



University of Maryland  
CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

## Memorandum

**Date:** August 21, 2018  
**To:** Peter Goodwin, President of UMCES  
**From:** Julianna Brush, Past-Chair, UMCES Staff Council  
**Subject:** Staff Council Annual Report, July 2017 - June 2018

The following is a synopsis of the activities for the 2017-2018 term, the second term of the recently reinstated (2016) UMCES Staff Council.

2017-2018 Executive Team Members: Amy Griffin (Vice Chair), Katie Kline (Secretary), Curtis Henry (Acting Past Chair), Julianna Brush (Chair)

If I had to pick an overarching theme to our second term, I think it would be: continuous improvement. Improvement for the staff, the Council's relationship with administration, and to the Council's own internal-workings. In this respect, I feel that I can speak for each member of the 2017-2018 Council that we are proud of what we have accomplished and excited to be part of these changes.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about what I have presented here, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### *Accomplishments*

#### *Communications Committee*

*2017-2018 Members: Amy Griffin, Katie Kline, Jeannette Connors*

Charged with maintaining the Staff Council website, generating a newsletter on a regular basis, communicating information from the Council of University of System Staff (CUSS) to UMCES staff, posting meeting agenda and archiving previous meeting agendas.

*Accomplishments:* The Communications Committee successfully distributed quarterly newsletters to all staff members. In each of these newsletters, the committee highlights issues that are important to staff, their wellness, and connects staff with the resources that UMCES has to offer through Human Resources. Recently, the committee also began spotlighting staff, especially, new hires, to better connect the various units despite being geographically dispersed. Staff feedback to the newsletters and the staff highlights, in particular, has been very good!

The committee also maintains the Staff Council website: <http://www.umces.edu/umces-staff-council>. UMCES staff can go here to find current information about Staff Council members, submit questions or concerns, link to CUSS, the Women's Forum, Human Resources, and IT Resources. It is the committee's hope to better acquaint staff members with resources that are available at their fingertips.

### *Staff Award Committee*

*2017-2018 Members: Curtis Henry, Monica Chacon, Lisa Ross, Lori Stepp*

With the assistance of Ex-Officio members, Lisa Ross and Lori Stepp, this committee is charged with coordinating the submission process for both the UMCES Staff Excellence Award and the Board of Regents Award.

*Accomplishments:* The Staff Award Committee successfully submitted a proposal for an UMCES Staff Excellence Award to the Executive Council in late 2017. The award, the first of its kind at UMCES, is presented to an individual Staff member who consistently demonstrates a high level of commitment and dedication to UMCES, has a positive impact on their work environment, is flexible and demonstrates cooperation and collaboration among their peers and supervisor while carrying out their job duties.

The committee received three nominees, and will present the winner with a plaque of recognition and a \$500 stipend at the first Staff Appreciation Day in September 2018.

The Staff Award Committee also reviewed and submitted three nominations for the Board of Regents Staff Award, the most UMCES has ever had at one time! Brian Duke, Curtis Henry, and Laura Seabrease were nominated for their outstanding achievements. Brian Duke received the award for Effectiveness and Efficiency and is the first staff member to receive the award from UMCES! This shows the quick progress UMCES made from having never submitted a BOR Staff Award application to having four consecutive years of multiple applications to our first winner.

### *Staff Appreciation Day Committee:*

*2017-2018 Members: Sherry Pike-Saville, April Lewis, John Piasecki*

Charged with planning and executing Staff Appreciation Day where all staff members from all units, who are able and willing to participate, can meet in an informal setting where members of the administration can show their appreciation for their efforts throughout the year.

*Accomplishments:* The Staff Appreciation Day Committee successfully submitted a proposal to the UMCES Administrative and Executive Councils for a Staff Appreciation Day in late 2017/early 2018. The event will be held at Centennial Park, a location central to all units, in September, and all staff members and administrators, including the President, Vice Presidents, and Directors, are encouraged to attend.

## **Council of University System Staff Participation**

Based upon its size, UMCES has four seats on CUSS, and UMCES participated to its full capacity by filling all four seats. Amy Griffin and Julianna Brush were primary/voting members, and April Lewis, and Elissa Lee were alternate/non-voting members. All four attended monthly CUSS meetings, either in-person or via phone, and actively participated in CUSS committees. Amy Griffin chaired the CUSS Communications Committee, April Lewis participated on the Benefits & Compensation Committee, Elissa Lee joined the BOR Staff Award Committee, and Julianna Brush participated in the Legislative & Policy Committee.

