



Search for the Dean, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Baltimore, Maryland

THE SEARCH

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), a nationally recognized leader in inclusive excellence and interdisciplinary research, seeks a visionary and strategic Dean to lead its College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS or the College). As the university's broadest academic unit, and a cornerstone of its liberal arts mission, CAHSS prepares students to think critically and creatively while fostering research and scholarship with real-world impact. As UMBC continues to build on the momentum of its recent elevation to R1 research status, the next Dean will play a vital role in shaping the College's future, strengthening its academic programs, supporting faculty achievement, and advancing its public mission.

In this pivotal leadership role, the Dean will steward a college comprising 24 departments and two programs, each contributing unique perspectives and strengths. The position calls for a leader who can nurture collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, support faculty in expanding their research and creative work, and enhance education amid evolving funding landscapes and enrollment patterns. The Dean will serve as a compelling advocate for the arts, humanities, and social sciences, demonstrating their critical role in higher education and society.

Success in this role will require a seasoned academic administrator with a distinguished record of scholarly achievement and a deep commitment to inclusive pedagogy and student success. This leader will be a coalition builder, skilled at fostering trust and relationships across the university and with alumni, donors, and external partners. Experience navigating complex institutions and a thoughtful approach to strategic planning and resource management will be essential. Equally important is a leadership style grounded in empathy, integrity, and curiosity that creates a climate where people feel supported and the entire community can thrive.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to support this critical recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY

Founded in 1966, UMBC is a mid-sized public research university in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and a member of the University System of Maryland (USM). It was the first public university in Maryland to include students of all races, and it is federally designated as a Minority Serving Institution. UMBC was established upon the land of the Piscataway and Susquehannock peoples, and, over time, citizens of many more Indigenous nations came to reside in the region. UMBC humbly offers its respects to all past, present, and future Indigenous people connected to this place.

In the 2021 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, UMBC ascended to the highest level of research activity, achieving the Research 1 (R1) categorization for doctoral institutions. The University delivers a distinctive undergraduate educational experience characterized by a strong liberal arts and sciences core and offers graduate programs in engineering, information technology, science, humanities, social sciences, public policy, and human services. UMBC offers 41 master's degree programs, 24 doctoral degree programs, and 24 graduate certificate programs. The Division of Professional Studies offers an array of professionally-focused master's degrees, graduate certificates, individual courses, and non-degree training programs.

Thirty-five new academic programs have been added since 2006, including three new departments: gender, women's, and sexuality studies; media and communication studies; and marine biotechnology. Most of the University's academic programs are offered on its 500-acre main campus near Baltimore, with some programs offered at the University's Shady Grove campus—a distinctive partnership of nine USM institutions—in Rockville, Maryland, and select research and teaching facilities in downtown Baltimore.

The campus is largely residential, the University enrolls almost 14,000 students, and it enjoys more than \$118 million in externally funded research annually. Over the past 20 years, UMBC has increased its international student population, more than doubled the proportion of students from low-income households, and more than doubled its annual graduates, from 1,700 to nearly 3,500.

UMBC has achieved a remarkable national and international reputation for innovation and student success. Reflecting its commitment to experiential learning, 85% of undergraduate engage in applied learning opportunities, such as internships, research, service-learning, study abroad, student teaching, and leadership positions while at UMBC. The university supports high-achieving students through distinctive programs such as the Humanities Scholars Program, the Linehan Artist Scholars Program, and the Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program, which cultivate leadership, creativity, and civic engagement in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. UMBC consistently ranks among the most innovative universities with the highest quality undergraduate teaching. For over a decade, The Chronicle of Higher Education has recognized UMBC as a “great college to work for.”

LEADERSHIP

Valerie Sheares Ashby, PhD, President

Valerie Sheares Ashby began as the sixth president of UMBC on August 1, 2022. She is the first woman to serve in this role and holds a faculty appointment in UMBC's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Sheares Ashby joined UMBC from Duke University, where she had served since 2015 as dean of the Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. Before her tenure at Duke, Sheares Ashby chaired the chemistry department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) from 2012 to 2015. As a faculty member at UNC, she held numerous leadership positions and had experience at all levels of academic administration. She served on UNC's Arts & Sciences Foundation Board of Directors and Research Advisory Council and chaired the university's Institutional Conflict of Interest Committee and the College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Diversity Task Force. She engaged in all aspects of the undergraduate educational experience as director of undergraduate studies in the chemistry department, and she directed the UNC National Science Foundation Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate.

She began her academic career in 1996 as an assistant professor at Iowa State University and was promoted to associate professor in 2002. At Iowa State, Sheares Ashby served as a mentor for the Iowa State University Program for Women in Science & Engineering, a summer research program for undergraduate and high school students.

