



R3T Report

Reflect Reimagine Rebuild

Prepared By:

Robyn Dinicola, Chief Student Affairs Officer

Rose Jackson-Speiser, Research and Data Coordinator

Mary Kate Luft, ACES Career Readiness Coordinator

Chelsea Moyer, Director, UMBC-Shady Grove



Executive Summary

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing 'patterns of change' rather than static 'snapshots'. - Peter Senge

As global citizens, the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic has highlighted our inextricable mutuality, connectedness, and interdependency while simultaneously amplifying significant fissures, roadblocks, and, in some cases, gaping holes in our collective structures, systems, policies, and approaches that, in the end, ultimately serve to perpetuate disintegration, polarity, exclusion, and inequity. This dissonance, coupled with a hyper-concentrated and extended period of abrupt, rapid, and reactive change brought on by the necessity of adapting to accelerated disruption in virtually all aspects of life as a result of the pandemic, has forced us to face a critical reckoning moment.

We (as individuals, communities of all shapes, sizes, orientations, and institutions) must take pause to assess, explore, and determine who we are and who we want to be as we seek to collectively stabilize, center, and re-orient in the direction of a post-pandemic future. Perhaps, in our lifetimes, never has it been more clear that change is constant. While the process of change and adaptation is challenging and certainly not always fluid, it provides a necessary and critical tool in creating and supporting new personal, professional, and academic “landscapes” while also enabling the ability to redesign and innovate stagnant foundational structures and systems to more fully leverage the identified strengths of the collective whole, community, and/or system. This is equally true of higher education and its institutions.

**In the midst
of every
crisis lies
great
opportunity.**

Albert Einstein

As the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) community embarks upon a multifaceted, in-depth, and dynamic strategic planning process grounded in change-making principles while also in the midst of the continued global pandemic, we are called to **Reflect, Reimagine, and Rebuild** as we envision USG 2.0 and begin to lay the framework for and design the roadmap for our future. In answer to this call, the Reflect, Reimagine and Rebuild Team (R3T) was formed in early spring 2021 to respond to a number of charge elements specifically related to the exploration and analysis of environmental scans and survey data collected across various populations (students, staff, faculty) within the USG community throughout 2020 and 2021:

- Data collected from staff through the ***USG Deep Dive***
- Lessons learned from the ***COVID Response Task Force***
- Input from a broad ***student survey***
- Input from a pulse survey of ***faculty and program staff***

The R3T served a number of distinct purposes including calling attention to the pivotal work of the USG team and institutional partners throughout the pandemic; identifying our inherent USG community strengths as well as important lessons learned as a result of our pandemic operations; and, perhaps, most importantly, developing a number of bold, innovative ideas across academic instruction, student services, and administrative services that emerged as valuable points of action to consider and inform the strategic planning process.

Before addressing lessons learned and our bold ideas for USG's future, it is important to note that a critical, defining “lynchpin” element that emerged through the collective work of the R3T is the necessary development of strategic and intentional structures and practices that fully encourage and support the growth of dynamic and organic “systemness” at USG in sustainable ways.

Executive Summary

We cannot emerge from lessons-learned as a result of the pandemic and immediately begin to dive into the act of re-envisioning, development, creation, and innovation without first assessing, evaluating, and reimagining the internal operations, funding model, processes and procedures, and decision-making infrastructure that ultimately supports the system, our USG community, at large. If we truly desire to broadly support inter-institutional, industry, and community collaboration across 9 phenomenal institutions of higher education; leverage shared resources, knowledge, and best practices in cost-efficient and effective ways; and create a dynamic working model for innovation and creative engagement across all services in support of students, staff, and faculty, we must examine the system, structures, and operations that prevent and/or stymie a robust level of organic synergy and interaction that allow our USG community to authentically thrive as we look ahead. The voices, experiences, and visions of ALL community stakeholders must be empowered, recognized, and integrated as inclusive, essential threads when weaving the decision-making processes and designing the operational infrastructures to support USG 2.0.

LESSONS LEARNED HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Flexibility:** A combination of in-person and virtual instruction that provides students with educational options and empowers them to make choices as to the instructional modality that best suits their needs is the way of the future. Expansive technology infrastructure across USG must be purchased and integrated in order to fully support this need.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** DEI must underscore ALL decision-making processes at USG and serve as a value that we naturally infuse through all instructional, operational, and student services provided at USG. The lived experiences and diverse voices of our students, faculty, and staff must be intentionally integrated into the USG community's DEI efforts.
- **Interdisciplinary & Collaborative Approach:** With 9 institutions on 1 campus, there is huge potential to cross disciplines and truly collaborate, however, it is clear that there is also much work to be done from an infrastructure standpoint to ensure that a leadership model, internal operations, funding model, processes and procedures, and decision-making structure is in place to fully and robustly support collaboration that truly results in innovative practices and results.
- **Unwavering Focus on Student Success:** We are a caring, compassionate, and student-centered community. USG is committed to and cares deeply about student success. Wrap-around holistic student support (addressing academic, professional, and personal realms of "being") as well as an increased focus on strengthening USG's internal communication practices and fully embracing mental health and wellness are areas that require continued development and further exploration as we invest in student success. Additionally, we must ensure that we are addressing barriers for all students in terms of access, retention, and degree completion and that higher education as a pathway is not cost-prohibitive.
- **Talented and Dedicated Staff:** USG staff quickly and efficiently adapted to the extreme conditions created by the pandemic and successfully transitioned to a business model that relied upon a virtual delivery model and the use of telework. Many staff cited an increase in productivity during the past 16 months that also enabled them to achieve a better work-life balance. Moving forward telework policies and other workplace practices need to be reviewed to ensure they align with shifting needs and expectations of a future workforce.

Executive Summary

BOLD IDEAS:

- Evolving from Coexisting to Collaborating in order to fully leverage the strengths of the USM partnership at USG.*** A number of innovative ideas emerged from the overall R3T work and identification of lessons learned. Core to many of these bold ideas is USG's need to abandon a more stagnant model of "coexistence" (9 institutions functioning disparately in shared space) in favor of resolutely developing and moving toward a dynamic and fluid operational model that is built upon a robust system of shared governance (at all levels) and that both supports and encourages true collaboration resulting in dynamic outcomes that serve the collective whole. A few examples include customizable degree programs and shared student services programming that leverage the collective best in interdisciplinary and instructional practices, pedagogy, and content expertise among USG's 9 institutions; the ability to comprehensively share and centrally house student data to fully support and evaluate USG student success across all partner institutions; the development of a Center for Academic Innovation that provides for the critical intersection of information technology and instruction as a means to capture, respond, and develop new modalities for learning; and the development of a responsive, flexible, and sustainable funding model that embraces all of the above while also allowing opportunity for continued growth.
- Developing an immersive business and community engagement model to meet the needs of students and regional industry partners.*** In the vein of true collaboration, increased community engagement and integration is a central component in support of USG 2.0. Given USG's prime location within Montgomery County at the crossroads of a diverse array of industry, employers, and community agencies, there is significant potential for USG to challenge the boundaries of space by opening its doors as a means to "house" and immerse strategic industry connections, professional engagement, and experiential learning opportunities on-site and within the USG community. Formulating an immersive business and community engagement model allows USG to reimagine the student experience so that students are provided holistic learning opportunities that offer the ability to put their learning into direct, applied practice without necessarily having to leave the physical USG campus. Additionally, this level of synergy and engagement allows industry partners in the region to collaborate and strategically partner with academic programs across institutions to proactively invest in a skilled workforce that will best meet current and future industry needs.
- Reimagining the Student Experience to boldly meet the needs of students.*** A tremendous identified strength of the USG community is directly reflected in the diversity of our student population and the power of their lived experiences. Many of the students enrolled in programs offered at USG identify as first-generation, location-bound, working parents, low-income, and, as noted earlier, are juggling varied life responsibilities and competing concerns. USG's approach to holistic learning must not exclude addressing the "living" portion of the life equation -- our students' personal lives are not mutually exclusive from their academic and professional lives. It is clear that our students desire flexible learning models and the opportunity to learn in hybrid and hyflex formats that accommodate their demanding schedules and life responsibilities. Our operational and instructional models must ultimately aim to meet these needs as we plan ahead. Additional examples of opportunities that allow for a bold whole-hearted approach to student success that are transformational and that promote an inclusive culture of care as we look ahead to USG 2.0 include the following: we must ensure that all USG students are hunger-free, debt-free, have access to child-care opportunities on-site at USG, as necessary, and are provided a guiding mentor relationship(s) - perhaps through alumni engagement - to assist in navigating the intersection of the academic, professional, and personal components of life in students' ongoing quest to earn a degree and graduate career-ready. Further examples are noted deeper in this report.

