



At Notre Dame of Maryland University, current international students support new arrivals as they report to campus to begin their four-year college experience in a new country.

## Mentoring trend extends to local student groups

Results show students that college is more than books and academics

By Lisa Baldino, Contributing Writer

Whether you're the mentor or the mentee, the relationship is usually a special one. It may not be a match made in heaven, but schools with effective student mentoring programs spend a significant amount of time determining the mentor match.

Mentoring took hold during the pandemic and has been growing ever since. According to MentorCliq, an online research company in the mentoring market space, between 54 and 71% of organizations now use mentoring to some degree. Mentoring is used to increase skills, retain employees and groom future organization leaders. Mentoring has proven to be integral to Gen Z and Millennials to further their careers. In

fact, 83% of Gen Z workers believe a mentor is crucial for success in the workplace.

Students at three area colleges experience mentoring first-hand through student groups on campus. Mentees like these are more likely go on to mentor others – 89% of Mentorloop.com survey respondents said they would do so.

One of the college programs that demonstrates the full circle of mentoring is the award-winning MentHER program at Towson University. The group consists of women who have created a layered community service effect. The program connects Towson University sophomores one-on-one with mentors in the business community, then in turn, the young women provide peer-mentoring to high school students.

Lauren Tigie-Meredith, professional development partner in the college of busi-

ness and economics at Towson University, says the program's match process is extensive. Mentees tend to have high GPAs and specialize in a broader field. Matching involves responses to profiles and coordinating professional concentrations or specialties with the mentee's needs. "We connect with national mentoring research and make changes according to their best practices," Tigie-Meredith says.

The 16-year-old program is the winner of the BTU Award by Towson University's office of strategic partnerships and applied research, and it most recently won the Inspiring Programs in Business Award from Insight into Diversity, a leading higher education publication.

The high school interaction is a partnership between Towson University and Landsdown High. The high school students attend "first day of college" presentations on the Towson University campus, where they experience interactive tours, eating in the dining hall and small-group discussions with Q&A. "They learn how to foster relationships, and they develop a sense of community and building together," Tigie-Meredith explains.

Emily McElroy, a business administration major at Towson University, says the outreach for high school students is something that is making an impact in the com-

munity. "These students are often the first generation in their families to go to college. They're unsure, but we try to give them the best advice from our perspective." Fifty percent of the high school students are first-generation college students.

The Towson University MentHER women also have access to workshops on topics like salary negotiation, boundary setting and relationship-building. Student mentee Umu Bah Jalloh says, "The program is focused on the female experience in the workplace. It maximizes soft skills, which can elevate your professional skills." Bah Jalloh, who is pursuing entrepreneurial studies with a management concentration, says her mentor works for Homeland Security and has provided great insight into how a business runs, and how she can achieve both her professional and personal goals.

Towson University's college of business also offers Mentoring to Advance Professional Development (MAPD), which focuses on the needs of students in their junior and senior years.

At Notre Dame of Maryland University, current international students support new arrivals as they report to campus to begin their four-year college experience in a new country. Some of them don't speak the language and others have never been away from home. Notre Dame started the International Student Organization (ISO) more than a decade ago to give international students a group where they could feel at home, says Naomi Ewhe, president of the ISO and a sophomore pre-med student from Nigeria.

"We welcome the international students at the beginning of the semester and talk about what it's like to attend an American college, what they can learn from their experiences, and any concerns they might have," Ewhe explains. She describes it as a mentoring opportunity for international students.

Jens Mueller, faculty advisor for ISO, says, "The mentors and students are very carefully matched so that the students get the best possible experience for their needs. In addition, the partnering helps to overcome potential language barriers."

The International Student Organization has grown significantly in recent years. It is keeping pace with the growth of Notre Dame's international population as the university enters its second year welcoming men into the traditional undergraduate program. The group's growth has sparked big plans for this academic year, including several celebratory events during International Education Week, a joint initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education.

