

February 2009

Council of University System Staff (CUSS) Meeting

February 24, 2009

University of Maryland, College Park

In attendance:

Members	Institution	Alternates/Guests
Cynthia Coleman	BSU	
Chris Thomas	CSU	
Abby Bynes	CSU	Alternate
Jesse Ketterman	FSU	
Bernard Wynder	FSU	
Sheila Murray	SU	Alternate
Jackie Eberts	SU	
Carol Barr	SU	
Brenda Yarema	TU	
Absent	UB	
Karyn Schulz	Co-Secretary, UB	
Absent	UMB	Alternate
Colette Becker	UMB, Vice Chair	
Dave DeLooze	UMB	
Roy Ross	UMB	
Joe Hill	UMBC	
Deborah Geare	UMBC	
Jami Kasco	UMBI	
Mary Stapleton	UMBI	
Gus Mercanti	UMCES	
Larry Lauer	CUSS Chair, UMCP	
Patrick Perfetto	UMCP	Guest
Willie Brown	UMCP	
Chenita Reddick	UMES	Alternate
Ayman Abdo	UMUC	
Michael Hughes	UMUC	Alternate
Absent	UMUC	
Mary Reed	USMO	
John T. Wolfe, Jr.	USMO	
Rosario I. Van Daalen	USMO	Chancellor's Liaison To Cuss

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Larry Lauer called the **meeting to order**.

Dr. Kenneth Holum, Chair of the University of Maryland College Park University Senate which represents Staff and Faculty, welcomed the members to his Institution on behalf of President Mote. Dr. Holum explained how the UMCP University Senate represents Staff, Faculty and students as UMCP's Shared Governance body. They are currently working on tough issues such as a ban on smoking on campus, an amnesty policy on substance abuse and a proposed policy that will reduce salaries for tenured Faculty with poor performance evaluations. Dr. Holum shared his passion for Shared Governance and believes it creates a greater sense of community and invites shared decisions between members. He also shared that UMCP, under the guidance of Rika Motport (sp?) used a new electronic voting system this year and had four times the participants.

January **minutes** will be presented for review and approval at the March meeting.

Chairman's Report:

Larry reported that the most recent **Board of Regents meeting (BOR)** was focused mainly on budget issues. He indicated that furloughs were moving forward at all the Institutions of the USM.

From the Chancellor's Council meeting (2/23/09): The Council discussed the new federal stimulus bill that is expected to bring approximately \$3.8 billion to Maryland over the next three years. This will help to take some pressure off of the USM budget. Larry felt that the atmosphere at the Chancellor's Council and the BOR meeting was more relaxed and calmer as a result of the stimulus package being passed by Congress.

Larry reviewed the Chancellor's testimony in Annapolis which pushed for continued support for the USM budget as proposed by Governor O'Malley.

There was a discussion about a service fee being introduced by the union that is supported by the Governor. The service fee would allow unions to collect funding that they are not currently collecting as it is not permitted under the current Collective Bargaining law. This service fee proposal does not include USM unions, but could trickle down to the System if it passes through the legislature.

There was a discussion by CUSS members about the proposed service fee and Roy Ross indicated that under the current state law (Senate Bill 207), service fees cannot be mandated. CUSS will not be involved since it does not have union representation. It can act as a resource of information as we learn of pending legislation but cannot support or oppose any proposals.

Another issue that was discussed at the Chancellor's Council and BOR was the textbook cost resolution. Legislation was introduced to mandate that USM bookstores would work to insure that the least costly books would be available to USM students. The BOR has already passed a resolution regarding textbook costs.

BOR Awards: Deb Geare thanked all who volunteered to review the collected nominations for this year's awards. There were a total of 46 nominations, an increase of 10 from last year. There was one withdrawal and 2 duplicates which reduced the total nominations to 43. Deb shared that the timeline of decisions will be during the week of March 23rd and the Executive Committee will have final decisions during the week of April 1st.

John Wolfe indicated that the BOR is sensitive to the number of nominations/applications. He shared that they question which institutions did not participate and suggested that Deb create a table with the data that includes which institutions participated and the number of applicants nominated. Deb has already created such a table and will share with all when the process is complete. Deb indicated that all but one institution, UMCES, did not submit a nomination. It was believed that due to its size, UMCES could not find Staff to submit the paperwork for a nomination.

Joe Hill suggested the creation of a survey that would allow CUSS to collect information about why institutions opt to participate or not participate. This will be created by the Community Development Committee after the awards have been selected.

Mary Reed discussed that the strength of the nomination package is important to consider. Strong letters of recommendation are very important as they help increase the selection of the nominee. Furthermore, strong support from the institution is also important. She suggested an email be sent by the Chancellor's Chief of Staff that would encourage participation by all institutions.

Rosario added that it is also important to understand that the nominations are not intended for people who are 'doing their job', but for those who go above and beyond the duties and responsibilities of their job. She also indicated that it is very important for the institutions presidents to be involved.

Jackie Eberts suggested a creation of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the BOR Awards to help institutions with the nomination process.

Brenda Yarema indicated that Towson was very motivated to send nominations because their president was very supportive. She said that it is a partnership with the president during this process.

John W. shared that in the past the BOR was concerned also with a balance of nominations per institution and wanted the award to be likened to winning an "Oscar." This is a Systemwide award and needs to have more significance when nominations are requested. He told CUSS members that CUSF has a total of 17 awards and received approximately 87 nominations. John will send the CUSF BOR Award categories to Deb.

Larry told CUSS that the Chancellor has agreed to have the award ceremony at Hidden Waters in December 2009 which would give it more prestige. It would allow awardees and their families to be

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recognized by the Chancellor in a setting that is more formal and not become second fiddle to the BOR meeting in which the awards have been traditionally given. Larry will follow up with an email to the Chancellor and BOR to continue the dialog on hosting the award ceremony at Hidden Waters at the annual holiday party.