Executive Summary

- ***Reimagining the USG Workplace to empower staff to drive positive cultural change together and emerge as an employer of choice.*** As students need access to structures, services, and resources that allow for a highly personalized approach to student success, in order for USG to emerge as a premier employer in the region, USG staff need supportive infrastructures, policies, and approaches to aid in their success, fulfillment, and growth. This ultimately includes initiatives that seek to institutionalize flexible work schedules that enable staff to effectively provide service and also assist in helping staff to maintain personal work/life balance. The creation and deliverance of customizable staff support packages that include mentorship opportunities; mental health and wellness support; space, time, and ability for self-reflection and creative enterprise, and other initiatives are recommended to support a work culture that thrives best when its employees thrive. Additionally, competitive compensation for the complicated and multifaceted work and services performed by USG staff members requires further analysis and restructuring.
- ***Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice woven into the fabric of the USG culture.*** Finally, as we plan to build USG 2.0, undergirding all of the aforementioned bold and innovative ideas, it is essential to note that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) principles and a Social Justice approach must be integrated as actionable items across every aspect of USG's operating model and culture. This is an absolute necessity and includes suggested approaches regarding the establishment of a DEI office and relevant staff, hiring practices, orientations and job expectations, and the development and availability of courses and interdisciplinary programs that address social justice as a core educational component. To this end, a number of critical suggestions and specific opportunities for USG to harness and boldly implement are outlined and detailed in this report.



Our Charge

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic required USG, and all education institutions, to rapidly shift to remote learning and operations in order to ensure the safety of the students, faculty and staff. The USG team addressed this challenge with impressive alacrity and worked diligently to support instruction, provide needed support services, maintain campus operations and deliver creative engagement activities and programming. This work is ongoing.

The pandemic has focused our attention and resources on how best to foster a culture where everyone (students, staff, faculty, stakeholders) can not only survive during these challenging times, but thrive, today and beyond. While COVID-19 has affected everyone in some way, the impact is not felt equally and it has exposed deep, pre-existing inequities in every sector of society that must be explored.

In order to identify and explore the numerous lessons and innovations that have emerged over the course of the past year, and to reimagine the work we do, USG is standing up the Reflect, Reimagine and Rebuild Team (R3T). We want to evolve, transform and thrive through deliberate, purposeful reflection and change.

The R3T is an integral part of USG's strategic efforts to plan for the future, USG 2.0. At this time, we are engaged in an environmental scan/data collection to inform the work ahead. This work consists of data collected through the USG Deep Dive, through lessons learned from the COVID Response Task Force, through input from a broad student survey, and through the work of the Reflect, Reimagine and Rebuild Team.

The R3T has five primary goals:

1. To highlight and recognize the work of the USG team throughout the pandemic, including that of the current Campus Reopening TaskForce (CRTF)
2. To respond to the November 2020 staff survey that highlighted the need to understand and learn from our pandemic response and to take some immediate actions to improve upon the use of technology, virtual work, event planning, etc.
3. To capture the lessons of our response and our academic partners and build on them within the strategic planning process (so they are not lost in a post pandemic return to "normalcy")
4. To examine how effective our response was among the students, staff and faculty with the most significant barriers to learning and work
5. To advance the culture of innovation and problem solving at USG

JUNE 2020

USG establishes the Campus Reopening Task Force.

FEBRUARY 2021

The R3T Workgroup is established to identify lessons learned and to reimagine the work ahead.

MARCH 2020

COVID-19 Pandemic requires USG to switch to remote learning and operations.

NOVEMBER 2020

USG Staff Survey highlights the need to understand and learn from our Pandemic response.

JULY 2021

R3T will report findings to the Executive Director of USG.

Our Members

The R3T Report could not have been created without the thoughtfulness and dedication of the R3T Committee. Made up of members from the USG community, including students, staff, and faculty members from our partner institutions, the R3T Committee worked together to analyze and synthesize survey data and testimonials from students, faculty, and staff about the pandemic's impact on USG and higher education. Each member of the R3T Committee also graciously shared their own experiences and insights. We thank them for their efforts in creating this report, and in going above and beyond in their service to the USG community.

Robyn M. Dinicola, Co-Chair
Chief Student Affairs Officer

Mary Lang
Chief Strategy Officer

Chris Saxton
Director of Information Technology

Annie Foster-Ahmed
Director, Macklin Center for Academic Success

Nitshu Joshi
Senior Coordinator, Office of Human Resources

Greta Ober-Beauchesne
Social Work, Psychology and Education Librarian

Iris Schauerman
Coordinator, Center for Student Engagement and Financial Resources

Michelle Marcellino
Director, College Park Programs at Shady Grove

Joan Pittman
Director, UMB MSW Program at Shady Grove

Karenina Anselmo
School of Nursing Student at Shady Grove

Diane Alonso
Director, UMBC Psychology Program at Shady Grove

Mary Kate Luft
ACES Career Readiness Coordinator

Chelsea Moyer, Co-Chair
Director, UMBC-Shady Grove

Rose Jackson-Speiser
Research and Data Coordinator

Sara Wells
Manager, ACES/Pathway Partnerships

Tom Clifford
Major Gifts Director, Advancement Office

Erin Ward
Manager, Administrative and Financial Services

Pamela Allison
Professor and Chair, UMES Hospitality & Tourism Management

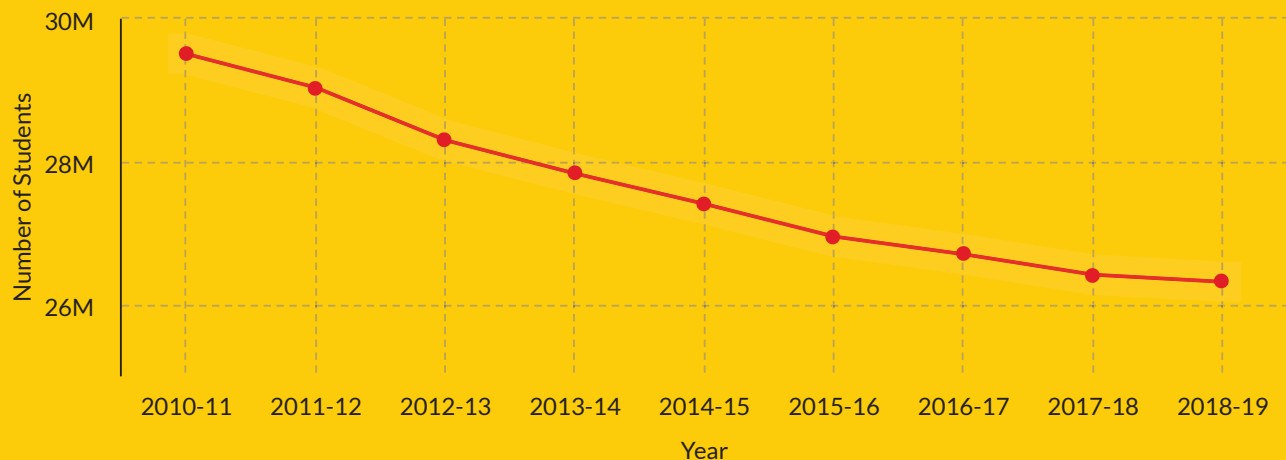
Jessie Nolasco-Sandino
MSW student and the Chair of Events and Initiatives of the GSA



