

2009

Mickey L. Burnim, President

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY



**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

March 4, 2009

**SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH,
EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

March 9, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
MICKEY L. BURNIM**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify in support of the Governor's proposed FY 2010 budget. The students, faculty and staff at Bowie State University appreciate the Governor's strong commitment to higher education, especially in the face of difficult fiscal circumstances. We are equally grateful for the continuing support you and your colleagues in the General Assembly have demonstrated.

In the past year, we have witnessed unprecedented economic turmoil. Yet, we remain optimistic and more committed than ever to do all we can to keep open the doors to higher education for the students we serve. We know that investment in human capital through education is a critical part of our nation's economic recovery. And so we applaud the Governor and you for remaining steadfast in your commitment to Maryland's public universities.

My plan this morning is to update you on some of our efforts and challenges over the past year and then turn to the issues and recommendations made by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) and answer any questions you may have.

Let me first tell you what the Governor's proposed budget means for Bowie State. As with the other University System of Maryland institutions, we will be able to keep our in-state tuition for undergraduates flat for another year. That is welcome news, particularly for our institution where providing access is such a critical

component of our mission. The Governor's budget, however, will not allow us to increase financial aid for our students. In FY 2008, about 80% of our undergraduates received financial aid and 85% of those awards were need-based aid. This is, of course, not good news as we try to move our students toward graduation and keep more of them from "stopping out." The proposed budget will not allow us to increase our enrollment and programs nor will it permit us to catch up on much-needed deferred maintenance projects. While the proposed FY 2010 budget covers mandatory costs like increases in employee fringe benefits, we will not be able to provide merit or cost-of-living increase to our employees – all of whom will have taken one half to six furlough days during this fiscal year. Nonetheless, we are committed to moving the institution forward in the face of these fiscal challenges. This year, consistent with our strategic goals,ⁱ we are focused on five priorities:

- **Promoting Enrollment Growth**
- **Improving Academic Programs**
- **Closing the Achievement Gap**
- **Improving Campus Safety and Security**
- **Expanding Marketing and Outreach**

I will highlight a few of our efforts and challenges related to some of these priorities. They are all interrelated.

Growth

The University System of Maryland has designated Bowie State as a "growth" institution and we welcome that distinction. I firmly believe that the future of Bowie State University depends upon our ability to attract new students and retain more of those students to graduation. We began implementing a **comprehensive marketing plan** to "get the word out" about our university and we are becoming less of a "best-kept secret." We have met or exceeded our enrollment targets for the past two years and we are focused on a variety of recruitment and retention efforts, as well as efforts to improve student services and increase financial assistance. We believe these efforts will pay off.

As part of our strategy for increasing our enrollment, we are reaching out to a broader mix of students, geographically and racially. Diversity is one of our core values and we strongly believe that a diverse student body enhances the

educational and campus life experience for all of our students. Our marketing efforts reflect this commitment to diversity.

It will be extremely difficult for us to continue to grow in a significant way without additional resources for faculty and programs. Without high-quality, high-demand programs -- and first-rate facilities to support those programs -- many potential students and their parents simply will not see Bowie State University as their institution of choice.

New Academic Infrastructure

During the past year we completed the hiring of a new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, along with four academic deans. The Academic Affairs Division is being reorganized in such a manner as to increase the University's competitive advantage as it recruits outstanding students and works to expand its offering of highly desired academic programs. One example of our reorganization is seen in a change in the names of the University's academic units. Formerly called "schools," these units now bear the following names:

- College of Arts & Sciences;
- College of Business;
- College of Education; and
- College of Professional Studies.

These changes offer a better reflection on the advanced degrees offered in each of the units and, while no plans are under consideration for further expansion of our current "departments" into "Schools" (such as "School of Nursing" or "School of Social Work"), it opens the door for a move in that direction when the programs are sufficiently mature. These name changes also bring us in line with our sister institutions in the USM and with our peers throughout the region. They have the cumulative effect of leveling the playing field as we compete for the brightest students in the state.

Workforce Development

We also remain committed to making a strong contribution to workforce development in Maryland. We are focusing much of our efforts on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, where we have

specific capacity and strength. We were awarded a \$140,000 BRAC grant from MHEC to design an innovative new Master of Science in Information Assurance degree program. This degree will be targeted to military and homeland security professionals.

