



COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM STAFF

CUSS Newsletter

July 2025

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Letter from CUSS Chair Kalia R. Patricio

We are wrapping up the 2024-2025 CUSS cycle and I am pleased to report that we made great progress this year in achieving additional benefits for the staff that CUSS represents (the non-bargaining USM staff). We were successfully able to advocate for improved access to leave for all staff, including: [an increase in holiday](#) leave to 16 days (17 during a general election year); an increase to [4 personal days of leave during a leap year](#); and an increase of 10 days in the allowed amount of [leave carryover](#) annually. Additionally, campuses now have guidelines available to aid in the creation of [leave donation programs](#). The State of Maryland also [modernized a law](#) that offers more support for parents grieving from the loss of a child by offering the broader use of and expanded time for paid bereavement leave.

These are all wonderful points of progress to celebrate. We also have to acknowledge that it was a challenging year: a tense election season; continued conflicts overseas leading to unrest on our campuses, with many students, faculty, and staff directly impacted; and several campuses (and the University System of Maryland (USM) itself) moving to new Enterprise systems, impacting virtually every facet of our daily work. All of this is happening in a time of significant financial uncertainty: staff continue to be concerned about the budget crisis facing the State of Maryland and the impact it will have on our jobs and our students. Eerily reminiscent of the fiscal uncertainty of the early days of COVID, I have made it clear to the USM and the University Presidents that we stand by eager to contribute to the process of responding to the crisis. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention the concern many of us share about the pay increases, approved by the Maryland Legislature, for bargaining staff during a time when the State can hardly afford them. At many of our institutions, this is the second year

in a row that non-bargaining staff are excluded from pay increases and compression among staff members continues to escalate.

Beyond our achievements and concerns, I want to share a few other relevant highlights for the year. In fall 2025 I presented to the USM, Regents, and USM Presidents the findings of the first annual Shared Governance Awareness Survey. This was a survey we conducted of non-bargaining USM staff and faculty in Spring 2024. Findings indicated that the awareness of the USM's systems of shared governance varies. At the USM level, 55% of non-bargaining staff and 64% of faculty indicated an awareness of shared governance. At the campus level, 74% of non-bargaining staff and 83% of faculty indicated an awareness of shared governance on their respective campuses. Across the board, respondents' sentiments showed a strong desire for better communication, inclusion, and practical empowerment in shared governance and expressed concerns related to the effectiveness of the governance structures in place. CUSS, in partnership with the Council of University System Faculty (CUSF) and Presidents (CUSP), hopes to take steps to address some of the concerns in the coming years.

Two other annual commitments were completed by CUSS again this year. The Shared Governance Survey for 2024 was conducted in late winter 2025 and the aggregate report can be found [here](#). The second commitment is the annual Board of Regents Staff Awards process. I am thrilled to say our effort to separate out the exempt and non-exempt processes for the first time this year, while not without its challenges, seems to have been a success. We received a record breaking 11 non-exempt submissions along with 27 exempt. Moving forward, our timeline for the awards process will change significantly to align with the faculty and student awards. More information will be released to campuses in July.

The final note of accomplishment worth noting from this year is a formally approved update to the CUSS Constitution. With this change, the names of the USM campuses have been updated and the process by which CUSS members are elected and represented was formalized. It is my hope that these changes will help raise the profile of CUSS on our campuses, an area for improvement found from the survey noted above, and create a more robust selection process for the honor of serving as representatives within the System.

This is my third and final year as CUSS Chair. It has been an honor to serve and advocate for staff and I am grateful for the collaboration and commitment of everyone I have had the privilege to meet and learn from in this role. This has been one of the most impactful endeavors of my career, in no small part due to the people I have been fortunate enough to work with. I truly thank you.

In partnership, most sincerely,



Kalia Patricio, Ph.D.

Council of University System Staff



1 - CUSS members gather for dinner @ Old Mill Crab House, celebrating the last official CUSS meeting of 24-25!

Left to right: Roy Prouty (UMBC), Catherine Fu (UMBC), Chenita Reddick (UMES), Anthony Skevakis (TU), Kevin Bruce (UMCES), Trish Johnson (BSU), & LaVel Jones (BSU) up front.

Feature - Board of Regents Awards



The highlight of the 2024-2025 year was the launch of the separate cluster of Board of Regents awards specifically for non-exempt staff. In this inaugural year we received 11 nominations in the non-exempt categories.

The committee also reviewed and revised the awards scoring process, updating the rubric and revising the scoring system. The exempt awards process was revised last year, removing the option of applicants submitting additional materials that did not have any points assigned to them.

