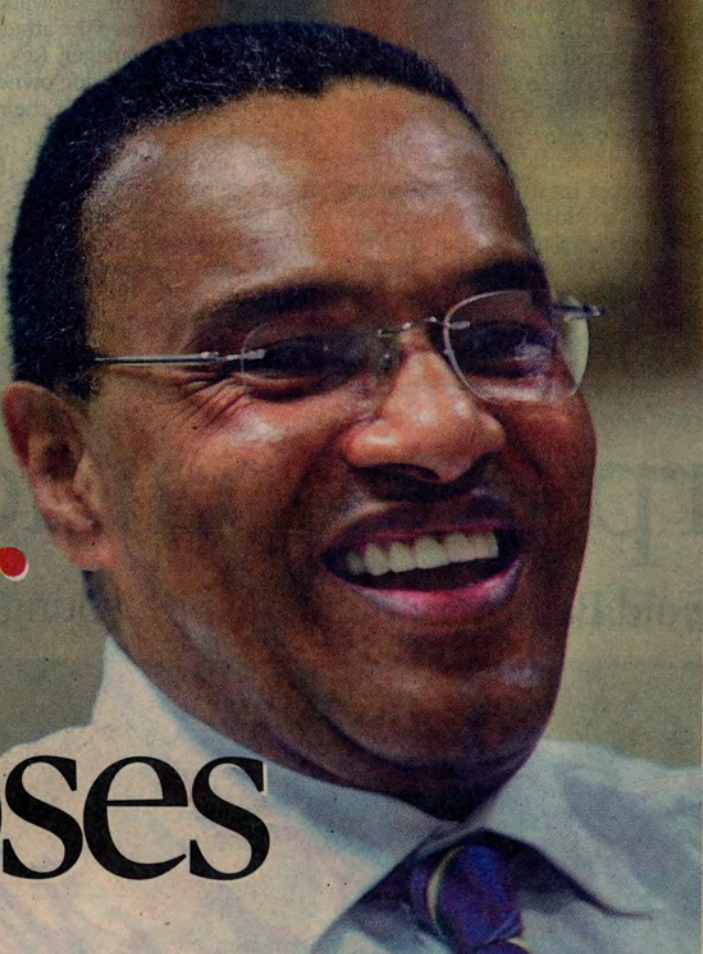


Yankees prevail over O's, 4-3

SPORTS

Generations of students attest to the role UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski and his wife have played as one-on-one mentors

Bigger purposes



KENNETH K. LAM/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

"It is part of the work of education to have substantive relationships with your students," says Freeman A. Hrabowski III.

By Childs Walker | The Baltimore Sun

The melody of the president's voice, the intensity of his movements gripped Jeremy Brickey's attention, cutting through the monotony of freshman orientation at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Honestly though, he thought Freeman A. Hrabowski III had to be "full of it." Who brings that kind of dynamism to rote encounters with students? Two years later, Brickey asked to meet with Hrabowski, this time to discuss his fraternity's return to campus after a suspension for serving alcohol to minors and pledging academically ineligible members.

Surprise No. 1: The UMBC president remembered him. Surprise No. 2: Hrabowski didn't seem concerned with the fraternity. Instead he wanted to know what experiences made Brickey who he was. Did he think he had matured into a man?

The student mentioned he had published an autobiographical piece in the campus literary journal. Hrabowski called for a copy from his secretary and read it as they sat there. He appeared to be skimming, but his questions suggested he was absorbing every word.

See HRABOWSKI, page 20

Shooting places focus on gun laws

Shotguns, more common in hunting than crime, treated differently under Md. law

By Scott Dance
The Baltimore Sun

The shotgun that Robert Wayne Gladden Jr. allegedly used in last week's shooting at Perry Hall High School wasn't registered with the state. Under Maryland law, that wasn't required.

Police also say the 15-year-old Gladden should never have been able to get his hands on the weapon. He found it unsecured in his father's home, according to court documents.

The shooting has shed light on the gap between the regulation of handguns — often used in crimes — and "long guns" such as the double-barrel Western Field shotgun that police seized, a firearm more common on a hunting range or farm. It has also raised concerns about securing firearms around children, which is required under state law.

As the community searches for ways to prevent similar acts of violence, advocates and opponents of stricter gun control agree that there should be a focus on keeping guns out of the hands of juveniles. But even if a push emerged to increase regulation of long guns in Maryland, it's not clear what it might call for or whether it would be effective, said Del. Curt Anderson.

