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# CUSS: IN REVIEW

## Who and/or What is CUSS?

*After all these years, many University System Staff are still asking what is CUSS?* To put it simply we are the Council of University System Staff (CUSS).

CUSS started meeting in 1992 at the request of the Chancellor to advise the Chancellor on matters relating to the development and maintenance of the new pay program for Staff employees. CUSS is comprised of Staff employees with representatives from each of the 13 institutions. Institution membership is proportionate to the number of Staff employees at the individual institutions with a minimum of two representatives per institution. Recently CUSS membership was restructured to be comprised of Exempt and Nonexempt staffs that are not covered under collective bargaining.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The mission of CUSS is to provide a voice for Staff employee concerns in reference to basic decisions that affect the welfare of the University System of Maryland, its constituent institutions, and its employees. CUSS functions in an informed advisory role in administrative areas and in the functional support aspects of academic matters.

Visit the CUSS website: <http://www.usmd.edu/Leadership/Workgroups/> for more detailed information.

## Standing committees

### Executive Committee

**Chair:** Joe Hill 2002-03 – 2003-04

The Executive Committee is charged with managing the CUSS meeting agendas, assigning people to committees, charging committees with tasks, addressing staff concerns to/with the Chancellor, Regents, Legislators, and other interested parties.

### Benefits & Compensation Committee

**Chair:** Sally Hearn 2002-03 Marjorie Gill 2003-04

The Benefits and Compensation Committee will review current compensation packages and proposals from Campus, System, and State personnel offices, for both Exempt and Nonexempt staff. Review and comment on USM policy on slotting or classification of employees (including contract employees), levels of pay, classification schemes, pay ranges, merit pay proposals, COLA distribution proposals, etc. The Committee will also review current health benefit plans and proposed changes in benefits including Health Care, Retirement, Vision, Prescription, Life Insurance, Tuition Remission, Annual, Sick and Personal Leave, and all other non-cash compensation packages.

### Communications Committee

**Chair:** Hermetta Hudson 2002-03 – 2003-04

The Communications Committee will develop means of conveying CUSS issues to various constituents: Exempt and Nonexempt Staff, Faculty, Students, Regents, Legislators, etc. The Communications Committee will develop formal and special features for the newsletter as well as oversee the CUSS website. Included in its charge is: print media, electronic media, phone trees, etc.

( *committees continued* )

#### **Community Development Committee**

Chair: **Lu Ann Marshall** 2002-03 **Colette Becker** 2003-04

The Community Development Committee will develop and execute activities that provide for the professional and social development of staff at the University System of Maryland. This could include presenting, or co-sponsoring with other groups, professional development opportunities for staff, arranging social activities such as baseball or theme park outings; fund raising activities; brown bag lunch seminars on various campuses; supporting development of Staff Senates or Councils at System institutions; special task groups or presentations on equity or diversity issues. This committee facilitates the process of selecting the annual Board of Regents Staff Awards recipients.

#### **Legislative Affairs Committee**

Chair: **Roy Ross** 2002-03 – 2003-04

The Legislative Affairs Committee will monitor the Maryland Legislative Session for USM-related bills, and apprise CUSS of relevant issues.



### Messages From The Chancellor . . .

As the **2003-2004** academic year opens, the University System of Maryland is once again grappling with the impact of a significant budget shortfall. As was the case with the cuts made to the USM during last year's budget process, we understand the severity of Maryland's fiscal situation and fully recognize the University System's obligation to manage its resources carefully and responsibly. It is important to note, however, that further cuts to our budget cannot be addressed without real and meaningful harm to our students, our institutions, and our dedicated faculty and staff.

Working with the Board of Regents, the Council of Presidents, the Council of University System Faculty, the Council of University System Staff, and the USM Student Council, we have made every effort to manage our budgetary issues in a thoughtful, sensitive, balanced, and judicious manner, through a combination of spending reductions, tuition increases, and other administrative actions. Our goal, as always, is to take actions that have the least impact on our students; protect the integrity of our academic and research programs; and minimize the hardship on our faculty and staff.

As we have worked together to navigate the USM through these difficult times, I have been particularly impressed with the dedication and commitment of CUSS. This diverse group of individuals—from across the University System—has stepped forward to work cooperatively and collegially for the betterment of System institutions and System staff. CUSS continues to be an important voice for one of USM's greatest assets – its dedicated staff.

The commitment of CUSS was a key factor in our decision to revise our Tuition Remission Policy for Staff and Faculty to provide the benefit for up to eight credits per semester, rather than two courses. This increased flexibility will be helpful to many of our employees taking advantage of this benefit. In addition, I commend CUSS for its leadership in facilitating the BOR Staff Awards program for the fifth year and for its work on staff policies and programs that continue to deserve the administration's attention.

( message continued )

***The Board of Regents and I also commend Joe Hill for his leadership as Chair over this past year. We look forward to continuing to work with him and the entire CUSS leadership team in the coming year. We also welcome the new CUSS Vice Chair, Ray Frederick, and new member-at-large, Hermetta Hudson.***

As we look toward the future, our collaborative efforts will become even more important, especially as we work together to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Efficiency and Effectiveness. Based on the efforts of CUSS over the years, I am confident that our partnership will be positive and productive. I look forward to working with the members of CUSS as -- together -- we face our challenging times and move forward to achieve our common goals.

