

**Staff Senate November Meeting Minutes****\*Thursday, November 5, 2020****12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.****❖ Call to Order (12 noon)**

The meeting was called to order by Staff Senate President, Kristy Novak.

**❖ Attendees**

Voting Members: Ayuk-Brown, Ayamba; Boggs, Steven; Brightbill, Gregory; Buckingham, Kent; DeBoer, Taylor; Dietz, Allison; Essien, Sharese; Fenwick, Christina; Hamilton, Jill; Hitch, Kecia; Hokenmaier, Sarah; Jackson, Sarah; Lewis, LaToya; Ludd, Latoya; Novak, Kristy; Phelan, Mary; Privette, Shawnta; Volberding, Jenn; Wakefield, Priti; Wilson, Lakeisha; Zhang, Lei.

Alternate Members: Barkman, Emma; Hockensmith, Thomas; Perri, Carroll.

Absent Members: Azen, Michael; Holt, Susan; Sizemore, Cody.

**❖ Establish Quorum (50% +1 = 13 voting members): Quorum is achieved at 21 members.****❖ Welcome/Staff Senate Check In**

- Kristy Novak welcomed Staff Senate members and opened the floor to allow members to greet each other; she also provided the opportunity for Staff Senate members to share any updates as desired. She commented on how resilient we have been as a campus and as a staff senate to continue to do our part in the midst of a pandemic.
- Jill Hamilton provided an update on her husband's recovery from injury and his return to work.
- Sharese Essien shared that she was celebrating her daughter's twenty-first birthday.
- Lei Zhang shared that she was also celebrating her daughter's twenty-fourth birthday.
- Gregory Brightbill reminded the Staff Senate of the President's Symposium: Health Literacy as a Social Determinant of Health with Alsh'le Abimiku, PhD.

**❖ Approval of October Minutes**

- A motion to approve October meeting minutes by Kecia Hitch; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Allison Deitz.  
Motion Passed Unanimously.

**❖ CUSS Membership****➤ Nominations & Voting for Cuss Membership**

Self-nominations- Shawnta Privette and Lei Zhang

Lei Zhang was voted to fill the vacant CUSS Membership.

Kristy informed of the following Staff Senate: Michael Azen will fill the vacant Staff Senate and Thomas Wise will fill the vacant seat for Staff Senate Alternate (2020-2021 term). Kristy encouraged senators to extend congratulations to Michael Azen and Thomas Wise. She added

that she contacted Thomas Wise but received an out of office response; she is hoping that he will respond soon and confirm his membership.

❖ **Guest Speaker(s)**

➤ Kristy introduced Dr. Bruce Jarrell, UMB President.

❖ **Dr. Bruce Jarrell, UMB President**

President Jarrell spoke of the current climate nationwide as the country awaits the final results from the 2020 Presidential Election. He commented that he is also waiting in anticipation for the final results. He reminded the Staff Senate of the President's Panel on Policy, a speaker series examining issues important to the UMB community, including health and higher education policy, federal budget priorities, and civil rights and social justice. This event is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 2 p.m. and will feature former Maryland Lt. Gov. and current political commentator Michael Steele, JD, and a discussion of the election and its implications for the future. He commented on how timely the event has been despite the fact that it was planned ahead without the inclination of what current climate will be. He highlighted two other events hosted by the School of Social Work, and the School of Medicine.

**Budget**

President Jarrell informed that there were no additional updates to the budget. He promised that provide updates once they become available.

**Covid-19**

President Jarrell expressed his concerns about the current prevalence of the Covid-19 virus within the state of Maryland and nationwide. He estimated 588 hospitalizations in the state of Maryland, and noted that the numbers are increasing nationwide. He said that this supports the message that the virus is still a threat and admonished the UMB campus to not let guards down on preventative methods. He encouraged that we should all wear a mask, wash hands often, and continue to social distance. He warned that persons on campus should not be having lunch in close proximity. In terms of monitoring the UMB Community, he noted that there were two incidences of Covid-19 positivity that involved individuals who are on clinical rotations and interact with nurses and doctors. He explained that both instances were handled very well and the spread was contained. He reported that all precautions were taken and the areas impacted were closed and cleaned. There was only one research laboratory that reported Covid-19 positivity but it was handled appropriately. President Jarrell encouraged the campus to take precautions especially during the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