Pre-Pandemic Higher Education Trends

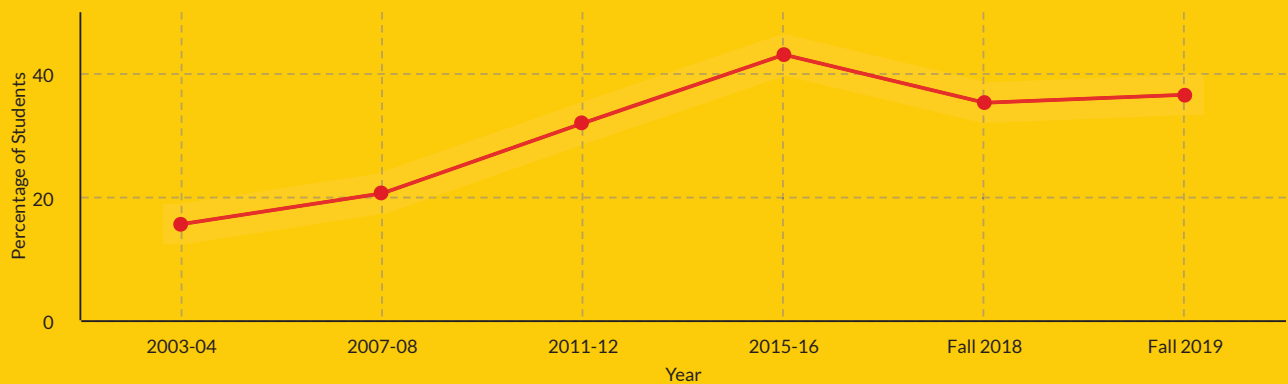
Prior to the pandemic, higher education was making slow shifts toward the following to support an evolving economy: online learning, alternative credentials, competency-based learning, technological innovation in the classroom, and mobile apps. The move toward online learning can be seen by the increase in percentage of students enrolled in distance learning since 2003-04. However, within the last decade, there continues to be a year over year decline in enrollment in higher education, as can be seen in the Enrollment of Students Annually in Post-Secondary Institutions graph below. The majority of admissions counselors in 2019 reported concern about losing applicants, and thus enrollments, due to applicant concerns about debt.

Enrollment of Students Annually in Post-Secondary Institutions



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month Enrollment component final data (2001-02 - 2017-18) and provisional data (2018-19).

Percentage of Students Enrolled in Distance Learning



Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-04, 2007-08, 2011-12, and 2015-16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12, and NPSAS:16). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment component final data (2012 - 2018) and provisional data (2019). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (forthcoming). Digest of Education Statistics 2019, [Table 311.15](#).

FINANCIAL TRENDS

TOTALS

Admissions counselors who reported they are losing applicants due to concerns about debt in 2019

81%

Percentage of Undergraduate Students Receiving Pell Grants, 2011-12 to 2018-19

-6%

Percentage of Undergraduate Students Receiving Federal Student Loans, 2011-12 to 2018-19

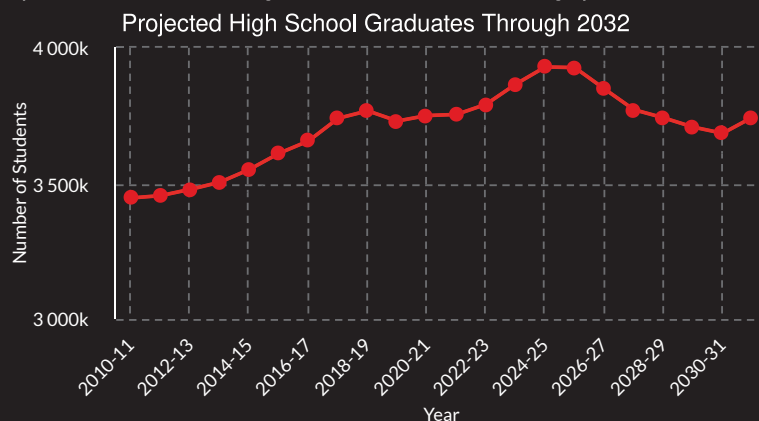
-8.6%

Source: Jaschik, S. (2019, September 23). 2019 Survey of Admissions Leaders: The Pressure Grows. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/2019-survey-admissions-leaders-pressure-grows>. U.S. Department of Education, (n.d.). Percent of Undergraduate Students Receiving Pell grants. National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/8/35>. U.S. Department of Education, (n.d.). Percent of undergraduate students receiving federal student loans. National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/answer/8/37>.

The Pandemic's Impact on Higher Education

IMPACT ON ENROLLMENT

Institutions are already facing challenges with enrollment, which will likely continue to worsen due to projections for a decline in new college students after 2025 caused by declining high school graduates. According to [Othot](#), 75% of institutions will see negative growth from 2025-2032. While it isn't entirely clear how the pandemic will further impact enrollments, experts predict that it will further exacerbate enrollment issues. Already there is some evidence to support this prediction, with a [4.7% drop in lowest income students](#) (family income \$25k or less) who renewed their Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This suggests the pandemic has caused a significant portion of students to halt continuation of their studies, and reflects the pandemic's widening of the socioeconomic gap.



Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 2020, www.knocking.wiche.edu

IMPACT ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Prior to the pandemic, the percentage of students enrolled in at least some distance learning was continually upwardly trending. The pandemic accelerated this trend in higher education, with most institutions being forced to quickly transition to a primarily virtual environment.

Many students now want continued options for online courses, and express more positive views of online education than they felt prior to the pandemic according to [The Digital Learning Pulse survey](#), published by Bay View Analytics. Of the 1,413 students surveyed (who were registered at a U.S. higher education institution for both the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters), **57%** of students assessed feeling more optimistic about online learning than they did prior to the pandemic.

IMPACT ON DEI

The pandemic has highlighted major inequities within our societal systems, which affect students at higher education institutions. [Jim Fong of UPCEA](#) highlights that the adult learners of today and tomorrow will include Millennials and primarily Gen Zers, who are characteristically value-oriented and socially conscious, are more diverse than past populations of adult learners, and thus are more affected by societal inequities.

For example, 48% of Gen-Z identifies as racially or ethnically diverse. And 60% of Gen-Z say the racial tensions of the summer of 2020 have impacted their mental health. Gen Z indicates that social issues like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have made a stronger impact on their worldview than the 2008 financial crisis, while the financial crisis was assigned a greater weight by Boomers and Gen X.

Higher Education will need to respond to and meet its changing student population.

ACCELERATING TRENDS

- Online Learning
- Revenue Diversification
- Alternative Credentialing
- University Consolidation
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Increased Workforce Development
- Enrollment Impacts
- Widening of the Socioeconomic Gap

73%



Of surveyed students "somewhat" or "strongly" agreed they would like to take some future courses in a fully online format.

USG During the Pandemic

Beginning in March of 2020, the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic forced USG to reconsider important aspects of campus life and the student experience. Following is a high level timeline of USG's administrative decision-making.

“

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed every aspect of our professional life — from our daily commute to office travel to our work environment to how we interact with our colleagues and peers.

”



March 13, 2020

USG Campus Closed

As health concerns grew, the USG campus closed, and staff transitioned to remote work.

April 2020

USG Converts to Remote Learning/Work

By April 2020, students, faculty, and most staff were all operating remotely.

June 17, 2020

Formation of the Pandemic Taskforce

The taskforce is made up of colleagues throughout the USG community to formulate detailed strategies for reopening.

June 26, 2020

Return to Campus Framework Developed

The taskforce develops a plan for a safe return to campus.

October 2020

Executive Director Leadership Transition

Dr. Stewart Edelstein is succeeded by Dr. Anne Khademian as Executive Director of USG.

July 6, 2021

Phase I of Return to Campus Implemented

Phase 1 continues through July 31. Up to 50% of normal campus activities will be authorized.

August 1, 2021

Phase II of Return to Campus Implemented

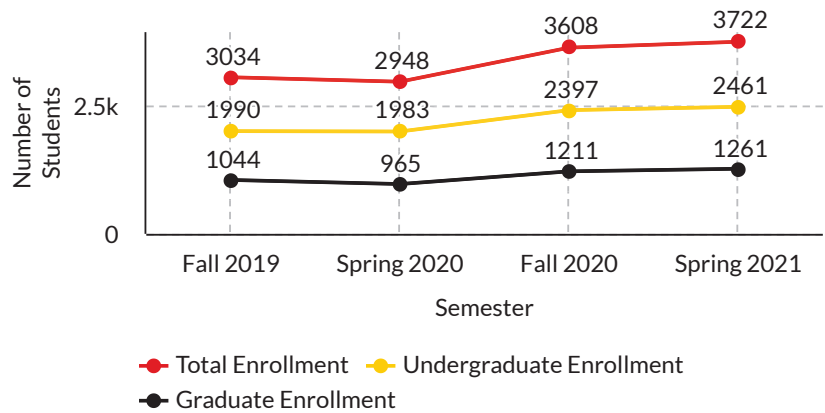
Phase 2 continues through December 31. Up to 100% of normal campus activities will be authorized.

