



PRESS RELEASE

THE URBAN MANUFACTURING ALLIANCE APPOINTS RONALD C. WILLIAMS, PhD AS THEIR BOARD PRESIDENT AND CHAIR

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The Urban Manufacturing Alliance (UMA) is proud to announce that Dr. Ron Williams, a leader in Baltimore's entrepreneurship ecosystem, is the new Board President and Chair of UMA's Board of Directors.

As an associate professor at Coppin State University's College of Business, and the Founding Director of the Center for Strategic Entrepreneurship, Williams has established himself as a dedicated advocate of Baltimore's entrepreneurs. He has seen firsthand how manufacturing and entrepreneurship can benefit his students, particularly those who come from deindustrialized urban areas of West Baltimore and may be unaware of career possibilities.

Williams has also established a relationship between Open Works Baltimore, and Coppin State University, the first formal relationship in the U.S. between a community-embedded makerspace and a public Historically Black College and University. In 2019, he brought a light over the economic influence of makerspaces when he worked as a principal investigator for "Turning Makerspaces into Greater Places: An Organizational Assessment and Economic Impact Study of Open Works," (www.greaterspacesandplaces.com), one of the first economic impact studies of a makerspace in the nation.

"I'm excited to lead the board of the Urban Manufacturing Alliance and to leverage my position as a business faculty member at a Historically Black College and University, and my insights into the entrepreneurial needs in Baltimore to new heights," Ron said. "Working with students and others in Baltimore has solidified for me, how well manufacturing can create opportunities for innovation and new career ladders."

Williams has taught at Coppin State University since 1996 and served as Interim Dean of the school's College of Business from 2013 until 2017.

During his tenure as a dean, Coppin State University was ranked as one of the "2015 Top 50 of Small College Business Programs" in the U.S. by the "Business Research Guide." He also oversaw the school's specialized accreditation by the Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs.

Williams joined the UMA Board of Directors as a Board Member in January 2020.

"We admire Ron's work for many reasons," said Lee Wellington, Founding Executive Director at



UMA. “He believes that trust is a core competency at the heart of equitable economic development. He believes in a whole-person approach to workforce development. And he brings an intersectional approach to tackling racial justice. We’re excited to keep working alongside him and tapping into his Baltimore expertise to inform our city-focused strategies.”

As the board chair, Williams will aid UMA’s planning around local projects to support manufacturing ecosystems in cities where the organization’s network of 900-plus members work and live. Those projects include communities of practice — cohorts of local leaders who strategize solutions to challenges in their area of expertise — and research on how urban manufacturing affects city economies.

“We’re in a historic moment right now, where it has become clear that manufacturing and racial equity share the same path,” said Bernardine Hawes, UMA Board Member and Immediate Past Chair of the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Advisory Board for the Manufacturing Extension Program. “That positions UMA as a critical voice in the room as experienced actors with a strong network, and Ron will only make that voice more impactful because of his role as a changemaker where he lives.”

Williams officially began as the Board Chair in January when Adam Friedman, UMA’s co-founding Board Member, stepped down as Chair. Friedman’s vision for manufacturing in urban centers and advancing economic and racial equity, as well as community-driven land use strategies will always be at the core of UMA. Friedman’s leadership as Chief Strategy Officer for Pratt Institute Office for Research and Strategic Planning continues to be an inspiration to so many in UMA’s community of manufacturing practitioners.

Adam will remain a member of the UMA Board.

“Ron is taking the lead at a great time in the organization’s history,” said Adam. “When we launched the UMA, our focus was largely around economic justice, but our work and the insights of Ron and other members of the UMA board helped us realize how economic and racial justice are intertwined. Today, racial equity is part of every UMA decision. The network is stronger and larger now than it was when we started, and I believe the work is on a path that aligns excellently with Ron’s expertise.”

“Coppin State University is proud to have Ron at the helm of this national organization,” said Sadie R. Gregory, Ph.D., the Dean of the College of Business. “He’s an important figure at our college both as a professor and an advocate for entrepreneurship, and his locally-rooted knowledge on the topic makes him a great Baltimore voice for any national-level work around economy and equity.”

“Ron’s research on the economic impact of our makerspace helped us see how we’re doing, and educated readers on the broad-reaching, positive impact makerspaces can have on their neighbors,” said Will Holman, Executive Director of Open Works Baltimore. “His work shaped our work, and we think he’ll have the same impact on UMA.”