Primary members also contributed UMCES news items to CUSS for its quarterly newsletter that includes institutional updates and is distributed throughout the USM.

These four also represented the USM and UMCES at USM Advocacy Day in Annapolis in February. Prior to Advocacy Day, UMCES CUSS members met and coordinated with Dave Nemazie, who arranged for us, along with CBL student Katie Lankowicz, to meet with several state representatives to speak about the importance of UMCES and the USM.

## **Meeting with President**

In its policy, the Staff Council is charged with meeting with the President annually. In February, the staff had a very successful and productive meeting with you by having a relaxed conversation where we were able to get know you better and you, us, both as a Council and as individuals. We discussed your background, why you decided to come to UMCES, your views on shared governance and staff, and the challenge of sustainability, an issue faced by both the Staff Council and the Faculty Senate. Likewise, I hope that you learned that we are a group of individuals who take off our “unit hats” when we meet as a Council and really want to serve the staff of UMCES to the best of our ability.

## **Staff Council Elections**

In May/June, the Council held elections for CBL, HPL, and IMET. Members from the other three units will have elections next year as part of the Council’s staggered election cycle. Stacey Hutchison and Brian Duke became the representatives for CBL while Kurt Florez and Julia Bliss were selected to represent HPL, and Michelle Prentice and Christopher Wilson represented IMET.

In advance of these elections, the Executive Team drafted a list of FAQs about Staff Council, which it posted on the website and distributed to UMCES staff to inform them better about what to expect when considering whether to run for election.

The Executive Committee also updated its New Member Orientation Packet which included a letter of welcome, the FAQs, current members and committees, our by-laws, policies, and some background information about shared governance at USM. These materials were distributed to the New Members at a Joint (Incoming and Outgoing Members) Meeting in June 2018.

## **Reviewing and Updating By-Laws, Policies, and Practices**

Sustainability is a topic that the Council discussed throughout the 2017-2018 term. The Council has 15 members when it is at full capacity (2 elected members from each unit, Past Chair, and two Ex-Officio members). The current policy and by-laws specify that one elected member shall be a voting member while the second will be a non-voting member. Towards the end of the term, the Council began drafting changes to the policy and by-laws so that all elected members are voting members and therefore eligible to be part of the Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary). Changes to the by-laws were also discussed to allow all members, including Past Chair and Ex-Officio's to be eligible to serve on CUSS. With these changes, the Council hopes to increase member participation, effectiveness, and greater decision-making power.

Additionally, the Council, and especially the Executive Team, continued to review its internal practices and fine-tune procedures such as communicating with administration, elections, updates to the Staff Council website, and general workings of committees. The goal was, and will continue to be, to establish consistent practices that will serve as a guide to future Staff Councils.

## **CUSS Staff Engagement Survey**

Early in 2018, CUSS asked the Staff Council members at each institution to participate in a Shared Governance Survey to determine how shared governance is viewed and being put into action across the University System of Maryland. This survey mirrored surveys distributed by the Council of University System Faculty and the University Student Council to each respective group. Results of the CUSS survey were analyzed for the entire USM as well as for each institution, and the President and the Staff Council Chair were presented with the results. The UMCES report showed that although we are making strides in shared governance, there is still more that we can do to communicate with staff about shared governance and better serve them.

## **Summary of Accomplishments**

The accomplishments that I have outlined here are the results of a great deal of effort by the entire Council with the goal to better serve all staff at UMCES. It has been a pleasure to work with the Council, and I continue to be impressed that the Council was able to accomplish all of these in one year while balancing our day-to-day work duties.

## ***Future Goals***

The Staff Council would like to better engage the Staff of UMCES. The Staff Council is charged with having two open forums meeting per year. Unfortunately, it did not accomplish this during this term. We are aware of the requirement and will continue to work towards that goal.

However, we feel that we have established a good working relationship with the administration in the past two years so that questions and concerns can be thoughtfully discussed as they arise. Now we

would like to turn our attention to engaging the staff more so that we can better liaise between staff and the administration, to better disseminate information and concerns in both directions. To that end, we plan on brain-storming how we can interact with staff at each unit on a regular basis. We also plan to conduct an UMCES Staff Engagement survey to determine how shared governance is viewed at our institution, and in what ways can we better serve the staff.