**Mentoring trend, continued on next page**



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## New graduate programs support career opportunities

Business, communication and psychology programs grow

By Alex Keown, Contributing Writer

When the fall 2024 semester began, the University of Maryland Global Campus unveiled a newly designed Masters of Business Administration program. It's something the school does every few years in order to keep up with the rapidly changing business landscape, says Dr. Mohamed Ezz, a former physician and now full professor at the University of Maryland Global Campus. Each semester there are tweaks to the program to address emerging issues that are likely to have a wide-ranging impact. For example, Ezz points to the debt crisis in Greece that included that country defaulting on a loan payment to the International Monetary Fund in 2015. At the time of the interview, Ezz was in Egypt. He explained the country is an importer of oil, wheat and corn. Russia and Ukraine are the biggest exporters of those commodities. The ongoing war has caused the prices to rise, which means the people of Egypt, and other countries who import those goods, are being forced to pay more.

"We have to adapt to include things that are relevant to the world," Ezz says. "We want our students

to be current with what's going on. You can't be in business today without knowing what's going on in the world."

When it was time to make the latest adjustments to the MBA program, Ezz says the department turned to UMGC's stakeholders, students and employees to gauge their thoughts on what the MBA program should include. They collected the information and spent three years building the new program around that feedback, Ezz says.

"We had the best subject matter experts create our courses," Ezz says. "It took 40 or 50 meetings to get to where we are now."

The new MBA program is designed to create flexibility for students as they schedule the different required courses. The MBA program involves seven core courses and three specialized courses, such as marketing or global business. The revamped program allows students to take the courses in any sequence, rather than the linear progress of previous years, Ezz says.

"The previous program was rigid; you had to go through a specified sequence but now it's more flexible," Ezz says.

MBA students are able to focus their studies on

key areas, such as marketing, global business, human resources management and the newest direction, nonprofit management. Ezz says UMGC offered a Master of Arts degree in nonprofit management, but it was not previously in the MBA program. They felt this was something important to add because "there are a lot of not-for-profit employers out there," Ezz says.

Another addition to the MBA program is UMGC now accepts transfer credits, Ezz says. That was another change made due to the feedback from stakeholders and students.

The courses are eight weeks each and students are allowed to work at their own pace. Many of the UMGC students are adults who are already in the workforce. Allowing them to work at their own pace as they juggled other responsibilities was something students wanted. The MBA program is online, which allows UMGC students in Maryland and across the globe the opportunity to earn the degree.

UMGC isn't the only university adapting to meet changing demands. Salisbury University established a new Master of Arts in public communication degree to meet the rising demand for public communication specialists. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are an expected 30,000 public commu-

nications specialists who will enter the workforce each year through 2030. The majority of these positions will lie between Washington, D.C., and New York City.

Salisbury University's new program enables graduates to step into communication roles in multiple fields, including athletic organizations, corporate, health, and public affairs and political operations.

Jakob Todd, who graduated from Salisbury University in 2023 with a degree in communications, is one of the first students in the new M.A. program. When he was still an undergraduate, Todd heard that Salisbury University was planning to offer this new program. After graduating, he took a job in the student activities office until the program began. Now, he's focused on completing the degree and landing a communications position with an athletic organization.

"It's exciting to be part of the first group of students in this program," Todd says.

David Burns, Ph.D., department of communication graduate director at Salisbury University, called the new M.A. program "a fantastic opportunity for students who are studying communications." He says the new degree is a "great opportunity" for the students to gain the credentials that will allow them to move into positions that are in demand and financially lucrative.

The Master of Arts in public communication is a 36-hour program that offers four tracks, one in public affairs and political communication, one in health communication, a track in athletic communication and one in corporate communication. Burns says the coursework will benefit people who are already in the workforce and may hold communications titles but don't have the formal training for the role. The university is making classes convenient for working professionals who are trying to get a degree and keep their day job, Burns says.

"Salisbury's mission is to have practical workforce training. It's something the state of Maryland supports. When we looked at the growth of public communication in the D.C. corridor, we saw an opportunity to create a hands-on program focused on developing workforce skills," Burns says.

