



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 22, 2024

Good afternoon, Eagle Nation. Help me thank Mister and Miss Coppin State, for getting us started. Great job. It is wonderful to see all of you here today; I also want to thank those who are joining us online.

Before, I begin my remarks, I want to take a moment to recognize some individuals and express my gratitude:

- Many thanks to Governor Wes Moore and our federal delegation, for their support of Coppin.
- Thank you to our Baltimore City delegation, and the Maryland General Assembly for their partnership and advocacy.
- I also want to thank the University System of Maryland Board of Regents, led by chair Linda Gooden.
- I would like to thank the University System of Maryland Chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman.
- I want to thank my cabinet, the Office of the President team, and my extended shared governance committee.
- Let me thank Andrew Brezinski, Erinn Brooks, James Brown, and Robert Harper for helping pull together today's program.

I would like to acknowledge our faculty, staff, and alumni. It is a pleasure to work with you all and I deeply appreciate your dedication to Coppin State. The milestones and accomplishments we celebrate today are possible, in large part because of your willingness to put our students and university above personal interest. Thank you.

I also want to recognize and welcome our new faculty and staff who have joined Eagle Nation. You are joining Coppin at an exciting time, and I look forward to your contributions.

Finally, I want to thank our First Lady, Toinette for her support of me and Coppin State.

When we entered the 2023-2024 academic year, we did so with unprecedented momentum that was fueled by our unwavering commitment to making intentional strategic investments throughout our physical and intellectual infrastructure. Our purpose was laser focused and clear. We sought to enhance the overall student experience, better support our faculty, and staff, and elevate our beloved Coppin. What we have achieved collectively, alongside our external supporters, over this past year is nothing short of astonishing.

When I arrived, I noted that we would distinguish ourselves and become a leader in urban higher education recognized nationally for our ability to transform the lives of students from all economic backgrounds.

I am pleased to say, Coppin, we are doing just that, and the Division of Academic Affairs is helping lead the charge. Earmarking \$2.1 million of HBCU funding and over \$4.8 million from external sources, we have made record investments totaling nearly \$7 million to support the division during the 2023-2024 academic year.

With a focus on driving upward mobility, and workforce development, our faculty are creating flexible curricula, redesigning academic courses, and developing new academic programs to meet the needs of our students and industry demands. Last year we expanded our academic portfolio adding a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity Engineering (our first engineering program), and a master's in Teacher Education Leadership. These programs will help address the lack of diverse talent in these important fields. I want to thank Drs. Clarence Williams, Steven Providence, Atma Sahu, Yi-Ping Huang, and Karen Rogers.

To ensure we produce qualified and certified professionals, our academic leadership and faculty work diligently to ensure we adhere to or exceed the national standards of excellence. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education reaccredited our Helene Fuld School of Nursing for 10 years, until 2033. This is the maximum accreditation term a school can earn. And the Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Preparation (CAEP) renewed our School of Education's accreditation for a maximum of seven years, ending in 2030.

Join me in congratulating the faculty, staff and deans of the College of Health Professions, and the College of Arts & Sciences and Education.

Let's also acknowledge Dr. Garey Hyatt and our theatre students – last fall the Coppin Rep captured statewide attention when they performed the hit play *PIPELINE* at the Lyric Baltimore in front of thousands of art goers. Mr. Gant, please stand.

We are also garnering national attention for our work to improve the human condition. Dr. Johnny Rice, II, associate professor, and Chair of Criminal Justice is a national leader on gun and youth violence, and his research is helping shape the national and state narrative. Similarly, our Charles Schwab Wealth Center, and Truist Bank Black Economic Hub Center, in collaboration with our College of Business are helping to unpack the challenges that foster systemic racism that hinders generational wealth building among communities of color.

Coppin State faculty are not only teaching, and conducting research, they are also highly sought after for their expertise in their respective fields of study, as well as for their leadership and ability to solve complex problems and provide innovative solutions at the national and state levels. Faculty including: Dr. F. Michelle Richardson; Dr. Oulwatosin Olateju; Dr. Mona Calhoun; Dr. Danita Tolson; Dr. Johnny Rice, II; Dr. Melissa Buckley; and Dr. Charlotte Wood.

Please join me in congratulating and recognizing our faculty colleagues, and Division of Academic Affairs — led by Provost Pamela Wilks — for their leadership and outstanding work.

Coppin State continues to distinguish itself as a university that is invaluable and irreplaceable. One driving factor in our doing so, is our research. The research we conduct drives our efforts to advance knowledge, discovery, innovation, and creativity, across campus and beyond. The research centers we have created not only provide experiential learning opportunities for our students, but they also produce growth and impact, raise the university's profile, and serve as a catalyst to improve the human condition.