Larry asked CUSS members if they could suggest ways to increase participation. Did we feel the current process, 2 selections per award, is enough? Should we add an award that recognizes team work? John W. agreed that an award for collaboration would be a good addition. Larry told CUSS members that the CUSF awards have been expanded which sets the precedence for CUSS awards to increase as well.

Jesse Ketterman asked if we really need to increase the number of awards just for the sake of increasing the numbers. He suggested that there may be a need to simplify the process since it is very time consuming. He also indicated the importance of the Institutions presidents becoming involved in the nomination process by promoting the awards to Staff. He said we need to create a sense of excitement about the awards.

Willie agreed that the process was cumbersome for all involved and asked CUSS if there was a way to streamline the process.

Larry charged Deb's committee to create a task force that would review the process for the BOR Awards and focus specifically on ways to improve the process and make recommendations.

Joe H. indicated that it may not be the process, but lack of support at different institutions or lack of support by different presidents.

John W. asked if there was a way to create a secure website that would allow nominations to be posted and reviewers share their thoughts. Rosario added that perhaps having the "stories" of the award winners on the USM website may inspire others to nominate peers in the future.

Gus Mercanti shared his concern that during the process review that the process should not dumb down or make it too easy for nominations to be submitted or awards given.

Chancellor's Liaison to CUSS- Report: Rosario I. van Daalen shared that it is not too early for Institutions to begin their election process for CUSS representation. It is of particular importance for CUSS members to know if they will be continuing during the next term, prior to the nomination process and elections for the CUSS Executive Committee positions. This takes place at the May and June meetings. She shared her concern about the lack of alignment with CUSS elections and institutions elections.

Rosario discussed the Biennial Nonexempt Market Salary Survey which was started in September 2008. The data collected was from surveys completed prior to October 2008, when the economy in the country started to go sour. The earlier data suggested a need to increase the Nonexempt Salary

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Structure to compete with the market. Even though the Baltimore-Washington corridor is still doing fairly well in regards to jobs and salaries, the State/USM budget is facing serious constraints, including furloughs and perhaps more serious budget cuts in the upcoming fiscal year. A conservative approach has been recommended.

The proposed recommendation to the Presidents and BOR is to increase the minimum of pay range 1, up to bring it in line with the State's minimum "living wage", from \$20,772 to \$21,188. The USM is committed to pay "no less" than the State. Additionally, this adjustment will also have an impact on Pay Ranges 2 and 3, which will be increased too.

All Staff employees in Regular, Contingent Category I, and Category II jobs whose current pay falls below the new minimums, must receive an increase to the new minimums according to USM policy.

Although CUSS does not represent Contingent Category I Staff employees, it can comment on this recommendation because it may impact Systemwide usage of the policy. Larry suggested that CUSS should be concerned about any policy regarding Contingent I contracts and that they are not abused by institutions. John W. added that institutions should not resort to using Contingent I contracts to keep costs down. Rosario agreed that Contingent I contracts should not be used for continuous functions but as they are intended, for short-term projects.

Rosario shared that the federal minimum wage will change on July 24, 2009 to \$7.25. At the USM it will apply to students, lecturers and others whose pay could start at the federal minimum wage.

Joe H. asked about the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) report which is due in December 2009. Rosario shared that the BRC is reviewing best practices of other states in regards to retirement packages and health benefits of retirees, taking into consideration the current economy.

There have been no recommendations by BRC. Rosario mentioned that suggestions have been made that the BRC not interfere with current retirees as well as others who were "promised" their retirement plan. Suggestions to change the minimum number of years to be vested into the system or the number of years to be eligible for a full subsidy may be some of the points under consideration. Also an increase in the contribution by agencies and or employer or employee may be suggested. Maryland has an excellent retirement/health plan, as compared to other states, but it is facing a huge deficit of over \$16 Billion and changes must be made now in order to support a retirement/health program in the future.

John W. indicated that as a retiree from Georgia, his premium doubled mid-year and he voiced his concerns for such a change and those who live on fixed incomes.

Committee Meetings:

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Community Development: Will continue to work on the BOR Awards and hopes the selection process will be in its final stages by the next CUSS meeting. Once the selection process is finished, the committee will review the policy, program and process of the BOR Awards and work to create consistency.

Legislative Committee: Roy shared two letters that were created, one of which has been sent to the Governor thanking him for his support for higher education. The second letter will be sent to the members of the legislature asking for their support of higher education and the governor's proposed budget. It is hoped that we (CUSS) will be able to individualize these letters per CUSS member to send directly to their representatives.

A discussion between CUSS members ensued regarding the best tactic to take, in delivering the letters to the legislature. Would more attention be given to a letter from CUSS overall or individual letters? Joe H. suggested to send letters to individual members of the legislature (own districts) indicating their institution, requesting their support of the budget. Larry suggested a template on the CUSS website for others to use (per institution) so the letter campaign can be expanded. Roy shared the website that allows individuals to determine their representatives in Annapolis: http://mdelect.net/elected_officials/

Rosario suggested that we (CUSS) legislative committee attend the BRC discussion hearings to get input from the process.

Benefits: Did not meet

Communication: The website will be updated shortly and will update members, the newsletter, committee members and Jami asked if the minutes are ready for the site too. Karyn and/or Kimberley will submit the approved minutes to Jami to be placed on the website. Jami asked CUSS to review the website for any needed updates, etc.

Larry shared that today, 2/24/09, is Deb Geare's birthday and Rosario's is 2/27/09. The CUSS membership sang Happy Birthday to both.

Next meeting: March 24, 2009 at the University of Baltimore

Respectfully submitted by Karyn Schulz, 3/11/09