James Burton, chair of the Salisbury University communication department, agrees and says the program is something that will help people in the workforce, as well as undergraduates. He is excited about the first cohort of students in the program.

"This university is delivering the tools the students will need to be successful," Burton says.

At the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, the new ADVANCE Maryland program was established to train 14 clinical psychology doctoral candidates and 10 social work master's students. The training program is funded by a two-year grant of more than \$900,000 from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The funds will support the training of the students and their faculty advisers to deliver culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health services to juveniles and young adults in underserved and rural English- and Spanish-speaking communities in Maryland. It's a program aimed to fit growing needs within the state.

Accommodate new programs, from page 1



The college of business at Coppin State University took occupancy last fall in a new, multi-story building.

The building provides a variety of areas that serve as learning laboratories for students, with ample opportunities for instruction, networking and support. The classrooms throughout the building are non-traditional, with the opportunity for faculty members to innovatively reconfigure the space to include breakout and focus areas to meet the needs of the class. There is a board room for meetings and presentations, equipped with a separate observation room, and other intentioned spaces like breakout rooms for small groups and spaces for privacy and confidential consultation. Larger, open areas, including an outdoor atrium and courtyard, host receptions and meetings for large groups.

In addition, the center for career excellence assists students with finding internships and job placements, as well as areas of professional development like resume building, interviewing skills, dressing for success and networking.

In August, Harford Community College opened its Owl's Nest in the student center, providing a break from studying and a place to spend time between classes.

"The student center is a space that's designed to make students feel comfortable and help them to have a space where they can come and decompress, eat some food, and interact

with other people, and get that co-curricular educational experience where they're learning about themselves as well as about their content in their classes," says Chandler Sagal, student leadership and program specialist at Harford Community College.

As a two-year college without residential facilities, students would leave between classes or just pass time without much socialization. Leadership wanted the Owl's Nest to be a popular place for students to congregate, and after adding nine recreational games, they found the effort quite successful. What used to host on average five to 10 students, now sees a population of up to 75 at a time.

"We got a multisport simulator that includes a golf simulator. We got a digital pinball machine with over 30 games. We got an arcade machine with over 4,500 games, mini basketball hoops, an air hockey table, ping pong, shuffleboard, a pool table and the foosball table," Sagal adds.

High top tables spread around the center enable students to eat food from the Globe Café, located next door and watch games being played. They also enjoy music that is piped into the center throughout the day.

"Part of it is understanding the co-curricular experience and how facilities can be reimagined and reinvented to make students feel

more connected, make them feel a part of the community," Sagal adds. "We're a community college and the sense of belonging is huge here, and this gives them an opportunity to...enjoy their time on campus and step away from their studies for a little bit to relax."

At the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), a new school of pharmacy and health professions building opened in 2023, the first phase of a project that aims to bring physical therapy, physician assistant, kinesiology, rehabilitation, pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences programs to one area of campus.

The first phase, specifically designed for pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences, currently provides operational space for the other programs. The second phase, which will house the other programs including the future veterinary medicine program, has not yet begun construction.

"The pharmacy program started in 2010 and was split across six buildings across campus," notes Sean Vasaitis, Ph.D., dean of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore school of pharmacy and health professions. "It's necessary to have all of the functions in one space to be efficient and to meet accreditation standards."

The new space allows for collaboration amongst the different programs. "The other part of this is that we want to have more interprofessional activities and education with the other health professions programs, ideally moving towards a place where we can have a lot of exchange between the students in different areas," Vasaitis explains. "They can learn from each other; they can study together; and really find a living space for all of our health professions."

The building comprises 120,000 square feet on three floors, with cutting edge research laboratories with top-of-the-line equipment, a vivarium, intensive care unit (ICU) and birthing simulation rooms, mock community and hospital pharmacy rooms, and clinical examination rooms. There are classrooms, a large auditorium, a computer lab and problem-based learning rooms throughout the building for small group work.

