



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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HOUSE BILL SEEKS TO BOLSTER COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION

Yesterday in the House Ways and Means Committee the USM offered favorable testimony on House Bill 350 establishing the Maryland Center for Computing Education (MCCE) within USM. The MCCE will provide professional development, administer a grant program, and set diversity goals in computer science education.

The USM Office of Academic and Students Affairs, campuses of the USM (especially the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and University of Maryland, College Park) have been working over the past three years with a collaborative group of computer science educators and non-profit organizations to enhance the professional development of teachers in computer science. The group includes the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Code.Org, Code-in-the-Schools, and the Computer Science Teacher Association (CSTA) as well as community colleges and local school districts in Maryland.

To ensure Maryland's P-12 students have access to computer science courses in elementary, middle and high schools, and to enhance the preparation of students who may wish to focus on computer science in colleges, the state needs much better prepared elementary and secondary education teachers. With funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF STEM-C), USM provided computer science workshops for 20 PGCPs between 2015 and 2017, and expanded access to computer science classes into 14 high schools in the county. House Bill 350 would scale up the outreach beyond Prince George's County to the entire state, taking advantage of what USM has learned with the NSF grant, which is ending this year.

USM can draw upon successful experiences coordinating multi-faceted partnerships that include local districts, MSDE, and non-profit partners to scale implementation of computer science professional development across the entire state. With coordination through the USM Office of Academic and Student Affairs, leadership and engagement of the campuses, and collaboration with MSDE and other partners, the Center will assist local schools and partner organizations to increase student

exposure to computer science and computational thinking by supporting existing teachers and developing education supports and resources.

The MCCE is designed to expand access to high-quality Pre-Kindergarten-12 (P-12) computing education by strengthening educator skills and increasing the number of computer science teachers in elementary and secondary education. It also serves as a focal point for broader collaborative initiatives to increase the availability and quality of P-12 computing education across the state, including stakeholder meetings and partnerships; teacher certification efforts; standards and curriculum development; innovative pedagogical research and practices; training and awareness for administrators, students, and parents; and coordinating with related national efforts.

COLLEGE CREDIT IN HIGH SCHOOL SUBJECT OF SENATE BILL

On Wednesday in Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee USM testified favorably on Senate Bill 479 with a minor amendment. Senate Bill 479 requires a county board of education to award elective credit to a high school student who successfully completes a college course or a course recognized for credit by an institution of postsecondary education.

USM supports the premise of Senate Bill 479 as a way of both scaling effective dual enrollment programs across the state, and clarifying the understandings between higher education institutions and local school districts about how to best communicate the opportunities afforded to students interested in enrolling in dual credit courses and programs. USM appreciates the sponsor's openness to clarifying amendments stipulating that the MSDE has an opportunity to review the college courses to certify they meet specific high school graduation requirements in the state.

USM's ongoing collaborations with local school districts and community colleges will be strengthened and enhanced with the passage of this legislation. In 2009 the USM, in collaboration with Bowie State University (BSU), University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), Prince Georges' Community College (PGCC) and Prince George's Public Schools (PGCPS) received a five-year NSF grant to test two models of dual enrollment – a university-residence based model at BSU and an in-high school model run by PGCC based in various PGCPS high schools.

Three important findings from the study include:

- Students who enroll in dual enrollment courses are more likely to apply to college and less likely to be placed in remedial courses.
- Underrepresented minorities recruited and enrolled in dual enrollment courses attend college and select science majors at a higher rate than those students not enrolled in dual enrollment courses.

- The PGCC model, which included enrolling students in classes offered on the PGCC campus and in their local public schools was a much less costly, more efficient and more effective model than the university-residential model piloted at Bowie State University.

In retrospect, with the passage of the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013, the state officially took the position that dual enrollment and early college courses were to be encouraged in Maryland public schools.

Findings from the Math Science Partnership Grant, reported to NSF, and to USM partners provided additional validation for the efficacy and importance of dual enrollment as a strategy for improving student access and success.

HOUSE BILL ATTEMPTS CHANGES IN STUDENT CONDUCT PROCEEDINGS

On Tuesday in House Appropriations USM officials urged an unfavorable report on House Bill 603. House Bill 603 establishes the right to an attorney or non-attorney advocate for a student or an officially recognized student organization during disciplinary proceedings at public four-year institutions of higher education.

The student conduct process is an internal administrative process and not a criminal or civil proceeding. House Bill 603 superimposes an overly legalistic framework for managing student conduct issues and may burden institutions by establishing legal mandates not germane to conduct processes in institutions of higher education.

The USM is particularly concerned that the bill requires institutions to allow for opening and closing statements and the cross-examination of witnesses. These should not be required in student conduct processes and especially in sexual misconduct cases. The dynamics of a student conduct proceeding in a university setting are not the same as those of a courtroom. The student conduct process is not intended to be adversarial. Strict adherence to the conventions of courtroom advocacy would not be in the best interest of students in an educational environment.

USM made several specific points:

- In some cases, the student organizations' expenses would be institutional funds if the organization is not a sorority or fraternity with independent funds/counsel.
- Allowing students to be represented by attorneys would require institutions to use attorneys to represent them and be present at every phase of the proceeding. As we are not currently staffed to provide that support, such an

unfunded mandate would require the hiring of counsel for the institutions. The current adjudicators would also have to be fully trained in legal proceedings, as they would be responding to motions and objections made by trained attorneys.

- House Bill 603 intrudes upon its autonomy and that imposing regulations on institutions' handling of their internal student conduct proceedings is beyond MHEC's statutory role as set forth in the Maryland Charter for Higher Education, specifically Educ. 10-207, and its powers as set forth in Educ. 11-105.

Currently, USM institution policies permit both parties to be accompanied by an adviser of their choice, who can be an attorney. The attorney may advise the student throughout the adjudicative process. Further, each decision is subject to appropriate legal sufficiency review by legal counsel before it is issued.

BILL SEEKS TO ELIMINATE FAILING GRADES FROM TRANSCRIPTS

Again, on Tuesday in House Appropriations, the USM testified on House Bill 663. House Bill 663 requires USM institutions to develop and implement an academic forgiveness policy to disregard an applicant's unsatisfactory or failing grades earned at a prior institution more than seven years before an individual applies for admission.

USM testified that institutions already have processes that account for previous academic work, including academic failure, in their admissions processes. However, there are nuances to our processes, and they vary from institution to institution, depending on the mission and usual acceptance process that is institution specific.

The USM is concerned not only about access to higher education, but success in our programs as well, and simple and complete disregard for previous failure, rather than engagement of the student to improve, may run counter to existing support processes. The accountability for previous academic challenge or success will also vary depending on the level of the courses taken and completed.

USM institutions take into serious account previous academic work, and each has forgiveness policies or standards they use when considering students' academic histories. For example, University of Maryland University College and University of Maryland Eastern Shore both have mechanisms under which they can invoke forgiveness after a 5-year period of separation for many students. Other USM institutions have academic clemency or forgiveness policies and procedures also.