As a researcher, Sheares Ashby has focused on synthetic polymer chemistry, with an emphasis on designing and synthesizing materials for biomedical applications such as X-ray contrast agents and drug delivery materials. She is the recipient of the National Science Foundation Career Development Award, DuPont Young Faculty Award, and 3M Young Faculty Award, as well as numerous teaching and service awards, including the UNC Chapel Hill General Alumni Association Faculty Service Award and the Bowman and Gordon Gray Distinguished Term Professorship for excellence in undergraduate teaching and research. In 2022, Women of Color Magazine named Sheares Ashby its Technologist of the Year.

She received her BA and PhD in chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completed postdoctoral research at Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz in Germany as a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow and NATO Postdoctoral Fellow.

Manfred H. M. van Dulmen, PhD, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Manfred H. M. van Dulmen serves as UMBC's Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Dr. van Dulmen comes to UMBC from Kent State University in Ohio, where he served as Senior Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate College. He started at Kent State as a faculty member in the Department of Psychological Sciences in 2004 and, since then, has served in numerous academic leadership positions

at Kent State, including Interim Department Chair and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He led Kent State through the COVID-19 pandemic and developed strategies for enhancing graduate education and supporting student mental health. He also led strategic planning in Academic Affairs, helped to enhance and promote research strength across all disciplines, and led efforts resulting in new collaborative degree programs in data science and cybersecurity, as well as in innovative micro-credential programs at Kent State.

Dr. van Dulmen is an award-winning scholar with a PhD in family social science from the University of Minnesota. He has published over 100 articles and book chapters and edited or co-edited three books. He also founded and served as editor-in-chief of the Sage Publications journal *Emerging Adulthood*. His research interests include adolescent and young adult relationships and experiences, externalizing behavior problems and aggression, and measurement and methodology.

UMBC COMMUNITY

UMBC's Vision Statement is remarkable in its clarity and ambition: "Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds." UMBC serves 13,906 total students: 10,767 undergraduates and 3,139 graduates. Most students (94% of undergraduates and 44% of graduates) come from the state of Maryland, the majority coming from Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, as well as the City of Baltimore. As of Fall 2024, 15% of undergraduate and graduate students were international, and 99 countries are represented in the entire student body.

The University is firmly committed to access and is a diverse and welcoming community, with 56% of students self-identifying as students of color. As of Fall 2024, across undergraduate and graduate students, the University enrolled a student body comprising 27% White students, 22% Black/African American students, 20% Asian or Asian American students, 9% Hispanic/Latinx students, and 15% international students. 56% of students self-identify as men and 44% as women, a trend that has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years.

UMBC's 1,242 faculty are recognized nationally and internationally, notably in the areas of research, scholarship, and creative achievement. The rich and rigorous environment for teaching and learning is supported by 594 full-time instructional faculty members, of whom 443 hold the ranks of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. Of those tenured or on the tenure track, approximately 45% self-identify as women, 8% as Black or African American, 6% as Hispanic or Latino, and 19% as Asian or Asian American.

Essential to all University activities and initiatives are the employees who tirelessly support and advance the institution's mission and enhance the student experience at UMBC. The University employs

approximately 1,350 staff members in a variety of non-faculty roles. As of 2024, 60% of UMBC staff self-identify as women, 20% as Black or African American, 4% as Hispanic or Latino, 5% as Asian or Asian American, 0.2% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

UMBC embraces a strong [shared-governance model](#), facilitating academic success by fostering an empowering institutional culture and broad leadership for innovation among senior leaders, administrators, staff, faculty, and students. The University Steering Committee, comprising the leaders of the University's three senates, the Adjunct Faculty Advisory Committee, the Graduate Student Association, and the Student Government Association, is the cornerstone of UMBC's shared governance system. The robust shared governance model at UMBC is a critical element of its empowerment.

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

At the heart of UMBC's liberal arts mission, CAHSS anchors the intellectual and creative life of the campus. It fosters interdisciplinary learning and encourages students in all disciplines to draw connections between diverse fields and perspectives. The College currently houses 30 undergraduate majors, 40 minors and certificate programs, and 16 graduate programs, including both master's and doctoral degrees. These programs span the disciplines, the centuries, and the globe, preparing students for careers in education, public service, the nonprofit sector, media, the arts, and beyond. The [Global Studies](#) and [Asian Studies](#) programs feature interdisciplinary curricula and faculty across CAHSS, enabling students to engage deeply with international and intercultural issues while building global competence.

In Fall 2024, CAHSS enrolled 3,549 undergraduate and 686 graduate students. Reflecting UMBC's broader commitment to access and opportunity, CAHSS serves a diverse student body: 31% of undergraduate students are the first in their families to attend college, and 62% identify as members of minority groups, with 36% belonging to underrepresented populations. When combining undergraduate and graduate enrollment, 58% of CAHSS students come from minority backgrounds.