The committee also spent time this year discussing the best ways to promote CUSS across the system, making sure that all USM staff know that, in addition to shared governance at their home institution, CUSS also serves a crucial function in linking all staff governance bodies to the Chancellor's Office as well as the Board of Regents. We established a revised schedule for CUSS newsletters and committee members will continue to promote awareness of CUSS to all USM staff, specifically targeting new hires.

Finally, the committee will be focused on the rollout of the revised staff awards timeline, which will allow for all USM Awards recipients (staff, faculty, and students) to be recognized and celebrated at the same time and at the same event. Award packets for both non-exempt and exempt categories will be shared with USM institutions in mid-July, with nominations due to the committee by noon on Friday, November 21, 2025. Direct any questions to Committee Co-Chair Brian Jara at cussbor@usmd.edu.

At the July Committee meeting, we took time to recognize, thank and celebrate Co-chair Deniz Erman for her years of dedication and service to CUSS and to the BOR Awards process in particular. Thank you for everything, Deniz!

CUSS Awards & Outreach Committee

Deniz Erman & Brian Jara

CUSS Member Highlight - Ruben Stevenson (FSU) Winner 2024 BOR
Award



Why did I join CUSS?

I was asked by two former CUSS members, and I thought it would be a very good learning experience to learn how the State System worked for non-union members. I also wanted to be a voice for those who were not represented by the union and to learn more about shared governances.

How long have I been a member of CUSS?

Well over 15 years and counting.

What has my experience been like?

It's been such a great experience to learn how the system works and learning from other members how their institutions deal with issues on their campuses. It's amazing getting to know the great representatives from across the system.

What is the value of joining?

The value of joining is having a voice for others that need representation. Advocacy Day is a great day to let our elected officials know how important and meaningful all staff members are, union and non-union staff across the system.

How did it feel to win BORSA?

It was a great accomplishment to have others honor me for things that I do outside of my PIF. To have others across the system acknowledge that, I can only be humble and grateful to have been selected. With all the work that so many staff do outside of their scope of work on campuses. I was truly grateful and honored to WIN.

Campus Anniversaries in 2025



*Salisbury University and University of Baltimore are celebrating 100 years in 2025, Coppin State University is celebrating 125 years and Bowie State University is celebrating 160 years!!
Read below to find out what the campuses are doing to celebrate these big anniversaries.*

Salisbury University - 100 years



Salisbury. Forever.

That's the message Salisbury University will send as the institution celebrates its 100th anniversary beginning this September. SU President Carolyn Ringer Lepre recently announced the phrase as the SU Centennial brand during a ceremony in front of the University's first and oldest building, Holloway Hall, opened in 1925.

Founded as the State Teachers College at Salisbury with 115 students in fall 1925, SU has become a mainstay in Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. Today, some 7,000 students are enrolled in 51 majors and 17 graduate programs on the 200-plus-acre campus. More than 60,000 have graduated from the University in its first century.

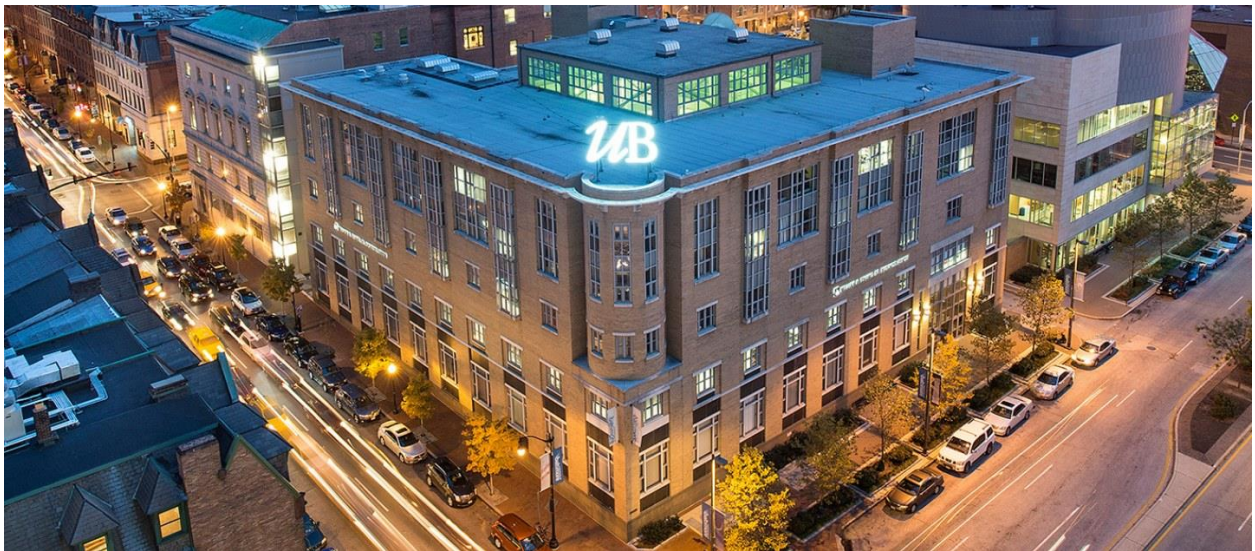
The SU Centennial launched with the University's 100th Spring Commencement in May, held on campus for the first time since the 1970s. Upcoming events include a gala on Saturday evening, September 6, followed by a special event on Sunday afternoon, September 7. That day, SU will celebrate its 100th birthday with Fun Fest in the Nest, a family-friendly community celebration, commemorating the date the first students moved into Holloway Hall in 1925. For more information, visit the SU Centennial webpage at www.salisbury.edu/centennial.







