



2017-2018 USMSC State of Shared Governance Report

to

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Executive Summary

The University System of Maryland Student Council (USMSC) is committed to effective shared governance structures and attitudes that are inclusive of all relevant stakeholders when decisions are made by campus leadership. To measure the baseline of the practice of shared governance at each campus across the system and advise the Chancellor and Board of Regents on its effectiveness and potential issues, the USMSC decided to distribute a survey among student leadership, similar to the faculty and staff survey and reports. The Council found that the effectiveness of shared governance varied significantly from institution to institution. Many campuses excelled in particular areas and scored lower in other categories.

A couple of observations are in order given the survey data. First, while administrators are generally accessible to student leaders when they want to meet to discuss concerns, students believe that communication must be improved overall between student and campus leadership. This can happen through more open forums and discussions with larger audiences on relevant topics so that both student leaders and the student body in general feel that their concerns are heard. Many campus administrators discuss their commitment to shared governance extensively in public, but students feel that sometimes the follow through on this commitment is not strong. There are also opportunities for collaboration between student leadership and administrators where common goals are shared that are currently underutilized.

In sum, the ensuing report and data show that each campus has specific areas of improvement in their shared governance structure, with some campuses reporting significant issues and others only minor. This report may be used to improve these systems and to more effectively and proactively include the student voice.

Summary Report

Purpose/Justification

The purpose of this survey is to strengthen shared governance within the University System of Maryland. The USMSC constitution states that the primary function of the Student Council is “to advise the Chancellor on issues, matters, and policies having direct bearing on students and student affairs of the System as a whole.” This survey advises the Chancellor on the shared governance climate on each of the USM campuses from the perspective of student leaders. It sheds light on the well-functioning aspects of shared governance and areas for improvement. This survey provides the Chancellor with substantive data and feedback on improving shared governance practices within each institution as the Chancellor conducts his performance evaluations of the Presidents in April.

Procedures

The survey was completed together by the Undergraduate and Graduate student body presidents, or their equivalents within the governance structure. The recommended options for completing the survey, given the information of governance structures provided by the universities, was as follows:

Option 1: The Student Body Presidents may complete the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents). They may or may not consult with other student leaders prior to completion of the survey.

Option 2: Student Body Presidents complete the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards. There are many variations to this approach, and could take place at a joint meeting and could include other campus leaders through invitation (student senators, student group leaders, etc.)

Option 3: Student Body Presidents complete a survey of the students, either through a survey or discussed at an open meeting prior to an executive board meeting, and use option #2.

Table 1, below, shows which option each institution selected to collect their data and who they listed as the others they consulted in developing their answers. The student leaders answered the shared governance survey within a month long period between the end of January and the end of February. The results were compiled, analyzed and drafted into this report, discussed at the USMSC meeting in March of 2018, and delivered in April to the Chancellor.

Table 1. *Data collection.*

What USMSC institution are you from?	Which option did you use to collect data?	Who else was consulted in the development of your answers for this survey? (e.g. student senators, RHA leaders, student group leaders, etc.)
Bowie State University	Option 2: Student Body Presidents completed the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards.	Student Group Leaders
Coppin State University	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	Senators
Frostburg State University	Option 2: Student Body Presidents completed the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards.	SGA Senate
Salisbury University	Option 2: Student Body Presidents completed the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards.	Just Exec board members of the both the Grad student Council and the Undergrad Student Council.
Towson University	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	Former SGA Presidents
Universities at Shady Grove	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	GSA President

University of Baltimore	Option 2: Student Body Presidents completed the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards.	Exec members and a few senators/students
University of Maryland-Baltimore	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	Student senators, student group leaders
University of Maryland-Baltimore County	Option 3: Student Body Presidents completed a survey of the student body, either through a direct survey, or it was discussed at an open meeting prior to an executive board meeting.	Undergraduate and Graduate Student Senators
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	Graduate Student Council
University of Maryland-College Park	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	Members of the SGA and GSG
University of Maryland-Eastern Shore	Option 2: Student Body Presidents completed the surveys in conjunction with their executive boards.	Student group Leaders
University of Maryland University College	Option 1: The Student Body Presidents completed the survey with only each other (undergrad/grad student body presidents).	N/a

Results

The tables below provide summative data on how the 13 campuses who responded to the survey answered the survey questions.

Table 2, below, outlines the summative responses from student leaders on the questions relating to the general shared governance climate and communication. Respondents were split on the question of if shared governance on their campus could be described as “alive and healthy,” with just less than half answering that they agree or strongly agree with the statement and the majority neither agreeing nor disagreeing or disagreeing to some extent. This question is reflective of the students’ overall feeling of the climate and practice of shared governance on their campus.

The biggest issue identified is that most student leaders found that communication and consultation is often poor between the administration and campus student governments. Many respondents disagreed with the survey statement that there are excellent communications currently. A clear area of improvement across campuses is to improve their consultation and communication with student leadership and to bring them in to the fold more often when making decisions.