Research and Scholarship

UMBC ranks among the nation's top public universities in securing federal research funding, and research and creative activity are central to CAHSS's mission. Faculty and students engage in scholarship that addresses complex social, cultural, and political issues, often through interdisciplinary and community-based approaches. The [Creative Achievement and Research Administration Team](#) assists CAHSS faculty, departments, and centers in all stages of the funding process, from identifying funders and developing proposals to administering awards and reporting to sponsors.

In 2020, UMBC was honored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with its distinguished Carnegie Community Engagement classification. The College is proud to claim that most of the community-engaged activities in scholarship, teaching, and service at UMBC are performed by CAHSS faculty, staff, and students. Faculty and staff also benefit from internal funding opportunities that support

this work, including [BreakingGround grants](#), which supported seven projects led by ten faculty and staff between 2022 and 2024, and the [Eileen and Jerry Carroll Awards](#), which have provided \$2,000 grants over the past three years for collaborative, civically engaged research. Recent awardees have represented disciplines in history, psychology, dance, visual arts, and anthropology.

The College is home to seven prominent research centers that foster collaboration and public impact:

- The [Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture](#) showcases innovative contemporary art and design, creating space for artists, scholars, and the public to connect through exhibitions, publications, and programs that reflect and challenge our cultural moment.
- The [Center for Innovation, Research, and Creativity in the Arts](#) supports experimental and interdisciplinary work by artists and performers, offering resources and community to explore new ideas, technologies, and creative practices.
- The [Center for Social Science Scholarship](#) brings together researchers, students, and community partners to address problems of local and global concern and connect research to practice and policy.
- The [Dresher Center for the Humanities](#) supports and promotes research into the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of the human experience. It creates space for scholars to develop their work, collaborate with others, and share ideas through writing, conversation, and public events.
- The [Imaging Research Center](#) blends art, science, and technology to explore how images shape how we see and understand complex ideas, from data visualization to animation and immersive media.
- The [Institute for Politics](#) supports public-facing research and community engagement on the political and policy issues that matter to Maryland. It connects academic work to civic life across the state through events, internships, and partnerships.
- The [Public Health Research Center](#) brings together researchers from across disciplines to tackle public health challenges through data-driven research, community partnerships, and a commitment to health equity.

The College also offers several undergraduate scholars programs that support students with exceptional academic and creative promise. The [Humanities Scholars Program](#), [Linehan Artist Scholars Program](#), and [Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program](#) engage deeply with their disciplines through intensive mentorship and experiential learning. Each program offers a distinct pathway for students to grow as thinkers and creators.

ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting to the Provost, the Dean is the principal academic and administrative officer for CAHSS. The Dean will build upon the College's strong foundation and UMBC's recent elevation to R1 research status by developing and implementing a strategic vision that advances excellence in teaching, scholarship, and public engagement across all disciplines. This includes fostering collaboration among more than 25 departments and programs, supporting innovative creative activity and research, and enhancing graduate and undergraduate education with an emphasis on student success.

The Dean is responsible for ensuring the quality and vitality of CAHSS's academic programs, effectively managing fiscal and human resources, and overseeing the College's physical and operational infrastructure. As the face of the College, the Dean communicates the vision and mission of CAHSS to the community while seeking public and private funds to support its goals. They are supported by a talented team of 37 department chairs and directors, three associate deans, one assistant dean, a director of operations, and an executive administrative assistant. The College also houses CAHSS advising, which includes a director and six staff members.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

Foster interdisciplinary collaboration and strengthen a diverse academic community.

The next dean of CAHSS will lead a college defined by its interdisciplinary breadth and will serve as a champion of all disciplines within the college. With departments and programs spanning the arts, humanities, and social sciences, the college thrives on its academic diversity. Across disciplines, faculty and staff have a strong sense of collective identity and purpose that unites CAHSS. The dean will have the opportunity to build on this foundation by encouraging deeper connections across disciplines and creating space for collaboration. Chairs and program directors are eager for more opportunities to engage across departmental lines, not only to share ideas but to shape the future of the College together. The dean will play a key role in supporting these efforts, and there is a strong appetite for leadership that brings people together in ways that feel intentional and grounded in mutual respect. As CAHSS continues to evolve, the ability to foster connections across disciplines will be essential to amplifying its impact on campus and beyond.

Accelerate research growth and expand scholarly impact.

UMBC's recent transition to R1 status is a defining opportunity for CAHSS to elevate its research profile while staying true to its commitment to teaching and public engagement. Faculty across the college are producing rigorous, creative, and socially engaged work, and the next dean will be instrumental in expanding this momentum. They will scale research support, align infrastructure with faculty needs, and remove barriers to scholarly productivity. Whether it's advocating for course equivalencies or simplifying administrative processes, the goal is to create space for faculty to do their best work.