University of Baltimore - 100 years



Throughout 2025, The University of Baltimore is celebrating its 100th anniversary. A year-long campaign, called “Proud Past, Bright Future,” has inspired an audience of thousands – from alumni eager to learn more about their alma mater, to those with little familiarity with the institution but a desire to discover its unique place in higher education. What they’re drawn to, and inspired by, is the University’s origin story and its determination to continue to be a force for positive change.

The high bar for this occasion was set early: UBalt's Centennial "should be more than a celebration," President Kurt L. Schmoke said when he announced plans for the anniversary in early 2022. "The occasion should set UBalt on a positive trajectory for its second century."

Over the ensuing months, plans were made to host a series of high-profile events as the signatures of the campaign. Two of these – a convening and kickoff gathering last January, and an outdoor block party in mid-April – have drawn large crowds and enthusiastic responses. The third event, a Grand Celebration taking place on Nov. 13, will cap off the Centennial in high style. In general, the response has been a strong recognition that this non-residential campus has been such an active part of the life of the city for 100 years. Secondly, and perhaps surprisingly to its organizers, the Centennial has brought new energy and excitement to the University community.

"Throughout this process, we've come to realize that there's no other place like this University," says Theresa Silanskis, M.P.A. '95, vice president for Advancement and External Relations. "By our nature, I think we're a humble community. It's not like us to brag about our history or claim that we do something better than another school. But because we've all learned so much about the institution over the past couple of years, and we're talking so much these days about the potential of our second century, I think the attitude has shifted in a huge way. I believe the Centennial has allowed us to own our many incredible stories – and to take a lot of pride in what we've done and what we want to do in the future. It's such a gratifying time to be here."

UBalt began as a private institution, founded by a group of local business and civic leaders, with a focus on night classes for the teaching of business and the law. With Baltimore's crucial role as a hub for shipping, transportation, and more – an early version of a global marketplace – the need was great to provide educational opportunities for working class-people.

While its mission has expanded greatly since then, and it's been a part of the USM for decades, UBalt still delivers on that early promise of accessibility and a focus on career success.

"The longer we're in our Centennial year, the more we want to express those core values," Schmoke says. "We've discovered something truly special about our campus, and we want it to continue. While many of us are looking back, even more are forging ahead. We see that especially in our students. I think you can look for us to keep the University's Centennial spirit alive for years to come."







Coppin State University - 125 Years



Dear Eagle Nation:

Last Thursday, Coppin State University made history once again, hosting an unforgettable evening of pride, purpose, and power at the iconic M&T Bank Exchange in downtown Baltimore. Hundreds of proud alumni, students, faculty, city leaders, and community champions gathered to honor Coppin's 125 years of legacy and illuminate its bold vision for the future.

One of the evening's most powerful moments came when CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield presented a historic gift: a \$6.2 million donation to Coppin State University. The check presentation, introduced by CareFirst President and CEO Brian D. Pieninck, marked one of the largest corporate contributions in Coppin's history, and served as a resounding statement of their commitment to Coppin's mission and its \$25 million BEMORE Campaign.

Reflecting on this milestone, I emphasized that this celebration was about more than our 125-year history; it was about the generations of lives we have impacted and the even greater future we are building. Coppin is a beacon of hope, empowerment, and transformation.

Special thanks to VP Joshua Humbert and our Institutional Advancement team for coordinating and developing this unforgettable event.



2 - (left to right): President Anthony L. Jenkins, Miss & Mister Coppin; CareFirst President and CEO Brian D. Pieninck with check from CareFirst at 125th celebration.