Our nursing program is strong and getting stronger. We are using funding from the Higher Education Investment Fund to improve curricula and we received a \$333,000 Congressional appropriation to develop a “Minority Nurses Pipeline” project in collaboration with the Prince George’s County Schools. Programmatic enhancements are ongoing, but our current facilities are inadequate to meet the growing demands of our nursing program. This past fall, nearly 400 students declared nursing as a major, seeking to pursue a BS or BSN degree. This is more than three times the number we can support with our current facilities.

With a distinguished history as a teacher’s college, we continue to work to strengthen our education programs. Funding from Congress enabled us to launch a Principal’s Academy whereby we will train educators in the Prince George’s County School System who aspire to become principals.

Closing the Achievement Gap

We have a plan to increase our six-year graduation rates over the next several years. The plan is comprehensive and is focused on retention efforts throughout the undergraduate experience. We have seen good success with our Summer Bridge Program and we are reviewing our tutoring and academic advising services to ensure that we are providing the best services for our students. We are also working hard to provide a safe and positive campus life experience for all our students.

Among other things, we know that a major obstacle to higher retention rates is financial challenge that causes students to “stop out” or “drop out.” I mentioned an unfortunate reality of the FY 2010 budget is that we will not be able to increase the amount of financial aid we can provide to our students. This will inevitably have an impact on our retention efforts.

We followed the work of the “Bohanan Commission,” and we were pleased to welcome the special HBI Study Panel to our campus last summer. Recognition of our “dual mission” is a positive step forward. The fact is that we provide access to a disproportionate number of capable students who are less prepared than we might

expect, while also serving high achieving and highly motivated students who are looking for a high quality and affordable postsecondary education. This “dual mission” presents special challenges for us. The Bohanan Commission’s report and the HBI Study Panel report recognize the fact that we require additional resources to adequately meet our dual mission. We look forward to working with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and our sister institutions as we focus even more intensely on improving retention and raising our graduation rates.

Support for Bowie State



In November 2008, we launched the public phase of our \$15,000,000 comprehensive campaign. Three hundred of the university’s alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends gathered for the kick-off gala for *The Campaign for Bowie State University – Believe Invest Grow*. The BIG Campaign has already raised approximately \$5,000,000 and is receiving enthusiastic support from the university’s alumni and other potential donors. Scholarships for students will be an important special effort within the campaign as will funding to support academic program innovations.

We recently received the largest gift ever from a graduate. The contribution, that will total \$1 million, is from William R. Teel, Jr., CEO of 1 Source Consulting, Inc. and Energy Enterprise Solutions, LLC. Mr. Teel holds a B.S. and M.S. from Bowie State University. His companies provide work for over 1600 Marylanders. Mr. Teel is one of many alumni supporting the University. Alumni giving and participation has increased. The alumni participation rate has increased from approximately 5% in FY 07, to over 11% in FY 2008.

I was very pleased to re-establish the Bowie State University Board of Visitors (BOV) last year. This group of community and business leaders serves as an advisory board to me and is committed to advancing the goals of the University and supporting the university financially. The Board held its first meeting in June 2008 and its second one on November 7, 2008.

We will continue efforts to strengthen our alumni relations and our fundraising capacity. These efforts are paying off and will benefit even more students in the years ahead.

Climate Commitment



I joined my colleagues in signing onto the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment. Our campus community is deeply concerned about the scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects. We recognize the need to reduce the worst impacts of global warming and to help re-establish the more stable climatic conditions that have made human progress possible over the last 10,000 years.

We established a Climate Commitment Coordinating Committee to develop a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality on campus within the very near future. I am proud that our Committee completed the carbon footprint inventory for our university ahead of schedule. This valuable information will help us measure the amount of carbon emissions we produce and will assist the University in our efforts to alleviate carbon emissions throughout campus.

We also launched an annual Earth Day program, which focuses on new GREEN initiatives designed to help educate the campus community. We began a new recycling program in all academic buildings and several auxiliary buildings and the students who live in our residence halls are participating in the national Recycle Mania competition.



