UMGC HOMECOMING 2023

POSTEVENT REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Greetings,

For the sixth consecutive year, University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) proudly hosted worldwide Homecoming celebrations, uniting our global community of 290,000 alumni, 85,500 current students, and 6,700 faculty and staff members. This is no easy feat, but coming together each year to celebrate and network is now a treasured UMGC tradition.

This year's theme was "Reach for the Stars," honoring the learning journey—the "reach"—that unites us. While the journey is different for each of us—each with different strengths and challenges, different experiences of the world, and different goals and objectives—the shared effort, commitment, and achievements unite us in joyful celebration. UMGC Homecoming 2023 was our first ever in the metaverse, removing barriers to access and allowing community members to connect directly and in real time no matter where they were in the world. UMGC is among the first cohorts to participate in a two-year pilot that invites students to take courses on a VR (virtual reality) "metaversity" campus, and Homecoming 2023 demonstrates how UMGC continues to explore new and exciting ways to enhance the learning journey without recreating challenges of access and affordability that have excluded so many from traditional academic settings.

Today, Homecoming is more than a celebration. It represents a powerful networking platform that fosters connections on a global scale and demonstrates how proud and grateful we are to stand united in support of our public mission—to inspire hope, empower dreams, and transform lives . . . one student at a time.

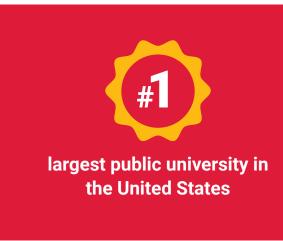
As we look back on UMGC Homecoming 2023, I invite you to continue building the networks and connections that propel careers, drive success, and transform lives. And remember always that we stand with you and believe in you, knowing always that, at UMGC, the sky is *never* the limit.

Thank you!

Agyw.fl

Gregory Fowler, PhD President University of Maryland Global Campus

UMGC BY THE NUMBERS



85,500+ students enrolled in FY 23

290,000+ alumni worldwide

\$16 million in institutional scholarships awarded in FY 23 175+ classroom and service locations



95%

More than **20** countries and territories in which UMGC has a presence

of courses available online or in a hybrid format



UMGC was founded more than 75 years ago specifically to serve the higher education needs of working adults and military servicemembers. Today, UMGC is the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and continues its global tradition with online and hybrid courses, more than 175 classroom and service locations worldwide, and more than 125 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland (USM).

In October 2023, members of the UMGC community came together around the globe to celebrate their accomplishments and successes while sharing their school pride through Homecoming 2023 celebrations that were held in person and—for the first time ever that reached beyond the world we know, venturing into the UMGC metaverse!

UMGC Homecoming was initiated six years ago as an opportunity to celebrate and unite our greater community while creating a sense of university pride. This year proved that homecoming has evolved into a powerful networking opportunity for our UMGC community to further develop connections on a much larger global scale.





With an emphasis on connection, the program grew from 900 attendees in 2021 to 1,168 attendees in 2023. Participation extended across 39 states and 11 countries with celebrations in the United States, Europe, Asia, and the UMGC metaverse. This diverse and talented community connected with each other, expanding their ever-growing UMGC network.

UMGC Homecoming 2023 celebrations embraced the theme "Reach for the Stars." While each alumni member's goal or "star" may be different—an advanced degree, a promotion, a career change, a better community or world the common act of reaching for a goal is what ties this global community together.

All of us pursue dreams, goals, and opportunities, although each of us reaches for a particular "star." Homecoming 2023 invited all the members of the UMGC community to come together to celebrate their achievements—stars they have already reached—and to dream together, as they set their sights on their next "stars."

> Homecoming has evolved into a powerful networking opportunity for our UMGC community to further develop connections on a much larger global scale.

