Capital Budget Testimony
Bowie State University
FY 2015

Mickey L. Burnim, President
On behalf of the students, faculty and staff of Bowie State University, I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify in support of the Governor’s capital budget proposal for FY 2015. We are grateful for the Governor’s commitment to higher education and for the continuing support you and your colleagues in the General Assembly have demonstrated.

We appreciate the recommendation from the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) to approve construction funding for our new Natural Sciences Center. This facility has been a top priority since my arrival at Bowie State University almost eight years ago. Our faculty has been actively involved in the planning for this new space and we are all very excited as we approach the construction phase next year.

The Natural Sciences Center will be approximately 152,799 gross square feet and will house the Departments of Natural Science, Nursing and Mathematics. This new space will replace the inadequate teaching classrooms and laboratories presently in the Crawford Sciences Building and will provide state-of-the-art research and instructional laboratories, classrooms and space for faculty and staff. In addition, there will be ample classroom space for an expanding nursing program and laboratories for all undergraduate students to meet general education science requirements.

We cannot overstate the importance and timeliness of this facility. It is essential to the University’s efforts to attract and retain highly qualified STEM faculty and recruit students interested in STEM. The current facility is woefully inadequate for 21st century teaching and learning; indeed, middle and high school students who tour the space will in many cases have experienced far better quality instructional spaces in their schools. We simply cannot be competitive without a state-of-the-art facility.

The Natural Sciences Center is long overdue. This exciting new facility will support strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing teaching in the basic sciences as well as faculty and student research that is at the cutting edge of scientific inquiry. For example, Bowie State has housed one of the few protein crystallography laboratories in the country since 1997.

Recently, this laboratory has become a prime
collaborator with the National Cancer Institute (NCI), which has allowed our faculty and students to participate in ground-breaking, award winning research at NCI. While our current laboratory spaces are exceedingly cramped, our enterprising faculty actively pursue research funding that is providing opportunities for our students to participate in a range of collaborative research experiences. Projects like genomic research aimed at enhancing plant diversity and synthesis of structurally modified agents for intelligent drug design are just two of our many currently active research programs.

This new facility will also foster the kind of collaborations needed to enhance our three-year-old Bioinformatics program that brings together mathematics and other computational disciplines to analyze biological data. Collaboration such as this is facilitated by collocating Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Nursing in one building with shared facilities, resources and programs. The Natural Sciences Center will support and catalyze the increasing interdependence of mathematics and natural sciences disciplines. Additionally, the programmatic connections between nursing and the natural sciences are important in the first two years of study when nursing students are required to take a heavy load of science and laboratory coursework.

This new facility will maximize efficiency in use of shared lecture and open laboratory space between all three programs.
The nursing program has long outgrown its current space such that we must limit the number of students we admit. In order for us to continue producing graduates in this critical workforce shortage area, we simply must expand our facilities.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the new Natural Sciences Center will enable the University to meet its goals with regard to producing highly skilled, workforce- and teaching-force-ready graduates in the scientific, mathematical, engineering, technological, and professional fields by addressing the current and projected shortfalls in specialized laboratory space, as well as classroom, and academic support space serving the Departments of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Nursing. We sincerely appreciate the Governor’s commitment to the continued funding for this project and DLS’ recommendation to approve it.

The five-year CIP provides for continued construction and equipment funding for the Natural Sciences Center. We know preliminarily that costs are estimated to be approximately $15 million more than had originally been projected. Notwithstanding this additional cost, for the reasons outlined above, the state’s investment in this premier facility is necessary and unquestionably worthwhile. Bowie State University has been an excellent steward of our resources and meticulous in our oversight of recent capital projects. We look forward to working with the Board of Regents and the Governor in the coming year to ensure full funding for the Natural Sciences Center.

Our next challenge is in the Humanities area. This area includes our Departments of Communications, English and Modern Languages, and History and Government. Our Facilities Master Plan calls for replacement of the Martin Luther King Building in order to meet current needs and support future growth. The new Humanities facility will also include the University’s Honors program, media operations, and production space for our radio and television stations. The university’s future CIP submissions will also include requests to renovate the Thurgood Marshall Library, the Henry Administration Building, and James Physical Education Complex.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about Bowie State University’s capital projects. Our growth and competitiveness depend greatly upon our ability to provide state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces for faculty and students. The new Natural Sciences Building will help transform our campus. I urge your full support of the Governor’s FY 2015 capital budget.
Response to DLS’ Analysis

The President should comment on why the building’s class laboratory NSF has increased given the space surpluses shown in Exhibit 1.

Response: We acknowledge the increase in class laboratory space NSF in the current design. The areas in question are specialized lab areas for the natural sciences and nursing. With the pending demolition of Crawford Science Building, there will be no specialized, science-related laboratory spaces on campus. The remaining lab spaces on campus are general teaching labs which are not equipped for instruction in the sciences. In order to provide instruction in the STEM related areas, we must have lab spaces specifically tailored for the natural sciences.