



**Search for the Vice President for Student Affairs**  
**University of Maryland, Baltimore County**  
*Baltimore, Maryland*

**THE SEARCH**

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) seeks a strategic, student-centered, and experienced student affairs leader to serve as its next vice president for student affairs (VPSA). Committed to inclusive excellence in practice, UMBC is proud to be one of the nation's fastest-growing and most diverse public top-tier universities. The University's vibrant campus is regarded as a new model for American higher education – a place where talented students, faculty, and staff thrive in a culture that embraces innovative ideas.

This is an exciting and transformational time at UMBC under the leadership of President Sheares Ashby; there is a strong understanding and appreciation for the significant role student affairs plays in student success, student retention, and providing a holistic student experience. The search for the next VPSA is happening concurrently with a search for a new provost, which offers these new leaders an opportunity to reimagine how student affairs and academic affairs partner to provide an integrated student experience. Young and dynamic, UMBC is small enough to provide personal attention to its students yet large enough to offer state-of-the-art facilities and services that support a large population of residential students. Home to almost 14,000 students with roughly 4,000 residential students, the division of student affairs supports a vibrant, robust, and actively engaged student community.

The next VPSA will have an immense opportunity to assess, build, and envision a future that enhances the student experience for all students, including graduate, undergraduate, non-degree, transfer, international, and commuter students. The VPSA will oversee nine departments within the division of student affairs, promoting a culture that is engaged, present, and accessible to students. UMBC seeks a leader who will provide strategic and imaginative leadership, striving to create a unified vision for the division based on the needs of the university's current student population. The VPSA should promote the intentional and meaningful integration of student affairs and academic affairs to support the whole student, prioritizing current national issues affecting students, such as mental health and well-being, and equity and access to resources in higher education. The next VPSA will be a savvy manager, guiding operational and fiscal resources with pragmatic ingenuity; an intellectually curious and collaborative colleague who will join the president's senior leadership team; and a creative leader who is ready to imagine and execute a vision for the future of student affairs at UMBC.

Dr. Valerie Sheares Ashby has engaged the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, in this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence, as indicated at the end of this document.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY

Founded in 1966, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, is a mid-sized public research university in the Baltimore-Washington corridor. 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.

UMBC is a member of the University System of Maryland (USM). Under the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, UMBC is termed a doctoral university with higher research activity (R1). The University delivers a distinctive undergraduate educational experience characterized by a strong liberal arts and sciences core, and offers graduate programs emphasizing select areas of engineering, information technology, science, humanities, social sciences, public policy, and human services. UMBC's Graduate School 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 [Universities at 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. UMBC has increased its international student population, more than doubled the proportion of students from low-income households, and more than doubled its number of annual graduates – from 1,700 to nearly 3,500 over the past 20 years.

UMBC is a young university with a national and international reputation for innovation and student success, particularly in STEM. *U.S. News and World Report 2022* ranks UMBC as the #6 most innovative university and #6 top university for undergraduate teaching in the nation, and it has consistently ranked as one of the “Most Innovative” national universities and one of the nation's leading institutions for social and economic impact. *Times Higher Education* has five times recognized UMBC as one of the world's top 100 young universities for strong research, innovation, and an international outlook. *The Princeton Review*, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, and *Fiske Guide to Colleges* have repeatedly named UMBC a “best

value” university. For over a decade, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has recognized UMBC as a “great college to work for.”

UMBC also ranks among the country’s top 100 public universities in federal research support, #14 in NASA funding, and #40 in federal funding for social sciences. In 2020, UMBC was honored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with its distinguished Carnegie Community Engagement classification. Significantly, UMBC is the nation’s #1 producer of Black undergraduates who go on to complete a Ph.D. in the natural sciences or engineering, and #1 for Black undergraduates who complete an M.D./Ph.D.

For more information about the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, please see [www.umbc.edu](http://www.umbc.edu).

