

Council of University System Staff (CUSS) Meeting - MINUTES

Dec. 15, 2009

University System of Maryland Main Office
Adelphi, MD

In attendance:

Members

Linda Parker-Ford	BSU
Chris Thomas	CSU
Absent	FSU
Absent	SU
Brenda Yarema	TU, Member at Large
Karyn Schulz	UB, CUSS Co-Secretary
Giordana Segneri	UB, CUSS Co-Secretary
Colette Becker	UMB, CUSS Vice Chair
Dave DeLooze	UMB
Joe Hill	UMBC
Lori Smith-Watson	UMBC, Member at Large
Mary Stapleton	UMBI
Gus Mercanti	UMCES
Willie Brown	UMCP, CUSS Chair
Sister Maureen Schrimpe	UMCP
Larry Lauer	UMCP
Absent	UMES
Jessica McCarty	UMUC
Ayman Abdo	UMUC
Mary Reed	USMO
John Wolfe	USMO

Alternates/Guests

Cynthia Coleman	BSU
Michael Hughes	UMUC
Joel DeWyer	UMBC
Chenita Reddick	UMES
Andy Clark, guest	USMO

Chancellor's Liaison to CUSS:	
Rosario I. van Daalen	USMO

Chancellor Brit Kirwan	USMO
COO/VCAF Joseph Vivona	USMO
COO/VCAF Joseph Vivona	USMO

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Chief Operating Officer and Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance (COO/VCAF) Joe Vivona welcomed CUSS to the University System of Maryland Office and explained his position
- Andy Clark, Director of Legislative Affairs, introduced himself

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November minutes were approved

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

- a. Chancellor's Council meeting
 - No expectations of further budget reductions before the Legislature convenes
 - No clear picture for the next fiscal year
- b. USM Strategic Plan

- 20-year plan, update of plan presented five or six years ago
 - We should be involved in update
- d. Binge drinking
- Frostburg State University program is willing to speak at the Institutions and to CUSS about FSU's actions against binge drinking
 - Do we want them to come speak to CUSS? YES. Chair Willie Brown will e-mail President Gibraltar, FSU, who is leading the initiative.
 - Important to involve Staff and Faculty employees in combating binge drinking among students
- e. Report on Graduate Assistant/Adjunct Faculty
- Institutions are all over the map with what benefits they offer to Graduate Assistants and Adjunct Faculty; effort to develop consistent methods to improve their status
 - Joe Vivona chaired a workgroup to analyze the situation; John Wolfe was a member of the workgroup
 - American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union is interested in organizing both groups, but they didn't get enough votes for a hearing
 - Looked at circumstances of Contingent II employees
 - About half of the courses across the System are taught by adjuncts
 - Graduate assistants have grievances, too
 - Work through Shared Governance groups to help improve their status and deal with compensation issues
 - Larry Lauer: This is a grassroots issue, brought up at UMCP's Campus Senate meeting related to maternity leave
 - Question of unionization
- f. Meeting to Review the Extra Merit Increases Policy, with committee appointed by USM Office, as requested by CUSS
- No more than five CUSS representatives: Joe Hill, Roy Ross, Dave DeLooze, Brenda Yarema, Willie Brown
 - Either Monday, Jan. 11, or Wednesday, Jan. 13
4. VICE CHAIR'S REPORT: Board of Regents Meeting
- Update on University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES)
 - Joe Vivona gave an update on Dashboard Indicators, comparison of Institutions based on students, faculty, alumni satisfaction and funding
 - Vice Chair Colette Becker talked about CUSS legislative update: CUSS Legislative Committee will keep CUSS apprised of bills to keep an eye on
 - Colette Becker discussed Board of Regents Staff Awards
 - Board of Regents loved the Frequently Asked Questions that CUSS distributed in its Quarterly Report regarding furloughs and USM's cost-cutting measures
 - Regent Thomas Slater asked if CUSS could update and add more information to the FAQs and cost-cutting measures, to keep it as a living document