From academics to athletics, Bowie State experienced major successes and growth during the past academic year. We are proud to detail our accomplishments in the 2007-2008 annual report. In order to be more fiscally and ecologically responsible, we posted our annual report on the web at bowiestate.edu/annualreport2008.

Conclusion

The past year has been difficult and we know that the year ahead will likely bring even greater fiscal strain. We intend, however, to remain focused on our priorities while managing our resources efficiently and effectively. I believe our state and our country will emerge from this fiscal crisis stronger than ever. The fact that the Governor and General Assembly have resisted the temptation to abandon your commitment to funding higher education tells me that you recognize the important role we play in helping our economy rebound. With your continued support, we look forward to even more progress. I urge you to support the Governor's budget.

I will turn now to the recommendations from the Department of Legislative Services and answer any questions you have.

COMMENTS ON ISSUES RAISED BY DEPARMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

1. *The President should comment on the decline in the number of undergraduate students enrolled in nursing, on the progress of BSU's new undergraduate nursing program, and on the development of RN to BSU partnerships with community colleges.*

There are several factors negatively affecting the number of students who are enrolling in BSU's undergraduate nursing program. Attributable, in part, to an increase in our admissions standards into the Department of Nursing, and also to the large number of well qualified nursing students who enroll at BSU as freshman, the number of transfer students who can gain admittance into our program has dropped dramatically. As this news has circulated among prospective nursing students, the number of students who wish to major in nursing at BSU has declined. Another factor is the amount of financial aid available to promising students. A relatively new trend, however, is a decrease in the number of students who enroll in the University's RN to BSN degree program. As many of these students are non-traditional students, they have opted to enroll in on-line programs at other institutions. In an effort to address this group of students, BSU is currently seeking funding from MHEC for an accelerated RN to BSN program and for students who wish to pursue a second degree. In addition, BSU recently instituted

its own on-line program for RN to BSN students. Admissions data did not separate 4-yr. traditional students from RN to BSN students; therefore, all of our nursing students are listed in one aggregate population of nursing. It should be noted that the total number of students receiving nursing degrees from BSU is higher (2006-2008) than during years prior to our curricula revision.

Regarding our partnership with area community colleges, BSU's accelerated programs are specifically targeted to attract this group of students. The current partnerships include Prince George's County Community College, Howard County Community College, and the College of Southern Maryland.

2. The President should comment on measures being taken to increase the amount of need-based aid offered at the university.

The University erred in reporting institutional need-based aid for FY 2008. The actual amount should have been \$1,683,576. To date, the amount for FY 2009 is \$2,032,203 which results in an increase of 34% in institutional need-based aid from FY 2006 to FY 2009.

The University has made significant strides in increasing the amount of need-based aid at the institution. The University provides more need-based aid from its Foundation (\$266,980 in FY 2009, compared to \$164,446 in FY 2008, a 38% increase). During the fall 2008 and spring 2009 registration cycles, we allocated funds from the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) to assist needy students. This effort will continue in FY 2010.

3. The President should comment on the number of awards given to students without demonstrated financial need.

The University utilizes merit-based scholarships to recruit and retain high achieving students, thereby increasing the diversity of its student population. This was the primary method used to recruit Honors Program students through fall 2006. Since that time, greater emphasis has been placed on assisting need-based students at the university and, as a result, merit-based awards have decreased by 8%. To reiterate the point made earlier, from FY 2006 to FY 2009, institutional need-based funds increased by 34% while merit-based funds decreased by 8%.

4. *The President should comment on how BSU plans to reduce average debt burden for the university's neediest undergraduate students.*

The University has prioritized increased fund raising to support additional institutional need-based aid for its neediest students. In addition, a comprehensive loan counseling program including workshops to help our students with debt management and to have them consider loans as a last resort has been implemented. Finally, the University has been a strong advocate for increased funding levels for need-based students at both the state and federal levels and that continues under my leadership.

5. *The President should comment on the university's progress in implementing the achievement gap plan.*

Bowie State University is making good progress on implementing its plan to close the achievement gap. The progress report, which was recently submitted to DLS, is included in the analysis as Exhibit 10. As indicated, a number of the listed activities have been completed and others are in progress. We are systematically monitoring the implementation of the plan through specific objectives that I have included as part of my annual plan of operation. We are very pleased to have aboard a new provost who is rapidly becoming acclimated to USM and the state of Maryland and who will assume an increasingly important role in implementing much of the plan.