EVENTS

2023 HOMECOMING PROGRAMS

Metaverse Quick Tips Session

Thursday, October 12 | 7–8 p.m. eastern time Zoom

Global Virtual Spirit Week

Monday, October 16–Friday, October 20 UMGC Social Media

Global Virtual Networking Hour

Monday, October 16 | 7–8 p.m. eastern time UMGC Metaverse

33rd Annual Alumni Awards

Thursday, October 19 | 6–7 p.m. eastern time College Park Marriott Hotel & Conference Center, Maryland, USA

UMGC Homecoming 2023–USA

Thursday, October 19 | 7–9 p.m. eastern time College Park Marriott Hotel & Conference Center, Maryland, USA

UMGC Homecoming 2023–Global Virtual

Thursday, October 19 | 7–9 p.m. eastern time *UMGC Metaverse*

UMGC Homecoming 2023-Regional Open Houses

Thursday, October 19 | Local Times San Diego, CA; Patrick Space Force Base, FL; Pearl City, HI; Fayetteville, NC; Fort Drum, NY; Killeen, TX; San Antonio, TX; Arlington, VA; and Hampton, VA, USA

UMGC Homecoming 2023–Okinawa

Friday, October 27 | 6:30–9:30 p.m. Japan standard time Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, and UMGC Metaverse

UMGC Homecoming 2023–Germany

Friday, October 27 | 6–10 p.m. European central time Kaiserslautern, Germany, and UMGC Metaverse

REGIONAL OPEN HOUSES AND GLOBAL VIRTUAL NETWORKING HOUR

Homecoming fostered networking connections both locally and by industry.

Students, alumni, and faculty joined the fun at homecoming open house celebrations at nine UMGC locations from Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, to Pearl City, Hawaii. These celebrations offered a festive opportunity for attendees to meet fellow members from their own area and explore local resources available to support learner and alumni success. The UMGC metaverse celebration was broadcast live on monitors, introducing many to their first virtual reality experience. Attendees were encouraged to showcase an avatar's dance moves.

To foster connections, members of the UMGC community were invited to step into the metaverse for the global networking hour. This opportunity provided a chance for students and alumni located around the world to connect with faculty and staff from each of the UMGC academic schools—Business, Cybersecurity and Information Technology, and Integrative and Professional Studies. Attendees had the chance to expand their network and connect with fellow students, alumni, faculty, and staff by creating an avatar and exploring the UMGC networking lounges. Attendees also had the chance to learn how the UMGC schools are continuing innovative work to empower, diversify, and improve the accessibility of UMGC's education offerings.







USA HOMECOMING

This year's U.S. homecoming celebration welcomed alumni, students, and staff into an immersive experience to build new connections, share achievements, and learn more about the positive impact of our university. Led by actor and alumna Caitlin Bassett '15, the program opened with UMGC pride, inspiring remarks, and words of encouragement. UMGC President Gregory Fowler also addressed the ballroom full of attendees, honoring their star accomplishments as they continue to reach for new goals in the years to come.

With the help of more than 60 UMGC staff volunteers, attendees were fully engaged throughout the event through numerous activities.



DANCING WITH LIVE DJ

Great music always brings more fun to the celebration! This year's DJ played hit songs that had attendees dancing and smiling together in person and virtually through a new livestreaming experience for alumni and students.



MILITARY THANK-YOU

Embracing the spirit of global community, UMGC alumni and students took time during the homecoming celebration to write 95 personal notes of appreciation for UMGC active-duty and veteran military members in Europe and Asia.



METAVERSE WALL

The event featured our online UMGC metaverse platform, enhanced to take students beyond the classroom and incorporate new spaces that were custom-designed for homecoming. Attendees were able to connect globally during the event, using an immersive oculus headset or laptop to engage with other alumni and students celebrating UMGC Homecoming around the world.





REACH FOR THE "STARS"

UMGC faculty leaders gave their time to connect with alumni and students in person, guiding our themedengagement activity to share their achievements, their "star." More than 110 stars were written by attendees and displayed on a hanging ribbon in the Chesapeake Ballroom, celebrating all the amazing moments that have been experienced throughout the UMGC community.



