Access to Quality: Our Unwavering Commitment

In a time of limited resources, our greatest challenge is to provide access to quality education for our most highly qualified applicants. It is our unwavering commitment. We are determined to ensure that top students of low to moderate financial means will be able to graduate from the university without taking on backbreaking debt. We also relentlessly pursue educational programs that stretch our students intellectually, enhance their personal growth, and prepare them for productive lives. Two new initiatives illustrate our focus on these goals.

Maryland Pathways guarantees that every student who is a Maryland resident from a family whose income is below the poverty line ($22,000) can graduate debt-free. These students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, are required to work 10 hours per week, maintain a full course load and remain in good academic standing. We help them maximize federal and state financial aid grants, and provide our own resources, including private gift support, to bridge the gap between what these students need and what is available to cover their tuition, room and board.

We are exploring a new Maryland Pathways initiative to guarantee in-state students with family incomes in the $22,000 to $65,000 range that they can graduate with debt not exceeding the cost of one year's attendance for tuition, room and board. That debt burden would be relatively manageable, would be known in advance of admission, and is substantially less than the average debt of today's students.

Implementing these Maryland Pathways programs depends on raising resources through increased philanthropic support for scholarships. Using scholarships to control debt is a new reality for today's student. As reported in this issue, we have embarked upon a significant scholarship campaign—co-chaired by alumnus and men's head basketball coach Gary Williams—that will raise at least $200 million for scholarships. This effort will go far toward helping us reach our goal.

Another new initiative for Fall 2005, the President's Promise, guarantees every entering freshman the opportunity for a special learning experience to complement the major curriculum. We have a wealth of such opportunities, including our nationally acclaimed living-learning programs, research projects with faculty members, study abroad, public and private sector internships, service-learning experiences and many more. Nearly two thirds of our students already take advantage of such programs. With this initiative, we guarantee that every student who wants such an experience will have the opportunity for one. The response from new applicants to the President's Promise initiative has been overwhelmingly positive. Now, we look forward to delivering on the promise.

What kind of institution will the University of Maryland be in 10 years? We will be an entrepreneurial, public research university that will be largely financed through our own efforts. And with the support of our Maryland family, we will be one of the nation's truly great universities, creating knowledge through cutting-edge research, fueling the economic development of the state, leading the nation in programs across the spectrum and graduating top students on their path to productive lives.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and support in all of our efforts.

Dan Mote, President