USG Enrollment and Demographics

USG Enrollment

While the trend in higher education is a decline in enrollment (see page 7), enrollments at USG have increased since Fall 2019. From Fall 2019 to Spring 2021, total enrollment increased by 688 students, or 22.67%. Even with the pandemic hitting in Spring of 2020 and continuing to impact students and the USG campus into the fall, total enrollments increased for Fall 2020 by 22.38% (660 students).

USG Enrollment Fall 2019-Spring 2021

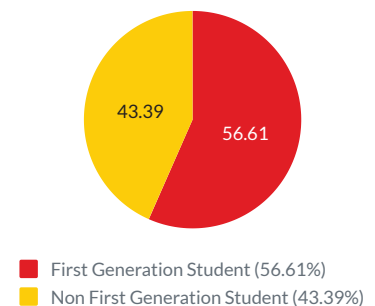


Comparatively, total USM enrollments decreased from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 by 1.18%. Nationally, enrollments at public four-year institutions increased during that time period by 0.18%. The number of undergraduate graduating students declined by 15.16% from AY 18-19 to AY 19-20, yet increased again in AY 20-21 by 9.51%. Overall graduation rates (undergraduate and graduate) have increased from AY 18-19 to AY 19-20 by 10.52%.

Who We Serve

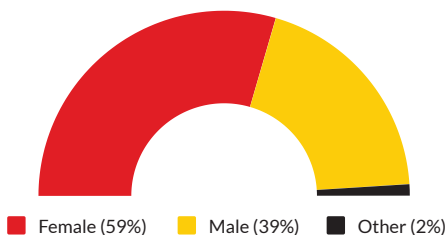
USG serves a unique group of students compared to your typical higher education institution. As a two-year campus, 100% of USG students are transfer students, with the majority of students coming from Montgomery College. USG students are older than the average college student; the average age of an undergraduate student at USG in Fall 2020 was 27. A large percentage of students are first-generation students. In a survey conducted in Spring 2021, 56.61% of respondents reported they are a first-generation student.

First-Generation

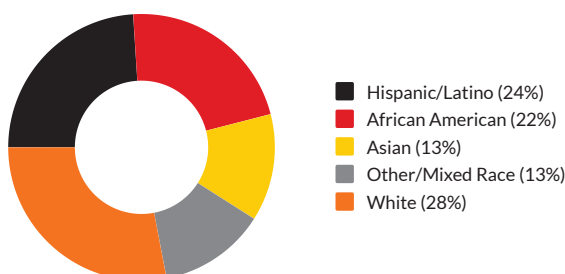


UNDERGRADUATE

Gender

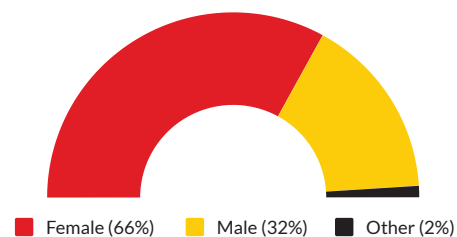


Race/Ethnicity

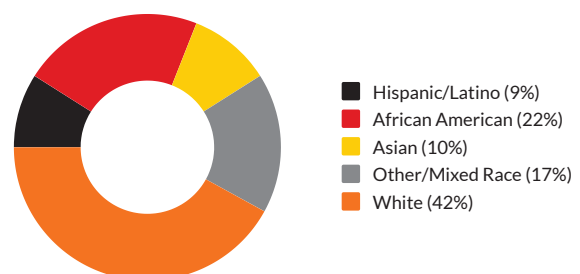


GRADUATE

Gender



Race/Ethnicity



All demographic data is as of Fall 2020.

USG Pandemic Support Services

Each of USG's divisions adjusted service delivery methods in unique and creative ways including virtual counseling appointments, curbside pick-up of books, virtual fitness classes, expanded equipment loans, virtual orientation and graduation celebration, virtual internship programs, and student-led virtual campus tour. New services like the Emergency Assistance Fund and Grover To Go were instituted to support students with affording and accessing their essential needs.



Emergency Assistance Fund

The Emergency Fund opened April 3, 2020. Students facing situations such as a reduction in work hours, unexpected job loss, recent unforeseen crises, or situations that impact college completion can apply for assistance. Students were able to receive up to \$200 in Target Gift Cards per semester. As of May 24, 2021, 1200 gift cards have been distributed to 563 unique students.

1,188

Emergency Fund
Requests

627

Unique Student
Requests

\$120k

Funds
Distributed



Grover To Go

Grover Essentials modified its services to "Grover To Go" and implemented these updated services starting September 29, 2020. Current USG students, faculty, and staff who signed up could pick up pre-made bags of food and other household essentials from lockers on the USG campus once per week. From inception to May 29, 2021, Grover To Go served 314 USG Community Members.

314

USG MEMBERS

Received Food &
Household Essentials



Technology Loans/Support

As a result of the pandemic, the USG community could only connect through technology, increasing the need for technology support. The USG IT Department responded by providing and assisting the USG Community with Zoom and Webex capabilities, remote technical support, virtual labs for program needs, installing WiFi in the Shady Grove Garage, and loaning resources including laptops, cameras, and microphones, amongst their regular services.

263

Laptops for
Students & Staff

1,644

Remote Support
Requests

50

Cameras &
Microphones



Library Services

Curbside pick-up was a new service that allowed any requested books to be picked up at USG, whether from the Priddy Library or any USM network library. **Chat and Zoom consultations** were utilized greatly during COVID. Finally, staff quickly adapted their regular library **workshops** to a virtual environment, and continued to provide in-class instruction as requested. **41** in-class instruction workshops occurred since SP'20.

411

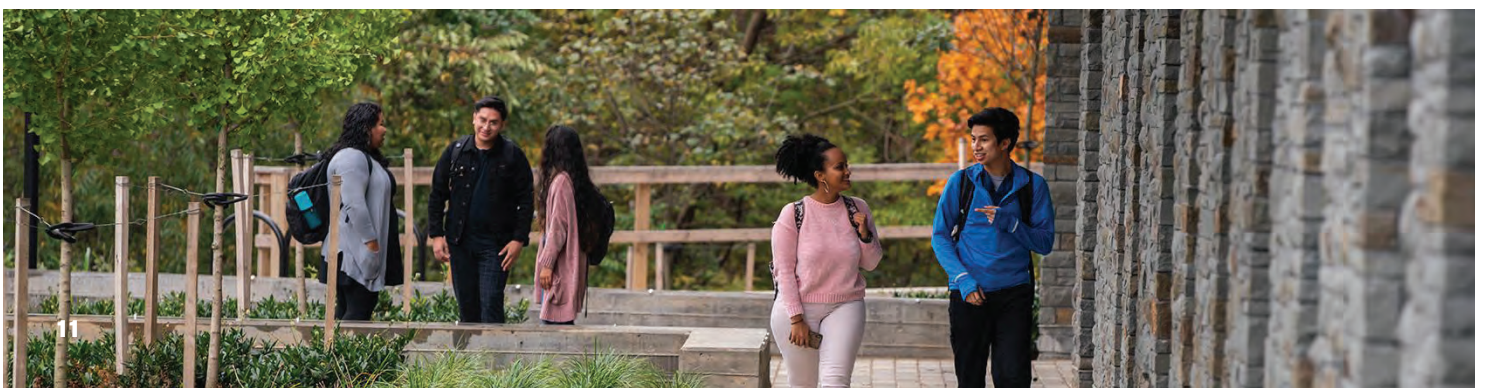
Curbside Pick-Up
Books

422

Online
Consultations

551

Workshop
Attendees



USG Pandemic Support Services



Student and Academic Services

Student and Academic Services modified operations to continue its wide array of services to students remotely. This included remote academic coaching with MCAS, financial and student organization support through CSEF, virtual counseling sessions with the CCC, virtual career coaching appointments with CISC, and virtual pathway and recruitment support through our Pathways Team. SAS also manages Grover To Go and the Emergency Assistance Fund.

75,990

Touchpoints

2,375

Unique Students
Served

16,157

Total Contacts



Facilities

Although the USG campus has been mostly closed, it has still needed to be maintained and kept secure. Security mans front desk posts to monitor entrances and patrols campus on rounds, amounting to a total of **360 posts, lasting 8 hours each**. Housekeeping sanitizes all high traffic areas daily. Security and Housekeeping also spent hundreds of hours posting pandemic signs and barriers daily; both were instrumental in protecting the USG campus from COVID-19.



Study Space

To provide students access to quiet study spaces, USG opened daily dedicated space in the BSE building on February 25, 2021. To use the space, students needed to complete a symptom screening. Though there were 127 total reservations from February 25 to May 21, only 65 symptom screening questionnaires were received. This could be due to a number of reasons including students who forgot to cancel a reservation, or just non-compliance.