The rest of the responses were split between agreeing and disagreeing with the statements. Two positive highlights are that students responded that administrators generally take concerns raised by students seriously (more so than faculty leadership), and are accessible to meet and discuss student concerns with student leadership.

Table 2. *General Climate and Communication*

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Shared governance on our campus is alive and healthy.	1	4	4	3	1
There are excellent communications and consultation between the administration and campus student governments.	2	4	2	4	1
The administration is supportive of student involvement in shared governance.	4	4	3	1	1
There are opportunities to provide feedback on the state of shared governance on your campus, and there are plans made to address issues that are brought up.		6	3	3	1
The administration is accessible to meet and discuss student concerns with the student leadership.	3	7	2	1	

The administration provides adequate institutional support for shared governance to function.	1	4	3	4	1
The administration takes concerns raised by student leaders seriously.	2	7	2	1	1
The faculty leadership take concerns raised by student leaders seriously.	3	5	1	2	2
The faculty leadership is accessible to meet and discuss student concerns with the student leadership.	1	5	5	1	1

Table 3, below, gives the summary of the university president's role in participating and promoting shared governance. Students agreed that the president rarely/seldom overturns decisions and/or recommendations where the students have primary responsibility and that the presidents support and advocate the principles of shared governance, for the most part. However, presidents could do more to seek meaningful student input on issues of interest to students.

Table 3. *President's Role*

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Other than on rare occasions, the president seldom overturns decisions and recommendations in areas in which students have primary responsibility.	3	5	5		
The president seeks meaningful student input on issues which students have an appropriate interest, but not primary responsibility.	1	5	4	2	1
The president supports and advocates the principles of shared governance.	3	6	2		2

The final section of questions - **Table 4** - focused on how decisions are made within each campus' system of shared governance. Shared governance structures and processes were generally well defined in campus governance documents. Most campus administrations do a good job of having student representation engaged with relevant hiring decisions and certain planning and strategic planning practices. While students are sometimes left out of decisions that they'd like to be involved in or aware of, and communication could be improved, shared governance between the administration and students on most campuses work somewhat effectively.

Table 4. *Decision-Making*

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The administration utilizes student involvement appropriately in planning and strategic planning.	2	4	3	2	2
The administration recognizes student involvement appropriately in relevant hiring decisions.	2	6	2	2	1
Structures and processes that allow for shared governance are clearly defined in governance documents.	2	7	2	2	
Shared governance between the administration and students functions in an effective manner.	2	4	4	2	1

Campus Summaries

Bowie State University

Students at the graduate and undergraduate level are included in the shared governance structure at Bowie State University. Those students who serve on committees where shared governance is exercised are members of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and Student Government Association (SGA). The Presidents of these organizations are charged with securing student representation on these committees. Shared governance gives students the opportunity to vote on policies and legislation that affect the University (students, faculty, staff, etc.) Students are also a part of the search committees when hiring new employees at the university.

Shared governance can be improved on Bowie's campus by being considerate of the times meetings are held. Many meetings currently take place in the morning, when most graduate students aren't available. There is no option to call-in for graduate representatives for these meetings. A more inclusive approach could be taken in this area to ensure that the student voice is included.

Frostburg State University

Frostburg State has seen its shared governance processes improve significantly in recent years, especially in response to its most recent re-accreditation in 2016. In response to concerns brought by the SGA relating to a lack of an ability to participate in campus decisionmaking, President Nowaczyk created students seats on the institution's University Advisory Council (UAC). In this way, students have a codified, consistent opportunity to share concerns and be heard by the campus leadership. In addition to administration support, there has been regular encouragement and coordination of student involvement in shared governance by the faculty and staff councils, and the three have worked together on issues of mutual concern. Students have also participated in various other campus committees, task forces and advisory councils.

An area for improvement is that the student participation in shared governance is all advisory, and there is no joint campus legislative body that equally responds to resolutions and proposals from the three representative bodies. Finally, some faculty serving on campus committees will disregard the importance of consistent student representation on core issues.

Salisbury University

Students expressed frustration with the administration's enforcement of shared governance practices. Students feel that, though shared governance is written and spoken out, there has been little action behind the words, and, thus, little progress. Students do have seats on different consortium committees on campus that are involved in making decisions for the campus; however, these committees rarely meet. The leadership of committees can shift between semesters, and no practical avenue exist through which stakeholders (namely, students) are thoroughly and consistently informed of when, where, and what committees they have representation on. Further, the committees often meet at times that are incongruent with student schedules, and they are not allowed to send another student in their place.

Though they believe administrators *want* an effective shared governance system, student leaders feel that that administration does not thoroughly facilitate infrastructure development or execute even existing committees in a manner that is conducive to a productive shared governance system. Students are often demeaned when they push certain initiatives rather than encouraged; the faculty senate, for example, has created an environment where they believe that students are creating solutions to problems that don't actually exist. The student body disagrees.

