



USM BOR Student Excellence Scholarship Winners

The University System of Maryland (USM), the Board of Regents and the USM Student Council (USMSC) have presented the 2025 Board of Regents Student Excellence Scholarships to twelve exceptional undergraduate and graduate students who are making contributions in important aspects of student life.

Academics, Scholarship, and Research

Freshman/Sophomore - Sulayman Khan, University of Maryland, College Park

A bioengineering major, Sulayman serves as a research assistant in the Fischell Department of Bioengineering, contributing to projects on Bacterial Extracellular Vesicles (BEVs). His work in the lab has helped solve three major problems: increasing the *production*, enhancing the *quality*, and proving the *therapeutic efficacy* of BEVs. His successful work in the lab—along with winning first place in regional biomedical engineering science presentation and fourth place at a national science fair at Duke University—has enhanced his passion for bioengineering and biomedical innovation. Additionally, his efforts in optimizing experimental techniques and troubleshooting challenges directly contributed to three publications, as well as to a patent, book, and dissertation by his mentor, Dr. Nicholas Pirolli.

Junior/Senior - Pavankumar Umashankar, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

A Meyerhoff Scholar, Pavankumar is pursuing degrees in chemical engineering AND biochemistry/molecular biology. He has been involved in research ranging from optimizing insulin production to combat rising insulin prices and inequities in healthcare access to characterizing muscle fiber types to investigate novel therapeutics for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He is the first UMBC student to win the Donald F. & Mildred Topp Othmer Scholarship from the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, which recognizes outstanding chemical engineering students who show exemplary promise of becoming leaders in the field. Pavankumar has presented his research at six conferences and led the UMBC Chemical Engineering Jeopardy team to a 1st place win in 2022.

Graduate/Professional - Aidan Patrick Wiley, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Aidan is a third-year medical student interested in a career in academic medicine. He received the highest possible scores in all his first- and second-year preclinical courses and the highest honors in every clinical rotation that he has completed in his third year. Aidan has written 8 publications and had multiple abstracts and presentations accepted at local, regional, national, and international conferences—including one he delivered entirely in Spanish during a vascular surgery conference in Cancun. He also mentors over 35 pre-medical students, mostly from student populations

underrepresented in medicine, at seven different institutions and has seen 100% of the students that he mentors accepted to medical school on their first try.

Innovation and Creative Activity

Freshman/Sophomore - Julia AnnMarie Carlson, Salisbury University

Julia is majoring in urban and regional planning with a minor in communications and marketing. She has also started her own handmade jewelry business. She began making jewelry in 2020, and within three years she had close to 1,000 online sales, was vending at over 100 markets, and is featured in three stores. The support SU has given her—both in terms of selling opportunities **and** business courses—has been invaluable. Julia is also committed to giving back to the community, working with several charities. One of the products he has designed is breast cancer awareness rings and she donates the proceeds of those sales to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

Junior/Senior - Floralyn Leon Guerrero Villagomez, University of Maryland Global Campus

Floralyn believes in the power of art to inspire, heal, and bring people together. While stationed at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, she created a mural at Eglin Elementary School, helping to provide a warm and reassuring space for students. Floralyn also connected with Fisher House of the Emerald Coast—a home away from home for military families with loved-ones undergoing treatment—by donating a hand-drawn portrait commemorating the strength and sacrifice of a wounded veteran and his family. Recently, while stationed at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, she painted the Wing Commander's box for the annual "Operation Christmas Drop", an event reaching 20,000 people across 56 Micronesian islands.

Graduate/Professional - Kevin Jili Tu, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Kevin is a first-year medical student dedicated to advancing sustainability in healthcare. Two years ago, he invented Sashimi, a retrofit device to reduce energy waste in labs and hospitals. That ultimately led to Sustainabli, a climate-tech company. Relying on grants rather than venture capital to preserve the company's social mission, Sustainabli technology is now deployed in academic institutions nationwide and gaining traction in the chem-pharma sector, advancing the goal of embedding sustainability throughout the healthcare ecosystem. Kevin also piloted the International Fume Hood Challenge— a global competition empowering research organizations to optimize energy-intensive lab ventilation systems. And he is mobilizing a global petition urging science funders to adopt sustainability standards.