Rec Center

The USG Campus Rec Center responded to the pandemic by creating virtual fitness classes for students, faculty, and staff. Beginning in Fall 2020, the center offered three virtual classes. A total of 65 participants attended virtual classes in the fall. The center increased the number of classes to five in Spring 2021. The number of participants increased as well by 80% to 117. In total, 182 participants have taken virtual fitness classes since Fall 2020.

182

PARTICIPANTS

In Virtual Fitness
Classes, FA'20 - SP'21



Pathway Support

USG serves prospective students in Montgomery County through pathway programs like ACES and TAP, and through general recruitment efforts. Pathway Support was modified to operate virtually, including virtual open houses, remote advising appointments, and remote workshops - both live and asynchronous. Touchpoints include prospective students, while "unique students" are only current USG students.

41,569

Touchpoints

285

Unique USG
Students Served

1,671

Total Contacts



I do not have any words to thank the generous private donors and USG. This is a difficult time for all students and their families, including me. I will say thank you again and let God bless you abundantly.

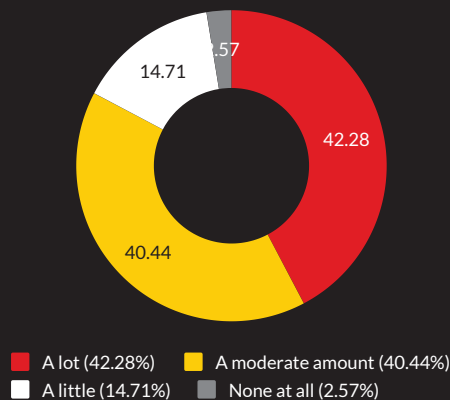


- Emergency Assistance Fund Recipient

USG's Mental Health

The changes that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic - to our jobs, to our schooling, to our relationships with others - have forced individuals to adapt in a variety of ways, triggering the body's natural stress responses and impacting everyone's mental health to some degree. Most people have had the emotional strength to cope with these COVID-related stressors, but some have had a more difficult time managing the changes in lifestyle. Of USG staff, 55% reported "a great deal" or "a lot" of stress as the result of the virus. In a survey of students in Spring 2020, 82% of students felt at least a moderate amount to a lot of stress due to the virus. Several efforts were taken by the Center for Counseling and Consultation (CCC) to address the heightened needs of staff and students during the pandemic. The pandemic overall has highlighted the importance of focusing on the stressors and needs of students and staff.

Student Stress About COVID

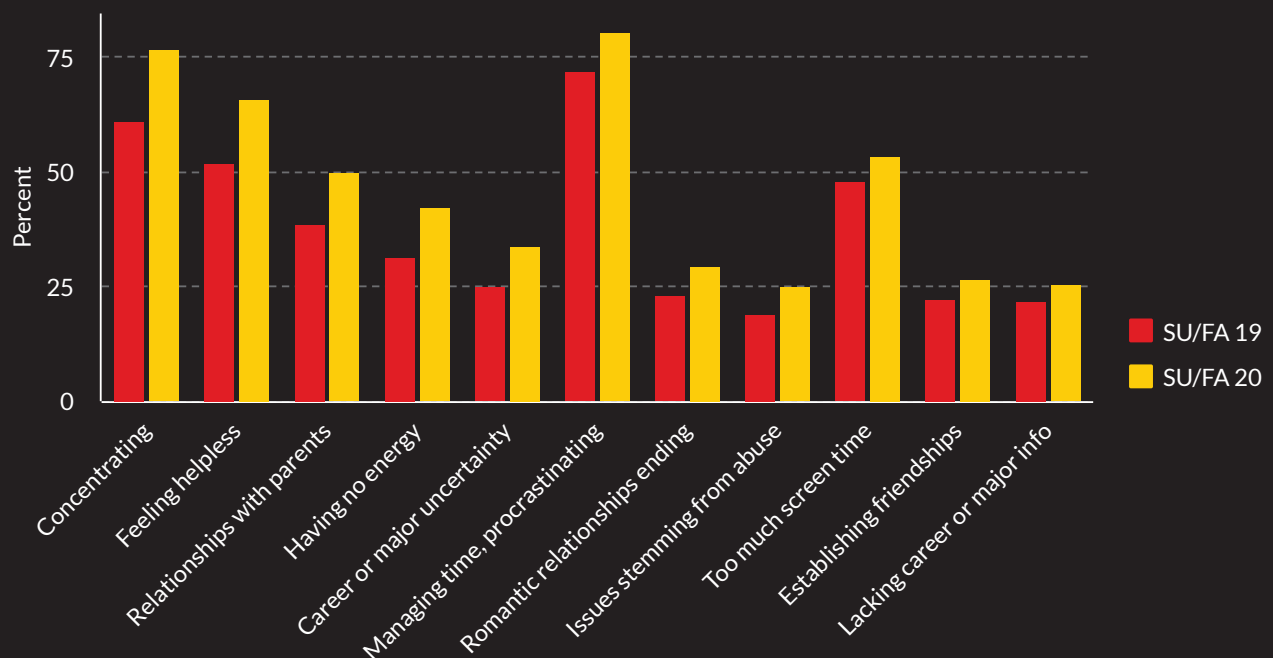


CCC Responses to COVID-Related Mental Health Concerns

- Weekly USG Staff/Faculty Open Forum
- Post-Election Open Forum
- Coping with Uncertainty and Intolerance Session
- General Therapy Group
- Video and Phone Counseling
- How to Make Friends Workshop

Top Issues of Greater Concern During Pandemic

Among the client issues showing the largest increases in reporting during the pandemic, five themes emerged: (a) academic concerns, (b) emotional depletion, (c) interpersonal interactions, (d) career concerns, and (e) one item relating to coping with trauma. It is important to note that while the endorsement of these concerns has risen since the start of COVID-19, they (and many others) were present prior to COVID as well, reinforcing the need for a continued focus on mental health.



Faculty and Staff Reflect on the Pandemic

Top Faculty Challenges:

- Student fatigue and anxiety
- Gauging class interest/participation
- Technology issues for students
- Difficulty having synchronous class activities
- Concerns related to academic integrity

Top Staff Challenges:

- Complexity of USG decision-making structure
- Burnout & fatigue
- Navigating & balancing needs/policies/requirements among 9 different institutions
- Problems with communication

Our ability to offer services online can add to our accessibility options in the future.

- USG Program Director

Top Faculty Recommendations:

- Improve coordination, communication, collaboration, and community between home campuses and USG
- Ensure adaptability and flexibility in delivery modality (inside and outside of the classroom)
- Conduct community outreach and provide robust wrap-around services in support of students
- Offer expanded cross-institutional course opportunities
- Expand availability of and fully invest in career, internship, and field placement opportunities/services

Top Staff Recommendations:

- Increase flexibility in work, including telework, flextime, and varied start times
- Prioritize staff physical and mental health to prevent burnout and fatigue; provide PPE and cleaning equipment to staff, offer workshops and programs
- Create a sustainable staffing and funding model
- Balance needs/policies/requirements among 9 different institutions; develop cross-institutional programming/courses, facilitate opportunities for collaboration and innovation
- Communicate clearly with staff, faculty, and students information on all relevant items to USG

Students Reflect on the Pandemic

Top Needs at USG Moving Forward:

- In-person services/activities
- Financial Aid/Scholarships
- Safety: COVID-19 Precautions
- Course Options: In-Person and Online, Cross-Institutional
- Clear Communications

Envisioning USG in a Post-Pandemic World - Top Things to Consider:

- Adopt more online options for courses and services permanently
- Offer in-person opportunities for those who feel safe
- Provide support for mental health/fears around returning to campus
- Implement stronger skill building based on employer needs
- Communicate changes as they occur

Top Urgent Needs in Higher Education:

- Making college more affordable
- Offering more flexible options (online and hybrid)
- Reducing barriers to access higher education
- Creating flexible internship opportunities
- Providing more mental health support

"The experience of people in the context of their education should be the MAIN focus of Universities promoting 'higher learning'. What does USG do to make sure that any and all of my money and capital gained by the institution is being used in the best way possible as determined by an objective entity focusing on human rights, student well being, quality of education, accreditation standards and respect for community and local needs... I would MUCH rather have a less 'modern, sophisticated' looking building if it means there are more scholarships available and more funding goes towards environmental initiatives on campus."