Last fall, working alongside our Dr. Angela Williams (Director of Title III), Ms. Stephanie Hall (Chief Government and Legislative Affairs Officer), as well as our federal and state partners, we secured and invested more than \$4.8 million in one-time funding to our centers and academic units so faculty could purchase scientific equipment, advance our research, strengthen our Arts and STEM programs, and help improve Baltimore City schools. We awarded: Dr. Ron Williams [\$100,000]; Dr. Hany F. Sobhi [\$110,220]; Dr. Garey Hyatt [\$111,000]; Dr. Kavita Hegde [\$151,121]; Dr. Jacob Adeyeye [\$241,000]; Dr. Joan Tilghman [\$1M]; Dr. Leontye Lewis [\$1M]; and Dr. Jamal Uddin [\$2.1M]

While many institutions' research and grants were impacted by the pandemic. Research and grants at Coppin State has never been stronger. Up 153% over last year, and up 1,266% since 2019, reaching a record high of \$14 million, in 2023. We now have a foundation for rapid growth, and I want to recognize the directors of our centers and institutes as well as all faculty and staff for elevating the research culture of our university.

In addition to our investment in academic affairs, we invested external funding totaling over \$6.4 million in our infrastructure, with the goal of improving the campus environment. The consideration in all decisions centered around enhancing the overall student experience. Last summer and fall, we completed several renovation and branding projects across campus. Some of the projects included: The Office of Admissions [\$113,000]; branding in the PEC [\$150,000]; construction upgrades in university library [\$200,000]; Coppin Academy renovation [\$300,000]; upgrades to university workout center to include all new equipment [\$500,000]; campuswide technology upgrades [\$600,000]; redesigning our tennis courts [\$700,000]; and Daley and Dedmond Residence Halls Renovations [\$3.8M].

We pride ourselves on the ability to be forward thinking and adapt to being preemptive and responsive. To live up to this commitment, we have created three new student-centered initiatives on campus.

Thanks to the leadership of Dean Dorothy Parrish-Harris, we partnered with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This program allows us to better support our students who are facing housing challenges. This partnership is the first-of-its-kind in the state of Maryland, and Coppin is leading the way.

Both our Coppin Corner and the President and First Lady's Closet are initiatives born out of a recognition that some of our students, like many college and university students nationally, can use some support with life necessities.

Coppin Corner is a resource center that provides students access to food, fresh fruits, and personal items, free of charge. The President and First Lady's Closet will provide business and formal attire for our students to meet their needs for work, internships, interviews, or attendance at formal events. The Closet will officially open later this semester, and Toinette and I would like to thank everyone who helped bring this project to fruition.

These important initiatives validate our unwavering commitment to our students, and I want to thank, Stephanie Hall, Dr. Angela Williams, Kevin Carr, Christopher Thomas, Consuella Simms, Mykayla Davis, Dean Parrish-Harris, Dr. Stephan Moore, Ann-Marie Waterman, Philomen Allen, Sam Patterson, Roy Thomas, and our entire facilities team, for their leadership and outstanding teamwork.

The demand for the Coppin State experience is growing. Our Fall 2023 entering class represented a 5% increase in overall enrollment.

Through our "Reimagine Yourself at Coppin" recruit-back program, we identified over 400 students who had left the university before earning their degree. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Synethia Green, we were able to return 114 or over (25%) of these students back to Coppin, keeping them moving toward earning their degree.

We also saw great enrollment growth at the graduate level. I am confident the face-to-face and online graduate programs we have developed in addition to our graduate assistantships will fuel more growth going forward.

Our enrollment growth is a result of our collective efforts. And together we reversed a 12-year enrollment decline.

Every year, colleges and universities across the nation seek to enroll top talent. Two years ago, to ensure Coppin remains a destination for such talent, we established our Presidential Scholarship and revamped our Fanny Jackson Coppin Scholarship. And I am pleased to say, our Fall 2023 cohort was impressive including several valedictorians and salutatorians. Would our Presidential and Fanny Jackson Coppin Scholars, please stand and be recognized.

I want to thank everyone for contributing to the enrollment growth we experienced for Fall 2023; especially, our admissions team – led by Jinawa McNeil, our graduate studies team – led by Dr. Ericka Covington, all our dedicated faculty and staff who - called students, followed up with students, and attended enrollment events. We could not have done it without all of you.

At a time when some are questioning the value and cost of higher education, Maryland's most affordable 4-year university has increased its merit and need-based scholarships and launched our "Expand Eagle Nation" program. The program targets students from more than 30 states and territories, giving them in-state tuition at Coppin. The innovative program has received national attention, and we are working to develop partnerships with California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan and last fall we partnered with the Colorado Community College System, to create

pathways that allow more scholars access to our nationally recognized academic programs and rich HBCU heritage.