- Willie Brown: At the Chancellor's Council meeting, the Chancellor reiterated how great the document is; the Presidents also really liked it
 - Colette Becker: told the Board of Regents that the more knowledge that USM Staff have, the more accepting they'll be of budget-cutting decisions
 - Rosario van Daalen: Use this article for the newsletter this year, this is a perfect example of Shared Governance at work
 - Willie Brown: CUSF Chair William Stuart regrets not having a chance to meet before the break; Willie Brown to attend the December CUSF meeting Dec. 16; planning a meeting with CUSF and the USM Student Council at the end of January or mid-February
 - Larry Lauer: If we're going to be effective at all in influencing the budget process, we need to have the meeting as early as possible; tuition increase will be a big issue
 - Willie Brown: We can work on our own *and* with the other groups; Shared Governance needs to be united before we go to Annapolis; we need to meet before bringing recommendations to the Legislature because we can't bring multiple differing views; often, CUSS writes a letter, and CUSF will endorse it
 - Gus Mercanti: concerned about CUSS taking a backseat to other groups
 - Rosario van Daalen: we shouldn't second-guess students about them supporting the tuition increase because they see the value of the USM having funds to support Student's programs and needs.
 - Willie Brown: proposed 5 percent increase in tuition was included in the budget sent to the Legislature; Student Council Chair Brady Walker has already stated he endorses the increase; we're much stronger if we work together and endorse proposals together; we'll get the other groups on board, but we won't wait for them to put forth our proposals
5. WELCOME FROM USMO CUSS MEMBER TO THE SYSTEM OFFICE - Mary Reed
- Chancellor will join us for lunch, and we will take a group photo with him; USM Office houses Advancement, Academic Affairs (Faculty and Student program), Administration and Finance and the USM Foundation
6. REPORT FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S LIAISON TO CUSS - Rosario van Daalen
- Revisions to supplemental retirement plans approved by Board of Regents
 - No longer restricting employees under 403(b) plan to just one loan at a time (hardship withdrawals)
 - No limits on loans as long as employees meet IRS criteria
 - Employee benefits
 - United Concordia will be sending notices about dependents reaching age 19; our employees can ignore these notices because our State Health Benefits cover dependents until age 25
 - Health Benefits application forms for Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) retirees - mandate from DBM-EBD:
 - If employees are in the ORP, any prospective retiree, as of Feb. 1, 2010, must fill out these new forms to find out if she/he will have retirement health benefit coverage and receive a State subsidy; the process can be very

complicated and time consuming if the employee worked at multiple State agencies because each agency has to sign off on the form

- **The ORP is a State of Maryland retirement plan, so years at any State of Maryland agency count as years** of service for purposes of calculating the eligibility for the health benefit
- All employees in the ORP should read the ORP booklet; it has examples of combinations of service/State of Maryland Retirement/Pension/ORP and coverage according to years worked. The booklet and forms may be obtained from the employee's Institution Benefits Coordinator or look on the following websites:
<http://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/healthben/Documents/HBForms/ORPRetireeFormsPacket.pdf>
and
<http://dbm.maryland.gov/employees/healthben/Documents/HBForms/ORPRetireeHealthBenefitsHandbook.pdf>
- Same-sex domestic partner benefits
 - Question came up as to why same-sex domestic partners are not covered under USM policies if they are eligible for health benefits
 - The Systemwide Human Resources Committee (SHRC) has identified four policies that would be impacted:
 - Tuition remission
 - Nepotism
 - FMLA
 - Sick leave (death of a relative; UMCP has separate policy)
 - Action on moving policies forward is postponed until after the Legislative Session, because of focus on budget
 - Not many people are taking advantage of the current domestic-partner benefits because there are lots of hoops to jump through, require lots of proof; plus, benefits are paid as post-tax and the premium is taxable as added income on paychecks
 - Same criteria used for Health Benefits eligibility must be met to be eligible for inclusion under USM policies
- Biennial Exempt Market Salary Survey Report – July 2010-June 2012
 - Two USM Exempt Salary Structures: Traditional Pay Ranges (UMB and UMUC) and Wide Pay Ranges (rest of USM Institutions)
 - Requirement is that the minimum and maximum of both structures must be equal; what happens in between can differ
 - Report presented to SHRC on Dec. 3, 2009.
 - Committee surveyed the market:
 - Concern about overlapping of Exempt and Nonexempt pay structures: USM is still 10.74 percent below where it would like to be for Exempt structure minimum to reduce impact of compression

- Exempt minimum is \$29,149, which is parallel to pay range 8 of Nonexempt structure, when USM would prefer it to be parallel to pay range 10 of Nonexempt structure (\$32,280)
- By the time we can recuperate from the budget cuts and constraints, we'll be way behind this goal
- Three recommendations:
 - Increase minimums of the Exempt Salary Structures by 10.74 percent and Increase the rest of the Pay Ranges minimums by 5 percent (five Pay Ranges in the Wide; 10 pay Ranges in the Traditional)
 - a. Not accepted because Institutions can't afford the increases, would cost USM more than \$700,000 at a time that we are facing serious budget cuts.
 - Second option: Raise the just the minimums of the Exempt Salary Structures by 8 percent, which would cost the USM \$114,000
 - Third option: The SHRC recommended no action at this time and freeze the current Salary Structures; the report will be presented to the Admin VPs on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2009.