USG Student

Institutional & Program Best Practices During COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic provided a learning opportunity for everyone on the USG campus, including institutional and program faculty and staff based on the USG campus. The R3T Committee asked each program for their top three highlights and best practices from the pandemic. Below are the key highlights and best practices reported, categorized into four main themes that emerged: Academic, Community, Career, and Technology.

Academic

- Online advising and office hours (and flexible scheduling of office and advising appointments) gave students more opportunities to connect with advisors and faculty
- Flexibility with assignment submission deadlines
- Option for Pass/Fail grading
- Enhanced engagement in group work through online platforms
- More use of “flipped classrooms”

Community

- Student engagement fostered through different virtual activities: game night, networking with professionals hour, and fundraisers
- Implementation of student appreciation events built community and positivity-online trivia games, group paint nights
- Student orgs on USG campus connected with main campus students through joint remote programming

Career

- Implemented virtual networking events with local regional employers
- Connected students to remote internships
- Placed students in remote options for student teaching
- Implemented weekly career newsletters
- Provided and connected students to virtual volunteer opportunities

Technology

- Explored new platforms for virtual activities like Icebreaker and Houseparty
- Utilized multiple avenues of communication - Listserv, newsletters, ELMS space
- Utilized Zoom and WebEx for virtual meetings and events
- Created online orientations using tools like Blackboard

Lessons Learned

The pandemic altered life as we know it and forced us to rethink our campus operations. As the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines continue, infection rates decline and normalcy is returning. While there is still much to learn about COVID-19, we must seize the opportunity to assess what the pandemic has taught us in order to reorganize and reenergize USG for the future. Following are the key themes that emerged from the data.

Flexibility



- Telework increased productivity
- Current organizational structure, processes, and decision-making impedes creativity and efficiency
- Meet students where they are
- Investment in tech to support flexibility

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion



- Pandemic highlighted systemic inequities
- Students want a role in supporting and implementing these elements
- All infrastructure and budgetary elements need to reflect that DEI is a top priority

Interdisciplinary & Collaborative Approach



- Internal operations, funding model, processes and procedures, and decision-making infrastructure at USG needs to be examined, explored, and redesigned
- Current infrastructure impedes authentic collaboration

Unwavering Focus on Student Success



- Addressing barriers for all students in terms of access, retention, and degree completion are of utmost concern
- Compassion and sense of community are critical factors to student success
- Mental health and wellness is a top priority

Talented & Dedicated Staff



- USG staff are adaptive and able to function effectively in a dynamic environment
- Staff found improved productivity and work-life balance through telework
- USG needs to examine the traditional work model with a fresh approach

Lessons Learned: Expanded

Flexibility

USG pandemic operations highlighted the critical importance of **flexibility** in meeting our students (many of whom are working adults balancing school, children, and a multiplicity of responsibilities) where they are through both instruction and student services. While it is clear from review of survey data that USG students appreciate and greatly value the traditional face to face environment and sense of community such interactions provide, it is equally apparent that our students have an expressed need and desire to engage via a hybrid (combination of online and in-person modalities) approach and model as we look ahead. A flexible, hybrid work model is valued and preferred by many USG staff as well with the ability to telework adding to increased work productivity and efficiency. Ultimately, in order to leverage this lesson learned and to support the diverse populations that USG serves, we will need to make a substantial investment in an immersive technology infrastructure and network to support quality flexible instruction and services (hyflex, etc.) across the entire USG campus.

"Telework over the last year has been extremely positive for me in terms of **productivity, effectiveness, innovation, professional growth**, and the ability to **reach a greater number of stakeholders**. It has also allowed me **greater work-life balance** and prevented much of the burnout I had been experiencing pre-pandemic that, to be honest, had me considering leaving USG."

USG Staff Member

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) are critical principles and core practices that we as a community must infuse within and through all aspects of USG operations. The pandemic highlighted gross inequities within our societal systems that need to be addressed and higher education must respond to the call in leading that effort. USG students want to be actively engaged in that call and desire to have a meaningful role in exploring, supporting, and implementing DEI planning, efforts, and initiatives within the USG community. Their diverse voices and lived experiences must be integrated into our operations and decision-making processes and the pursuance of **social justice** must be a standard action embedded within our operating practices and milieu.

Q
&
A

WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS USG'S
GREATEST STRENGTHS?

"The diversity of our students and their commitment to attaining their degrees."
- Faculty Member

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS AN URGENT NEED FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

"Decolonizing higher education and addressing issues of classism, racism, ableism, and privilege."
- USG Student

Lessons Learned: Expanded

Interdisciplinary & Collaborative Approach

With 9 institutions and 80+ programs on 1 campus, the *possibilities* for an **interdisciplinary, collaborative approach** at USG are phenomenal; yet, it is clear that we as a community need to invest in better leveraging, cultivating, growing, and truly developing collaborative opportunities as well as a supportive infrastructure that both encourages and facilitates interdisciplinary work across USG service centers and among institutions and industry partners. This requires our need to thoroughly examine and address decision-making structures and funding models that impede our ability to think and act in creative ways. Identifying and embracing the “sweet spot” as far as balance between autonomy and interdependence is key. The **internal operations, funding model, processes and procedures, and decision-making infrastructure at USG needs to be examined, explored, and redesigned to reflect, incorporate, empower, and best support the vision and voices of ALL stakeholders within USG and across Montgomery County**. This is an important marked area for serious evaluation and growth as we look ahead and plan for USG 2.0.

"The lessons these challenges teach us are that **without partnership** and service agreements, **clear communication** on expectations that are reinforced, **transparent priorities**, professional growth opportunities, clear ownership responsibilities, and a **consistent decision-making process**, we are caught in a cycle where decisions are not final, information is inconsistent, processes are continuously re-invented, and turnover is unavoidable."

USG Staff Member

Unwavering Focus on Student Success

One of USG's strengths is an **unwavering focus on student success** and its commitment to provide the necessary support services to assist students in reaching their full potential. It is evident that **compassion and a sense of community** are critical factors within the student success equation and serve as attributes that define our USG community. We need to continue to build upon these strengths in order to best serve our students in a truly holistic manner that prioritizes their multifaceted needs as unique individuals while also creating an inclusive, collective sense of belonging among the entire USG community. As part of these efforts, it is apparent that clear, inclusive, and responsive campus communications as well as mental health and wellness (in support of all USG populations) need to be top priorities in ensuring the continued success of our USG community. Affordability of higher education and the services it provides continues to be a critical and major area of concern among students when considering access and equity issues.

Talented & Dedicated Staff

The staff at USG are nimble, adaptive, and able to effectively function in a dynamic environment. USG staff quickly and efficiently adapted to the extreme conditions created by the pandemic and successfully transitioned to a business model that relied upon a virtual delivery model and the use of telework. In fact, many staff cited an increase in productivity during the past 16 months that also enabled them to achieve a better work-life balance. Moving forward telework policies and processes need to be reviewed to ensure they align with shifting needs and expectations of a future workforce. In addition to telework, other workplace practices and culture must be revisited to ensure USG has a team of professionals who are heard and supported and ready to embrace USG 2.0. As USG transitions to the future of work, the traditional work model must be examined with a fresh approach that focuses on creativity, flexibility, competitive compensation, health and well-being, professional development, autonomy, and promotes a healthy work-life balance.

USG 2.0: Reimagining for a Bold Future

The pandemic requires institutions of higher education to reassess and redefine their value proposition, compelling them to revisit antiquated structures and meet the demand of shifting student expectations. We are at the crossroads of a once in a generational opportunity to reevaluate our core mission and vision in order to organize and structure ourselves for a future that should not revert to a traditional way of operating, especially as we endeavor to serve a growing population of nontraditional students. The time is now to transform higher education into a model that is customizable and affordable to the vast majority of people. As the Universities at Shady Grove prepares to embark upon the development of its first Strategic Plan, the members of the R3T committee urge the members of the Strategic Planning Committee to be **BOLD** in the conception of USG 2.0.

1 **Evolving from Coexisting to Collaborating in order to fully leverage the strengths of the USM partnership at USG.**

In order to successfully transform USG to meet the moment, the partners must strive to deepen the partnership to evolve from coexisting in a shared space to the development of a true and deep collaboration.

2 **Developing an immersive business and community engagement model to meet the needs of students and regional industry partners.**

USG is located in a county brimming with employer engagement possibilities. Developing strong, innovative, and sustained linkages with this growing employer community will be essential as USG enters its next phase of development.