"It's a much-needed improvement for the environment here and being that the simulation equipment is very cutting edge, I rarely see equipment of this caliber available for students," Vasaitis says. "It'll be a very big help for student learning."

UMES, Vasaitis notes, is the only HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) in the country to offer an accelerated three-year pharmacy program. It is considered an access school, offering programs for first-generation

students with additional support.

"We're here to help people to change their lives," Vasaitis says. "Having modern facilities is very important to us because it allows us to give people that are coming from disadvantaged areas the best chances to move forward and to really make more out of their lives. We have great programs. We want them to continue to be great."

Tailored for success, from page 2



Experiential learning is a key in UMD's sports management program.

Maryland student Vinay Kumar is completing an internship with Maryland Athletics this semester. "I've gained valuable exposure to the daily operations of a sports medicine department and developed skills in evaluating, treating and rehabilitating student-athletes," he says. "These experiences will be highly transferable to future opportunities in the field."

Through its hands-on learning and professional connections, the sports management program reflects the University of Maryland's commitment to preparing students for lasting career success in a competitive industry.

Preparing students for thriving careers

By focusing on career readiness and tailored solutions, programs at Carroll Community College, Towson University and the University of Maryland are equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. This shift signals a broader trend toward more responsive, adaptable and student-centered learning models across the state. These initiatives are not only helping students today but also shaping the future of education in Maryland, positioning the state's colleges as leaders in preparing students for evolving workforce demands.

Mentoring trend, from previous page

"International Education Week is taking place from November 18-22," says Ewhe. "We are hoping to host a food festival, which celebrates the many cultures represented on campus, as well as a culture show, which brings together our graduate and undergraduate populations."

This year's 54 ISO members will get hands-on experience with event planning and execution as well as communication to the Notre Dame community. Mueller says, "We normally market the organization through peer-to-peer interaction at the beginning of the semester. Now that the school is co-ed, we have another avenue for recruitment. The program really took off last year and it can only get better. The group creates a welcoming community for every culture and background."

At University of Maryland's college of agricultural and natural resources (AGNR), peer mentors are paid student employees who help undergraduate students navigate the various majors, requirements and potential career paths – just showing them the ropes. Heather Buchanan, program manager for student services at the AGNR, says, "The students in these majors are the ones who get things done. They are well-versed and engaged students."

The college offers seven undergraduate degree-granting departments/units with nine majors and 32 concentration options. There is also a non-degree certificate unit with nine 2-year certificate options. Who wouldn't need a mentor to guide them through that?

Those who have mastered the options are the peer mentors. Each of the units has at least one peer mentor representative. To become a peer mentor, the student must have completed 24-30 credits, which equates to sophomore year. Students are required to maintain a 3.0 grade point average, but Buchanan says most have a 3.5 or better GPA. "They are actively involved in their major and know how to manage their time."

Both the mentor and mentee benefit from the activities. According to Buchanan, "The freshman student gets the upperclassman know-how, and the sophomore or junior has a student to emulate."

Buchanan says one of the challenges the group encounters is actually getting students to use the resources. She estimates that about 25 to 30% of the student population take advantage of the peer mentors. "We reach out to 100 percent of the incoming freshman and transfer students, and the mentors visit the freshman classes every semester." Students will now be seeing the program on social media, because the college has created a marketing plan for that platform.

If Gen Z has anything to do with it, all of these innovative mentoring programs will continue to flourish.

Food for thought, from page 5

long had food pantries, the new student lockers allow students to anonymously access food and other essentials when it's convenient for them, which is especially beneficial for students taking evening classes.

"Also, the anonymous nature of the food lockers helps erase the stigma or shame that some students may feel by asking for help. People arrive at life with different privileges and circumstances, and we want to stress that you are no less valuable of a person just because you are hungry," she says.

Dell-Hagan explains that access to the food lockers is easy. Students fill out a form that asks what types of items that they need – snacks, breakfast items, basic items to make a meal at home, personal hygiene or school supplies. After their request is fulfilled, students receive a locker location and unique access code, and they have

one week to pick their items up. Students who take classes online can also request gift cards.

