

Two major defense contractors gave UMD more than \$46 million from 2010 to 2023

Katharine Wilson · June 10, 2024



Glenn L. Martin Hall hosts the University of Maryland's engineering department. The engineering department is one of the main beneficiaries of funding from Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin. (Evan Kramer/For the Diamondback)

The University of Maryland has a years-long multi-million dollar financial relationship with major defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, according to data obtained by the Diamondback.

The two companies are among the top employers of this university's graduates, according to the 2022 graduation survey. But this university's financial ties with the companies, which consist of receiving donations from the entities and possible investments into them, have drawn criticism from some who cite the defense industry as unethical.

University relationships with defense contractors have reemerged as a point of debate on college campuses after Israel's recent military offensive in Palestine sparked nationwide protests calling on universities to divest from those companies.

Lockheed Martin was the world's top arms-producing company by revenue in 2022, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Northrop Grumman placed third, according to the research institute. Both companies work extensively with the U.S. Department of Defense and supply technology reportedly used by Israel's military forces.

William Arkin, a long-time national security reporter who worked on a 2015 Vice News investigation of "militarized" college campuses, said this university stands out due to its profit from and connections to the federal government and defense industry.

"There's a relationship that exists, but it's certainly not about academics. It's certainly not about learning," Arkin said.

Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman gave more than \$46 million combined to this university from 2010 to November 2023 in donations and research funding, according to data obtained by The Diamondback.

During that time frame, Lockheed Martin donated about \$11.1 million to this university and funded an additional \$14 million worth of research, according to the data. Northrop Grumman donated \$18.7 million and funded an additional \$2.8 million of research.

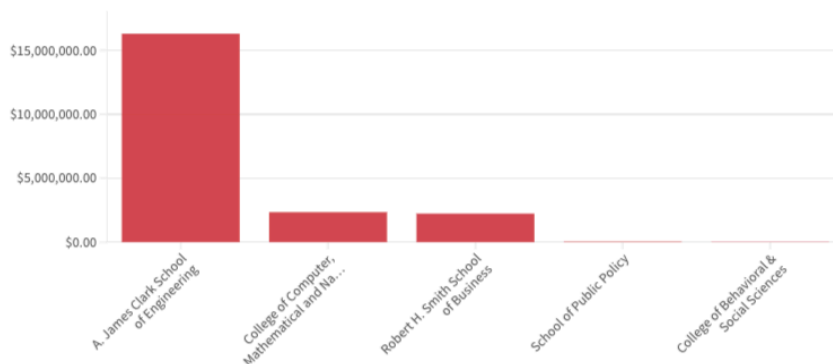
"This is just the modern economics of the university," Arkin said.

The donations helped fund individual colleges, research and programs across campus.

The two companies donated the most to the engineering school from 2010 to November 2023, followed by the computer, mathematical and natural sciences college and business school, according to data obtained by The Diamondback.

Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman have donated the most money to the engineering school since 2010

The two defense contractors gave more than \$46 million to this university from 2010 to November 2023 in donations and research funding.



Source: University of Maryland • Chart: Daranee Balachandrar
Schools that have been renamed since 2010 have been combined with their appropriate division.



* A Flourish chart

These donations create an environment that pushes students in STEM fields into lucrative but unethical career paths, Vivian Flanagan, the former UMD Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines president, told The Diamondback in October.

“The salary and the benefits that come with the job in defense are at someone else’s expense abroad,” Flanagan said.

[UMD SGA fails to advance divestment resolution]

This university declined to comment on student criticisms about its relationship with Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

The University System of Maryland Foundation invests most of this university’s endowment assets.

The university system foundation is a public charity. But the details about the companies the foundations invests in are not public information, according to an April university system foundation statement to The Diamondback.

In an email to The Diamondback, the University System of Maryland Foundation emphasized its commitment to consider the “ESG factors” — environmental, social and governance concerns — related to investments.

If an ESG factor presents a “material risk” to the endowment, the university system foundation will “mitigate those risks sufficiently or not make an investment,” according to a 2020 statement by the foundation.

Charles Harry, an associate research professor in the information studies college and public policy school, told The Diamondback in October that the collaboration between this university and defense contractors benefits students.

Northrop Grumman’s funding helped start the Advanced Cybersecurity Experience for Students honors college, according to the program’s website.

Harry said Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin are interested in partnering with universities to promote research in their subject areas. Students have had opportunities to contribute to research and land internships through the ACES program, he added.

“There’s a richness in bringing folks from that sector into campus,” Harry said.

The ties between this university and defense contractors go beyond financial relationships.

Linda Gooden, the chair of the university system’s Board of Regents, is a former executive vice president for Lockheed Martin’s information systems and global solutions. Glenn L. Martin Hall is named after one of the founders of the company that later became Lockheed Martin. “Northrop Grumman Day” was held last May for aerospace students to connect with the defense company’s leaders.

The University System of Maryland Foundation's lack of transparency about the university endowment's investments was at the center of demands from the #DivestUMD campaign — a group of campus organizations advocating for system-wide divestment from companies that “commit or profit off of human rights violations.”

In April, the Student Government Association debated a resolution that asked the university and university system foundation to advocate for “transparent and ethical investment” of university funds and to divest from “companies engaged in human rights violations.”

[UMD community members hold sit-in to call for ceasefire in Gaza, divestment]

Junior government and politics major Lahiruni Dias Amarawardena said students should be able to know the details of the university system's investments.

Any investment into companies that profit off human rights violations is an issue, Dias Amarawardena told The Diamondback after an April SGA meeting.

The SGA resolution ultimately failed to advance after an unfavorable committee report by the SGA's student affairs committee, The Diamondback previously reported. Previous SGA divestment efforts also failed to advance in 2017 and 2019.

A similar bill in the university system's student council was struck down in April.

This university's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter held nearly daily sit-ins calling for divestment from mid-April through the end of the semester, The Diamondback previously reported. The sit-ins were part of a rise in encampments and protests supporting Palestine on college campuses nationwide, according to The Associated Press.

The demonstrations come after Israel's military forces have killed more than 37,000 people in Palestine since declaring war on Hamas in October, the Associated Press reported Monday. On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas killed at least 1,200 people in Israel and took about 250 hostages, according to the Associated Press.

Matthew Foos, a junior philosophy and physics major, participated in a May sit-in held by this university's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter that urged this university to reconsider its ties with defense contractors and called for a ceasefire in Gaza.

“Having these connections between these companies also directly plays a part in approving in some way... the atrocities that their companies also commit overseas,” Foos said.

Holden Zeidman, treasurer of this university's Jewish Voice for Peace chapter, said supplying weapons to Israel does not represent the interests of Jewish people. This university should not accept money from defense contractors, Zeidman added.

“This university should uphold some moral standards here and not accept money and not partner with companies who profit off of death, destruction and genocide,” Zeidman said.

Some students have accused the divestment movement of unfairly targeting companies that work with Israel.

Isaac Shiner, the treasurer of this university’s Jewish Student Union, told The Diamondback in April he believes the SGA’s divestment resolution intended to “marginalize Jewish students”.

The resolution “disproportionately” focuses on the violence in Israel and Palestine, the sophomore journalism and government and politics major said.

Dias Amarawardena emphasized that while the current conversation about divestment has focused on Israel and Palestine, defense contractors’ impact is felt across the globe and could have focused on other countries as well.

“The location changes, but the company doesn’t,” she said.

The university system foundation said it is aware of the divestment movement at this university, according to a statement to The Diamondback. The foundation recently created an “ad hoc committee” to discuss ESG factors, the statement said.