



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 10, 2022

Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2022 State of the University Address. Thank you Desire' and Jahi for getting us started. Let's give our Mr. and Miss Coppin State University a round of applause.

I appreciate everyone coming out, today, as well as those watching, via livestream. It is a pleasure to start this tradition at Coppin State University and to have so many of our Eagles, friends, and special guests join us.

It has been my privilege to be with you, now, for the past twenty months, and I could not be prouder as to how we are moving our university forward, together, especially during what we hope is a once in a century pandemic.

As a result of the pandemic, we find ourselves in a time of great challenge and opportunity, and I appreciate all that each of you have done: our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community supporters, to carry us through these uncertain times as we never wavered from our core mission – to educate students.

Over the next several minutes, you will hear about the spirit of the Coppin State University community, and "*Experience the Transformation*" that is taking place as we are touching lives and defining our future.

Since 1900, Coppin State University has built a reputation for diversity, equity, and transformation. Today, as a well-respected university, we proudly educate students from across Maryland, 30 different states, to include the District of Columbia, and 19 international countries.

Despite the challenges of the last two years, I am pleased to tell you that the state of our university is strong. And I am honored to showcase but a few of our many accomplishments, over this last year, as well as provide insight as to how we are working to advance our priorities, building upon our strong foundation of quality education, expanding our research, working to become a university of choice, strengthening our commitment to student achievement, and improving our financial health.

Throughout my career, I have learned that success is never accomplished in a vacuum. Therefore, there are a few stakeholders that I would like to acknowledge and thank. I would like to thank Governor Larry Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly, especially our Baltimore City delegation, for their support for higher education. I would like to thank University System of Maryland Chancellor Jay Perman and the entire USM team for their leadership and guidance through a very challenging time for all of us. I would like to thank our Board of Regents, led by Chair Linda Gooden, for working hard, every day, to support the great work we are doing at Coppin

State. And I would like to thank our leadership team here on the ground, as well as our faculty, staff, students, and all the Coppin State supporters for believing in our mission and vision.

When talking about what we have accomplished this last year, atop our list is how we have continued to step up and respond with great resiliency to this global threat. From the moment the pandemic hit, we began working to ensure the safety of our campus community. We have made thoughtful decisions, true to our principles of shared governance, rooted in data, science, and expert insight. Our comprehensive COVID-19 task force and Shared Governance Council conducted thorough analyses of our campus footprint, our physical plant, and teaching and work schedules all to figure out the best short and long-term safety protocols that would be most suitable for Coppin. Our comprehensive plan of masking, daily health assessments, enhanced environmental protections, and aggressive testing and quarantine processes became our standard. Also, we built in flexibility for students, faculty, and staff with varying levels of personal health concerns. Our collective engagement remains the cornerstone of our success; and I want to thank our COVID-19 task force and shared-governance council for their leadership.

When I arrived at Coppin, we made a commitment to invest in our academics. And despite the pandemic, we are keeping that commitment. Under my administration we have recruited 21 talented individuals to fill key academic positions across all four academic colleges.

Thanks to our faculty and academic leadership we launched 10 new high demand degree and certificate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In keeping with our mission to expand accessible and affordable education, we are also developing fully online degree programs that will launch Fall 2022 and Fall 2023, to support students needing to earn their college degree when and where it is most convenient for them. Our ability to expand our academic portfolio, invest in underperforming programs, and establish our online presence is critical to our growth, competitiveness, relevancy, and sustainability. We will better leverage our academic programs to attract students and strengthen our position as a university of choice.

We will also continue to foster the research arm of the university, which is yet another one of our priorities, and I am thrilled to say our faculty embraced this priority from day one. In addition to adding new talent and academic programs to our portfolio, our faculty had an exceptional year attracting more investments in their work. Dr. Yi-Ping Huang secured a \$1.8 million dollar grant from the US Department of Education to launch the Center for Inclusive Excellence (CIE). Through the lens of fostering a promising future for teacher diversity and student success, the CIE aims to build a model center for preparing and sustaining a diverse teaching force for inclusive excellence in education and the workplace. Moreover, the CIE will conduct specially designed strategies to recruit, retain, and promote Black male teachers.

Across all disciplines, we have seen more of our faculty engaging in grant writing. Because of their efforts, last year, we secured \$6 million in grant funding, from agencies such as the NSF, NASA, MSDE, MDH, USDA, USDOE, and NIH. This is the highest amount of external grant funding secured in the history of our university. To help foster the growth of our research and provide more support to our faculty, we are expanding our Office of Sponsors Programs, led by Dr. Dianna Vass.