AND MORE

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Additional engagement highlights included attendees capturing fun moments together at the event photo booth, representatives sharing opportunities for alumni and students to join a club or organization, and staff providing information about the Alumni Association and student benefits and resources. Attendees left the event with smiles on their faces, UMGC swag giveaways, a collective spirit of community, and a lifelong connection to their alma mater!

GERMANY AND OKINAWA HOMECOMING EVENTS

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

With a UMGC presence in more than 20 countries and territories, Homecoming 2023 provided a unique chance for the global community to establish and strengthen their professional network with each other and with university faculty and staff across Europe and Asia.

Throughout the month leading up to the in-person celebrations in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and in Okinawa, Japan, students, alumni, and staff were encouraged to participate in homecoming by sharing their goals and achievements on "stars" displayed at multiple locations. These served as powerful inspiration and motivation for students to continue their educational journeys.



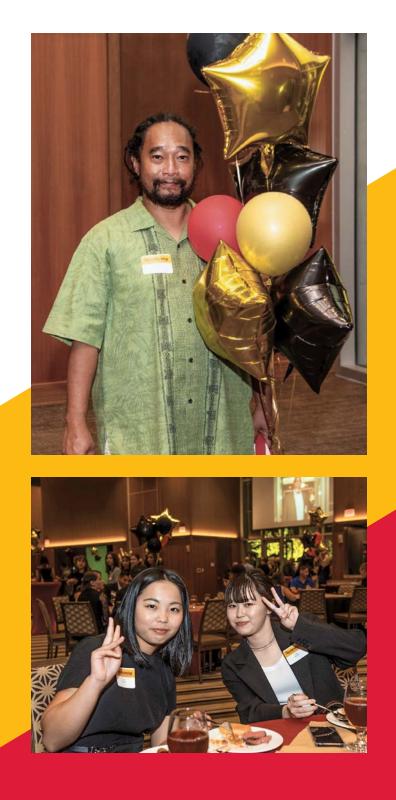
At both of these homecoming celebrations, participants enjoyed a fun-filled evening networking with fellow classmates and alumni. They celebrated their achievements; connected with colleagues in the UMGC metaverse; and enjoyed food, live music, and fun giveaways. UMGC Senior Vice President and Chief Academic Officer Blakely Pomietto attended the Okinawa celebration, while UMGC Senior Vice President, Global Military Operations Lloyd "Milo" Miles connected with attendees at the Germany celebration. UMGC President Gregory Fowler was also at the Germany celebration to personally recognize 2023 Achiever Award recipient Jorge Acevedo '12, '15 & '18, who resides in the area.











HOMECOMING IN THE UMGC METAVERSE





The metaverse is just one example of how UMGC is leading innovation to support student and alumni success.

UMGC is one of 10 universities participating in a twoyear pilot program offering students in select courses the opportunity to experience a "digital campus." The "campus" offers customizable UMGC learning spaces including a lecture hall, an auditorium, a student lounge, and an art museum.

Various classes in disciplines such as astronomy and human resources are available in the UMGC metaverse. This environment allows the university to bring students from all over the globe to learn together.

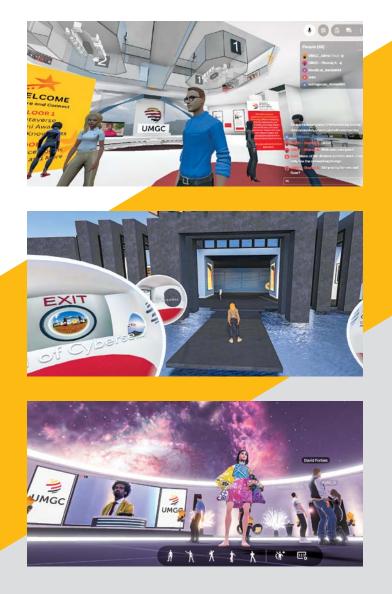
And UMGC is the FIRST university to host homecoming in the metaverse!