**Covid-19 Vaccination**

President Jarrell shared that he had a follow-up visit sometime today (November 5, 2020)- referring to his participation in the Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine trial. He clarified that he does not know if he has been assigned to the placebo or drug arm of the study. He shared his optimism in a Covid-19 vaccine becoming available in December 2020 or January 2021. He explained that once a vaccine become available the open ending question would be who would receive vaccination first, and second. UMB leadership has been working with the UMB Occupational Health Specialist to develop a tier system that will define who will be prioritized at UMB other

than faculty assigned to UMMC. He added that faculty members that work at the UMMC will be prioritized at the hospital because of their direct patient care interactions. The Ronald Mac Donald House may be considered as a location for distribution for the vaccine. He encouraged that individuals get the flu shot. He referenced research which support that taking precautions such as wearing a mask and following social distancing guidelines have a positive impact on suppressing the prevalence of the Flu virus. There has been low prevalence of the Flu virus in countries like Australia and New Zealand which have strict guideline for wearing masks and following social distancing.

### **Questions**

- Kristy Novak asked whether the University of Maryland Baltimore Police Department (UMBPD) will be preparing for any potential riots in response to the Presidential Elections.
- President Jarrell responded that he would like to believe that protestors are individuals that are exercising their rights and not rioters although there have been pockets of riots nationwide. He said that the UMBPD has been collaborating with the Baltimore Police Department as well as federal agencies to monitor any potential responses that may be of concern. He added that there has not been any credible threats that he is aware of.
- Kristy Novak commented that she hopes that things remain peaceful.
- Kent Buckingham asked if there were any changes to the UMB budget.
- President Jarrell reiterated that there were no updates to the budget but that he will provide updates when they become available.
- Kristy thanked President Jarrell for his time at the meeting and for his commitment to ensure that there is transparency with regards to UMB leadership.

Kristy asked if Chief Leone would provide the Staff Senate with updates since he is present at the meeting. She added that the next Executive Committee meeting with Chief Leone is scheduled for November 12, 2020.

### **➤ *Chief Thomas Leone, Interim Chief UMB Police Department***

Chief Leone greeted the Staff Senate briefly. He stated that the UMBPD has been monitoring the Baltimore community's response to the Presidential election and collaborating with the Baltimore Police department. He commented that the UMB campus has been quiet since March of this year due to less on campus activity in response to the pandemic. Chief Leone informed the Staff Senate of UMBPD's plan to collaborate with Lyft to expand the SAFE ride program. The Lyft service would cover the same boundaries as the SAFE ride. He explained that the pandemic has temporarily delayed these plans but he is hopeful that communication will be available soon highlighting this program and detailing the benefits. Chief Leone encouraged the campus community to utilize the SAFE walk program which is supplementing the SAFE ride program during the pandemic. He informed that the SAFE walk program, which is under-utilized, provides an escort service for employees from their point of work to their cars. He added that since activity levels are low on campus there are sufficient officers to accompany individuals to their cars and not just at the entrance of the garage.

Chief Leone informed the Staff Senate that thirty (30) officers were added and are patrolling during peak times of the day (7 a.m. to 9a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.). He commented that this ensures that the campus community has a visual of officers while they commute on and around the campus; it would also allow officers who are considered the eyes and ears of UMBPD to report incidence of concern.

Chief Leone provided an update on the Community Advisory Committee. He highlighted the importance of the UMBPD working with members of the community and ensuring all voices are heard. He shared that he is a member of a focus group that had recent discussions about the importance of comfort animals on campus. The group spoke of the possibility of adding a comfort pony, which will be a very exciting addition for the UMB campus. He commented that before joining UMB he was unaware of the idea of a comfort pony and the benefits. He believes that this will be an exciting and new experience for him as well.

### **Questions**

- Kristy Novak commented that comfort animals bring a lot of joy to many persons; she noted that ponies are easily startled and hoped that a consideration on managing that would be applied.
- Kristy Novak asked Chief Leone if there was anything that the Staff Senate could do to promote the SAFE walk program since it is under-utilized. She also wanted to know if he had an idea of the number of people currently on campus and if those numbers could have impacted the low number seen in the SAFE walk program.
- Chief Leone responded that there is an estimate of 1800 UMB card swipes/day. He added he will communicate with Carin Morrell (UMBPD Public Information Officer), to get information to add to the Staff Senate weekly letter.
- Sarah Hokenmaier noted that she clicked on the SAFE ride app and it redirected her to the SAFE walk program. She commented that this may be impacting the low use of the SAFE walk program because there is not a specific app designated to the program. She added that persons may not be aware of how to access SAFE ride program.
- Chief Leone commented that this was good information and that he will speak to the persons responsible for getting this done.