Understanding the importance that research has on a student's development, we will continue cultivating our culture of research and experiential learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Such an environment will prove significant in our efforts to attract talented students, increase retention, and grow our programs. Over the coming year, we will coordinate our efforts to establish policies and a framework that allows us to offer competitive graduate, teaching, and research assistantships. We will continue our commitment to undergraduate research as well, appreciating it is a great way to help students expand their learning interest, increase their ability to learn, and enhance their cognitive development skills. And speaking of undergraduate research, it is a pleasure to congratulate Dr. Hany Sobhi, and his students – Kaylah Castillo, Brittany Henly and Jordan Johnson - who earned first place for their faculty-student research presentation, during our eighth Annual Faculty Research and Development Conference. Dr. Sobhi, also took top honors winning first place for his individual faculty presentation.

In Spring 2021, I established our Presidential Scholarship. The Presidential Scholarship is the most prestigious merit scholarship awarded by the university, and covers tuition and fees, room and board, and books. It was started to strengthen our ability to target and recruit high performing students. In Fall 2021, I am honored to say we enrolled our inaugural cohort of Presidential Scholars. Please join me in congratulating our Presidential Scholars. Thanks to so many across campus, we are witnessing a rise in the number of students joining professional organizations associated with their respective disciplines. And last spring, we inducted 75 students into the National Society of Student Leadership and Success (NSLS); and also enrolled 74 high achieving students in our Honors Program, this is up more than 50 percent from just four years ago.

Athletics are an important part of our campus community and plays a key role in enhancing the college experience, and the profile of our university. Our student athletes serve as incredible ambassadors of Eagle Nation, and I am pleased to say they are excelling on the field of competition and in the classroom. Our student-athletes earned a mean Fall GPA of 3.2 – one of the highest within the MECA conference. Twelve of 14 teams earned a mean GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 19 of our student athletes earned a perfect 4.0.

Our Coppin State University Track and Field team were one of five HBCUs nationally selected to receive a \$10,000 donation from the Silk Protein Contest and participated in a meet and greet with Olympic great, Carl Lewis. Our Women's Cross-Country team finished third place in the MECA Championship, men's basketball player Nendah "*The Assassin*" Tarke captured "Rookie of the Year," and for the first-time in Coppin's athletic history - five of our volleyball players received All MECA honors – with MiMi Coleman and Ashley Roman taking home the 2021 MECA Player of the Year, and 2021 MEAC Defensive Player of the Year, respectively. Also, this past summer, we watched and cheered as two of our Eagles soared on the global stage, at the Tokyo Summer Olympics. Joseph Amoah and Joseph Manu represented their home country of Ghana and Coppin State well, and we are extremely proud of our Olympians.

As we continue to identify ways to elevate both our student-athletes and university, in the Fall, under the leadership of Athletic Director Derek Carter we partnered with Next Level TV, to televise our MEAC home games. This partnership puts Coppin State University in over 28 million

homes nationwide and provides a platform for us to showcase the talent of our student-athletes and introduce more people to our incredible university.

Each year, as part of the White House Initiatives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, a select group of students are recognized for their accomplishments in academics, leadership, and civic engagement. This past summer, it was a pleasure to join the White House call to hear that Coppin State University Women's Tennis star Christy Turner, was one of 45 students selected into the 2021-2022 cohort.

I also would like to acknowledge Dr. Errol Bolden, who was selected to serve as liaison for Coppin State University to the White House Initiatives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Driven to support our student-athletes and improve the financial health of our athletic department, I charged Athletic Director, Derek Carter with increasing athletics' annual donor fundraising goal to \$350,000. To date, athletics has raised over 70 percent of its goal, and has increased its donor fundraising by nearly 20 percent compared to this same time last year.

We are also keenly aware that this past year has had a devastating impact on so many of our students across campus. Many whom continue to face challenges to earn their degree while working, raising their families, and facing economic hardships. Despite what they are facing, to watch our students show up every day, determined to stay the course and complete their journey, is nothing short of inspiring. Therefore, our dedication to supporting our students will remain laser focused – and we will continue to provide a range of wrap-around supports to help them succeed.

At Coppin State, we believe, education should be equitable, more affordable, and more transformative. Hence, this is why we are working across campus with a more concentrated effort to remove barriers that could hinder our students' progress. Despite offering the lowest tuition of any four-year university in Maryland, we made the right decision to help all returning students and newly incoming students, for Fall 2021, pay down their tuition. Using our CARES Act funding, we provided a \$1,200 tuition grant to over 2,000 students, awarding over \$2.4 million in financial support; and I am proud to say that Coppin State was the first university in Maryland to provide this level of financial assistance to its students. In addition to this financial support, we also awarded nearly \$3 million in additional institutional merit and need-based aid to support over 860 students.