Those who wanted to join the party but could not do so in person had a new option: to celebrate in the UMGC metaverse. Not only was the global networking hour hosted in this immersive 3D virtual experience, but each of the three in-person celebrations also had engagement stations where in-person attendees could network and connect live with metaverse attendees. This merging of the physical world and that of virtual reality removed barriers of time and space so that the global UMGC community could truly network with one another—in real time—anywhere in the world.

"We were so excited to offer this innovative option to our global UMGC community this year for Homecoming 2023," said UMGC Department Chair of Information Technology Daniel Mintz. "This was an opportunity to showcase how the university is broadening and expanding education offerings and its presence in this immersive space. It was incredible to have so many experience it firsthand—no matter where they were located around the world."

The future is now, and it's virtual!

Homecoming in the UMGC metaverse offered a digital space where attendees could explore, network, and learn via computer, tablet, mobile device, or virtual reality headset. After creating custom avatars, attendees navigated through various portals to custom spaces to view a welcome video from UMGC President Gregory Fowler, learn about exclusive resources, expand their connections in the Networking Lounge, elevate their creativity while exploring the UMGC Art Collection, and dance the time away with a DJ live stream in the Celebration Zone.



33RD ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARDS

For 33 years, the UMGC Alumni Association has acknowledged some of the university's most distinguished graduates through its annual alumni awards. An exclusive awards presentation, honoring seven outstanding alumni members for their service to their alma mater and fellow alumni community, was held an hour before the UMGC Global Virtual and USA Homecoming events. The awards recognize those alumni members who lead the way through innovation and service to their industries and communities and enrich the UMGC community through their intellectual, social, cultural, and service contributions.

2023 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA AWARD RECIPIENT



Major General Janeen L. Birckhead '96

Army Major General Janeen L. Birckhead '96 currently serves as the 31st adjutant general of the Maryland National Guard. In this capacity, she acts as an advisor to the governor

of Maryland. She is responsible for leading a force of more than 6,300 soldiers, airmen, and federal and state employees, providing a relevant and capable force ready to fight, protect, defend, and prevail against all threats in a multidomain environment.

Most recently, MG Birckhead was the commander of the Maryland Army National Guard as well as the deputy commandant for Reserve Affairs at the U.S. Army War College. She also served as the director of Legislative Affairs for the Maryland National Guard. She has commanded at the company, battalion, and brigade level.

In a civilian capacity, MG Birckhead serves as a senior advisor for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Trust Fund Administration. She advises the bureau director on a wide range of issues related to the organization's personnel and managerial policies, practices and procedures, and organizational culture.

2023 EXECUTIVE BUSINESS LEADER AWARD RECIPIENT



William McKinley Washington III '10

William M. Washington III '10 is the global chief financial officer (CFO) at Baker McKenzie. As CFO, he is in charge of the firm's financial operations, which total more than

\$3 billion in revenue across 76 offices and 45 countries.

Mr. Washington is also responsible for more than 1.400 finance professionals and serves on the executive committee, financial committee, and many other strategic committees related to the firm's operations.

Mr. Washington was honored with the Executive Business Leader Award because of his professional accomplishments in the industry in which he works.

2023 EDWARD A. PARNELL **OUTSTANDING ALUMNA SERVICE** AWARD RECIPIENT



Ann M. Seeney '07 is the chief people and diversity officer at the U.S. Soccer Federation, leading the charge as an agent of change and promoting integrity in an inclusive and distinct culture. She anticipates that U.S.

soccer will be the foremost example of equity in sports and society worldwide.