Graduate education remains a vital part of the College's identity and impact. As funding models evolve and international enrollment becomes more complex, the dean will be called upon to strengthen graduate programs and the students who sustain them. The dean will support faculty members in competing for external research funding across all disciplines and in their pursuit of a variety of research and publication opportunities.

Continue to advocate for, advance, and strengthen UMBC's commitment to inclusive excellence.

UMBC is nationally recognized for its commitment to inclusive excellence, fostering an academic environment where people from all backgrounds are supported in their pursuit of knowledge. This culture is the result of decades of intentional work that continues to evolve in response to the needs of the university community. That commitment is evident in the College's efforts to expand access, cultivate a community of belonging, and elevate the voices of students, faculty, and staff. The next dean of CAHSS will join a college that values openness to new ideas, collaboration across perspectives, and a strong sense of community. As the College looks to the future, it continues to build on this strong foundation, adapting thoughtfully to a changing landscape while holding fast to the belief that academic excellence and innovation are strongest when shaped by a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

Communicate the value, significance, and scholarly impact of the arts, humanities, and social sciences within and beyond the university.

This is an opportunity to lead with purpose and conviction, advocating for the essential role of the arts, humanities, and social sciences in higher education and society. In a university environment where innovation and discovery are often framed through scientific and technological lenses, the next Dean will be instrumental in articulating how disciplines in the College enrich and expand the university's mission. There is a strong desire for advocacy that goes beyond internal support: someone who can make a compelling, public case for the value of these disciplines in shaping civic life and preparing students for a complex world. The arts, in particular, serve as a powerful public face of the college, connecting campus to community. Faculty across CAHSS are engaged in public-facing and community-rooted work, and the successful dean should share their commitment to scholarship that makes an impact beyond the academy. Strategic communication, public engagement, and cross-disciplinary collaboration will be essential in elevating the visibility and value of CAHSS's contributions.

Align support structures to meet the College's scale and complexity.

The next dean will have the opportunity to build on a strong foundation of collaboration and care by enhancing the systems that support the college's people and programs. With many chairs and program directors managing large portfolios, and staff often stepping in to fill critical gaps, the dean can refine how the dean's office partners with departments to ensure support structures are responsive and efficient. The next dean will need to be both pragmatic and imaginative, making the most of limited resources while identifying new opportunities for innovation.

Support leadership development and a caring academic community.

CAHSS is defined by a culture of mutual respect, collegiality, and care – principles that are not just stated, but practiced. Faculty and staff have embraced recent efforts to strengthen professional growth and mentorship, and there is strong momentum to continue this work. Chairs and program directors are eager for meaningful leadership development opportunities, while staff have welcomed initiatives that more fully include them in college-wide planning and decision-making. The next dean will be expected to sustain and expand this progress, cultivating an environment where leadership is nurtured at all levels and where transparency, critical listening, and shared governance are central to how the college operates. With a community already deeply committed to one another and to the mission of public higher education, the next leader has a timely opportunity to deepen that commitment and invest in the people who make CAHSS strong.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will possess the following required qualifications:

- Distinguished record of scholarly achievement as defined by disciplinary standards in the arts, humanities, or social sciences, including peer-reviewed publications, monographs, exhibitions, performances, or other recognized forms of scholarly output
- Excellence in teaching and mentoring at both undergraduate and graduate levels, with a commitment to inclusive pedagogy and student success
- Demonstrated effectiveness in the administration of a large unit, including strategic and financial planning, with a track record of successful leadership
- PhD or equivalent terminal degree from an accredited institution
- Currently holds the rank of Professor and is eligible for appointment at the rank of Professor in an academic department in CAHSS

While no person will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal qualifications:

- An appreciation for the varied backgrounds and complex needs of undergraduate and graduate students today
- An understanding of and facility in change management, with the ability to empower, delegate, and build consensus
- Experience with alumni or donor relations, and/or demonstrate the potential for success in this work; strength in storytelling and a desire to engage in fundraising activities
- The ability to assess and prioritize tasks, balancing urgent needs with long-term strategic objectives
- A commitment to sustaining a culture defined by trust, transparency, and open communication
- The capacity to approach difficult conversations with empathy, transparency, and a commitment to resolution

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. The target salary range is \$295,000 to \$325,000 and will be commensurate with experience. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent in confidence via the [search portal on the Isaacson, Miller website](#).

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Partner

Annah Wells, Associate

Alexis Scott, Senior Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

Have accommodation or access needs?

Isaacson, Miller and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, values safety, cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility, lifelong learning, equity, and civic engagement. Consistent with these principles, UMBC does not discriminate in offering equal access to its educational programs and activities or with respect to employment terms and conditions on the basis of a UMBC community member's race, creed, color, religion, sex, gender, pregnancy, ancestry, age, gender identity or expression, national origin, veterans status, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or genetic information.