Sincerely,  
William E. Kirwan  
Chancellor, University System of Maryland



### To My Fellow Employees:

It is a privilege and an honor to represent the staff throughout the University System of Maryland. As Chair of the Council of University System Staff (CUSS), I have had the opportunity to communicate your thoughts and concerns to the Chancellor, Regents, and University System Presidents.

In its twelfth year as a partner in shared governance, CUSS continues to be the vehicle through which ideas are exchanged as we work towards enhancing the goals of the USM and its staff.

This year, I have spoken of the staff's commitment to supporting the success of the USM and its mission. I identified the integrity and character of the staff on which this commitment is based and how it is reflected in the relationship between the staff and the administration. This relationship fosters and nourishes the belief in reciprocity – a belief in which staff members have made a commitment to the System to ensure that institutional needs are being met, and, just as important, a commitment from the administration to ensure that staff needs are being recognized and addressed. We continue to meet the challenges head-on during these difficult times, but question how long staff members can keep up this pace? Is it equitable for staff to continue to do more with less, taking on additional responsibilities and duties without the necessary monetary and physical support?

As the USM prepares to meet present and future student needs, we are working toward having staff needs being part of the strategic plan. Significant elements of student recruitment and retention are achieved through such staff-supported functions as information technologies services, academic services, residence facilities management, campus transportation, student life enhancement, academic advising services, facilities management, and a host of other essential services and functions.

**(message continued)**

As a proactive measure, we are asking that the USM and its institutions develop a staff hiring and retention plan in addition to reviewing the current Exempt and Nonexempt salary program as part of their strategic master plan. We see this as being vitally important to our staff and crucial to the USM and its mission.

As Chair, this past year has been a challenging experience with positive results. It has been an opportunity for personal growth and development for which I am grateful.

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to the Chancellor, Regents, Presidents, and institutional leaders and staff who have supported CUSS and its role within the University System of Maryland.

Sincerely,  
Joe Hill, CUSS Chair

## **YEAR-END COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Benefits and Compensation Committee – Chair:** *Marjorie Gill (University of Maryland Baltimore County)*

The committee was diligent in tackling the new agenda issues presented. The Leave Reserve Fund and tuition remission issues were resolved. The Leave Reserve Fund is available to those needing leave beyond time provided under the several categories within the sick leave policy. The fund is accrued from all unused Personal Leave. There is no pay back or cost associated with this provision. An employee may request leave from the Leave Reserve Fund after using all available leave, including advanced and extended sick leave.

The tuition remission policy has been changed, as a result of the CUSS initiative, recommendation, and intensive lobbying, to allow up to eight credit hours for employees per semester. The new policy no longer limits the number of courses; instead, the limits are eight credit hours.

Two CUSS members are volunteered to participate, as in the past, with the RFP process regarding health care with special interest in dental participation and mental health issues. Participating dentists are minimal and those left within the participation group are burdened with an extreme number of patients. Assessment into why dentists are not participating must be reviewed in order to seek a resolution to the issue. Another concern is to reduce the employee out-of-pocket expenses as it relates to developmental and mental health assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

### **Communications Committee – Chair:** *Hermetta O. Hudson (University of Maryland Eastern Shore)*

The primary focus of the Communications Committee for this academic year has been to update the information contained on the CUSS website. The Committee will continue to focus on maintaining the website. We also strive to provide representatives with the materials needed to function appropriately and seek to find alternative ways of keeping the system staff informed. The committee is also responsible for preparing “Welcome Packets” for new CUSS representatives, and producing the CUSS newsletter.

### **Community Development Committee – Chair:** *Lu Ann Marshall – Colette Becker (University of Maryland Baltimore)*

The primary task of the Community Development Committee is to oversee the Board of Regents (BOR) Staff Awards. The BOR Staff Awards recognize exceptional performance by USM employees in three categories, with two recipients (one Exempt and one Nonexempt) in each category, for a total of six \$1,000 awards. The award categories include:

1. Outstanding service to students in an academic or residential environment.
2. Exceptional contribution to the institution and/or unit to which the person belongs.
3. Extraordinary public service to the university or the greater community. This includes voluntary campus citizenship and/or dedication to public good through volunteer activities with outside groups.

The BOR Staff Awards represent the highest honor bestowed by the Board of Regents to staff in the USM system.

**(reports continued)**

**For year 2002-2003:**

We are pleased to report that nominations were submitted by 10 of the USM institutions, as well as from the USM Office, with representatives from 12 USM institutions participating in the selection process. A special "thank you" to the members of the BOR Staff Awards Selection Committee for taking the time to read each of the nomination packets thoroughly, and perform the difficult task of selecting the Award recipients. Our congratulations to the recipients of the 2003 BOR Staff Awards!

