



Bowie State University
14000 Jericho Park Road
Bowie, MD 20715

Coppin State University
2500 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216

Frostburg State University
101 Braddock Road
Frostburg, MD 21532

Salisbury University
1101 Camden Avenue
Salisbury, MD 21801

Towson University
8000 York Road
Towson, MD 21252

University of Baltimore
1420 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

University of Maryland, Baltimore
520 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

**University of Maryland
Biotechnology Institute**
Executive Office
15825 Shady Grove
Rockville, MD 20850

**University of Maryland Center
for Environmental Science**
P.O. Box 775
Cambridge, MD 21613

**University of Maryland,
Baltimore County**
1000 Hilltop Circle
Baltimore, MD 21250

**University of Maryland,
College Park**
College Park, MD 20742

**University of Maryland,
Eastern Shore**
Princess Anne, MD 21853

**University of Maryland,
University College**
3501 University Boulevard East
Adelphi, MD 20783

**University System of Maryland
Office**
3300 Metzgerott Road
Adelphi, MD 20783-1690

Dr. Brit Kirwan, Chancellor
University System of Maryland
Adelphi, Maryland

June 14, 2007

Dear Brit,

I am taking an opportunity to report to you as outgoing Chair of the Staff Council on the state of the shared governance process at USM. This is a matter of deep concern to Council, me personally and I am sure to you also. I regret to say that, in my opinion, there has been a serious deterioration in the USM shared governance system for staff, both in actual structure and in the attitude toward shared governance in general at USM and the component institutions.

In reference to the structure of shared governance, there are at least three institutions, Frostburg State, Coppin State and UMCES where no internal staff shared governance structure exists. The Regents policy on Shared Governance states that each institution should have some shared governance structure for staff input. Such staff structures existed previously but they no longer do. I have been reluctant to bring this discrepancy up to the Regents however this appears to clearly be in violation of the existing policy.

When this condition is allowed to exist on some campuses, it threatens the existence of shared governance at other USM institutions. While at certain Universities (UMCP and UMBC for example) shared governance for staff are firmly part of the culture and structure, other institutions only marginally accept shared governance and when they see sister institutions ignore the Regents policy on Shared Governance they are less likely to take staff shared governance seriously.

This lack of support from campus administrators manifest itself in lack of participation of staff in shared governance organizations such as CUSS, campus councils and senates etc. As an example, when I mentioned to the outgoing president of Coppin State that they had only one person on CUSS and they should have two, he told me that none of his staff had the time for such activities as shared governance, they were all too busy. Similarly other institutions in the USM do not view participation in shared governance organizations as an activity they value, promote or encourage. This attitude has serious consequences for participation of staff who already feel vulnerable. We have only to look at the membership of CUSS to see that certain USM institutions continually have vacant seats to understand that it is not a valued activity.

The attitude of marginalizing staff shared governance unfortunately also is common at certain UM Systems Offices. Advice, initiatives and requests

from the Staff Council are given perfunctory treatment and/or not responded to by upper administrators. An example of this attitude is an incident I have been told about at a Vice Presidents for Administrative Affairs meeting recently when someone asked how CUSS would view a certain policy, the reply was that CUSS has no power and shouldn't be a consideration. This type of attitude goes back from USM Hq to the campus and down to the HR departments. While you know that the Staff Council represent the concerns of over 8,000 university employees compared to the Unions 5,700 employees, others in the USM act as if the absentee union has the final say for all employees. The result is a grid-locking of all staff proposals because of a fear for intruding on collective bargaining. I would argue that this is used more as an excuse for inaction rather than actual legal hindrance on moving forward on issues.

To reverse this trend of marginalizing shared governance I would make the following suggestions- first is to fully implement the BOR policy on Shared Governance. This should not even be an issue of debate among the Presidents, as it is an existing policy of the governing board and should be fully implemented. This requires the presidents to report on their shared governance system to the Chancellor and the Chancellor in turn to report to the Regents. Once the Presidents know they will be before the Regents explaining why they don't have any staff shared governance at their units the problem will take care of itself. I would suggest that the Regents could add to that by requesting a report from the faculty and staff councils on the state of USM shared governance to the Regents. This would provide a different perspective for the Regents and keep the campus reports from exaggerating their shared governance activity.

Secondly, it would be useful if you were to meet with the Vice Presidents for Administration and make clear your commitment to shared governance. Many of the financial managers don't have experience with or interest in consultative management. A clear statement from the Chancellor in support of the shared governance process to this group would go a long way in opening the door to staff participation and advice on issue of importance.

Since this is my third term as Chair of the Staff Council with some years between tenures I have some perspective on how the status of shared governance activity has changed over the years. I have to say I was disheartened this year about the process. If the Staff Council's main roll is only to select the BOR staff awardees and not functions as a partner in making USM policies better, then we will have trouble attracting the participation of serious staff. If that happens it will be a loss of a valuable resource for the entire system and the State.

As always, I am available to discuss this at your convenience.

With best regards-

A. L. Lauer, CUSS Chair 2006-2007
Cc: CUSS Membership