Last year, 700 students requested food lockers on CCBC's Essex, Dundalk and Catonsville campuses, and Hagan-Rhodes says that the school aims to expand the program to its Owings Mills campus soon.

It's no surprise that the Commons dining hall at Salisbury University is one of the busiest buildings on campus. In fact, according to George Oakley, Salisbury University's dining services director, over 4,000 students visit the Commons each day, providing a captive audience to deliver more than just great food.

Starting last fall, Salisbury partnered with the Art League of Ocean City to bring the exhibit "Stigma Highlighted: Portraits of Recovery" to the university's Commons dining hall. The display featured paintings of 12 residents of the

Delmarva Peninsula recovering from addiction, painted by local artists, with QR codes linked to videos of the subjects telling their own stories of addiction and recovery.

"The director of the Art League reached out to us, and since the Commons is a high traffic area, it made sense to have the exhibit there. As a liberal arts school, we are dedicated to promoting the arts and exposing our students to the arts in various ways," Oakley says. He adds that the exhibit on addiction and recovery received a lot of buzz on campus.

This academic year, the partnership continued with a display of artwork by Salisbury alumni that originally hung at the Art League's gallery in nearby Worcester County.

"It's a great opportunity to enjoy local art, especially for those students who are not majoring in the arts," Oakley says.

New programs, new opportunities, from page 1



Salisbury University's new engineering physics major gives students the opportunity to fast track their ways into careers in aerospace and nanotechnology.

from the Sellinger School of Business, they can gain a competitive edge in the job market and save time and money while they do it. Plus, earning a master's degree from Sellinger can open doors to higher-level positions, a larger professional network and increased earning potential."

Scully explains that another motivation for the development of the program was to give liberal arts students the opportunity to pursue an undergraduate degree of their choosing but also complement it with a business degree, which can be a great pathway to a diverse career. "We're really focusing on making a college education as accessible and practical as possible."

"When the students start the graduate program, they have a leg up," adds Patricia Tarrant, M.B.A., assistant dean of graduate programs. Students have the opportunity to meet with business leaders, do company site visits, receive career coaching and more. "When they leave Loyola, they're ready for the business world," says Tarrant.

Anna O'Neill graduated Summa Cum Laude from her undergraduate program in 2021 and will earn her master's in accounting in spring or fall of 2025.

"The 3+1 program attracted me mainly because of its ability to fast track me toward achieving my professional and personal goals," says O'Neill. "Although I do greatly value education and the opportunity it provides, I did not want to be in school for five years straight while trying to start my career. Instead, the 3+1 program allowed me to obtain my undergraduate degree in three years and start working full time at a firm while doing my master's program virtually. Another attraction was the accounting department staff at Loyola, as they supported and pushed me to be successful as I could."

O'Neill goes on to say that the highlights of the program have been the opportunity to mold her college plan into what best fitted her needs and desires, starting her career earlier and saving a year's worth of tuition.

O'Neill's immediate short-term goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant and to fully immerse herself into the accounting industry to make strong professional connections. "My long-term career goal is to be on the boards of non-profit organizations within my community so that I provide them with my

knowledge and expertise on financial matters."

Tarah Sipos received her undergraduate degree in 2021 and her master's in 2022. She's currently a senior associate with a national public accounting firm.

"Going into college, my objective was to major in a field that had job security and opportunity for growth," says Sipos. "After doing my research and speaking with Dr. Krahel (JP Krahel, Ph.D., accounting department chair), I knew accounting would be the right fit for me. Since working full-time, that still holds true."

Sipos said that she chose the program because she was eager to get out into the "real world." "I was ready to experience working in accounting. I am the type of person that learns by doing, so being able to complete 150 credits to be CPA-eligible in four years was at the top of my priorities."

Sipos plans to grow into leadership roles within her company and to be able to make a lasting impact on the Baltimore community through community service initiatives. "I look forward to continue to support the many nonprofit organizations in the Baltimore area," she says.