6. *The President should comment on which parts of the plan (Achievement Gap) will be prioritized and implemented given the constraints of the Governor's fiscal 2010 allowance and on the study panel's recommendations concerning comparability and competitiveness.*

Closing the achievement gap is a very high priority at Bowie State University. As one of the oldest institutions of higher education in the state of Maryland, and as an institution founded for the purpose of educating Maryland's African-American students, it is particularly important that we keep the goals set in our plan for closing the achievement gap as a primary goal. As Bowie State University's area of focus is on our graduation rates for African-American students, in particular, we want to insure that our cuts do not negatively affect our plan's over-arching goal. Bowie State University's Achievement Gap Plan has three prongs:

- The First Two Years of College Life;
- Instruction and Support; and
- Sustainability.

Given the fiscal constraints facing us in 2010, we have been asked to place these areas of emphasis in priority order. We believe that we must remain singularly focused on improving our retention and graduation rates. As such, we have chosen to retain the second prong, Instruction and Support, through these difficult times. We will focus on the following seven actions and activities that we believe have the most direct impact on our retention and graduation rates:

1. ****Teaching:** infusion of proven effective learning resources, such as smart classrooms, repositories of materials for course, online discussions, and formative assessment; all of which is conducive to active pedagogy and collaborative learning among teachers and students*
2. ****Assessment and Feedback:** use of various strategies for formative assessment of students as opposite to final assessment only, which include homework, quizzes, online discussions and projects, all of them with opportune feedback. As result of the above, there will be more density of grades during the term and both quantitative and narrative feedback.*
3. ***Tutoring:** content advising and content review, at individual and class level.*
4. ***Advising:** automated support of degree completion planning, course selection and degree progress auditing*
5. ***Counseling:** campus life guidance; student welfare monitoring*
6. ***Aid:** opportune and pertinent financial aid*
7. ****Monitoring:** Develop automated procedures to continuously track performance of students, taking care of early warnings for both progress and final outcomes.*

Our priorities are consistent with the recommendations of both the HBI Study Panel and the final report of the *Commission to Develop the Maryland Model for Funding Higher Education* (Bohanan Commission), which emphasizes assessment.

**Priorities within the group*

7. *The President should comment on why some revenues generated by the deficit reduction plan will not be used to pay down the negative fund balance.*

The deficit reduction plan submitted by the Athletic Director is part of a larger plan to enhance the university's intercollegiate program through more effective fundraising. The athletics program operates on a shoestring budget and some growth in revenues is needed to improve the program.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDED ACTION

Bowie State University does not object to the recommendation to restrict \$1.5 million of our unrestricted appropriation for FY 2010. Indeed, we look forward to working with MHEC and our sister institutions to assess and report on programs and services to improve retention and graduation rates, consistent with the recommendations of the HBI Study Panel set forth in the Bohanan Commission report. However, we strongly object to the recommendation that FY 2009 Access and Success funds be held pending submission of the same report in September 2009, well after the fiscal year has ended. As requested in the 2008 Joint Chairman's Report, we submitted a report detailing our plan to spend the FY 2009 Access and Success funds, and outlining the measurements we would use to evaluate the effectiveness of our plan. Our report was submitted to USM in August 2008, months before the Bohanan Commission's final report. It is unclear to us why DLS did not receive our submission until February 2009. We believe it is unfair to withhold FY 2009 funds and retroactively apply a new reporting requirement when we have already complied with the reporting requirement imposed when these funds were appropriated. In effect, DLS is recommending a \$1.5 million cut to our current year budget. Such a reduction will have an immediate negative impact on the core services and programs that are already in place to address retention. We urge the Committee to reject this recommendation.

ⁱ **Bowie State University**
Institutional Goals

2007-2012

- Goal 1: Provide high-quality and affordable academic programs and support services for all students.*
- Goal 2: Support growth by enhancing recruitment, access and retention efforts University-wide.*
- Goal 3: Promote regional economic and workforce development.*
- Goal 4: Increase the University's External Funding*
- Goal 5: Promote effective and efficient use of institutional resources.*
- Goal 6: Enhance the University's image*