Ms. Seeney was honored with the Edward A. Parnell Outstanding Alumna Service Award because she is a reflection of the change that she seeks. Serving as board chair of Pro Sports Assembly-an organization of sports leaders who are blazing the trail and advancing the industry-she unites, equips, and empowers sports leaders to examine best practices, influence others, and positively affect communities through sports and diversity.

2023 ACHIEVER AWARD RECIPIENTS

Jorge Acevedo '12, '15 & '18

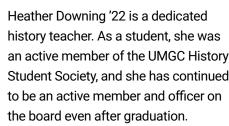


Jorge Acevedo '12, '15 & '18 is a 21-year U.S. Army veteran who held key positions while serving as an army engineer solider with the Army Engineer Regiment. He currently works as a desktop support engineer

for Fiserv, an American company located in Bad Homburg, Germany.

Mr. Acevedo was honored with the 2023 Achiever Award because of his dedication as an alumni volunteer in the UMGC career mentor program, helping more than 16 UMGC alumni and students excel in their career paths this year. His mentees noted how they appreciated the time he took to listen, and many could relate to his military-to-civilian career transition insights.

Heather Downing '22



Ms. Downing was honored with the 2023 Achiever Award because of her involvement in the UMGC History Student Society and her integral role in the development of the International Undergraduate History Conference, including chairing one of the three-hour conference sessions. This conference provided valuable resources to the UMGC community to connect their education to career aspirations.



Huyen-Tran Nguyen '17, '21 & '23

Huyen-Tran Nguyen '17, '21 & '23 is an end processing specialist at the McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, managing computer security networking.

She serves as a role model for her fellow members of the UMGC community and consistently receives high reviews from mentees who appreciate her thoughtful and detailed feedback.

Ms. Nguyen was honored with the 2023 Achiever Award because of her work as an alumni volunteer in the UMGC career mentor program, providing career coaching to more than 30 UMGC alumni and students this year, sharing her valuable career insights and tips for success.



Margaret Sofio '71

Margaret Sofio '71 is committed to helping others succeed. After working for 20 years in the cable industry, she retired as a vice president of AT&T.

After achieving her degree at UMGC while living overseas, she returned

to the United States to graduate from Boston College Law School. She served as vice chair of the Children's Museum of New Hampshire and is a current member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for New Castle, New Hampshire. Currently, she is a board member at Common Table and vice chair of the nonprofit organization GoodWork, which helps other nonprofits maximize their potential.

Ms. Sofio was honored with the 2023 Achiever Award because of her volunteerism and the impact she has made in her local community.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

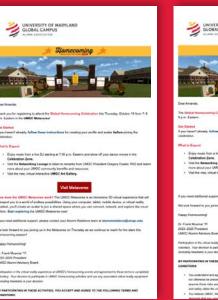
To create awareness, generate interest, and encourage participation among the global UMGC community, a comprehensive multichannel communication strategy was developed. This strategy expanded the university's brand and demonstrated the value of a UMGC education and network. Focused on fostering networking connections, the communications highlighted activities and shared resources that drive participation.

DIGITAL MARKETING

A series of customized messages were deployed 10 weeks before the start of each event to the UMGC global community of students and alumni. This strategy included email invitations, newsletters, activity reminders, and thank-you emails for attendees with surveys and links to photos—each customized based on affiliation and geographic location.

Homecoming Z Ve look forward to co o reach for your stars Dr. Frank Musmar '11 2023–2025 President UMGC Aurmi Advisory Boa Homecoming P.S. We want to hear from you your thoughts on this year's Hi Dr. Frank Musmar '11 2023–2025 President UMGC Alumni Advisor *

