



Second Annual Joint USM Councils Meeting

University System of Maryland Student Council

Council of System Faculty

Council of System Staff

November 13, 2011

During the Second Annual Joint USM Councils Meeting at the University of Maryland, College Park, students, faculty, and staff discussed three topics: the proposed UMB-UMCP merger, the USM budget, and family leave policies.

Summary of Discussions

UMCP-UMB Proposed Merger

Members favored joint faculty appointments and joint programs not only with UMB and UMCP, but also among other institutions. It was pointed out that the merger that eventually created the University System of Maryland in 1988 has not fully merged; with many of the institutions' procedures (i.e. payroll system) has not been unified in the USM. Members also discussed the fact that the National Science Foundation has indicated that they would not recognize a merged institution with two campus presidents, as Senate President Miller has recently proposed. There are other ways to obtain greater research funding and higher rankings, including submitting joint reports between UMB and UMCP. It was also submitted that if all of the system institutions would submit one report as a University system, the USM would be placed third in research rankings. The length and the projected costs of a merger also posed concerns for many members, along with the programs at the new institution and how those programs will affect smaller system institutions. Members agreed that the priority of a merged institution would be to enhance access to Maryland residents to pursue their undergraduate and graduate studies within the USM. Members expressed support for an alliance or a "strategic realignment," a term coined by Senate President Miller. Members expressed strong support for more collaboration between the two institutions and other system institutions. One of the positive results that members projected would be the prestige that this new institution would command. Students indicated that the value of a degree from the University of Maryland would be greater given its projected prestige. Furthermore, more joint programs between UMB and UMCP could expand access to the Baltimore-region for UMCP and for UMB, expanded access to the Washington, D.C.-region. Some members argued that a merged institution would make University of Maryland and other system institutions more competitive and would garner national and global attention. However, members did recognize the vast cultural differences that exist in UMB and UMCP and expressed concerns about how that would play out if the two institutions were to merge. Members expressed concerns about the fact that this merger is politically motivated (mandate from legislative leaders instead of discussions between institutions), how this could impact the

economy, and the fact that resources are already scarce given today's economic situation. Furthermore, there were some concerns about the potential negative impacts on smaller institutions and the loss of resources and support from Annapolis. Given a larger and more prominent merged institution with greater research standings in Baltimore, members questioned how this merger might impact institutions like Johns Hopkins, renowned for its research capabilities. With a \$1 billion deficit, members also questioned where the cost of this proposed merger will come from.

Dr. Neerchal of University of Maryland, Baltimore County, a member of the Council of System Faculty, requested that an opinion piece submitted by David Salkever, a professor at University of Maryland, Baltimore County be included in the summary:

“Flawed thinking in push for UM merger.” David Salkever. *Baltimore Sun*, Nov 8, 2011.

link: http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-11-08/news/bs-ed-um-merger-20111108_1_rankings-research-funding-campuses

This article suggests that even if College Park and UMB merged, their research funding data might still be treated separately in the Center for Measuring University Performance's national rankings. The center's research director, Craig Abbey, told me that factors such as geographic distance between units, a tradition of separate reporting, separate faculty groupings, and governance arrangements are all considered. He illustrated this with examples of "flagship campus-medical institutions" combinations that are each treated in the rankings as two distinct universities. These were the University of Oklahoma (22 miles between the Norman campus and the Oklahoma City medical campus), the University of Kansas (40 miles between the Lawrence campus and the Kansas City medical campus), and the University of Nebraska (56 miles between the Lincoln campus and the Omaha medical campus). In all three examples, a single president was CEO for both campuses combined, but each of the two constituent campuses also had its own CEO serving under the single president.

USM Budget

Members were asked to make recommendations of areas to cut in the budget and came up with the following items to cut: remedial education, legal fees, and finances in budgets for institution administration. Members also indicated that they would prefer cuts be made outside academic areas, financial aid, and capital projects. Members also indicated that they would prefer that cuts not be made to human resources, given the fact that faculty and staff have been affected negatively by furloughs and budget cuts in recent years. Members also discussed furloughs and presented the following opinions on this issue: with more furloughs, faculty members would be less willing to sit on university committees; students recommend that furloughs occur during academic breaks to lessen impact on students' academic experience; given the increase mobility of faculty members, there are many alternatives to furloughs; faculty and staff also graciously weathered through furloughs in years past and faculty continued to provide superior academic experience in the classroom and staff continued to provide great services and support for our students; and lastly, furloughs hurt the morale of faculty and staff. Members also discussed the

possibility of consolidating the academic week to 4 days instead of 5 and streamline programs to save money. In regards to tuition and fees, members indicated that raising tuition and fees would make attending a system institution, especially a merged institution, less attractive. Due to the fact that many students face significant student debt and budget cuts to financial aid, the access to quality and affordable education might be compromised. Members also pointed out the fact that faculty and staff members' compensations have not seen an increase in a number of years. Newly hired faculty and staff are being promised salaries and benefits that are unrealistic. Members strongly support a cost of living increase.

Family Leave

Members indicated that the Towson Family Leave Policy should be implemented systemwide. The USM should have a unified family leave policy instead of varying family leave policies in individual system institutions. The USM should also set aside funds specifically for family leave and paternity leave should be compensated. Family Leave policies should also cover same-sex couples and families and students who are employed by an institution (i.e. graduate assistants) should receive partial or full coverage under such policy. Given the fact that we live in a technological world and faculty, staff, and students can perform work at home during Family Leave days, there should be more flexibility in the number of days permitted and individuals should be able to save up leave days. Members indicated that having a strong and unified Family Leave Policy for the USM could boost morale for faculty and staff. Members also support alternative work options and systemwide definitions for varying circumstances that are different in individual institutional policy. Members strongly oppose leave without pay.

Respectfully submitted:

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