3 **Reimagining the Student Experience to boldly meet the needs of students.**

The pandemic emphasized several critical needs of USG's unique student community. In order to address these evolving needs, USG should streamline and realign its support model by infusing flexibility to meet the students where they are, addressing affordability and accessibility challenges, creating a funding model that supports the student services infrastructure, and leveraging the tools and services provided by the partner campuses to avoid duplication

4 **Reimagining the USG Workplace to empower staff to drive positive cultural change together and emerge as an employer of choice.**

In order for USG to emerge as a premier employer in the region, USG staff need supportive infrastructures, policies, and approaches to aid in their success, fulfillment, and growth.

5 **Weaving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice into the fabric of the USG culture.**

USG should rethink all of its work through the lens of DEI. It should be a framework/lens through which everything is viewed. Adequate resources need to be devoted to this critically important work and students, faculty and staff must be involved in the change-making.

Coexisting to Collaborating

In order to reimagine and rebuild USG 2.0 and to bring into the fruition (and fully support) the bold ideas of which we are capable of implementing, the partners ***must strive to deepen the partnership and evolve from coexisting in a shared space to the development of a true and deep collaboration.*** This requires that we strategically develop into an organic, “living and breathing” system that celebrates the unique character of its distinct, functional parts, but thrives through interconnectedness via a natural and intentional promotion of synergy, symbiosis, and responsiveness among partners, stakeholders, and populations when developing and executing decisions. Currently, USG is more reflective of a collection of entities sharing space in one centralized location. This will require the partnership to identify its shared goals and create the space and structure to enable the partners to develop an interdependence that leverages their skills, abilities, expertise, and experiences. The evolution to a true collaborative model could lead to initiatives and enhancements, as follows:

- Creation of ***shared governance*** among the USG partner institutions at the faculty and program director level similar to a faculty senate. This body could develop a more effective method for the exchange of information, thoughts and ideas and enable greater levels of genuine partnership.
- Allow for ***flexible, customized, and newly created degree programs***. USG should leverage its multi-institutional strengths to produce academic innovations that will fuel student success, creativity and growth. A structure could be created to enable students to customize a major, minor or certificate. Institutions could partner to create joint programs that address workforce needs. Academic innovation should be infused with the compassion and flexibility needed to meet the students where they are. A task force could be created to examine opportunities and create a pilot program.
- Enhanced ***Interdisciplinary/cross-institutional academic course access***. While the Inter-institutional Registration process is available to students at USG, it is used in a limited capacity and without a shared goal or vision among partners. Data collected from students at USG indicate their desire for more opportunities to take advantage of the offerings of other USG institutions. Some specific ideas include:
 - Every undergraduate program has 10-20% availability of seats open for anybody across any university who wants to take that course
 - Programs with similar core academic competencies should sign MOUs to allow credits to be accepted (even across different institutions)
 - Allow access to core classes (like seminar courses) such as library research, career development, transfer success, research essentials, by all institutions to avoid replication.
- Create a ***Center for Academic Innovation*** to coordinate efforts between IT and Faculty Development to better prepare faculty for the variety of teaching modalities needed to stay nimble and flexible. This could include the development of a Faculty Resource Center or Development Hub or a Teaching and Learning Center, incorporating the best practices from the home institutions and layering in the unique and special features that USG adds.
 - Develop a gold standard for faculty onboarding and engagement at USG. Provide information on how to onboard and integrate faculty into the culture, how to communicate effectively with them, provide opportunities, etc.
 - Constantly strive to discover and implement new methods and models of teaching and learning. Make USG a sandbox for creating new and innovative ways of teaching both within and across programs/institutions.
 - Consider ways to create a better sense of community in the classrooms especially in virtual classroom settings.
 - Improve technology capabilities to enable hyflex programming.

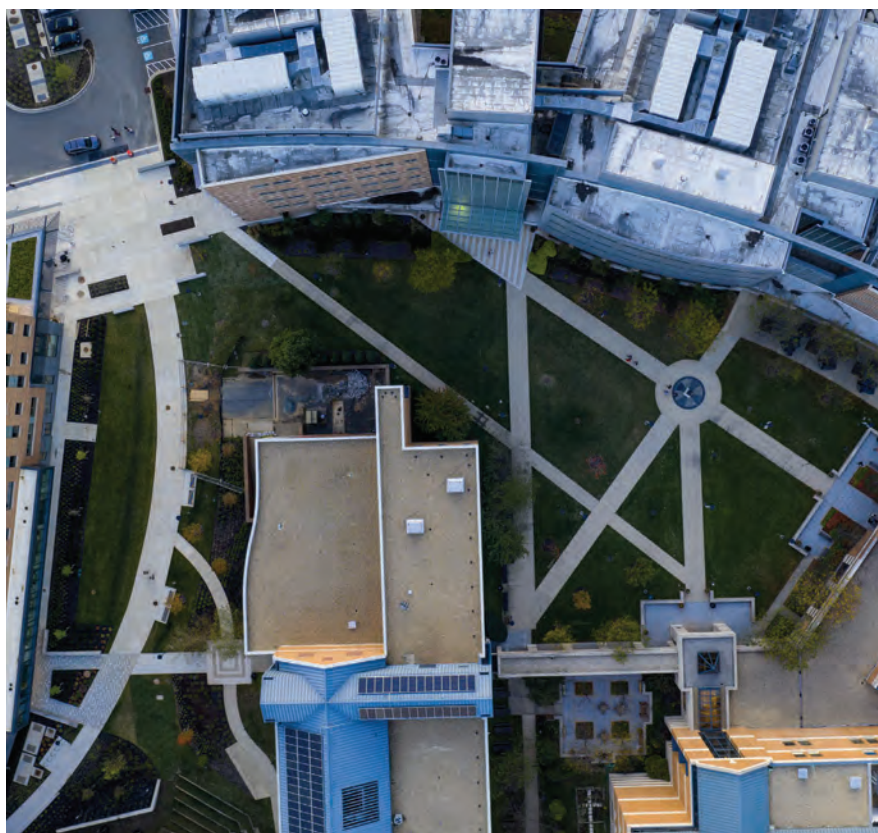
Coexisting to Collaborating

- Sharing of **data** among institutional and pathway partners to fully assess the success of the USG partnership, identify patterns and trends, and track student progress and success all along the pathway and beyond. In addition to a partnership agreement to greater data sharing, USG lacks a comprehensive database and, therefore, the ability to produce meaningful longitudinal outcomes data.
- Creating efficiencies through **shared student support services programming**. The pandemic forced institutions to reevaluate both their academic and support service models. The inclusion of enhanced virtual delivery methods, enabled institutions to expand access and, in some cases, increase student engagement. Students have indicated their strong desire for a continued hybrid service model to allow them maximum flexibility. USM institutions developed a variety of virtual workshops, events, trainings, tutoring platforms that should be shared at USG in order to create efficiencies and leverage the best the USM system has to offer.
- Develop a **funding model that enables innovation, growth and creativity** and provides the resources needed for USG to fully implement its mission and realize its vision. The model should enable USG to independently secure funding through Montgomery County and secure grants and other resources. A shared pool of resources should be created to purchase shared technology and to develop innovative programming and support services.



“Partnerships, collaboration, and the leveraging of resources remain critical to providing comprehensive, high-quality, and meaningful programming in an efficient and cost-effective manner.”

USG Staff Member



Developing Immersive Business and Community Engagement

USG is located in a county brimming with employer engagement possibilities. Eighteen federal departments and agencies are headquartered in Montgomery County, including DHHS, FDA, and NIH. There is an abundance of wet lab space making it an ideal bio hub. The county is also an attractive location for business of all sizes, including start-ups. Developing strong, innovative, and sustained linkages with this growing employer community will be essential as USG enters its next phase of development.

- Develop an **immersive business engagement model** at USG that brings the outside in. Similar to institutions of higher education, the employer community is also engaging in a period of reflection as the pandemic shows signs of lifting. They too must rethink their operating models, resource allocation, funding and delivery models. Many companies are looking to downsize their real estate footprint, enabling more employees to work from home. USG should leverage this moment to reach out to local employers who may be interested in downsizing into office space at the USG campus in exchange for experiential learning opportunities for students at USG.
 - This model that brings the employer community to the students could create a unique learning environment for students with ample opportunity to put their education into practice.
 - Industry partners would enter into an MOU that outlines that they will reside in a suite on campus, consult on curriculum related to their aligned major, serve on inter-institutional group guiding student service strategy, provide hands-on, regular applied learning opportunities to students, provide paid internships and/or scholarships in their major of alignment in exchange for space rental, engage students in research and publication (as applicable), actively engage in campus life via student orgs, career services, community engagement, and commit to hiring grads from programs offered at USG.