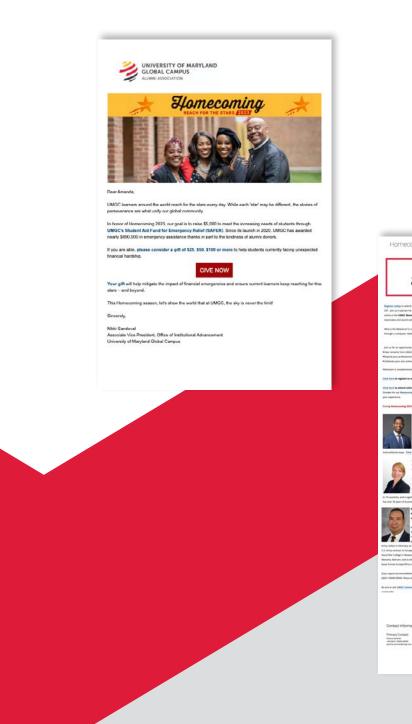
Global email reminders invited members of the university community to access the UMGC metaverse, providing instructions on how to create a Spatial virtual reality account, make an avatar, and explore and navigate the UMGC metaverse before the start of Homecoming 2023 celebrations.





SOLICITATION

UMGC alumni and students were invited to raise funds for the UMGC Student Aid Fund for Emergency Relief (SAFER). As part of registration for homecoming, which was complimentary, the UMGC community was invited to make a gift to SAFER to benefit students in need. A SAFER solicitation email was also sent out, describing the fund and how gifts can provide direct aid to students to assist them in continuing their studies. The emails were sent to UMGC alumni, resulting in \$5,750 raised for SAFER. This was the first time such emails were sent.



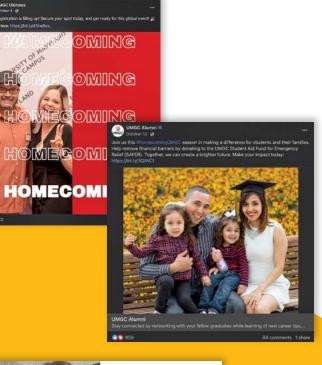
WEBSITE: ALUMNI.UMGC.EDU

All UMGC Homecoming 2023 celebrations were housed centrally on the UMGC Alumni Association website, **alumni.umgc.edu**. This allowed us to direct members of the UMGC community to the website for information and registration in all communications and to connect the community to additional benefits and resources. A total of 98,426 impressions were garnered from the website during the months of August, September, and October.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media played a large part in the overall homecoming communication and engagement strategy, supporting the goals of personalizing the face of the UMGC community, instilling school pride, and elevating the value of a UMGC degree. Social media strategies were developed to keep the audience engaged beyond the onetime event. Before the event, social media was used to drive event attendance, both in person and online.





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SPIRIT WEEK 2023

THROWBACK THURSDAY

Homecoming kicked off with UMGC Spirit Week 2023, a global social media and university engagement promotion, inviting community members to show off their school pride. Social media themes included Metaverse Monday, Together Tuesday, Where Are You Wednesday, Throwback Thursday, and Future Friday. Participation in Spirit Week using #HomecomingUMGC made individuals eligible for one of 23 chances to win a UMGC Stanley tumbler. Spirit Week alone resulted in reaching more than 137,000 people on social media, spreading the value of a UMGC education and brand.

Through university engagement during Spirit Week, students and alumni were also greeted with pop-up messages on the student portal and alumni website and on the university's phone greeting message. University staff joined the fun by hosting department Spirit Week activities filled with teambuilding.

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IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

OUTCOMES



98,426

page views of the alumni website were recorded from August to October 2023.



208.000

impressions across social media reached **137,000** people, spreading the UMGC brand through the event hashtag #HomecomingUMGC.

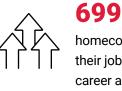


1,893 students, alumni, and guests registered for Homecoming 2023, cultivating relationships for lifelong engagement.

1,168

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participants attended homecoming activities, connecting directly with their alma mater and tapping into their UMGC network.



homecoming registrants updated their job title/employer, noting career advancement.





95

thank-you notes from attendees were sent to our servicemembers.



\$5,750

was raised for the Student Aid Fund for Emergency Relief (SAFER) to help students in need.