"I don't know what specific new law you'd want to pass," said Anderson, a
See GUNS, page 19

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND

NO DOGS: The manager of a Waverly farmers' market says that following a dog-biting incident adjacent to the popular Saturday event, his security detail will issue civil citations to the owners of animals left unattended. **NEWS PG 2**

APPLE OR PEAR: Even if your body mass index is normal, you may be at greater risk for heart disease and death if your waist-to-hip ratio indicates an apple shape, with fat carried around the middle, rather than a pear shape, with fat carried around the hips. **NEWS PG 13**

NATION

THE PRESIDENT: As Barack Obama prepares to accept his party's nomination for a second term, three and a half years in office have ground away much of the nonpartisan aura he brought to it, leaving a deeply polarized view of the nation's 44th president. **NEWS PG 10**

TODAY'S WEATHER

CLOUDY AND HUMID

84 HIGH 69 LOW

Storms possible Monday **SPORTS PG 14**

GRAND PRIX OF BALTIMORE

Race weighs prospects for survival

Fans and businesses must be convinced that the event is worth all the trouble

By Julie Scharper and Chris Korman
The Baltimore Sun

Tony Assadi shakes his head as he looks out over the racetrack for the second Grand Prix of Baltimore, which zooms past his Luna Del Sea restaurant and its outside patio on West Pratt Street.

He and his patrons have a clear view — no blue screen blocks the sightline to the street-turned-course. But for that privilege, he signed a contract and was charged \$5,000 by race organizers.

"I didn't feel comfortable," he said. "It felt like I was paying a bribe."

As the weekend of racing heads toward the finish line today, the stability and sustainability of the event remains unclear. Tens of thousands of fans packed downtown streets to watch the first two days of the festival, as they did last year, and drivers, though they griped about the bumpy track, once again marveled at the crowds.

But Assadi's concerns echo a larger theme: Does the boost to tourism and business outweigh the extensive and intrusive construction that comes with the
See GRAND PRIX, page 14



GENE SWEENEY JR./BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

The IndyCar series morning practice, partially in wet conditions, proceeds on Pratt Street. Some of last year's problems have been resolved, but long-term issues remain.

More coverage

Results of Saturday's races, along with drivers' opinions of the track
SPORTS

Clarksville native is on women's team taking to the street, claiming a place
NEWS PG 16

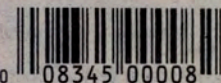


Video online

For video of races, go to baltimoresun.com

inside

bridge **auto 15** • lottery **news 2** • movie directory **a&e 4** • horoscopes **news 23** • obituaries **news 24**
opinion **news 26** • puzzles **a&e 6** • tonight on tv **tv book** • comics **tv book** • classified **b&j 6**



0 08345 00008 2

TOYOTA

nationwide
Clearance
event

JUST ANNOUNCED!

NEW 2012 **CAMRY**
(excludes hybrids)

