

NESS Meeting Minutes July 9, 2025

Attendance: Helena Dahlen, President; Barbara Ann Smith, VP; Crocetta Argento; Tammy Brown; Jenny Carr; Erica Davis; Cathy Fu; Justine Gonzales; Shelly Johnson; Michele Kimery; Leslie Kruger; Michele Mullins; Wendi Myers; Sharon Paul; Kyle Pokorny; John Roemer; Sydney Smith; Lisa Thomas; Terisa White.

Guests: *Sara Shannon*, Benefits and Wellness Manager; *Kelly Barnett*, Senior Benefits and Wellness Manager; and *Anthony Oughton*, Human Resources Specialist, all from Human Resources & Strategic Talent Management (HRSTM).

- Here is the [slide deck](#) for their presentation.
- The benefits team posts all the wellness information, as well as other HR and benefits content on these myUMBC groups:
 - [Department of Human Resources & Strategic Talent Management](#)
 - [Training](#)
- Below are the results of the wellness survey that Helena created for NESS:
 - 17 people filled out the survey.
 - Folks are using many benefits, including the RAC, benefits and financial information, leadership development, and others.
 - The most common reasons that people don't take advantage of benefits are time constraints and not knowing what is offered.
 - When asked if they would take advantage of a benefit offered outside the workday, respondents were split.
 - We can let the benefits team know what additional wellness benefits we would like to see.

Exclusion of NESS-eligible employees from the merit and retention increases negotiated between the nonexempt staff covered by the union and USM. Bargaining units will receive a 2.5% merit increase and a 1% increase in retention in FY26. For the first time that we can recall, NESS members were excluded from these raises.

Meeting with leadership: Helena, Terisa, and Barbara met with Lynne Adams, CHRO; Dan Petree, Interim VP for Administration and Finance; and Michale Tallon, Director, Talent Engagement and Labor Relations, HRSTM on June 30 to share their concerns about this decision. Below is Helena's synopsis of their discussion.

- The decision to exclude the NESS-eligible from receiving the increases was very difficult. The decision was up for discussion until the final moments prior to releasing the notification. Weighing the current and future budget cuts, this decision was made to conserve funds where possible.
- Lynne sincerely apologized for not informing NESS of the official posting in advance. There was a time component that made it more difficult. <https://pen.org/little-gardens/>

- If there is an avenue in future budget planning, Dan has promised to explore the possibility of financial compensation to the NESS group. Dan agreed that the NESS should continue to be included in receiving benefits from the bargaining negotiations.
- Lynne offered to meet with the leadership of NESS quarterly to ensure that we, as a group, are heard and respected.
- The question was raised regarding past decisions, specifically why nonexempt staff do not receive compensation above 2.5% if they are given an overall PMP rating that exceeds expectations.
- Lynne and Michale are going to compare the salary ranges within USM for the nonexempt staff to see where UMBC is positioned.

NESS meeting discussion about this decision

- There are 80 NESS members at UMBC who were excluded from the increases. The university is saving around \$150,000 with this move. It was pointed out that even NESS-eligible individuals who pay dues to the union were excluded.
- Communications from the leadership with shared governance should not be optional if it affect a group the way this did.
- As NESS-eligible, we cannot help but acknowledge that the nature of our jobs requires us to be separated from bargaining staff. Some members raised the question of a merit pool just like the Exempt staff has, where the merit can be differentiated between "meeting expectations" and "exceptional". We seem to be falling through the cracks.
- This decision is bad for morale. NESS members are always among the first to volunteer for special events.
- Dan Petree promised to look into future compensation for our group. This feels hollow since he is interim, and we only have his words.
- Some NESS members expressed that they may be less willing to work overtime, especially since some supervisors require that overtime be compensated by comp. time, not by extra pay. Several meeting attendees noted that supervisors are not allowed to mandate how overtime is compensated. (Helena later found [this USM policy](#) which confirms this.)
- The possibility of forming a union was discussed. One member pointed out that if we unionize, we won't be in shared governance anymore.
- Is there anything in writing about our existence on this campus? There needs to be a document outlining who we are and how we should be treated, separate from the bylaws.
- Cathy Fu shared a letter that the chair of the Council of University System Staff sent to Governor Moore last week protesting the uneven implementation of pay increases.
- We must continue to raise our concerns about this issue. We need to remain active and visible.
- Some members suggested that the leadership meet with the president about our concerns. The president is the decision maker and needs to hear what we think.

No committee updates due to time constraints this month.

ESS/NESS Cookout is August 13! See the posted event in our myUMBC group event to RSVP.

The next meeting will be August 20, 2025. --- Cathy Fu, NESS Secretary



COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM STAFF

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3300 Metzgerott Rd
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The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

July 2, 2025

Dear Governor Moore,

On behalf of the Council of University System Staff (CUSS), representing over 13,000 dedicated, non-bargaining staff members across the institutions within the University System of Maryland (USM), we write to express our deep concern regarding your recent decision to authorize fiscal year 2026 (FY26) Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs), merit, and longevity pay increases for many USM staff during a period of significant fiscal uncertainty in our state.

While we support fair and competitive compensation—and recognize the importance of honoring long-standing public service—we are troubled by the timing and uneven implementation of these pay increases. As you know, the State declared these increases for FY26 without allocating sufficient funding to fully support them for all staff across the USM institutions while simultaneously instituting rather significant base budget cuts. This has forced the USM and its campuses to make difficult and inequitable decisions about who receives pay increases and how, placing additional strain on already limited institutional budgets. As a result, several USM institutions are now facing the difficult decision of enacting staffing reductions and furloughs. These actions will ultimately lead to larger workloads, fewer staff, and diminished services—outcomes that will harm our 43,000 employees, our 100,000 students, and the many communities we serve.

Like you, CUSS members are deeply committed to the USM's mission of education, research, and public service. However, we are increasingly challenged by workforce reductions, inconsistent compensation policies, and funding cuts that erode morale and compromise our ability to deliver on that mission. We believe that during a budget crisis, protecting jobs is not only sound fiscal policy, but also a moral imperative. Rather than increasing wages for some at the cost of eliminating positions for others, we urge a more sustainable and equitable approach that preserves the strength of the public workforce and the value we provide in service to this great state.

We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss these concerns, gain a better understanding of your fiscal priorities, and provide insight into the vital work performed by the thousands of non-bargaining state employees (68% of the USM staff workforce) who keep our public university system running but are significantly underrepresented in the State's legislative landscape and political consciousness.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to higher education in Maryland and ask that you stand with us in protecting the workforce that makes that mission possible.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kalia R. Patricio".

Kalia R. Patricio, Ph.D.
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roy Prouty".

Roy Prouty
Vice Chair