Leadership and Advocacy

Freshman/Sophomore - Quyen Ha, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Quyen established an organization that offers students the opportunity to support Mai Tien Orphanage in Vietnam. The organization focuses on the education and well-being of the children and single mothers in the orphanage. Volunteers tutor the children and provide resources including books and study materials. The organization also provides basic needs such as food, clothes, and hygiene products. Quyen also served as the vice president of Save The Children, where she organized and designed the "Happy Smile" dental care project, including budgeting, media content, and donation management. The

effort distributed essential care products to over 3,000 children. And, through the Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group, she helps provide food to families in need.

Junior/Senior - Imaan Shikoh, University of Maryland, College Park

Imaan's passion for advocacy was sharpened as she wrote weekly opinion columns for *The Diamondback* tackling issues like affordable housing for students, improved campus accessibility, and greater civic engagement. As co-director of student affairs for the Student Government Association she organized a campus safety and accessibility audit across multiple university departments. She was one of only five undergraduates appointed by President Pines to the Joint Presidential and University Senate Taskforce on Antisemitism and Islamophobia, working to protect students from discrimination while defending their rights to speech and protest during difficult times. And she founded and currently leads the Asian American Policy Union, working to increase the mobility of underrepresented students in public service.

Graduate/Professional - Jessica Brie Burstrem, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

In 2022, Jessica—who is pursuing a Ph.D. in Language, Literacy & Culture—began advocating for graduate student support for collective bargaining, resulting in UMBC's Graduate Student Association submitting favorable testimony for the first time. She was elected to serve as a GSA Senator. She later served on the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee, where she co-chaired the new Equity of Funds Committee and is a member of the new Strategic Planning Committee. Beyond student government, Jessica was accepted to serve as the first graduate student Advisory Board member for the UMBC Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging. And she has been a strong and valued member of the USM Student Council.

Outreach and Engagement

Freshman/Sophomore - Amrutha Alibilli, University of Maryland, College Park

Amrutha, a neuroscience major, is driven to amplify marginalized voices. As a research and choreography fellow with Art Beyond Borders, she founded the ARTiculate Narrative Project to highlight marginalized narratives through creative mediums and the media. Collaborating with Howard County, Amrutha launched Indian classical dance workshops for senior citizens to promote cultural awareness and interaction. As the Terrapin Think Tank associate director of funding, Amrutha has collaborated with Prince George's County to advance public health and catalyze public policy reform with a focus on Hispanic health equity. And she was a Do Good Challenge semi-finalist and won a \$750 grant for implementing diverse health equity projects, such as transportation equity and hospital tele-triage interventions.

Junior/Senior - Vicky Vazquez, Salisbury University

Vicky is an English for Speakers of Other Languages and Spanish major. As a first-generation college student, she has dedicated herself to fostering academic success for underserved students. Vicky uses her bilingualism and biculturalism to transcend barriers, serve as a bridge between her communities, and create spaces where students can thrive without losing themselves through assimilation. Beyond the university, in her Junior year Vicky began volunteering at the library, teaching English to adults and

Spanish to children. As a lead volunteer during the English sessions, she helped students navigate grammatical challenges and facilitated culturally relevant discussions that encouraged everyone to contribute. Beyond the library, she helped students practice their English in real-world settings.

Graduate/Professional - Abdulmajid Mansour Alrefaie, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Abdulmajid is pursuing a Ph.D. in Marine Estuarine Environmental Sciences and is connecting science, policy, and community service to address societal challenges. He served as a legislative fellow for Florida Congresswoman Frederica Wilson. This role allowed him to engage with policymakers developing solutions for critical environmental issues in ways that served to benefit local communities. Abdulmajid also participates in domestic and international summits. He represented youth perspectives on sustainability and development at the Youth G20 Summit in Indonesia and the World Bank Global Youth Summit. At those summits, he discussed global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development and worked with international stakeholders to propose strategies for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable economic growth.