**For year 2003-2004:**

We are pleased to report that 12 USM institutions submitted nominations, including the USM Office. Representatives from 11 USM institutions participated in the selection process. A special "thank you" to the members of CUSS who volunteered to serve on the BOR Staff Awards Selection Committee. They took the time to read each nomination packet thoroughly, and to perform the difficult task of selecting the Award recipients. Collectively they reviewed over 32 nomination packets. Our congratulations to the recipients of the 2004 BOR Staff Awards!

**Legislative Report -- Chair: Roy Ross (University of Maryland, Baltimore)**

**2002 – 2003**

The start of the 2003 legislative session began with a changing of the guard, a new governor and a new perspective. While there were high hopes for a brighter future with new ideas and concepts in state government, it wasn't long before the reality of the budget crisis and its severity set in. What transpired in the session of 2003 won't soon be forgotten. Everyone agreed to disagree, the slots bill became a dead issue, and the University System of Maryland was handed budget cuts of a magnitude that stunned and shocked everyone. With a one hundred and twenty million dollar reduction in funding came a necessity to increase tuition costs once again, caused the loss of, or give back, of many personnel positions and resulted in the layoffs of many employees. For the most part, the 2003 legislative session proved to be a rough road to travel, with highs and lows at every turn. During the session, CUSS was very proactive in our efforts, trying to persuade the legislature not to make the recommended cuts and to maintain funding for the USM. CUSS embarked on a letter writing campaign on several occasions and hand carried and delivered letters to each and every member in the House and Senate. One can only hope that the 2004 session will have smoother roads of travel, less dips and turns and a more positive and productive outcome. We should work together in a progressive manner to persuade our elected officials to hold harmless the University System of Maryland from additional budget cuts while preserving the ideas of achieving national eminence, and ensuring that the citizens of our state have access to quality education at a reasonable and affordable cost.

**2003 – 2004**

The 2004 session of the General Assembly concluded April 12<sup>th</sup> at midnight. During this year's session a record number of bills were introduced. There were 1,548 House bills introduced and 934 Senate Bills. Of this amount 706 bills were passed along with one joint resolution. The Governor will now either sign or veto these bills. The signing dates are April 13<sup>th</sup>, April 27<sup>th</sup>, May 11<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup>. Any bill passed that is not signed or veto by the Governor will become law without his signature.

**USM OPERATING BUDGET**

The budget for fiscal year 2005 remains "flat funded" at the same rate as 2004. After reductions to last year's budget (\$120 million) the USM funding level was \$746 million in State appropriations. The budget just passed (Senate bill 125) includes no reductions or increases.

The bill provides for a merit increase of 2.5%, as well as a cost of living increase. Initially the COLA was included in the bill at 1.6%. However, the bill was amended by the House Appropriations Committee to be an across the board COLA of \$752.00. These increases will be effective July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, with the \$752.00 being applied first and the 2.5% added after.

NOTE: The merit increase is a non-funded mandate; however, funding requirements were accomplished by using institutional resources and increases in tuition.

*(reports continued)*

The USM fared extremely well with the Capital budget request. The Governor provided \$159 million in state appropriations for new buildings, renovations and equipment.

The State budget for fiscal 2005 is larger than last year's budget and it tops out at \$23.6 billion dollars.

## **Board of Regents Staff Award Recipients      2002 - 2003**

The Board of Regents' University System of Maryland Staff Awards represent the highest honor bestowed by the Board of Regents for achievements of Exempt and Nonexempt employees from institutions of the University System of Maryland. The awards are presented to staff members who have demonstrated excellence in one of the following categories: (1) contribution to the institution and/or unit to which the person belongs; (2) service to students in an academic or residential environment; or (3) public service, within or outside the university.

There are two awards given in each category—one Exempt and one Nonexempt—for a total of six awards.

The recipients of the **2003** Awards are:

(left to right) **Ramona Arthur**, *University of Maryland Baltimore County*;  
**Monica Herrera**, *University of Maryland College Park*; **Andrea Spratt**,  
*University of Maryland Baltimore County*; **Fran Younger**, *University of*  
*Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences*. **Not pictured: Gregg Bagwell**,  
*University of Maryland Baltimore County*; **Jamie Winters**, *Frostburg State*  
*University*.



## **Board of Regents Staff Award Recipients      2003 - 2004**

There are two awards given in each category—one Exempt and one Nonexempt—for a total of six awards.

The recipients of the **2004** Awards are:

Awarded in the category of **Extraordinary Public Service to the University or the Greater Community**.

Nonexempt : **Pat Musick**, *University of Maryland University College*

Exempt : **Marsha Guenzler-Stevens**, *University of Maryland, College Park*

Awarded in the category of **Exceptional Contribution to the Institution**.

Nonexempt : **Priscilla L. Redding**, *University of Maryland Eastern Shore*

Exempt : **Kathy Sutphin**, *University of Maryland, Baltimore County*

Awarded in the category of **Outstanding Service to Students in an Academic or Residential Environment**.

Non-Exempt: **Wallace J. Beery**, *Frostburg State University*

Exempt: **Elizabeth I. Shearn**, *University of Maryland, College Park*

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