3 - Scenes from 125th celebration



4 - Entrance to The Mill on North

Last Thursday, The Mill on North Food Hall celebrated its grand opening, marking a significant milestone as the first major food concept to debut on West North Avenue. This highly anticipated project represents a pivotal step in the revitalization of West Baltimore. Located at 2636 W. North Avenue, the food hall features seven local vendors, each with deep ties to the westside of Baltimore. These vendors offer a diverse array of culinary delights, including seafood, soul food, brunch favorites, bakery treats, and hand-crafted coffee.

The Mill on North Food Hall stands as a vibrant anchor of opportunity on West North Avenue, embodying the intersection of community and commerce. It is a place where local flavors and entrepreneurial spirit come together to create a dynamic and welcoming environment.

Additionally, Coppin State students, faculty, and staff can enjoy a 10% discount when they use their Eagle Card to purchase their food.

Bowie State University - 160 years



Bowie State University marked a historic milestone with a glamorous 160th Anniversary Gala event that brought together alumni, faculty, students, and supporters, including Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, to honor the university's rich legacy and demonstrate their unwavering support for the school.

“You don’t have the excellence in Maryland without Bowie State,” said Governor Moore. “It has been the foundation of so much of what we depend on, so much of what we’re proud of and so much of what we hope for the future. We’re here not to just celebrate the past but also look toward the future as well.”

The evening featured elegant dining, live performances and moving tributes that reflected Bowie State’s enduring impact as Maryland’s first HBCU. Under the theme “Celebrating 160 Years of Excellence,” university leaders highlighted Bowie State’s growth from Baltimore Normal School for Colored Teachers, a teaching school founded in 1865, to a leading institution in innovation, research, and higher education.

Bowie State President Aminta H. Breaux addressed the hundreds of guests in attendance, emphasizing that the history of the university is filled with sacrifices made by others committed to education.

“I stand on the shoulders of folks who went through a lot of struggles for us to be here tonight,” said Breaux. “The legacy for me is to keep uplifting this institution and making sure it is here for another 160 years.”

Outstanding alumni and supporters whose contributions have helped shape the university’s trajectory were recognized at the Gala. Honorees included notable figures in education, business and public service who have all demonstrated a deep commitment to Bowie State’s mission. It was announced through a special “BSU drone show” that the university’s Campaign for Excellence has reached \$67 million in contributions.

Entertainment for the evening included live music performances and a celebratory atmosphere that blended tradition with a forward-looking spirit. Alumni and friends of the university used the event to reconnect and reflect on the institution’s legacy while also looking toward its future growth.

Funds raised from the gala will go directly toward student scholarships and programs that support student success and innovation.

Founded in 1865, Bowie State University continues to serve as a beacon of access and excellence in higher education, remaining a vital force in shaping the futures of students in Maryland and beyond.

[USM Staff Resources Highlight - Behavioral Health Support](#)

MyMDCARES!

Behavioral Health Support (BHS)

What is BHS?

Behavioral Health Support (BHS) refers to a range of services designed to assist individuals in managing personal or professional issues that affect their mental and emotional well-being. BHS encompasses various forms of support, guidance, and counseling aimed at addressing challenges such as relationship problems, life transitions, burnout, depression, and daily obstacles.

Components of BHS

Behavioral Health Support is typically provided through dedicated platforms and applications that offer convenient access to resources and professional help. Key components include:

- Self-service web portals: These portals provide extensive tools and resources, with some offering over 500,000 options for skill development and well-being.
- Apps for easy access: Apps like MyMDCARES allow users to access services conveniently from their smartphones, available on Google Play and the App Store.
- Behavioral health guidance: Support from master's level clinicians who offer resource navigation, short-term counseling sessions, and assistance in finding treatment options.
- Financial and legal consultations: Free, unlimited financial consultations and 30-minute phone or in-office legal consultations.

Benefits of BHS

The primary benefit of BHS is the comprehensive support it provides for individuals facing mental and emotional challenges. By offering access to professional guidance and a wide array of resources, BHS helps individuals improve their well-being and navigate life's difficulties more effectively.

In conclusion, Behavioral Health Support is an essential resource for anyone looking to improve their mental and emotional well-being, deal with personal and professional problems, and gain access to important tools for skill development and general well-being.

Help is just a phone call away. 844-405-8200.

*MyMDCARES is available to active employees within the State Personnel Management System, Maryland Department of Transportation, Judiciary and Legislature, including full and part-time employees and contractual employees. This program is not available to contingent workers, temporary employees, and interns. Also, not available to some agencies, such as but not limited to, those parts of the University of Maryland System, Register of Wills for all Counties, Maryland Stadium Authority, etc.

Maryland Stadium Authority, etc.



5 - Scan for more information on BHS resources for staff

Contact Us



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