0% APR
FINANCING
FOR 5 YEARS

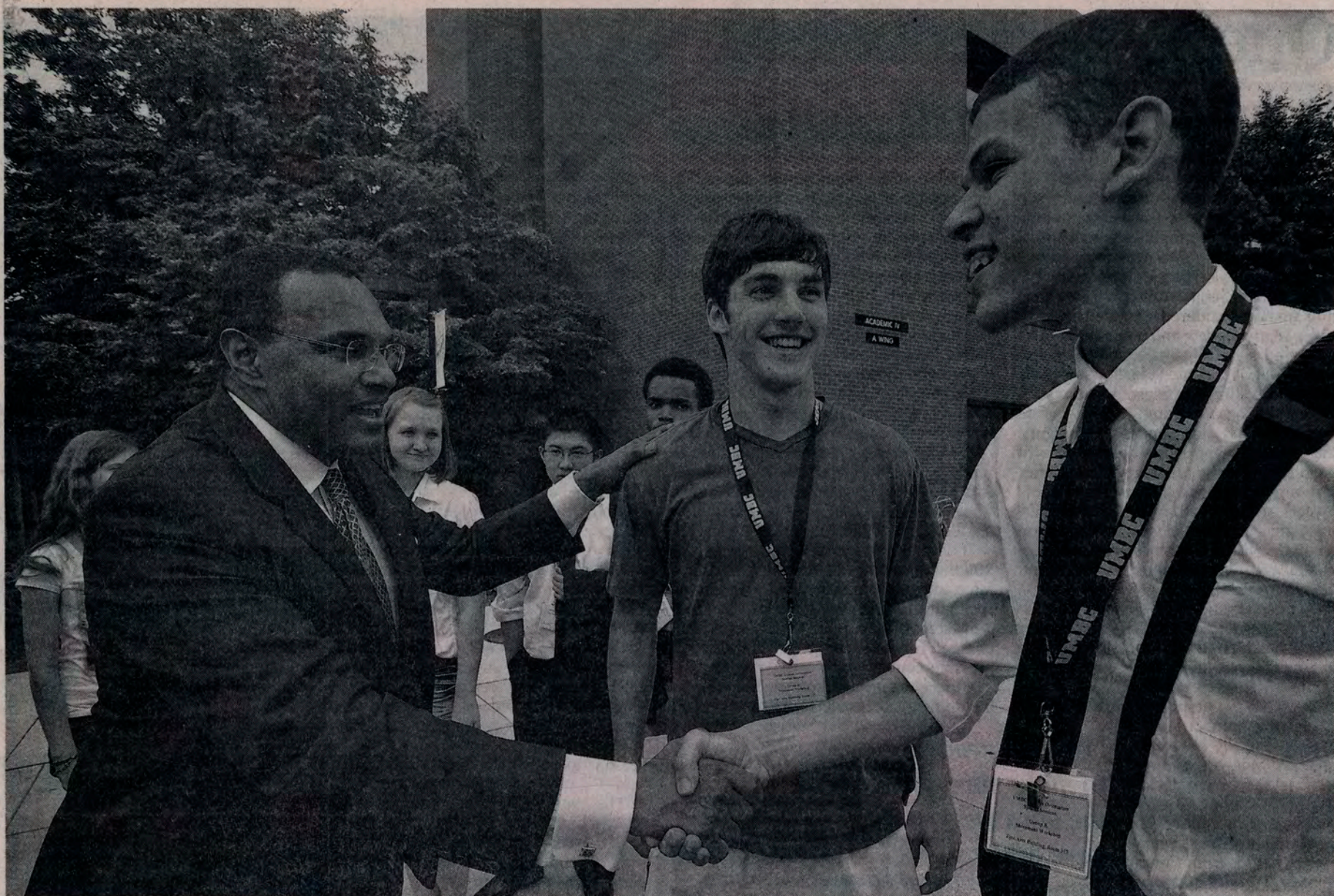
OR

LEASE AN LE FOR
\$199 MO.
24 MOS. **\$1999** DUE AT
SIGNING*
TAX, REGISTRATION, INSURANCE,
AND DEALER FEES ARE EXTRA

Buyatoyota.com

*0% APR FINANCING UP TO 60 MONTHS AVAILABLE TO QUALIFIED BUYERS THRU TOYOTA FINANCIAL SERVICES. TOTAL FINANCED CANNOT EXCEED MSRP PLUS OPTIONS, TAX AND LICENSE FEES. 60 MONTHLY PAYMENTS OF \$16.67 FOR EACH \$1000 BORROWED. NOT ALL BUYERS WILL QUALIFY. **DUE AT SIGNING INCLUDES \$1800 DOWN (AFTER APPLICATION OF \$500 TOYOTA LEASE CASH INCENTIVE FROM TOYOTA FINANCIAL SERVICES); FIRST \$199 PAYMENT AND NO SECURITY DEPOSIT. NOT ALL CUSTOMERS WILL QUALIFY. TAX, REGISTRATION, INSURANCE, AND DEALER FEES ARE EXTRA. CUSTOMER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXCESSIVE WEAR AND EXCESS MILEAGE CHARGES OF \$15 PER MILE IN EXCESS OF 24,000 MILES. YOUR PAYMENT MAY VARY BASED ON FINAL NEGOTIATED PRICE. OFFER AVAILABLE ON APPROVED CREDIT TO QUALIFIED CUSTOMERS FROM TOYOTA FINANCIAL SERVICES. 2012 CAMRY LE 4 CYLINDER AUTOMATIC MODEL 2532. *MSRP \$23,700. SEE DEALER FOR DETAILS. OFFERS END 9/4/12.