Graduate student leadership has felt especially left out of shared governance structures and decision making, and feel that there has been little to no collaboration or conversation by faculty and administrators with student leaders outside of the SGA.

Towson University

Shared governance concerns at Towson were less related to accessibility to campus leadership or relationships with administrators and more surrounding the actual structures of shared governance. Students are often required to go through the university senate for certain initiatives and to tackle certain issues that primarily affect students, which can be problematic because structurally, the university senate contains many more faculty than students or staff. This often makes it especially difficult for students to address any issues of real concern brought up by the student body.

Universities at Shady Grove

In terms of participation, the representation of students on various committees and the USG Board of Advisors has opened clear communication channels and input on important decisions that are made. The administration does a good job of engaging with the students. An area for improvement is to clarify shared governance processes, as things can move quite slowly.

University of Baltimore

The University of Baltimore is working to foster a more inclusive relationship among students, faculty, staff and administration when it comes to making decisions that impact the university. This academic year, the student body has become more outspoken in vocalizing issues and concerns with strong support from faculty and staff as well. As a result, the administration is working to create a more open dialogue with student input where it matters.

One specific example of this is through the creation of a committee of students, faculty and staff that sends recommendations for a commencement speaker to the President for their consideration. While the final decision still lies with the President, he is now able to make a more informed decision based upon student feedback. Another area of concern this academic year was on budgeting and finance. As the university undergoes changes in enrollment, the changes that have been made relating to budgeting correlate with our university's values of improving its financial state and being transparent. To keep students updated with real time information as budget decisions are made, the President's office created a web portal for budget and finance updates that are accessible to anyone. Resources such as this, in addition to holding more town halls and forums, and creating committees and task forces, has kept all relevant stakeholders in the loop.

While tough decisions must be made, transparency along the way is vital in these decisions, especially when they directly impact students. From the reformation of the counseling center to the relocation of the bookstore, we've seen a lot of changes at the University of Baltimore this year, with mixed reviews. Together, we have learned that it isn't always *what* decisions are made, but *how* they are made and the process that was used that is just as important. The quality of our shared governance system is steadily improving as we continue to hold each other accountable.

University of Maryland - Baltimore

University of Maryland-Baltimore administration has worked to address certain concerns brought to the table by student leaders. For example, financial aid was a serious concern last semester, and administration has decided to hire an additional staff to oversee issues regarding financial aid, and has heavily involved students in this process. However, due to the graduate and specialized nature of all 7 UMB schools, there is not much connection between schools themselves.

President Perman invites select students and student leaders to have brunch with him on some weekends. However, due to the number of students at UMB, the graduate and specialized nature of all 7 schools, it can be difficult to ascertain a single student voice. The UMB campus is overall more health profession focused, and does not have much of a centralized system, and sometimes there isn't as much interest in shared governance.

University of Maryland - Baltimore County

In summarizing the shared governance relationship between students and administration, student leaders noticed that there is a difference between the undergraduate and graduate student relationship. While the overall climate isn't considered especially healthy or unhealthy, student leaders felt that there was room for improvement in the ability for students to be a key part of the decision-making process. Students also felt that communication could be increased from the administration as well.

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences

Student leadership felt that the practice of shared governance at UMCES was generally positive. Of particular note is that administration seeks out student input on decision making at the academic and administrative level. A recent addition of adding the student council chair permanently to the Administrative Council was a very positive step in continuing to seek out student input. While documents outlining the role of the student council are unclear, the student council is working with faculty and administration to more clearly define the responsibilities of the council in the shared governance structure.

University of Maryland - College Park

While shared governance is advocated for publicly on a consistent basis at UMCP, in practice there have been specific instances where shared governance processes have failed. Specifically, the implementation of a new student fee on international students that did not go through any of the campus shared governance processes has caused significant distrust between students and administrators. Student leaders are then left with the perception that their input is tokenized or disregarded, yet shared governance is still used as a marketing tool. When brought to the table, student concerns, especially graduate student concerns, are not taken seriously.

While there are relatively clear processes and structures for participation at UMCP, they are often underutilized and biased in ways that demean and diminish student (and faculty, and staff) participation. Overall, students felt that the climate for shared governance is poor and that there is much room for improvement.

University of Maryland - Eastern Shore

Student leaders described shared government as “above average” compared to other USM campuses, and as an improving relationship. While in some departments and divisions there is a strong sense of shared governance, it is completely lacking, strained, or non-existing in others. However, the administration does do a good job of including the SGA and GSG in conversations regarding key decisions that impact students on campus. While the administration does a good job in the area of including students in the decision making process, an area for improvement is actually addressing student concerns when their views and concerns are brought to the table.

University of Maryland University College

UMUC has a unique shared governance structure; for students, the primary leadership is the Student Advisory Committee (STAC). The administration has always been quick to respond to items of interest brought to the table by STAC, and is given opportunities to advise the administration on areas of interest.