## THE UMBC COMMUNITY

UMBC serves 13,991 total students: 10,625 undergraduates and 3,366 graduates. The majority of students (94 percent of undergraduates and 44 percent of graduates) come from the state of Maryland, with many from the counties immediately surrounding UMBC. As of Fall 2022, 13 percent of undergraduate and graduate students were international, and over 100 countries are represented in the entire student body.

The University is firmly committed to access and is a diverse and welcoming community, with just over fifty percent of students self-identifying as students of color. As of Fall 2022, across undergraduate and graduate students, the University enrolled a student body comprising 31 percent White students, 19 percent Black/African American students, 19 percent Asian American students, 8 percent Hispanic/Latinx students, and 16 percent international students. About 29 percent of first-year students were the first in their families to attend college. Fifty-three percent of students self-identify as men and 47 percent as women, a trend that has held relatively stable over the past twenty years.

UMBC’s 1,186 faculty are recognized nationally and internationally, notably in the areas of research, scholarship, and creative achievement. In 2021, UMBC faculty submitted proposals for over \$530 million in extramural funding and secured over \$114 million in new extramural awards in 2022. The rich and rigorous environment for teaching and learning is supported by approximately 560 full-time instructional faculty members, of which 421 hold the ranks of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. Of those tenured or on the tenure track, approximately 48 percent self-identify as women, 6 percent as Black or African American, 5 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 18 percent as Asian.

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 1,247 staff members in a variety of non-faculty roles. As of 2021, 60 percent of UMBC staff self-identify as women, 20 percent as Black or African American, 3 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 5 percent as Asian, 0.08 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.2 percent as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

UMBC embraces a strong shared-governance model, in which academic success is facilitated 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 Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the University's three senates and of the Graduate Student Association, the President and Speaker of the Student Association, and a designee of UMBC's President, is the cornerstone of UMBC's shared governance system. The strong shared governance model at UMBC is a key element of its empowerment. To learn more about each of the groups, please visit <https://usc.umbc.edu/>.

## **PRESIDENT VALERIE SHEARES ASHBY**

Valerie Sheares Ashby was appointed to the presidency of UMBC on August 1, 2022. She is the first woman to serve in this role.

Sheares Ashby previously served as dean of Duke University's Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. In this role since 2015, she led a 700-person faculty spanning nearly 40 departments and programs in rethinking what it means to deliver a world-class liberal arts education while navigating a pandemic and consistently promoting diversity and inclusion as a means of achieving excellence in both teaching and research.

Sheares Ashby came to Duke from UNC, where she served on the faculty since 2003 and chaired the chemistry department from 2012 to 2015. In her role as department chair, she was instrumental in UNC's collaboration with UMBC to launch the Chancellor's Science Scholars Program, among the earliest Meyerhoff Scholars replication pilots at an R1 institution. She began her academic career at Iowa State University as an assistant professor in 1996 and was promoted to associate professor in 2002. While at Iowa State, Sheares Ashby was 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 awards.

She received her B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and completed postdoctoral research at Universitat Mainz in Germany as a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow and NATO Postdoctoral Fellow.

## **THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Encompassing nine departments including Campus Life, The Career Center, The Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging, Off-Campus Student Services, Residential Life, Retriever Integrated Health, Student Conduct and Community Standards, and UMBC Transit, the division of student affairs serves as a dynamic resource for student success. With a passionate and dedicated

administrative leadership team, the division has strived to serve a student population and campus community that has seen immense growth in a short amount of time with limited changes to existing structures and support. The division of student affairs is poised to support innovative and dynamic changes that creatively reimagine what student life is and how it can continue to better serve all students in their academic pursuits, as active campus community members, and as global citizens. For more information on the division of student affairs and the various departments, please [explore here](#).