TOYOTA
moving forward



President Freeman Hrabowski greets incoming freshman honor students Luke Byrne, center, and Joseph Hunter, right, both from Ellicott City, during orientation in June. AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

Making big progress one student at a time

HRABOWSKI, From page 1

Hrabowski, who is celebrating his 20th year as president, could be forgiven if he could not pick the 23-year-old Brickey out of the crowd of 13,000 students on UMBC's Catonsville campus.

The man students call "Doc" is recognized as a superstar in his field. Just ask Harvard, which gave Hrabowski an honorary doctorate in 2010, or "60 Minutes," which broadcast a glowing segment about him last year. President Barack Obama has sought his counsel on reducing college costs and propelling more students to graduate studies in math and science. Most recently, Time magazine named him one of the world's 100 most influential people, along with Hillary Clinton, Warren Buffett and Adele.

He is renowned for his big ideas; educational heavyweights such as MIT and Stanford have been to Catonsville to study the methods with which UMBC churns out elite black graduates in the sciences. How, they want to know, has a 46-year-old university, founded to serve commuters, cracked the code to one of American education's most vexing problems?

Hrabowski's mother believed he was sent to better the world, and he has spent a lifetime trying to meet those expectations. Everything about him seems outsized compared to his university system peers, from his celebrity speakers agency to his lucrative positions on corporate boards.

Sometimes he overshadows his campus, which excels in many ways but still lags in national rankings because of middling graduation rates and modest financial means. He's a magnet for attention. During the summer at an event supporting the Dream Act, which would offer in-state tuition to some illegal immigrants, Hrabowski was the headliner and the one who drew criticism from some conservatives.

But Hrabowski, 62, would rather discuss Brickey's short story about coming of age with a drug-addicted mother.

To understand UMBC's success story, you have to watch Hrabowski with students, to hear them speak of how he has animated their dreams and kept them on track. These intimate relationships, in turn, help explain why Hrabowski has turned down other opportunities in favor of remaining president at UMBC for two decades, more than twice the average tenure for a college president. He believes, say close friends, that he can help students more profoundly and more directly by staying where he is.

Such personal relationships are uncommon for college presidents, who are more often consumed by the demands of fundraising and politics.

"I can't speak to other universities,"

Increasing enrollment, increasing diversity

UMBC's enrollment and percentage of students by ethnicity from fall 2002-2011

Year	Total enrollment	White	Minority Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander)	Other Multiple races, foreign or unknown*
2002	11,711	55.8%	33.8%	10.4%
2003	11,872	55.0%	34.7%	10.3%
2004	11,852	55.6%	34.7%	9.8%
2005	11,650	55.8%	34.6%	9.6%
2006	11,798	54.5%	36.0%	9.5%
2007	12,041	53.4%	37.0%	9.6%
2008	12,268	52.0%	38.1%	9.9%
2009	12,870	51.9%	37.7%	10.4%
2010	12,888	49.7%	37.8%	12.5%
2011	13,199	49.6%	38.4%	12.0%

*New race categories are reported for 2010. For the first time, students may choose more than one race

Source: University System of Maryland

says Miguel Calderon, a 2012 graduate from Bowie. "But from what I hear, it's not an everyday thing to see the president asking students, 'How are your classes? What did you get on your last test? You didn't do well? Maybe you need a tutor.' It's really a miraculous thing."

Brickey, a Lanham native, says Hrabowski gets mad at him if they go too long without communicating. "This is a guy who's on a flight to speak somewhere every other day," he says. "But here he takes the time to talk with me for 30 minutes all the time. It's amazing."

Together, they determined that for Brickey, an advanced degree was less important than a steady income. "The project was to stop being a boy and become a professional," Brickey says. He reached his goal well before graduation, securing a job as a market analyst for a book company.

But the two men, separated by authority and generations, are also friends. Hrabowski, who has added enough muscle through weightlifting to strain the buttons on his dress shirts, recently teased Brickey that "you're getting chubby."

These relationships do not end when Hrabowski's mentees graduate from UMBC. Many alumni communicate with him monthly by phone or text message. They stop by the Hrabowski home for lunch with his wife, Jackie, a retired T. Rowe Price executive.

It's not uncommon for students to describe UMBC's first couple as "second parents" who are consulted on major life decisions.