An essential part of growing our university is our ability to retain more students and advance their matriculation toward graduation. Guided by our Eagle Achievement Center, which opened in spring 2023, we are developing, redesigning, and implementing strategies to better meet the needs of our students. The EAC has positioned us to be more proactive, intrusive, and intentional. As a result of our collective efforts, we have increased our retention rate from 57% in 2019 to 74% in 2023. This is a record high for Coppin.

This is the power of teamwork, and I want to acknowledge everyone – all faculty and staff - for your commitment and great work; especially, our students for buying in and using the EAC; and our EAC team – led by Dr. James Stewart.

You have heard me say, Coppin State is where scholars and champions are made. Last year 91 (61%) of our student-athletes earned a 3.0 GPA or above, with 17 student-athletes earning a perfect 4.0.

Coppin State is not only home to the reigning MEAC baseball champions, this past fall our volleyball team brought another MEAC championship to Eagle Nation. The championship match was thrilling as our Lady Eagles swept Howard University in straight sets. It was total domination. Would Coach of the Year – Tim Walsh, his coach staff and our 2023 MEAC Volleyball Champion Lady Eagles stand to be recognized.

Congratulations to all our student-athletes, you are not just dominating on the field of competition, for the third consecutive year (2021, 2022, and 2023) you have led the MEAC with the highest student-athlete graduation rate. Let's give all our student-athletes a round of applause.

I want to thank Athletic Director Derek Carter, his entire team and all our coaches, training staff and faculty for their great teamwork and support of our student-athletes.

Speaking of teamwork, over the past few years, we have focused on enhancing the gameday experience, and I want to acknowledge the outstanding partnership between the Divisions of Athletics and Information Technology. Thanks to this partnership, we have enhanced the viewing gameday experience for Eagle fans inside the arena and for those watching on television. Thanks to our I.T. team – we moved out of the stone age and into the 21st Century.

Our upgraded sports control center now surpasses all ESPN requirements, and as a result Coppin is the only MEAC school with the technology quality to showcase all our basketball games on ESPN+.

The I.T. team is also taking an active role in keeping our campus safe from a public safety perspective. In collaboration with university police, we have upgraded our outdated analog, low-resolution cameras to high-resolution digital cameras. This upgrade has allowed us to increase our number of security cameras from 320 to 438, across campus.

Over winter break, we upgraded our campus app, EagleMobile, to facilitate and align our student business needs where students do business— on their phones. With this upgrade, students can view and update their personal information, view, and print their class schedule, see their grades, accept their financial aid, order a transcript, and pay their bill. In addition, the app connects students to the bookstore, campus parking, Blackboard, and most importantly university police.

There is no question . We have the best I.T. team and University Police Department in the state, and I want to thank Dr. Dionne Curbeam and Chief Dameon Carter for their leadership and teamwork.

As an anchor university, our work extends beyond the boundaries of campus; we are proud of our service to Maryland, and these accomplishments reflect more than good fortune. As chair of the West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA), we are bringing together community partners, and local and state leaders to develop a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization master plan, one that delivers a thriving and engaging family orientated community, and I appreciate the work of Chad Williams, executive director of the WNADA, his team, and the board as we lead the charge of this historic moment. Our work continues to receive the support of Governor Wes Moore, who provided the WNADA with \$11.4 million for operating and capital funding. This funding is significant in getting many WNADA projects up and moving.

Now that we have opened our College of Business and Graduate Studies building, and built out our Eagle Achievement Center, in early fall 2024 we will break ground on our new residence hall. The new residence hall will bring 350 beds to campus and will permit us to establish our living learning communities. This is important because national data shows that living learning communities are associated with greater student success and wellbeing.

It will also allow us to accommodate more residential students; thus, expanding our residential population and moving us closer to our goal of housing 1,500 students on campus. This will position us to better preserve and enhance the student experience.

Financially and philanthropically, Coppin is strong and getting stronger. We have made significant improvements to our campus infrastructure, brought new facilities online, improve student support services, invested in our academic centers and academic programs, all while keeping tuition low and remaining the most affordable four-year university in Maryland. Equally as impressive is the fact that while conducting these necessary investments, and keeping tuition low, we have also managed to increase the university's total fund balance from \$3.2 million to \$25.8 million over the past six years.

I want to thank our Division of Administration and Finance, led by Mr. Steve Danik, for their leadership and fiscal accountability.

This has been another historic fundraising year for us, and we are making remarkable progress. The growth in our fundraising illustrates the strong belief our alumni, campus community, supporters, and friends have in our mission, messaging, outcomes, and the direction in which we

are taking our university. The transformation that is occurring at Coppin requires resources, that is why our external fundraising is so important.

