential regional "game changer".

Job open slots in healthcare are projected to outpace education as the region's largest growing employment sector over the next decade, as confirmed by a recent Towson University report.

With healthcare driving 18% of national GDP growth, Southern Maryland stands out as one of the few U.S. regions lacking an Area Health Education Center (AHEC). To address this gap, Dr. Nesbary recently met with Dr. Mimi Novello, President and CMO of MedStar St. Mary's, and Dr. Evalayne Bryant-Ward, VP of Ambulatory Services at UM Charles Regional Medical Group. Both regional leaders expressed strong support for a Southern Maryland AHEC, and USMSM is now positioning itself to partner with the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) to host or support the new center.

Expanding USMSM's engineering programs (autonomy, testing, verification, and validation) into healthcare technology, nursing, and physician assistant fields.

USMSM is conducting internal and regional institutional analyses (similar to Towson's 90-page report for St. Mary's County Economic Development Corporation) to evaluate student enrollment patterns, system institution pathways, and K-12 pipelines, set for completion in Q1 in 2027.

Dr. Nesbary formally notes the naming of the USMSM SMART Building as the **S**teny H. Hoyer Building.

Funding has been secured for support positions, including marketing and communication staff (Brianna Dawson).

Over 160 participants (students, parents, adult learners, and counselors) attended the recent open house event. The Keynote address was delivered by Dr. Jackie El Sayed (aerospace/mechanical engineer and college president) targeting middle and high school students to spark early interest in higher education.

Marketing Update: Briana Dawson, USMSM Marketing Coordinator, reported planning is underway for a Health & STEM event scheduled for early April (tentatively April 5–9) targeting students and young professionals.

Continuing the "Doing Business with the Government" workshop series in partnership with UMD Business to engage local defense/contractor professionals.

USMSM is launching a monthly newsletter to keep the campus community and stakeholders informed about key events, developments, and initiatives across campus.

MATRIX Report:

Dr. Jamison Watson reports The Maryland Autonomous Technologies Research Innovation & Exploration (MATRIX) Lab, led by Executive Director of Research and Innovation Dr. Reza Ghodssi, serves as Maryland's platform for trusted autonomy, education, and industry partnerships at the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland (USMSM).

The lab's research focus spans advanced autonomous systems, including swarm and counter-swarm control, drone fixture prototyping in partnership with Applied Research Associates and NSWC Indian Head, machine learning algorithms for autonomous naval vessel landing funded by the Office of Naval Research, and maritime biofouling detection in collaboration with the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory. Supported by Congressman Hoyer, the facility is pursuing a congressional investment with ARLIS and the Navy to establish a Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC) test center of excellence for counterswarm tactics, algorithm engineering, and workforce development.

On the industry front, HII and AeroVironment recently joined as MATRIX and Clark School of Engineering corporate sponsors, with a Master Research Agreement currently underway with HII. The MATRIX Lab hosted its first Industry Open House and sponsored events such as the Engineering Futures Colloquium featuring Felice Frankel, while actively leveraging programs like MIPS, SBIR/STTR, and OTAs to support local Maryland small businesses in product development.

In education and workforce development, the MATRIX Lab launched its Graduate Certificate in Development and Certificate of Autonomous Systems (DCAS), hosted six undergraduate interns in Summer 2026, and introduced a new cohort of graduate researchers. Through Navy-sponsored undergraduate capstone projects, the establishment of a soldiering certification program through Maryland Department of Labor grants, short courses in technical skills like soldering and CNC machining, and partnerships with the College of Southern Maryland and NAWCAD, MATRIX continues to strengthen the regional engineering talent pipeline from education directly into industry and defense careers.

Retreat Recap:

George Hurlburt reported in the absence of Dr. Evalyne Bryant Ward, leading a brief discussion on the key takeaways from the Regional Impact session. Key takeaways included: expanding 2+2 programming to grow and diversify the focused workforce pipeline, broadening the research mission beyond engineering, securing financial and personnel resources, reforming education to engage Generation Alpha, and establishing a distinctive USMSM identity through targeted marketing. Additionally, a structured approach must be implemented to monitor and evaluate the strategic plan based on reliable data driven metrics.