We know that students who live on campus have higher GPAs, higher retention and graduation rates and a more engaging holistic college experience. Therefore, we want to see more Eagles living on campus. To assist and encourage our students to stay on campus for the 2021-2022 academic year we awarded Pell eligible students a \$5,000 grant to help cover the cost of living on campus. Through this effort, we were able to support approximately 150 students, and this historic action helped students reduce their total loan debt by approximately \$100,000. Our efforts will continue for Fiscal Year 2023, as we will offer a \$4,000 grant to Pell eligible students who live on campus. I want to thank my cabinet, Mr. Marcus Byrd and the Office of Financial Aid, and Student Accounts for working to get this done. During these uncertain times, we know that financial challenges are not the only concerns facing our students – many of them are also dealing with childcare issues and food insecurities. This is why, last Fall, we opened our childcare center on campus, and this spring we will assemble a team to standup our on-campus food pantry.

Raising external funding to support our students and university operations remains an essential priority; and in times of need, Eagle Nation and our friends are stepping up. This is exciting because when it comes to securing external funding for our students and university, we have ambitious goals, which will require the strong backing of our institutional advancement team. This past semester, in a partnership with The Charles Schwab Foundation, and our College of Business, we secured the single largest gift in the history of our university.

Our Charles Schwab collaboration will focus on faculty development, curriculum design, and educational pathways for students to enter careers in the wealth management industry, such as Certified Financial Analysts and Certified Financial Planners. And I am thrilled that this is but one example of the many partnerships in the pipeline that our great institution has on the horizon. We also benefited from a \$1 million dollar gift from Mr. and Mrs. Steve Bisciotti, owners of the Baltimore Ravens football team, and a \$300,000 gift from PNC Bank. Since July 1, 2021, we have secured over \$3.8 million dollars in external funding. Not only is this the highest amount raised in a single year, in the history of Coppin State, but it exceeds the total amount raised in the previous three years combined. I want to thank those who gave to support our students, mission, and vision. I especially want to thank Mr. Joshua Humbert, Dr. Sadie Gregory, and the entire Institutional Advancement team for their leadership.

We also achieved a few more records this year. Thanks to our Coppin State University Foundation Board, in collaboration with our Institutional Advancement team, our annual golf classic set a record for funds raised and golfer participation. I want to thank Alicia Ritchie, Chair of Coppin State University Foundation Board, Tara Turner, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the entire planning committee for their collaboration and leadership. As we identify more ways to support our students, and celebrate our university, I have charged our Foundation Board and the Office of Institutional Advancement with developing our Blue and Gold Scholarship Gala, and I look forward to receiving their proposal, this spring.

Great strides have also been made in the growth of our university endowment. In FY2021, we saw our endowment exceed \$16 million, this is a record high for the university. Our success in fundraising and engagement is yet another clear sign, that Eagle Nation, and our friends are behind us, and they value the direction in which our university is headed.

Thanks to the leadership of former National Alumni Association President Dr. Mary Owens-Southall, current National Alumni Association President Tish Madry, and Alumni Director Kimberly Nelson, we saw an increase in both the number of alumni who gave to Coppin State and the number of alumni becoming life-members of the National Alumni Association. Thank you, team for your great work.

In keeping our momentum, I have charged our Office of Institutional Advancement with increasing our corporate partnerships by 15 percent and increasing our alumni giving rate to 10 percent by 2025. Although the number of Eagles who gave last year reached a record high of 5.5 percent – this is a small fraction of those who are deeply committed to our university. Therefore, I am calling on all Eagles to help us achieve this goal. This is a great opportunity for us to illustrate the strength

of Eagle Nation. When we give to Coppin State, it creates a sense of engagement, excitement, and ownership in the success of the University we love so dear.

The growth of our enrollment and increased retention of our students has a direct impact on our university. And while there is no question that the pandemic and other external factors have had an adverse impact on our enrollment and retention; they are not the root causes of our enrollment and retention challenges. If we are going to reverse these trends, we must continue to improve our university culture, policies, structure, processes, and procedures as they play a key role in our future success. Only we can address the internal ills that are plaguing. Therefore, I am asking all of us to continue putting Coppin State and our students above our individual self-interest. The challenges we face cannot be fully addressed by one person or one office, alone. The efforts to improve in these areas will require a paradigm shift in how we think, recruit, collaborate, share ownership, and take responsibility for our university.

Although we have more work to do, I deeply appreciate what we have accomplished and the hard work of so many that continues to take place across campus. Our goal to position ourselves as a university of choice and to improve our retention is the greatest opportunity before us. The fact that we have raised our six-year graduation rate to a historic high, is a good indicator that we are trending in the right direction.

