

REMARKS FOR ADMINISTRATOR BOLDEN
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
COMMENCEMENT

May 18, 2012

President Neufville [New-ville], President-elect Juliette Bell, faculty members, distinguished honorees and guests, and UMES Class of 2012 – Thank you all for the honor of sharing this important moment with you.

At NASA, we think of ourselves as one big extended family, and I imagine you feel the same way here at UMES. The connections you've made during your studies run deep. Many of the people you've met and experiences you've had here will become permanent parts of your life.

Before I go any further, I want to join you in saying thank you to a very special part of this family -- the parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, spouses, children, and friends who have stood by you during the years of this journey. Many of them have traveled near and far to share in the joy of this moment. Let's give them all a round of applause.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate the Lady Hawks bowling team for winning your third NCAA Division One championship in the last five years. Let's hear it for the Lady Hawks.

I want to speak briefly this morning about the world you will be facing when you leave here today.

Our vision at NASA is to reach for new heights and reveal the unknown so that what we do and learn will benefit all humankind. That is a vision that challenges all of us.

In my travels across the country and around the world, I find that students everywhere are excited about exploring the unknown and creating a better world. They are fired up about what lies ahead, for the chance to develop capabilities that don't exist today. They want to be a part of something larger than themselves and they want to leave this world better than they found it.

For 125 years, that has been the mission of UMES and all of you have embraced it with a passion. Despite what you might have heard, I want you to know there is a lot of opportunity and a lot of ways for you to contribute to the life of this country and to the global community.

UMES has prepared you well. In this audience sits some of the nation's future leading doctors, pharmacists, business executives, engineers and scientists.

I am especially proud of the role that UMES is playing in preparing the next generation of scientists, engineers and explorers who will be crucial to maintaining America's technological leadership and boosting the nation's economy in the coming years.

Your School of Engineering and Aviation Sciences has become a valuable partner with NASA. Your K-12 Stem Pipeline is encouraging middle and high school students to "Reach for the Stars." Your "Aerospace Science: Gateway to Space" course is introducing students to space sciences. This course led to the development and launch of the UMES HawkSat 1 Satellite from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in 2009. This was an historic event and one of the earliest demonstrations of the potential of commercial space flight partnerships. It helped propel the UMES spin-off company, the Hawk Institute for Space Sciences that now has more than 53 employees providing engineering and technology support services for Wallops, Goddard and Langley.

These courses and experiences and others have given you the kinds of skills needed for the growth industries of the future.

These are also the skills we need at NASA as we enter a new era of space exploration that will take us farther into the solar system than we have ever been before.

Yes, our economy is struggling to recover. Yes, the world has conflicts and challenges that threaten us on a global scale. But, I ask you to put those thoughts aside and focus on today.

At NASA alone, there are opportunities for you. For those of you with STEM backgrounds, our nation's space program can use you. America's technology industries need those skills too.

Thanks to UMES, many of you are fully prepared for those jobs, but we can't expect to educate the next generation of scientists, engineers and explorers if they can't afford to attend college.

That's why the President is fighting so hard to ensure that student loan interest rates don't go up.

A new world is yours today. The programs and missions over which I preside at NASA today would have been science fiction when I was growing up.

The International Space Station, an orbiting outpost the size of a football field that has been occupied by humans 24/7 for more than 10 years now, would have been unthinkable. Since March of last year, the ISS has added the nation's first robotic crew member -- Robonaut 2, or R-2, as we like to call him.

Our missions to the moon, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, and Mars are rewriting science textbooks. We are discovering new planets in other solar systems. We are working with the Federal Aviation Administration and others to transform America's commercial air transportation system to make it safer, faster, cleaner, and more energy efficient.

President Obama has asked us to start planning missions with humans to an asteroid by the 2020s and to Mars by the 2030s. If all goes well, tomorrow we will see the first private space company launch a spacecraft to the International Space Station. The U.S. based company, SpaceX, will launch its *Dragon* module from Cape Canaveral, Florida atop its Falcon 9 launch vehicle. This is planned to include the first ever rendezvous and berthing of a private industry-owned capsule to the Space Station. This will be an historic milestone, part of President Obama's plan to create good-paying jobs and keep the United States of America the world leader in space exploration and innovation.

Our current plans call for a Virginia company, Orbital Sciences, to follow suit later in the year with its *Cygnus* module launched on their Antares launch vehicle. This launch will take place not far from UMES at the Wallops Flight Facility.

In this current fiscal year, NASA plans for at least three flights delivering research and logistics hardware to the ISS by U.S.-developed cargo delivery systems.

For those of you interested in jobs in the aerospace industry, you should know we are committed to launching American astronauts and their cargo from U.S. soil, on spacecraft built by American companies. We want to end the outsourcing of this work to the Russians and bring these jobs back home. Transitioning transport to the International Space Station to commercial industry partners will allow NASA to do what we do best – make it possible for our astronauts to go deeper into space than anyone has ever gone before.

Aside from these amazing technological possibilities, you are entering a far different world than the one that existed when UMES was founded 125 years ago.

There have been many hard-won gains for African Americans and others who were disenfranchised. Fifty-eight years ago yesterday – on May 17th, 1954 – Baltimore’s Thurgood Marshall – a man who was denied entry into the University of Maryland Law School because of his race – won the landmark Supreme Court case that ended segregation in our nation’s public schools.

Before that, in 1936, Thurgood Marshall teamed with Charles Hamilton Houston in *Murray v Pearson* to end segregation in the University of Maryland Law School.

On March 7, 1965 on a bridge entering Selma, Alabama, 600 civil rights marchers were attacked and brutally beaten simply because they were marching for their own basic human rights. At the head of that march across the Edmund-Pettus Bridge was John Lewis, today a member of the Georgia congressional delegation.

Eight days after the attack, President Lyndon B. Johnson came before a joint session of Congress to propose the historic *Voting Rights Act*.

Today, Congressman Lewis likes to say that on the end of the bridge, opposite from the police who attacked the marchers, on that other end is President Barack Obama. I understand his view, but I have another. I believe on the other side of that bridge are...you. For it is your generation that will have the chance – if not the right – to take the hard-won advantages you have inherited from my generation to fruition. Embodied in you are the hopes and dreams and aspirations of a truly united America. It is only as one nation that we will be able to face and conquer the challenges that science and technology have in store for us.

So I ask that you think boldly about how you want to apply the skills you've acquired here at UMES.

My daughter is a plastic surgeon and my son a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps.

My wife and I have always given them this advice: dream big dreams; do what you want to do; don't listen to anyone who tells you can't do something or you don't belong; do your job and do it very well; and don't let the opportunity to make a difference in your world pass you by.

I am reminded of the words of Nkosi Johnson...a young African child born in a place called Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa...

“Do all that you can...

With what you have...

In the time that you have...

In the place that you are!”

Class of 2012, I can't tell you with certainty how the social landscape of America or the geopolitical landscape of the world will look in ten years, but I expect that many of you will help lead us to a better world.

Not just more prosperous...but filled with more fairness, opportunity, freedom, creativity and love. It's been said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." That is our mission and this is your moment. Go Hawks!

Congratulations! Good luck and Godspeed!