

Building a Culture of Innovation

UMBC President **Freeman A. Hrabowski, III**, often says that part of his formula for the success of his campus is engaging his colleagues in questions about education and innovation.

“We are constantly asking questions about important issues. How do we ensure that students from all backgrounds excel? How do we use technology to strengthen teaching and learning?” It’s this practice that has helped UMBC create an institutional model of inclusive excellence and increase the representation of minority students in science and engineering.

Now, Hrabowski has been recognized for this work with the 2011 TIAA-CREF Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Leadership Excellence. Developed to recognize leadership excellence that reflects both commitment to higher education and contributions to the greater good, the Hesburgh Award is one of the most prestigious and respected awards in the higher education community.

“The achievements this award celebrates are really those of my colleagues and students,” said Hrabowski. “The award says that people around the country are recognizing what we are doing. We believe in the power of education to transform lives.”

The Hesburgh award is named in honor of Reverend **Theodore M. Hesburgh**, C.S.C., president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, nationally renowned educator and world humanitarian.

“On behalf of the University System of Maryland, I am very pleased to congratulate Freeman Hrabowski on receiving this prestigious and well-deserved honor,” said University System of Maryland Chancellor **Brit Kirwan**. “As president of UMBC and throughout his career, Freeman has championed academic and research excellence; diversity and inclusion; and access and success for underrepresented students, especially in the STEM fields.”

“It’s an honor to be in the company of Chancellor Kirwan, who received last year’s Hesburgh award,” said Hrabowski, who became president of UMBC in 1992. “This recognition highlights the strong support that our Governor, legislators and other state officials give to higher education in Maryland.”

In 2008, Hrabowski was named one of *America’s Best Leaders* by *U.S. News and World Report*, which in both 2009 and 2010 ranked UMBC the #1 “Up-and-Coming” university in the nation. In 2009, *Time* magazine named him one of *America’s 10 Best College Presidents*.

With Baltimore philanthropist Robert Meyerhoff, Hrabowski co-founded the [Meyerhoff Scholars Program](#) at UMBC in 1988 for minority students committed to pursuing advanced degrees in science and engineering. Today, UMBC is among the nation’s leading institutions in producing African American graduates who go on to complete STEM Ph.D.s and M.D./Ph.D.s. Hrabowski recently chaired a [National Academies committee](#) that has recommended strategies for expanding underrepresented minority participation in science and engineering.

UMBC is committed to providing a distinctive undergraduate experience, providing students with learning communities and hands-on research and creative opportunities throughout the Baltimore-Washington region and beyond. The success of the Meyerhoff program has led to initiatives that provide opportunities for all students to learn in community. For example, the University has redesigned first-year STEM courses, emphasizing group learning and technology, resulting in higher pass rates, and the campus is now part of an NSF-funded program to track student success and enhance STEM retention and graduation rates.

Model undergraduate scholars programs in the humanities, arts and public affairs; living-learning communities in residence halls; and First-Year Seminars and the Introduction to an Honors

University course also build on the group-learning model, while at the same time providing connections to faculty from the moment students arrive on campus. Competitive awards in undergraduate research are offered across disciplines, and student work is celebrated during Undergraduate Research & Creative Achievement Day and in two undergraduate journals.

In addition, UMBC's NSF-funded PROMISE program is providing support and resources for graduate students in order to increase the graduate student population in STEM fields. Also, UMBC's NSF-supported ADVANCE program has been instrumental in helping to increase the number of women faculty in science and engineering.

UMBC also is committed to supporting economic development and enhancing the region's quality of life. Over the past 20 years, UMBC has been a model for developing partnerships focused on technology development and commercialization, supported by bwtech@UMBC, UMBC's research park and incubator. Two sites house more than 70 biotech, IT/engineering and cybersecurity tenants.

Hrabowski said that innovation within the academy is critical as the nation faces an unprecedented set of challenges. "It takes all of us in the academy to build our institutions and prepare the next generation of leaders. Higher education is more important now than ever before for both our nation and humankind. I am honored to accept this award on behalf of my UMBC colleagues and students, and to have our work associated with the example of extraordinary leadership provided by Father Hesburgh."

<http://www.umbc.edu/window/innovation2011.html>