There are two major elements to growing our university, increase the number of students entering the institution, and increase the number of students we retain. With regards, to our enrollment, we have a goal to enroll no fewer than 850 new students, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, while increasing our fall-to-spring retention rate to 90 percent and our first-year retention rate to 68 percent. While these targets may sound ambitious, we possess the ability to get this done, and we will employ several tactics to do so. In working with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management, our marketing team will finalize our comprehensive marketing and branding plan that highlights our face-to-face and online academic programs through social media, ad targeting, print publications, radio, and television. Additional steps to support our enrollment efforts, will include expanding our recruitment footprint, establishing dual enrollment partnerships with community colleges and high schools, to include our own Coppin Academy, retaining external assistance to help recruit for our online degree programs, and increasing the number of our competitive merit scholarships.

For the students who attend Coppin, we must find better ways to help them address and deal with the challenges that may disrupt their educational journey. The top factors that adversely impact a student's retention are "time" and "improper advising." The longer it takes for students to earn their degree, the more life gets in the way. Therefore, we must identify methods that help decrease the time-to-degree completion and improve our advising model. This is precisely why we are developing and will begin construction, this spring, on our new Eagle Achievement Center (EAC), the first of its kind on our campus. Located on the fourth floor of the university library, the EAC will house, in one location, centralized advising and other essential student support services needed to better help address our retention.

In an effort to further help students decrease their time-to-degree completion, beginning Fall 2022, students who earn a total of 30 semester credit hours during the academic year, will be provided

the opportunity to take up to six credits over the summer for free. In addition, our Academic Affairs leadership will work to expand both our accelerated degree program options and our credit for prior learning framework.

We will continue working to improve the student experience on campus. Our student affairs team will lead the charge in developing a more socially stimulating campus environment that engages and connects both residential and commuter students to Coppin State. Such an environment is an essential part of our ability to attract and retain students. These are but a few of the steps we are taking to better support our students, improve retention, decrease time-to-degree completion, and foster a strong student-centered approach to our work.

By working together and being better stewards of our resources, we have made great advances in strengthening our financials. The gains we have achieved are apparent based off data from the USM Financial Dashboard Indicators for FY2021. The intent of the financial dashboard is to highlight how each institution is performing financially and to give the Board of Regents a visual display of whether, or not institutions are financially healthy. As it relates to Coppin State, in FY2021, all eight of our indicators improved, the only university to do so. Furthermore, I am pleased to state that we have met or exceeded our fund balance goal for the last 5 years, in fact we have moved from a fund balance deficit to a surplus as of June 30, 2021. This shows the university leadership's commitment to improving the financial health of the institution – and we all deserve an ovation for that, and I especially want to thank Mr. Steve Danik for his leadership.

Team Coppin, I want all of us to pause and appreciate what we have accomplished during this pandemic and understand it would not have been possible without the many hardworking staff members who often work behind the scenes on our campus, the unsung heroes who help our university.

They are embedded within our colleges and departments making sure systems work properly, personnel matters are addressed, students and faculty are supported, campus buildings are open and clean, campus grounds are beautiful, and that we remain as one of the top safest campuses in the USM. These are men and women who do not often get the recognition they deserve. So please join me in giving them a proud Eagle round of applause. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our entire College of Health Professions for their unwavering leadership during this pandemic.

Today, I have shared but a few of our many impressive accomplishments, over the past year. These achievements illustrate our commitment, and how we set ourselves apart - and others are taking notice. Over this past year, the work taking place on campus, continues to move us closer to our vision of becoming a leader in urban higher education.

We are showing a national and statewide audience that what we are doing, is working. We as a university, long committed to access, affordability and lifelong learning are thinking hard about how we can do more to improve the quality of life of our students and community. Over 70 percent of our students remain in Maryland after graduation with talents and skills that help drive the workforce of our state. This is a huge win for our state and students.

We are challenging ourselves in both our individual and collective beliefs. There has never been a better time like now to define our own future and to reimagine our beloved Coppin State.

As we reimagine our university and design new strategic priorities that will guide our efforts, we will focus on five broad initiatives:

- Become a university of choice;
- Improve the holistic development and completion rates of our students;
- Strengthen our brand and reputation as a leader in urban higher education;
- Become a great university at which to work; and
- Enhance our teaching and research excellence.

These priorities will continue to define Coppin State. When I arrived, I stated that our pace would be brisk, and our trajectory would be north. Team Coppin, we are doing just that. These accomplishments are the power of “We,” and I look forward to another exciting year of progress as we double down on our promise of nurturing potential...transforming lives.

Thank you, have a great Homecoming, and Go Eagles!