Create **stronger linkages to the surrounding community** through on-campus and virtual engagement with USG programs and services. USG should be a resource to the community through workshops, tours, service to the community, etc. For example, the kitchen could be opened up to underprivileged children to help teach healthy eating habits, live feeds of cooking classes, STEM on display, kids on campus summer programming, etc. There is an opportunity to showcase the best of what USM has to offer to Montgomery County and the surrounding region.



*“Graduating from a program at USG without **connecting the student to the real-life workforce** is doing a real disservice.”*

USG Student

Reimagining the Student Experience

The pandemic emphasized several critical needs of USG's unique student community. In order to address these evolving needs, USG should streamline and realign its support model by infusing flexibility to meet the students where they are, addressing affordability and accessibility challenges, creating a funding model that supports the student services infrastructure, and leveraging the tools and services provided by the partner campuses to avoid duplication in order to create a structure that enables it to boldly proclaim that:

- All students who graduate from programs at USG leave "career ready."
- All students who need access to technology should be provided it free of charge.
- No student at USG will be hungry as USG should be designated as a "Hunger Free" campus.
- All students who need financial assistance to persist should receive it.
- All students will graduate from college debt free.
- All students will be assigned an alumni mentor to guide them during their final two years of college.
- All students will graduate with one or more opportunities to engage in experiential learning.
- All students experience a culture of care where they are valued and respected.
- All students will have convenient access to mental health support and counseling.
- Students with childcare needs can have them met through a daycare center on the USG campus.
- All students will secure a position in their major of study upon graduation or continue their education in graduate school.
- Alumni will remain engaged and will maintain a lifelong learning connection with USG, updating credentials as needed through academic opportunities offered at USG.
- A reimagined USG partnership should provide high quality and meaningful **experiential learning for ALL students** who enroll in a program offered at USG that is flexible and meets the student where they are. This can be achieved through research, industry innovation hubs on campus, and expansion of best practices discovered through career readiness work with pathway students.
- USG is the only USM institution that focuses exclusively on service transfer students at the undergraduate level. USG should leverage the best practices obtained over the past 21 years to develop a **cross-institutional Transfer Research Institute**, focused on research by and for transfer students. USG could become a hub of published research on transfer student related topics, and potentially establish a transfer specific journal. Students would be given opportunities to engage in research and publication via the Research Institute. The Institute would provide support and infrastructure for students and faculty to collaborate on research on a number of topics.
- **Hyflex/hybrid service and course delivery models become the new norm.** Student and Faculty/PD data sets were rife with requests for more flexibility and "hybrid" instruction/student services as part of USG's "new normal". Upon further review, students seem to want to access in-person and virtual events/instruction simultaneously. To allow this access would require a major scale up in technology and faculty/staff training. In order to meet the unique student needs of students in programs at USG.
 - Every classroom should be outfitted for simultaneous in-person and virtual instruction.
 - Consider which student services should also be set-up for this hybrid model. A student should be able to access a service even if they have a barrier such as transportation, childcare, illness, etc.
 - All staff, including faculty should be trained on hybrid/hyflex instruction.
 - The simultaneous in-person/virtual instruction should be pursued for as many "group" events and classes as possible. It is clear that students should continue to have access to schedule individual appointments either in-person or virtually.



Reimagining the USG Workplace

As students need access to structures, services, and resources that allow for a highly personalized approach to student success, in order for USG to emerge as a premier employer in the region, USG staff need supportive infrastructures, policies, and approaches to aid in their success, fulfillment, and growth. This ultimately includes initiatives that seek to institutionalize flexible work schedules that enable staff to effectively provide service and also assist in helping to maintain personal work/life balance.

As the lessons learned from the previous year during the pandemic portrayed, the staff at USG are nimble, adaptive, and able to effectively function in a dynamic environment. USG staff quickly and efficiently adapted to the extreme conditions created by the pandemic and successfully transitioned to a business model that relied upon a virtual delivery model and the use of telework. As USG transitions to the future of work, the traditional work model must be examined with a fresh approach that focuses on creativity, flexibility, competitive compensation, health and well-being, professional development, autonomy, and promotes a healthy work-life balance. The staff at USG are dedicated, hardworking, and talented and are the building block of the campus.

USG should strive to enhance the culture by rethinking the employee experience and adapt to changing employee expectations along their entire journey. In order to do this, USG must address several areas:

- A compensation analysis should be conducted to ensure equity internal and external to USG.
- A flexible telework policy should be implemented to align with a changing business model that promotes hybrid work.
- An organizational structure that provides opportunities for growth and advancement should be created.
- A reward and recognition system that is tied to USG's values and culture.
- Internal policies and procedures that aid innovation and creativity and ensure quick, efficient decision-making and processing.
- All staff should receive a full-package of customized support that includes a mentor and coaching, personalized onboarding support, job shadowing opportunities, flexible work schedules, mental health counseling support, opportunities for self-reflection and space to be creative and innovate, etc. Retention and recruiting would benefit by offering unique support to the person, their work/life balance and their goals.

*"The pandemic has taken a toll on our **mental health**, including work. As we navigate this constant state of change and transition, we can expect to see an **increase in anxiety and burnout**. In order to support our staff, USG may need to take a **more empathetic approach** by offering greater flexibility in work arrangements, increase communication and transparency, frequent check-ins from senior leadership, and mental health support."*

USG Staff Member

Weaving In DEI and Social Justice

Moving the needle on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at USG hinges on curating tangible operational changes that enable taking action to progress the conversation beyond just words. USG should rethink all of its work through the lens of DEI. It should be a framework/lens through which everything is viewed. Adequate resources need to be devoted to this critically important work and students must be involved in the change-making. The USG budget should indicate that DEI is a priority. Several bold ideas on this topic are listed below, including modifying staff selection and performance review criteria, allotting ample resources to staffing and strategy related to DEI, and centralized training that is required for everyone on the campus community, including faculty.

- USG should hire a DEI Coordinator and provide them with a student worker/intern budget. The students working in this “office” should be directly involved in programming and leadership - rather than just administrative tasks.
- Development of an interdisciplinary/inter-institutional Diversity or Social Justice Minor.
- At select points during the year, USG’s DEI staff collaborate with partner institution DEI staff for best practice sharing and strategy. The goal will be for USG to serve as a hub for DEI best practices in USM - uniting the different campuses.
- A standard 10% should be added to every staff member’s job description related to DEI and infuse questions/competencies related to DEI in the candidate selection process.
- Develop and implement a DEI at USG orientation for ALL faculty, students, and staff.



Rebuilding For Our Future

USG is in the midst of a period of transformation and tremendous growth. As this unique partnership looks towards its future, it is critical to combine the lessons from the past with new, innovative solutions to form the core of its COVID-19 response, recovery and rebuilding work. Higher education's response to the pandemic will expose which institutions are resilient, innovative, responsive to the changing needs of the community, and willing to meet individuals where they are by taking a person-centered approach to ensure that every individual who desires an education can fully actualize that intention. As USG moves toward the rebuilding stage of the pandemic, we must strive to ignore the instinct to revert to the way things were. Instead, we must engage, listen to, enlist, and empower individuals and leaders from the ground up, support and scale their best ideas, and collaboratively rebuild USG to be genuinely inclusive, truly dynamic, and more strategically and organically adaptive in its operations and services. If we learn from and invest in the important lessons gleaned from the pandemic, we will be better prepared for a consistently evolving future that lies ahead.



THANK YOU

to everyone in our USG community who has contributed to making this year successful. To our essential workers who have maintained the campus, provided vital services, and helped to ensure our safe return to campus. To our staff who have seamlessly continued operations and modified services to students quickly and to a high-quality. To the staff and faculty from our partner campuses who have successfully engaged and taught the students while converting to a virtual format. To the students, who have flexibly worked with us and pushed onward in their education as we have all faced continued challenges. And to our Board of Advisors, generous donors, and all of our external partners who supported and collaborated with us during this unprecedented time. We appreciate you!





The Universities

AT SHADY GROVE

shadygrove@umd.edu

9636 Gudelsky Drive
Rockville
MD, 20850

301-738-6000