## THE ROLE

Dr. Sheares Ashby seeks a strong partner to lead the division of student affairs through the institution's next phase of transformation and growth. The VPSA will work closely with the president and senior leadership team to build a student affairs division that is structurally sound; organizationally nimble; and consistent in policy, process, and procedure. The VPSA will be a strong advocate for student success, engagement, and well-being at every level of academic pursuit from undergraduate to graduate, to transfer students, to continuing education students and beyond; will establish a visible and active presence; and will continue to promote a culture of responsiveness to student needs and ideas. The VPSA will envision a future for the division that redefines how student affairs holistically supports students by critically assessing existing systems and structures and reimagining the future of student affairs at UMBC. The VPSA will partner with Dr. Sheares Ashby to develop relationships and grow communication with the direct UMBC campus community and more broadly with the surrounding community. The next VPSA should be invigorated by the opportunity to join an intellectually engaging, dynamic, and collegial senior leadership team and share in Dr. Sheares Ashby's vision of what the institution can be.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

### *Create a unified vision and forward-looking culture for student affairs*

As the division transitions to its next leader, the VPSA must balance the nuance of preserving what already makes student affairs at UMBC successful and unique, while creating a forward-looking vision in line with leading national practices and at the forefront of the future of student affairs. The VPSA will work with the president and other colleagues to develop a University-wide strategic plan that aligns with the key priorities of the [University System of Maryland strategic plan](#). The next VPSA should align the division with national best practices while co-creating the vision for the UMBC student experience with the student affairs staff and other key stakeholders throughout the institution including students. The VPSA will advocate for students and provide new and creative ideas to better support the evolving student population. The VPSA will prioritize developing an identity for student affairs that promotes student engagement, traditions, campus vitality, meaningful connection, and a sense of belonging. The VPSA will be actively involved in highlighting the student life experience to prospective students in a way that inspires and energizes. UMBC is prioritizing growing and supporting the graduate student population with new programs and exciting research opportunities, which presents an opportunity for student affairs to

expand services and offerings for graduate students in meaningful ways. The VPSA will play an essential role in broadening student affairs services to include all students in the UMBC community.

***Promote the intentional and meaningful integration of student affairs and academic affairs***

UMBC strives for excellence in all areas as it continues to be a model for the future of higher education. As President Sheares Ashby embarks on a bold vision for the University and builds her senior leadership team, the next VPSA will join UMBC at a pivotal time. The search for a new VPSA and a new provost are aligned, which presents a compelling opportunity for the next VPSA to work in concert with the new provost to develop a more integrated student experience, more effectively blending the curricular and co-curricular. The VPSA will critically examine student leadership, engagement, and programmatic opportunities that provide real-world application of classroom learning. The VPSA will spearhead new and innovative ideas for the integration of student and academic affairs, establish clear pathways for communication, and identify current areas of strength and opportunities for cohesion.

***Assess the current organizational structure with an eye toward collaboration***

The VPSA should possess the leadership and management experience required to develop systems and structures conducive to the division's success. Barriers to collaboration and communication should be removed, work processes should be rationalized, and transparency and formal decision-making paths should be paramount. In all activities, the VPSA will empower division staff, encourage teamwork and respect, and champion the well-being of all students. With nine different units in the division, there is an opportunity to assess the overarching organizational structure to enhance operations. The VPSA must ensure that the administrative functions within the division of student affairs are coordinated, efficient, and effectively serve the current student population.

The next VPSA will bring a track record of building and managing cohesive and vibrant teams and modeling a solutions-focused approach to navigating change. The division of student affairs boasts strong staff retention, which necessitates an eye toward understanding and recognizing the existing talents and expertise of the division while also thoughtfully onboarding new team members for the future vision of the division. Additionally, through supportive leadership, clear purpose, and continual opportunities for education, development, and training, the VPSA will develop and lead a talented team of professionals. The VPSA will lean on partners in human resources to provide staff development initiatives to build a structure of professional development that embeds support and opportunities for growth in the day-to-day work of serving students. As an experienced student affairs professional, this individual will bring strong commitment and knowledge of the national landscape of student development to the division.