Board of Advisor Actions:

The meeting discussion highlighted several key operational and strategic initiatives. Addressing workforce demand in Maryland, particularly significant shortfalls in healthcare roles such as registered nurses, physical therapists, and medical technicians is a known priority. A regional Area Health Education Center (AHEC), for which funds are available, would serve to bolster the healthcare needs of the region given an optimal location. The USM Chancellor strongly favors this notion.

The US MChancellor also agrees that the the strategic plan is a living document and supports a re-write to incorportate the recommended updates from the session. Dr. Bryant Ward has agreed to chair a Strategic Plan Working Group dedicated to these initiatives, with Sybil Anderson and Thomas Saul volunteering to participate. Others are invited to join.

Governance and committee updates were presented on behalf of Nominating Committee Chair Joe Anderson. As of February 2026, the BOA consists of 20 members, adhering to bylaws requiring between 20 and 30 members. Three new ex-officio members, Dr. Marcus Newsome (Superintendent, Calvert County Public Schools), Dr. Jamison Watson (Director, USMSM Matrix Lab), and Mr. Jim Chandler (Director of Economic Development, Charles County) were added without needing formal elections. The nominating committee is currently vetting proposed member Dr. Philip Cole (Senior Program Manager at Indian Head) for an upcoming electronic vote. Two additional candidates, Dr. Mimi Novello (CEO of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital) and Lee Greeley (Regional Maryland Economic Development Lead), have also been proposed. Following their formal acceptance, vetting, and electronic elections, total board membership will reach 26.

Finally, USMSM highlighted its upcoming workshop series, "Doing Business with the Government," featuring sessions hosted by Stephen E. Cricchi on Defense Acquisition Reform, Dr. Dale L. Moore on Small Business Technology Transition, Dr. Philip Cole on NSWC Indian Head's technology partnerships, and Kevin Stotts on building partnerships. The presentation concluded with three immediate requests for board engagement: assistance with promoting the workshop series, securing an accomplished grant writer, and completing the BOA meeting survey update.

Emerging Technology (AI):

George Hurburt highlighted Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as critical drivers for upcoming strategic planning.

The digital transformation in higher education is critical for institutional stability, as emerging technologies and artificial intelligence rapidly reshape the regional workforce and alter traditional job structures. Technology has become ubiquitous and cross-disciplinary - ranging from generative AI to advanced self-generating agentic models. Many users lack a deep understanding of how modern technology functions. Adapting to these technologies requires rapid, systemic integration into academic pedagogical, administrative, and governance practices; however, digital transformation efforts often fail, with success rates hovering around 22% in the public sector and 30% in business due to challenges like lack of stakeholder buy-in, scope creep, and budgetary miscalculations. Complicating this challenge, frontier AI development is largely

driven outside academia by profit-motivated industry entities operating at immense scale and funding. Nonetheless, studies show that higher education institutions must proactively establish three essential prerequisites: 1) Foundational AI and technological literacy across all disciplines, 2) grounded metric governance standards informed by applied academic research on issues like bias, cybersecurity, and explainability, and 3) strategy informed by the preceding initiatives for sustainable digital transformation. Ultimately, transformation in higher education is not measured by technology alone, but by human development, experiential learning, and the ability to adapt learning environments to modern students such as Generation Alpha by delivering coherent, interactive, supportive, and rigorous educational experiences.

There was a dicussion leveraging AI tools (such as Copilot) for institutional strategic planning and analyzing lengthy technical reports.

Kaprece James suggested looking into the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership. This partnership was established under Senate Bill 597 (Chapter 633) and took effect on July 1, 2026. Housed within USM, the partnership coordinates statewide AI strategy and public service integration.

Board Uodates:

Bonnie Green discussed a few upcoming TPP (The Patuxent Partnership) events:

- October 28th TPP annual meeting with Steve Cricchi, Deputy Commander, NAVAIR, at Techport. He will provide base updates.
- November 18th, TPP Innovation Summit.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13pm.

The **next BOA Meeting** will be on January 5, 2027.