○ Kristy Novak thanked Chief Leone for attending the meeting and providing updates. Kristy Novak reminded the Staff Senate of the access that they have in submitting concerns, questions, and comments to the UMB leadership, by submitting these concerns to the Staff Senate Executive team. The Staff Senate Executive Committee meets frequently with the UMB leadership.

Kristy Novak provided the following updates from Staff Senate Executive Committee with UMB Leadership:

### **❖ Updates from UMB Leadership (Staff Senate Executive Committee)**

- *Matt Lasecki, Associate Vice President, Human Resource Services*

Emergency Funds On Behalf of Staff Members – Matt

Lasecki reported that there were several barriers that may not be insurmountable but would require a resolve. There is currently no law/rule against having a framework like the emergency fund, however currently there are no provisions to do so and any plan moving forward will need a review from USM and then at the state level-DBM. He highlighted the following:

- This fund differ from students because they are paid by UMB. Therefore any monetary transaction between UMB and the employee will need the approval by USM, which will require a review by the state (Maryland Department of Budget) and Management-DBM).
- This type of transaction may be subject to rules consistent with receiving a bonus; bonuses are taxed 30-40%. If this transaction is to be considered a grant through a foundation in the form of a scholarship, it may still be subject to the taxes (30-40%).
- Options- one option to consider is to have individual departments set up a fund for an individual in need since there are no rules preventing employees from independently donating to a fund. Another possibility could be to consider this as a leave payment. This would then allow the employees to receive time for responding to much needed circumstances like care for an elderly, or kids.

Return to Campus

- Kristy Novak informed the Staff Senate of discussions about the perception of the UMB staff concerning the extension of telework to the end of March 2021. She stated that the committee responded to UMB leadership that the majority of the UMB campus is aware that the extension date is flexible and depends on the pandemic.
- From an operational standpoint, UMB leadership is considering a full return when a vaccine is available and wide spread immunity through vaccination has been achieved (85%). Letter was sent extending telework through March 31, 2021. Matt Lasecki stated that they have not been considering a town hall since any discussions about returning to campus may be premature at this point. He added that the current focus is on the revised telework schedule and training senior leadership and supervisors on fostering an environment of flexibility.
- Discussions continue to focus on allowing persons to continue teleworking and training UMB management (supervisors, managers) on implementing a flexible schedule with employees. Human Resources (HR) have not finalized a new telework policy. Kristy Novak commented that HR is still finalizing details of the telework policy that addressed employees who may be teleworking from areas outside of Maryland. There is much consideration since there are varying labor laws that would impact how employees are paid in states outside of Maryland.

Kristy Novak provided the following updates:

➤ ***Dawn Rhodes, Chief Business and Finance Officer and Vice President***

- Dawn Rhodes informed the meeting that the search for the DEI Officer (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) is currently in progress. She explained that it is a very collaborative process involving feedback from varying groups (including students,

alumni, faculty, and staff). She is hoping that the search may be completed by February. The search may be completed in a few months.

- Dawn Rhodes was specifically interested in feedback from the Staff Senate on issues that are of concern (Return to Campus, Covid-19 compliance related issues, etc.). Notes that were specific to these discussion were submitted to Dawn Rhodes.

### **Questions**

- Jill Hamilton asked if there were any updates regarding DocuSign Telework Agreements.
- Kristy Novak confirmed that there were no definitive updates.

### **❖ Committee Reports: Goals for the Coming Year**

#### **➤ BOR (Update provided by Jennifer Volberding)**

- Jennifer Volberding reported that things have been slow, but reassured that they have been reviewing timelines aimed at getting the process moving. The committee will also be reviewing package materials, and surveying past winners to gather feedback on improving the process. They are hoping to begin the search for potential nominees in the near future.

Kristy responded that the committee did such a great job last term that the current committee has “big shoes” to fill.

#### **➤ Communications (Update provided by Ayamba Ayuk-Brown)**

- Ayamba Ayuk-Brown reported that the committee has been slow moving as well. She is planning to send out a Google Doodle poll sometime this week to schedule a meeting with committee members. Emma Barkman posted a reminder via the Zoom Chat; she reminded Staff Senators to respond to the “Know Your Senator” campaign.