Attendees participated from across the country and around the globe, representing

11 countries and 39 states.



375

participants attended in the UMGC metaverse!



697

students registered for homecoming, supporting a sense of belonging and connection to UMGC.

UMGC COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

DATA POINTS



of attendees would highly recommend UMGC Homecoming to others.



of attendees replied that homecoming made them feel connected to UMGC.

Most valued about homecoming experience:

- Connections and networking (feeling of community with UMGC family)
- Remarks from President Fowler and alumna **Caitlin Bassett**
- Overall energy: fun, great time, entertainment
- Metaverse experience
- Resources and information
- DJ and music

QUOTES FROM ATTENDEES

"Actually connecting and speaking to colleagues in a VR environment was better than Zoom!"

"It was my first homecoming experience, and I cannot wait to attend more. I had the best time meeting everyone!"

> "I absolutely loved everything about homecoming, and I'm so happy that I attended."

> > "I loved the whole

experience, how

welcoming the staff

was, and the wealth of information I got."

"Everyone made me feel valued, but Dr. Fowler greeting me at the door was priceless."

> "Great party. I cannot wait until next year."

"I value hearing from the homecoming speaker and the president and the networking opportunity-I simply love it!"

"Great information and great DJ!"

"I valued being able to see and hear the DJ that was actually at UMGC's headquarters. It made me feel truly a part of the party."

"Speaking with other alumni, getting involved with more reading. The books that were given to us. And meeting new people that I had not met before."

"Everything was nicely planned, the food was great, and the music was a wonderful selection."

"The opportunity to connect with UMGC family in person at a fun and inspiring event."

> "Homecoming 2023 was well planned, and every detail made it special to UMGC students, alumni, and staff."

"Immersive experience in metaverse. The environment was done well, music was fun and connective, and the museum and outside spaces were beautifully laid out. UMGC delivered an exceptional homecoming for both in-person and online participants."

"Connecting with alumni that I'm already connected with via LinkedIn. I most value making new connections and learning about new resources for leadership development."

"Keep up the good work! Proud to be a part of the UMGC family."

"The event is a nice mix of presentation, information, and socialization. The DJ was amazing, playing a great mix of music. Everything was perfect!"

"The meet-and-greet was awesome. Saw some familiar faces from last year and got to meet new people as well."

"The interaction with other students and alumni is what I valued the most. The whole event was planned wonderfully."

GLOBAL COLLABORATION

Designed in support of the UMGC 2024–2030 Strategic Plan, homecoming aligns with initiatives across the university. Through a collaborative process, several departments participated in every step of planning from strategy development to delivery, ultimately supporting the university vision and mission. The various departments include the following:

- Admissions
- Advising Operations
- Career Services
- Commencement Services
- Executive IT
- Human Resources
- Institutional Advancement
- Integrative Learning
- Marketing

- Office of the Chief Academic Officer
- President's Office
- School of Business
- School of Cybersecurity and Information Technology
- · School of Integrative and Professional Studies
- Security/Facilities Management
- Stateside Military Operations
- Student Affairs
- UMGC Asia
- UMGC Europe
- University Communications
- University Events
- Veterans Initiatives

CONCLUSION

Our mission is to inspire hope, empower dreams, and transform lives . . . one student at a time.

For more than 75 years, UMGC has focused on serving adults in the workforce and the military, bringing the right experience to the right learner at the right time and in the right way.

Today, UMGC Homecoming has evolved beyond mere celebrations to serve as a powerful networking platform that fosters connections on a global scale.

Utilizing technology to increase access, Homecoming 2023 was unwavering in its commitment to provide an engaging experience regardless of location—online through social media, in person, and in virtual reality. The breadth of activities connected the global community of 360,000 members to exclusive resources, expanded professional networks, and fostered lasting connections to the university.



CONTACT INFORMATION

QUESTIONS? REACH OUT TO US.

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