"It is part of the work of education to have substantive relationships with your students," says Hrabowski, the son of a teacher.

"What people don't realize is that everybody needs support, one way or another."

A national figure

Hrabowski has put himself forward as a voice on national educational issues. He's listed as a client of American Program Bureau, the same speakers' agency that promotes Jon Stewart and Al Pacino.

But some of Hrabowski's biggest media splashes have not been the result of any concerted publicity push. CBS correspondent Byron Pitts, a Baltimore native, was backstage at an event in the city when philanthropist Sheldon Caplis suggested Hrabowski as a possible "60 Minutes" feature. Pitts had never heard of him.

When Pitts learned his story, he was intrigued. "What we're looking for is people who light up on camera," Pitts says. "And he's as dynamic a person as I've ever met. I'm a paid skeptic, but no one I've ever talked to about Freeman had anything negative to say."

Brian Kelly, editor of U.S. News & World Report, first took a hard look at Hrabowski when a fellow educator suggested the UMBC president for an "America's Best Leaders" issue in 2006.

Kelly came away impressed with his achievements on some of the toughest issues in education. More black students earn bachelor's degrees in science and technology from UMBC than from any other non-historically black university in Maryland, even College Park, which has three times as many students.

"You have to appreciate the importance of STEM education," Kelly says, referring to the acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. "This is a huge national issue of competitiveness; it's a crisis. One of the questions is, can you get African-American students to thrive in a science environment? Some people would tell you no, but Freeman is proof that yes, you can."

Hrabowski was one of a dozen higher-education leaders Obama called to the White House in December as he crafted policies to be announced in the State of the Union address. During the past summer, Obama named Hrabowski

chair of a newly created advisory council on excellence in African-American education.

"He is someone whose opinion the president values," says Roberto Rodriguez, an education adviser to Obama. "Especially around the issues of affordability and innovation. He is someone with a strong record of focusing on STEM education, with a special focus on the success of students of color."

Ups and downs

For all the acclaim Hrabowski and the university have received, UMBC is still a maturing institution. It can't compare to the state's flagship university in College Park in fundraising, research or breadth of programs, and much of that is by design. The state funds College Park at about \$3,000 more per full-time student and has limited UMBC from offering programs such as business and electrical engineering.

Hrabowski says the absence of such programs is part of the reason UMBC ranks only in the middle of the pack in graduation rates among research universities because many students transfer out in search of programs his university can't offer.

About 57 percent of the class that began in fall 2004 graduated from UMBC within six years, compared to 63 percent for the university's peers. State budget analysts also have noted that UMBC loses more students than Towson, Salisbury or College Park after the second year.

Those statistics are among the reasons UMBC placed only 157th in the most recent U.S. News rankings despite being named the top up-and-coming university in the same issue.

Bryan Cook, who studies graduation and retention statistics for the American Council on Education, cited other numbers as major achievements: the university's work in eliminating the achievement gap for black students and the fact that its graduation numbers are improving faster than the national average.

"I'd say the overall numbers really mask the accomplishments that are going on at UMBC," says Cook.

Hrabowski himself has seen ups and downs in his career.

They called him the "boy dean" at Coppin State, where he worked from 1977 until 1987. "And let me assure you, in the black community, 'boy' did not mean something positive," Hrabowski says.

"There was some opposition to him, being as young as he was," says Calvin W. Burnett, the longtime Coppin president who hired Hrabowski. "He's ambitious, so that may have offended some people. But whatever they had to say wouldn't have much weight, because he deserves whatever it is he gets."

And at UMBC, where he started as vice provost and became interim president in 1992, Hrabowski recalls early faculty backlash for his failure to protect programs from state cuts. The graduate program in African-American studies was among those deemed inessential to the university's mission.

But Hrabowski has outlasted any

criticism, says George LaNoue, a UMBC political science and public policy professor since 1973 who's writing a history of the university. "Are there criticisms of him?" LaNoue says. "Sure. This is a university. But it has never taken on an organized form or voice."

In fact, observers often wonder why Hrabowski has remained at UMBC.

"You get planted in with people, and you don't even know if it's going to work unless you're around to see it," says Jackie Hrabowski, who says he has never seriously considered another job though he's had offers. "Why leave? What are you looking for? He's never been motivated by prestige or money. It's 'What am I doing to make a difference?' And when you see that you are, you're propelled by that."