#### **➤ Community Outreach (Update provided by Sarah Hokenmaier)**

- Sarah Hokenmaier reported that the committee has successfully launched the Back to School Supplies Drive which supports the James McHenry Elementary school & UMB Cure Scholars program. She reported that the Drive has raised an estimate of \$3,325.00 (53 donations). Sarah Hokenmaier recommended persons who wanted to feel warm and fuzzy around the holiday should visit the Thanksgiving website. The Thanksgiving Drive has received 73 donations to date, a total of \$2350.00. She noted that Central Administration was leading in donations, followed by the School of Medicine, and School of Nursing. The committee is hoping to support 250 families at \$50 a bag/family, which she acknowledges is a huge goal. She added that depending on the donations, they may be able to assemble smaller bags. The Thanksgiving Drive ends on November 12, 2020.

Kristy Novak thanked the committee for all the hard work and thanked Ayamba Ayuk-Brown for ensuring the message got to the community.

#### **➤ CUSS (Update provided by Jennifer Volberding)**

- Jennifer Volberding informed that she missed the last meeting due to conflicting schedule but promised to send any updates to the Staff Senate via email.

- Sharese Essien provided the following brief update:  
UMMS Chancellor Perman attended the meeting giving senators the opportunity to ask questions directly to him. Sharese is a member of the CUSS Legislative Committee and shared that some discussion focused on the upcoming legislative sessions traditionally held in February. The committee discussed possible changes to the format of these sessions due to the pandemic. Additional information will be provided as decisions are made.
  - Colette Beaulieu submitted the following message via zoom chat : The Joint Meeting is scheduled for November - CUSS, CUSF and SGA - Benefits and Compensation will be sending out survey to Staff Senates about availability of mental health resources and other services for staff
  - **Policy/Legislation** (Updates provided by LaToya Lewis)
    - The Policy & Legislative committee asked for guidance from the executive committee in drafting language for the Auxiliary Membership agreements. It was recommended that the agreement require a discussion between the supervisor and the interested employee. Since Auxiliary Membership will include employees that work hourly, and employees subject to collective bargaining agreements. It was suggested that the executive committee discuss the language to be included with Dawn Rhodes. The committee will begin the By-Laws review process and hopefully have an update by January.
  - **University Life** (Updates provided by Tom Hockensmith)
    - Tom Hockensmith shared that the committee met recently to finalize survey questions to be distributed to the campus community. The survey hopes to generate concerns/questions with regards to how the UMB community feels about working remotely. Results will be used to generate themes and questions in a town hall forum with UMB leadership.
    - UMB got Talent event has been launched and everyone is excited about it.
    - Kristy Novak commented that she is looking forward to the event adding that there is a Staff Senator who will be entering the competition.
  - **Executive Committee** (Updates provided by Kristy Novak earlier in the meeting)
- ❖ **New Business**
- **Motivating Engagement in Virtual Meetings**
    - Kristy Novak explained that at the last Executive Committee meeting it was discussed that the pandemic, the mandated telework and having to meet on a virtual platform, has led to a disconnection with staff senators at meetings. It was noted that everyone is being affected by the pandemic and at times persons may be multitasking during meetings to stay abreast with workloads. The committee suggested a discussion about improving engagement at virtual meetings be presented to the Staff Senate. The committee also decided to encourage senators to bring their lunch at the November meeting to motivate a more casual atmosphere. Kristy suggested engaging in fun activities and icebreakers at

the beginning of meetings, a strategy that works well at her other meetings at the School of Nursing,

