



Meeting Minutes

UMGC Alumni Advisory Board

September 14, 2026

This was the third Alumni Advisory Board meeting for the 2025–2027 term. Dr. S. Raschid Muller, President, led the meeting. The meeting was held at the UMGC Administrative Building with virtual participation available.

Present (in person): Nat Alston, Dr. Kenya Dugger, Dr. Solomon Gebru, Velma Hart, Samantha Howard, Dr. Manbae Kim, Dr. Tulinda Larsen, Dr. S. Raschid Muller, Dr. Jim Payne, Bernetta Reese, Patricia Toregas.

Present (online): Najila Ahsan, Philip Callahan, Anil Tailor

Guest (in person): UMGC President Dr. Gregory Fowler, Dr. Deann Collins, Dr. Shaun Joseph, Dr. Kimberly Whitehead

Staff (in person): Ashley Charles, Jen McDowell, Berniece Reese, Nikki Sandoval, Dharma Selva, Cathy Sweet

Staff (online): Danielle Matz

Meeting Starts: 6:30 p.m.

Proceedings

The meeting of the 2025-2027 UMGC Alumni Advisory Board session was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Nikki Sandoval on behalf of Alumni Advisory Board President, Dr. S. Raschid Muller.

Welcome

Nikki Sandoval, UMGC Associate Vice President, Institutional Advancement

Nikki Sandoval: Called the meeting to order on behalf of Dr. Muller and requested a motion to approve the February 2026 meeting minutes. The motion was approved. Nikki thanked Board members for their continued support of university initiatives, including mentoring students participating in the Global Symposium, supporting Grad Walk, Global Give, career fairs, and other alumni engagement activities. She shared that following the recommendation of the Board, UMGC now offers alumni continued access to their UMGC student email account and a Microsoft Office A1 license as a lifelong alumni benefit. Nikki also reported that more than \$17,000 has been raised toward the Board's goal of \$35,000 for the Alumni Association Scholarship.

UMGC PRESIDENTS UPDATE

President Fowler Remarks: Dr. Fowler provided an update on the university's growth, strategic priorities, and the evolving higher education landscape. He shared that UMGc continues to experience strong enrollment and graduation outcomes, serving more than 103,000 learners worldwide and graduating more than 20,000 students during the previous year. He noted that the university's alumni community now exceeds 329,000 graduates globally, including more than 118,000 alumni residing in Maryland.

He highlighted UMGc's continued focus on expanding access through partnerships with employers, community colleges, and K-12 school systems. Dr. Fowler discussed ongoing collaborations with major employers and workforce partners, as well as new international initiatives designed to increase educational opportunities for learners around the world. He emphasized UMGc's commitment to affordability, accessibility, and workforce alignment while responding to changing student and employer needs.

Dr. Fowler also addressed challenges affecting learners, including government shutdowns, military deployments, global conflicts, financial aid uncertainty, and broader economic pressures. He shared examples of how UMGc has supported military-affiliated students and overseas operations during periods of disruption, reinforcing the university's commitment to help learners remain on track toward their educational goals. He discussed the growing role of artificial intelligence and data analytics across higher education and noted that UMGc continues to explore opportunities to enhance student support, advising, and operational effectiveness while maintaining a strong focus on human-centered learning and decision-making. He emphasized the importance of balancing innovation with responsible implementation and student success.

Velma Hart: Asked about the financial and operational challenges associated with supporting students during military deployments, government shutdowns, and other disruptions, and how UMGc balances those responsibilities while maintaining fiscal stewardship.

Dr. Fowler: Shared examples of scholarship assistance provided to military-affiliated students during government shutdowns and discussed institutional decisions to support student persistence despite funding uncertainty.

Bernetta Reese: Asked whether UMGc is tracking enrollment impacts associated with military conflict, deployments, economic uncertainty, and related external events.

Dr. Fowler: Explained that UMGc is using enrollment data, student feedback, call transcripts, and AI-supported analysis to identify trends and better understand factors affecting enrollment growth and persistence.

Dr. Kenya Dugger: Asked about the broader impact of financial aid changes and affordability concerns on enrollment growth and student access.

Dr. Fowler: Discussed uncertainty surrounding federal financial aid changes, affordability concerns among adult learners, and demographic trends affecting higher education.