A bigger university could probably match or beat Hrabowski's salary of \$420,000 a year, on par with College Park President Wallace D. Loh, who was hired in 2010 at \$450,000. But as a board member at Sparks-based spice maker McCormick & Co., Hrabowski earned \$217,509 in salary and stock last year, and until recently, he earned as much as \$191,000 in a year on the board at Constellation Energy Group.

The university has grown up around him — and because of him.

UMBC was anonymous nationally and often mistaken for a community college by state residents when Hrabowski arrived. Now it's cited as America's top up-and-coming university and a leader in undergraduate teaching by U.S. News. It has an endowment of about \$60 million, built from less than \$1 million when Hrabowski took over. Research funding has risen from less than \$10 million to about \$90 million.

"I don't know of any president whose identity is so synonymous with that of his university," says David Nevins, former chairman of the state's Board of Regents.

Southern roots

It's 7:30 a.m. on a Wednesday in May as Hrabowski steers his Buick Lucerne to a halt in front of the UMBC administration building. The previous day, he spoke in Denver (he often gives multiple out-of-town talks in a week) and was back to work on campus by late afternoon. He needs coffee.

From car door to counter, he stops to speak with a half-dozen students. What are they studying? Are they ready for finals? What's next after graduation? He will initiate similar conversations with scores of students in the course of the day. A cross-campus walk that should take five minutes will take 30.

At the cash register, he tells the clerk, "You always make me laugh." She blushes slightly. "My grandma always told me, 'You got to make yourself laugh,'" he says.

On the way back to the Buick, he says, "I'm Southern," explaining his complete inability to avoid striking up conversation with anyone.

Hrabowski abhors tardiness. He keeps the clock in his car 10 to 20 minutes fast to trick himself into traveling ahead of schedule, and he has two voice-activated navigation systems in his car so directions are never lost.

As he cruises to the day's first appointment, conversation turns to Hrabowski's origins. Asked about his mentors, he starts with his parents.

Hrabowski — the name comes from his grandfather's grandfather, a Polish slave master — grew up in a segregated section of Birmingham, Ala., populated by teachers, lawyers and educated laborers. Condoleezza Rice's father came from the same neighborhood (the former secretary of state appears in several candid photos around the Hrabowski home), as did the family of activist Angela Davis.

Hrabowski's grandmothers both heard Booker T. Washington extol, from horseback, the importance of sending black students to college. As a result, his parents graduated from Alabama State College when few blacks studied past high school.

Hrabowski's father worked three jobs, earning extra money by helping his less educated white supervisors with reading and writing. His mother taught eighth-grade English and sold insurance on the side. Theirs was a household of constant work, where ideas served as currency.

At night, Hrabowski could earn a nickel from his father for answering factual questions from the day's newspaper or a dime for tackling more abstract questions about current events. The dime was most prized because it allowed him to buy 10 Tootsie Rolls. From his mother, he soaked up the words of Langston Hughes, Emily Dickinson and Feodor Dostoevski.

He learned that it wasn't enough to educate himself. Children always cluttered the modest home, receiving tutoring from Hrabowski's mother. She also taught GED classes to his father's co-workers from the steel mill. As a precocious student — or in his words, a "fat kid who loved math" — Hrabowski often joined in delivering the lessons.

"Of those to whom much is given," the family motto went, "much is required."

Three chief points

In the white world of downtown Birmingham, where he couldn't go to a movie and never saw a black face in a position of authority, Hrabowski felt small. But his parents insisted that he never act the victim. "Hard work can make a difference," they preached. "People in the long run will be fair."

Hrabowski's parents encouraged dis-



BARBARA HADDOCK TAYLOR/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO 1993

After his installation in 1993, Freeman Hrabowski (carrying file folder) faced early faculty backlash for his failure to protect programs from state cuts. But a longtime UMBC professor says Hrabowski has outlasted those criticisms.

Freeman A. Hrabowski III

Birthplace: Birmingham, Ala.

Age: 62

Family: Wife, Jackie, and grown son, Eric

Education: B.A. in math (1970) from Hampton Institute at age 19, M.A. in math (1971) and Ph.D. in higher education administration and statistics (1975) from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Career: Has been president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County since 1992; serves as consultant to the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and the National Academies; came to UMBC in 1987 as vice provost and was later named executive vice president; previously held various positions at Coppin State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Alabama A&M University.