- Gregory Brightbill agreed that eating together is a fun way to increase engagement with persons during a meeting and it adds a casual atmosphere. He also added that another way to engage each other is to have persons in a meeting do a pet profile. He explained there are times during a meeting that individuals with pets are interrupted by their pets. He suggests that when that happens have the person introduce their pets, giving a little more information about them. He said that this has worked for him at other meetings. Gregory added that he understands the frustration when someone at a meeting seems to be distracted. He commented that this can make things more fun. He also suggested doing a scavenger hunt for the first few minutes of the meeting.
- Christina Fenwick commented that it was quite unfortunate that the newly added senators did not get the opportunity to experience in-person Staff Senate meetings where there was more of a relaxed and comradery atmosphere. She encouraged Staff Senators to leave their cameras on during meetings even if they are multitasking; she joked that senators should show their corky side.
- Sarah Hokenmaier agreed with the pet profile idea commenting on her pets that come to her during meetings. She shared that at the school of Nursing they do incorporate ice breakers. She said it could be as cheesy as a trivia of well-known information or facts about persons in the group that others may not know. She said it is fun to learn more about each other but noted that the person must be willing to share or volunteer.
- Kristy Novak warned that Staff Senators are to be mindful of the seriousness and mission as a Staff Senator. She stated that the virtual format must not get in the way of what we are doing and who we represent. She stated that although we want things to be fun we want to remain intentional with what we do.
- Gregory Brightbill agreed and added that we are members of Staff Senate because we were voted to represent the staff and their concerns and that should be a motivation to remain engaged. He stated that we have a lot of responsibilities as a Staff Senate and should be seen as the heart of the UMB staff. He added that maybe we could take some of these ideas back to our respective departments and create a positive shift and increase engagement at meetings around campus.
- LaToya Ludd commented that she has shared an idea with Dawn Rhodes to use with her team and believes that it would work with the Staff Senate. She explained that as the holidays are approaching it will be a great idea to have senators wear holiday attire, for example ugly sweater. She added that it will hilarious and lighten up the mood at the meeting.
- Christina Fenwick agreed that the holiday attire would be great and informed the group that this was suggested at the Staff Senate Executive committee meeting.
- Amy Daniels commented that she has attended meetings at the School of Nursing and noted that meetings begin five minutes before the hour and end ten minutes after the

hour. She explained that this allows persons to connect before and after the meetings. Another suggestion is to have everyone in one waiting room before meetings so that they may get to know each other. She noted that at the Staff Senate meeting today that each individual waited in a separate waiting room. She asked if this was something that was possible using the Zoom platform.

- Christina Fenwick responded that she has not been able to create a waiting room that will allow a group of persons to wait but confirmed that she will look further into the possibilities.
- Kristy Novak explained that there was miscommunication about the start time of the Staff Senate meeting. She explained that the open meeting was scheduled for 12:15p.m to allow Staff Senators to take care of some administrative business before the open meeting. She emphasized that the Staff Senate is assembling to address important concerns on behalf of the staff, but we do want everyone to have a good time as well. She added that she is open to a lot of ideas and encouraged senators to email the Executive Committee with ideas and recommendations.
- Sarah Hokenmaier suggested using break out rooms be used to discuss topics and have one person present the information on behalf of the group of 3-4 persons. This will allow persons who may be shy to speak in a larger forum to be able to contribute to the topics.
- Kristy Novak agreed and added that having break out rooms where persons may be able to assemble and communicate in smaller groups would be a great idea. She added that in smaller breakout sessions you are able to see when someone signals to ask a question versus in a larger group where it may be more difficult.
- Taylor DeBoer agreed that breakout sessions would create an atmosphere that will encourage engagement and participation. He added that many individuals are experiencing zoom fatigue and at larger meetings it is easier to fall back and not participate. He believes that the smaller break out rooms will be helpful. He also suggested that the Staff Senate discuss current issues that may be impacting individuals like the current climate-systemic racism and public health issues.
- Kristy Novak responded that that will be a great idea if we have the time of the agenda to have those discussions. She explained that the agenda is usually compact and customarily at in person Staff Senate meetings there would be requests for presentations at meetings. The request for presentations at Staff Senate meetings have lessened due to the pandemic and shift to virtual format.
- Jill Hamilton commented that the virtual meetings have improved the level of professionalism at meetings. She explained that discussions are more productive when they are based on experience or truth and not mere feelings.
- Kristy Novak stated that an important component of Staff Senate meetings is ensuring that topics and discussions relate to the UMB community and how the work environment is being impacted in some way.

**Other Items**

- Gregory Brightbill reminded senators to attend the President’s Symposium.
- Sarah Hokenmaier recommended that Staff Senators register for the 1 hour educational sessions offered by Community Engagement. She noted that mostly students register but stated that the sessions are open to all employees and provide education to persons who are interested in volunteerism. She attended a session recently that focused on the history of Baltimore with regards to social justice issues. She added that the breakout sessions were really informative.
- Kristy thanked Sarah and Gregory for their reminders and extended warm wishes to the Staff Senators as they celebrate Thanksgiving with their families. She reminded them to be safe remembering pandemic guidelines.

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn meeting by Kristy Novak; second by Shareece Essien.

**Minutes submitted by:** LaToya Lewis, Staff Senate Secretary

**Minutes approved: December 3, 2020.**

*\*Note: Due to modified UMB operations in response to COVID-19, the October Staff Senate Meeting was held via Zoom. The meeting was open to UMB staff members.*