The excitement surrounding our work has captured the attention of some high-profile corporate partners. Baltimore Gas and Electric, CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield, Truist Bank, LifeBridge Health, M&T Bank, Northwestern Mutual, PNC Bank, the Charles Schwab Foundation, and Thompson Hospitality, are partnering with us, because they believe in who we are and what we are doing.

Donations to Coppin State have increased every year since 2019, and this past fiscal year, we achieved a historic milestone, raising over \$6 million. Since 2021, we have seen institutional giving increased by more than 450%, and the number of alumni joining the National Alumni Association is growing daily. We also made tremendous strides in growing the university's endowment. During the past three years, we have increased our endowment by more than 53%, this is crucial to the sustainability of our beloved Coppin.

At last year's inaugural gala themed "Illuminating Impact," we showcased our status as a leader in urban higher education and the meaningful contributions our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends have made to the enduring legacy of Coppin, as well as their communities. More than 550 guests attended this elegant affair, helping us raise \$300K. This year's gala – "**Celebrating and Inspiring the Path to BE MORE**" - will take place on May 4. The excellence of Coppin State University will once again be on full display. I encourage you to join us. Join me in giving our Division of Institutional Advancement, led by Mr. Joshua Humbert, a hand.

Our aspirations for the future are undaunting. As we come together on this journey to strengthen our university, our direction is coming into focus and our goals are becoming more defined.

I know change can be difficult, and I want to thank you for embracing all the change that has occurred over the past few years. And yes, more change is coming, and I am confident it will complement our work and further strengthen the foundation of our university.

We can never allow complacency to drag us down nor blunt our progress. We must continue to make the case that what we do matters to our community, state, and region. Being good is not enough, Coppin we will be exceptional in all we do.

This new year will bring exciting opportunities, new challenges, and important work for all of us. We entered 2024 with a ground swell of momentum and progress. This spring, we kicked off our Capital Campaign. The "BE MORE" Campaign - which is the largest in the history of Coppin with a goal of raising \$25 million by the end of 2025 – (the celebration of our 125th anniversary).

We are now in the public phase of the "BE MORE" campaign, thanks to the generosity of our faculty, staff, alumni, corporate partners, and friends, we have already raised over \$15.5 million. The "BE MORE" campaign focuses on five initiatives:

- Student Achievement and Retention;
- Academic Excellence;
- Top-Tier Research;
- Expanding Eagle Athletics; and
- Growing our Endowment

The campaign is on track, but we still need your support – knowing every contribution matters. I want to thank all our loyal Eagles, and friends who are helping to support our vision.

The metrics that define a quality institution include evidence of faculty scholarship, student achievement, national partnerships, and competitive research funding, and I am proud to say - we are excelling across each of these sectors.

Over the next few years, we will continue our commitment to these important sectors; while focusing on attaining the Carnegie classification as a “Research University.” We are making remarkable progress in our research efforts, and I am confident we will get there.

This semester, we will launch our Live Near Your Work Program. Our goal is to provide direct financial assistance to eligible Coppin employees and encourage a pathway to home ownership with the goal of strengthening community revitalization and fostering economic vitality. Through our LNYW program, eligible faculty and staff who complete the program and purchase a home in one of the identified localities will receive \$50,000 towards their down payment and closing cost. And I want to thank NHS of Baltimore, Coppin Heights CDC, and Rebirth Homes for partnering with us in this life changing endeavor.

For Coppin to continue to grow we must compete to attract and retain talent. Our faculty and staff are essential to our work and although their salaries have increased, they are not where they need to be. We must address this competitive disadvantage that threatens our ability to retain the talent we develop. Therefore, I have charged Provost Wilks and Vice President Danik, to complete our salary equity study and get it to my desk in 30 days.

In an effort to help strengthen our academic programs, at the start of the new fiscal year, for the 2024-2025 academic term, to specifically support academic program redesign, development, and enhancement, I am allocating one-time funding in the amount of \$175,000 to each academic dean. To support and fast track our recruitment efforts, this semester I will assemble small working groups to study the strategies and opportunities associated with fostering our international and Hispanic student recruitment efforts.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for their collegiality. In a time when colleges and universities across our nation are entangled in conversations and debates that adversely affect their campuses, at Coppin I am pleased with our ongoing efforts to promote inclusion, respect, freedom of speech, and academic freedom. As a public university and living laboratory for human relations, it is important for us to continue providing an environment where difficult conversations and meaningful solutions can occur. This I believe is a central component to discovery, the

advancement of knowledge, and the development of self. Coppin you continue to be a great example of how a diverse and multicultural community can learn and work in harmony.

I have great confidence in our future because of you and the entire Eagle Nation. Together let's continue to "BE MORE" for one another and for our beloved Coppin!

Thank you, have a great Homecoming, and Go Eagles!