Notable accomplishments: Named chair of a newly created advisory council on excellence in African-American education by President Barack Obama; chosen one of Time's 100 Most Influential Leaders in 2012; UMBC named America's top up-and-coming university three years in a row by U.S. News & World Report; co-founded acclaimed Meyerhoff Scholars program to promote minority achievement in science and engineering; marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at age 12.



Hrabowski at 13; he grew up in segregated Birmingham.

sent, as long as it was well-reasoned and courteously expressed. When the city's black youths rallied to protest the jailing of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1962, his parents prevented him from going the first day, fearing the police dogs and fire hoses. He told them they were hypocrites. They relented.

The 12-year-old Hrabowski spent five days in jail, where authorities threw him in with the tough kids. But one of them had been taught by his mother, so he was protected.

The event proved transformative for Hrabowski, because from then on, someone was always asking him to get in front of people and talk about his experiences. In that realm, he cites his pastor, John Porter of Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, as his chief influence.

Porter was a bear of a man who spoke passionately but briefly, limiting his sermons to three chief points.

"He was the best speaker I ever knew," Hrabowski says.

Porter told the burgeoning orator that preparation was the key to making it seem so simple. "Always have a paragraph in your head," he liked to say.

One of Hrabowski's signature moves is to ask a UMBC student — without warning — to speak before a pack of visitors, donors or prospective students. He believes this is something privileged students learn as a matter of course. "But I want my middle-class and working-class students to be comfortable in front of anyone," he says.

Calderon remembers going with Hrabowski to a recruiting event for prospective students. "Miguel," the president told him in the morning, "can you think, over the whole day, of three good points about why you love UMBC?"

Just before Hrabowski rose to speak at the evening event, he asked Calderon for the three points.

Calderon thought Hrabowski was going to use his ideas in the talk. Instead, he gave a few cursory remarks and said, "Now, I'm going to bring up one of my mentees, who has prepared a speech for you."

After freezing at first, Calderon calmly went through his points for the crowd of 250.

"Do you know why I did that?" Hrabowski asked him after the event. "I wanted you to challenge yourself in an area you feel passionate about."

While Porter shaped Hrabowski's speaking voice, the pastor's wife, Dorothy, revealed to him a wider world of fine restaurants and Bach concertos. Hrabowski's horizon expanded further during a summer at Tuskegee Institute, where, for the first time, he encountered math problems he could not solve. He was not dispirited but invigorated. A dean mentioned the possibility of a

Ph.D.

"What's that?" the 13-year-old asked. "The highest degree you can get," the dean said.

"I'm going to get that," Hrabowski promised. And from then on, he would stare in the mirror and say, "Good morning, Dr. Hrabowski."

He gained entry to Morehouse College when he was 14, but his mother wouldn't let him go. He had to wait a year before going to Virginia's Hampton Institute.

'You need to be pumped'

Hrabowski steers the Buick into a McDonald's drive-through. He needs another cup of coffee before taking on the eighth-graders at William Wirt Middle School in Prince George's County.

For their part, the kids appear distracted or sleepy. So Hrabowski attacks. "How many of you are smart?" he begins. A few hands tentatively go up.

"All right, tell me your name and tell me what you want to be when you grow up," he says. "And I want you to project so I can hear from the back of the room."

He goes boy-girl-boy-girl, forcing them to speak louder and louder. Slowly but surely, his energy transfers to the students. Hands raise more quickly. Thoughts come out more forcefully. "How many of you study at home at night?" he asks. Only two hands go up. "Now there's the issue," he says. "I guarantee the people who study are going to be successful. Nothing can replace hard work."

Then, he pulls his master stroke. He has \$50, he says, for the first person to solve a math problem. There are 29 children in class. Twenty have dogs and 15 have cats. How many have both a dog and a cat? There's a catch, though; give Hrabowski a wrong answer and you owe him \$5. One boy flashes a bill to show he's ready for the challenge.

The room crackles as the students scribble on notebooks. "What is my larger point?" Hrabowski asks. "This is what your school needs to be. You need to be pumped all the time. When I go to South Africa or Asia, they say, 'Bring it on.' They're focused. They're hungry for it. How are you gonna be the best if you can't match that?"