7. AD-HOC COMMITTEE REPORT

- Lori Smith-Watson and Brenda Yarema have to work through the many ideas that were brainstormed and will have more information for the January CUSS meeting
- Idea about communicating more publicly how broadly we represent Staff at Institutions
 - Concern: titles can be misunderstood, might not represent good split of Exempt vs. Nonexempt, might seem to represent more administrative Staff
 - Some people are afraid to speak up when upper administrative Staff is present
 - Recommendation: communicate more broad areas (departments) in which we work
- Larry Lauer: Council and constituents have changed since collective bargaining; Nonexempt staff in CUSS are mostly supervisors or confidential, thus not represented by the union
- Important to demonstrate broadness of CUSS representation to Legislature, communicate areas of Institutions from which we cull constituents
- All titles nevertheless are available via online directories at each Institution
- John Wolfe: We still represent larger constituency than collective bargaining; issue is perception of who we are
- Willie Brown: we take interest in the lives of all Staff, not just excluded (from collective bargaining) Staff
- Mary Stapleton: CUSS should work harder at recruiting representatives who aren't senior administration
- Willie Brown: Let's send out a holiday card from CUSS with representatives' names and institutions (with group photo taken at lunch)
- Motion to send out season's greetings card with our mission statement, including list of CUSS representatives with institutions: APPROVED

- Motion to allow Brenda Yarema and Lori Smith-Watson develop a proposal for communicating the range of Staff that CUSS represents and report back in January:
APPROVED

8. LUNCH

- Introduction of Chancellor
 - Chancellor Brit Kirwan: thanked CUSS, puts great stock in Shared Governance, appreciates the time we give to raising and thinking about issues, commends CUSS for its leadership.
 - Has been inspired by determination and spirit of USM Faculty and Staff
 - Maryland budget affected profoundly by unemployment because of loss of income tax revenue; USM is blessed that State administration appreciate importance of Higher Education; never before has USM been seen as such a priority
 - All in USM Main Office feel the State is treating the System as a priority
- Brit Kirwan: strategic plan produced in 2004 (for 2004-10); working to revise plan for new realities of next decade; document will go to Board of Regents for the last meeting of the year in late June
 - Important to Institutions because budget requests must be driven by the plan, and individual Institution strategic plans have to be in line with the USM plan
 - College completion vs. access
 - Role of higher education in economic and workforce development
 - Emerging ideas about new themes appear in the fourth column of the document
 - Very helpful if CUSS would provide feedback, look at proposed new themes and strategies
 - Mission, vision, core values, goals
 - Can take back to respective Institutions
- Update on UMBI: MOUs progressing; one signed, two about to be signed; work has begun on the CARB MOU, and it will be completed in the early part of the year

9. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (Karyn Schulz)

- State employees have reduced public transportation rates through MTA; USM employees should have the benefit, too
- Karyn Schulz developed a letter regarding public transportation for USM employees and requests feedback from CUSS
- Legislation that would have protected USM rights to parity of benefits was dropped when collective bargaining was adopted. However, a commitment was made by the Governor, the BOR and the Chancellor's /Presidents' Council that the USM would maintain that parity – to provide “no less than” the State.
- UMB Staff Council has negotiated its own program for lower rates with MTA
- Willie Brown: What are the legal and political ramifications?

- Rosario van Daalen: There are no political ramifications, but the difficulty is getting a hold of someone to help us. She tried in past years but did not get cooperation from the State; was told it was only available to a small group under a pilot program.
 - CUSS will get detailed report from UMB to follow the same path they did

10. OLD BUSINESS

- Legislative Day
 - Joe Hill: CUSS should go to Annapolis to introduce CUSS to Legislators; try to go at beginning of session, in the middle of the session and at the end; important to keep up our visibility
 - Andy Clark – Upcoming session:
 - Dealing with fallout of larger economic downfall
 - Choose three or four specific issues; keep them tailored to issues of the Board of Regents, Chancellor and Presidents
 - Tuition will be an issue; Gov. Martin O’Malley is a friend of Higher Education, and the freeze is one of the governor’s initiatives that has really worked
 - Keep issues clear and concise
 - Manageable advocacy strategy
 - Weekly call-ins (Mondays at 9 a.m.) with Andy Clark: rundown of what happened the week before, what to look forward to in the next week
 - Testimonies by presidents to be done differently this year
- Rosario van Daalen: The Blue Ribbon Commission, assigned to address the State’s current cost liability of retirees’ health benefits, has filed for an extension in submitting its report until December 2010; next year is an election year which might affect decisions made by this Commission; governor waiting to see what happens at the national level regarding health care which might have an impact on health care for active employees and retirees.

NEXT MONTH’S CUSS MEETING: Jan. 26, 2009, University of Maryland University College (UMUC)

- Willie Brown would like to spend a good portion of the next meeting discussing the strategic plan, so CUSS representatives should share it with and request feedback from constituents
- Legislative Day

Respectfully submitted by Karyn Schulz and Giordana Segneri, CUSS Co-Secretaries