Presentation- I. Advancing College Access: UMGC and PGCPs Dual Enrollment

Dr. Kimberly Whitehead, VP for Academic Administration and Executive Dean

Special Guests:

Dr. Shaun Joseph, Superintendent, Prince George's County Public Schools

Dr. Deann Collins, Chief of Staff, Prince George's County Public Schools

Dr. Kimberly Whitehead: Provided an overview of UMGC's partnership with Prince George's County Public Schools designed to expand dual enrollment opportunities and increase access to college credentials for high school students. She explained that the partnership was developed to address capacity limitations within existing dual enrollment programs while creating additional pathways for students to earn workforce-relevant credentials before graduating from high school.

Dr. Whitehead shared that the program currently offers certificate pathways in Artificial Intelligence Foundations, Leadership and Ethics, and Spanish for Business Professions. She explained that each pathway aligns with degree programs and provides students with opportunities to apply earned credits toward associate and bachelor's degree studies.

She highlighted the PACE 111 orientation course, designed to prepare students for college-level expectations and asynchronous learning, and reviewed the comprehensive support services available to participants, including dedicated advisors, success coaches, tutoring, mentoring, technical support, and the Inscribe cohort community. Dr. Whitehead reported that 55 students had enrolled in the program's inaugural cohort and discussed plans for ongoing assessment, process improvement, and future program expansion.

Dr. Kenya Dugger: Asked whether risk indicators were established when selecting certificate pathways and whether any programs had been identified as higher risk for high school students.

Dr. Whitehead: Explained that pathway selection considered student readiness, workforce relevance, and opportunities for student success. She noted that Project Management was not included initially because additional preparation would be needed before introducing students to upper-level coursework.

Dr. Deann Collins: Commended the rapid implementation of the initiative and emphasized the importance of parent engagement, school leadership involvement, and ongoing feedback throughout the student experience.

Dr. Shaun Joseph: Discussed Prince George's County Public Schools' commitment to increasing access and opportunity for students and highlighted the partnership's ability to provide pathways to higher education and workforce success.

Velma Hart: Asked how awareness of the program will continue to expand and encouraged the university to formally evaluate parent experiences as part of the program assessment process.

Dr. Whitehead: Confirmed that parent participation is built into recruitment, onboarding, orientation, and support activities and will be included in future evaluation efforts and outreach plans.

Dr. Gregory Fowler: Highlighted the importance of providing meaningful educational experiences and helping students recognize opportunities available to them through exposure and engagement.

Bernetta Reese: Asked whether students will have opportunities to apply coursework in practical settings and whether the cohort design includes meaningful peer engagement and support mechanisms.

Dr. Whitehead: Discussed the Inscribe community, cohort-based support structure, student check-ins, and plans to gather continuous feedback to improve the student experience.

Presentation – II. Innovation for Impact: AI and Philanthropy for Learner Success

Daniel Matz, Director Annual and Leadership Giving

Danielle Matz: Provided an update on Vanessa, UMGC's AI Virtual Engagement Officer pilot initiative. Vanessa was launched to provide personalized engagement for alumni donors not currently assigned to a gift officer portfolio.

Jen McDowell: Shared that all pilot participants are informed that Vanessa is an AI-powered engagement tool and reported no participants have opted out of the initiative.

Nikki Sandoval: Highlighted examples of alumni engagement supported through Vanessa, including outreach related to events, mentoring opportunities, continued learning, and alumni communications.

Jim Payne: Shared his experience participating in the pilot and noted Vanessa's ability to provide personalized responses, answer questions, and connect alumni with university resources when appropriate.

Dr. Manbae Kim: Discussed the importance of balancing AI innovation with transparency and human decision-making. He emphasized that AI should serve as a support tool while ensuring individuals remain responsible for decisions and actions.

Dr. Gregory Fowler: Agreed that AI should supplement rather than replace human judgment and emphasized the importance of creativity, critical thinking, ethics, and authentic human connection.

Bernetta Reese: Shared observations regarding the relationship between people and emerging technology and the importance of understanding how individuals engage with AI-enabled tools.

Dr. Gregory Fowler: Discussed responsible AI deployment, privacy considerations, and the importance of balancing innovation with oversight, accountability, and meaningful human engagement.

Closing Remarks

Dr. S. Raschid Muller: Thanked board members, guests, and staff for their continued leadership and participation. He reminded attendees of upcoming Homecoming and Alumni Awards events and encouraged members to continue serving as ambassadors for UMGC.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.