***Continue the legacy of inclusive excellence by centering equity***

The legacy of inclusive excellence at UMBC is strong, and the institution is currently hiring its inaugural Vice President for Institutional Equity and Chief Diversity Officer (VPIE/CDO). Serving as a relentless

connector, the VPIE/CDO will coordinate action and enhance the culture and climate to support UMBC's commitment to a safe and inclusive community in alignment with federal and state laws. The inaugural VPIE/CDO will be among Dr. Sheares Ashby's first cabinet-level appointments, alongside the VPSA and provost, and the three will be close and frequent collaborators. In particular, the VPSA will align student affairs' processes, policies, and procedures with the institutional vision of the inaugural VPIE/CDO. Student affairs, like the larger University, is multifaceted in the ways in which it approaches issues of inclusive excellence, including departments specific to student affairs such as Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging (i3b) and the Center for Democracy and Civic Life, among others. Central to the priorities for the next VPSA will be the alignment of the multitude of efforts surrounding inclusive excellence in practice with the VPIE/CDO.

### ***Effectively manage financial and operational resources***

The VPSA will be a strong steward of financial assets, utilizing resources to center student success and gracefully make tradeoffs in the face of constraints. The VPSA will be a leader with a multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of issues students and student affairs staff face in the current higher education climate. The VPSA will lead the ongoing assessment of current programs and services, facilities, and revenue sources. In establishing their vision for the division of student affairs, the VPSA will pay particular attention to advocating for appropriately funded personnel and programmatic resources, the renovations and potential expansion of student-serving infrastructure and spaces such as residential and programmatic facilities, and sustainable budgetary practices, including an entrepreneurial approach to revenue generation. The VPSA will manage financial and operational resources creatively, yet judiciously, in a way that consistently centers the overall undergraduate and graduate experience.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

UMBC seeks an experienced student affairs administrator and innovative leader to champion the values of inclusive excellence and student-centeredness in the role of VPSA. An advanced degree is required, along with demonstrated progressive administrative and leadership experience directly related to student affairs. While no one person will embody all of the following, the successful VPSA candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- Demonstrated effectiveness and competency in the development and execution of strategic and operational plans that require coordination and collaboration across internal departments and external functions;
- The ability to establish a welcoming and inclusive presence as a visible, active, and responsive leader;
- An interpersonal style that fosters collaboration and meaningful relationships with colleagues and staff;
- A proven track record of decisive leadership with constructive outcomes in response to student and community concerns in relation to crisis management;

- An innovative approach to redefining what the future of student affairs could be and the willingness to take risks to effect change;
- A demonstrated commitment to and experience with inclusive excellence, with an active understanding of anti-racism as applied to higher education and student affairs;
- A record of success as an administratively strong, innovative, and collaborative leader in a fast-growing and mission-driven organization;
- A high degree of emotional intelligence and sophisticated interpersonal skills;
- An understanding of the resources necessary to provide a campus experience that supports the intellectual growth, physical and mental health and well-being, and diverse identities and experiences of students;
- The ability to inspire, build, lead, motivate, and provide vision to staff while overseeing complex organizational structures and encouraging change and growth both in programs and people;
- A high degree of character and integrity;
- A powerful commitment to the mission, vision, and values of a public institution.

#### APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed electronically and in confidence to:

**Keight Tucker Kennedy**, *Partner (she/her)*  
**Hannah Moore**, *Senior Associate (she/her)*  
**Alexis Scott**, *Senior Search Coordinator (she/her)*  
**Elizabeth Arvanitis**, *Search Coordinator (she/her)*  
**Isaacson, Miller**

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-maryland-baltimore-county/vice-president-student-affairs>

*The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, values safety, cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility, lifelong learning, equity, and civic engagement. Consistent with these principles, the 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.*