As a young black kid, he says, he yearned to show a dubious world he was as smart as anybody. To this day, he works 80 to 90 hours and reads three

"It's by far the greatest thing I've ever done, and it's all Freeman Hrabowski."

Robert Meyerhoff, co-founder, Meyerhoff Scholars

books in a typical week. "That's what it takes to be the best," he says.

As it turns out, no one gets the correct answer. But Hrabowski is merciful, forgiving a multitude of \$5 debts.

He gets them on their feet and leads them through one of his favorite refrains: "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes destiny."

Three students, all black boys, walk him to his car. He chastens them one more time about their study habits. "Rich kids work hard," he says. "Most black kids aren't working hard enough."

Once he has shut the car door, he lets his body settle into a more relaxed posture. "When you give of yourself, it's draining," he says.

'Hold fast to dreams'

In examining Hrabowski's development, it's easy to see he collected older mentors for himself as readily as he dispenses advice to students.

One of those mentors, philanthropist Robert Meyerhoff, became his key ideological collaborator on the program that made Hrabowski's reputation. UMBC had graduated fewer than 20 black science majors in the decade before Hrabowski arrived on campus as vice provost in 1987. Part of his charge, under then-President Michael Hooker, was to change that.

Meyerhoff, meanwhile, was interviewing universities, hoping to find one that would set up a scholarship program for black males. He met Hrabowski at the suggestion of Abell Foundation President Robert Embry.

"After 15 minutes," Meyerhoff recalls, "I knew I had the right person."

He was struck by Hrabowski's absolute faith that black men could thrive at the highest levels of academia if held to high enough standards from the start of college.

To help Meyerhoff students find the essence of their mission, Hrabowski often leads them through a poem by Langston Hughes. "Hold fast to dreams," he begins, asking them to repeat each line. "For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird / That cannot fly."

Meyerhoff hoped to fund 10 scholarships the first year, but Hrabowski found 20 candidates, so 20 it was, with Meyerhoff donating \$522,000.

The Meyerhoff program now brings in promising students of all races who are aiming for doctoral studies in science or engineering and who hope to advance minority performance in those fields. The students start out in a six-week summer boot camp designed to acclimate them to college. The scholars hold monthly "family meetings" and Hrabowski likes to tell them they're as responsible for the success of the students next to them as for their own.

Last year, about 500 students applied for 69 spots. Nearly 800 have graduated from the program, and of those, more than 200 have gone on to earn Ph.Ds, M.Ds or M.D./Ph.Ds.

"It's by far the greatest thing I've ever done, and it's all Freeman Hrabowski," Meyerhoff says. "I talk to people who can't understand why it hasn't been replicated in other places, and I say it's because they don't have Freeman Hrabowski."

'Strong sense of self'

On her first day at Virginia's Hampton Institute, Jackie Coleman couldn't seem to escape this guy who spoke in a thick Alabama accent and hadn't lost his baby fat. There he was, letting her ahead of him in the bursar's line, then in the lunch line, then being introduced to her by a friend at dinner.

In math class, when he discovered that she had scored above him on an introductory test, he blurted out that he had found his future bride. To his chagrin, she replied with, "Let's be buddies." It took several years of persuasion for her to adopt his vision of the relationship.

When she thinks back on the 15-year-old Freeman, what strikes Jackie Hrabowski is how fully formed he was. She was almost three years older, but he was the one who knew everybody, who disarmed any room he entered with a well-timed joke. And for all his affability, he was serious, generally eschewing campus concerts for more library time.

"He always had a strong sense of self and self-worth," she says, preparing a chicken salad sandwich in the kitchen of the couple's airy Owings Mills home. "I got that from him. I was just a country girl, but he had always gotten the message, 'You're special.' And he had worked to live up to that."

Jackie tells a story, explaining why she has chosen to be with him, step by step, in his relentlessly public existence.

Whenever the Hrabowskis visited Birmingham as newlyweds, Hrabowski whirled off to greet a succession of old friends, leaving Jackie feeling abandoned at the family house.

"Darling," Hrabowski's mother told her, "you have to understand that he was sent here for a bigger purpose than to be your husband. He was sent here for the world."

childs.walker@baltsun.com



COLBY WARE FOR THE BALTIMORE SUN 2010

Freeman Hrabowski and Jackie Hrabowski, here at an Associated Black Charities gala, met as students at the Hampton Institute; he was 15 and she was 17.