

NESS Meeting Minutes June 11, 2025

Attendance: Helena Dahlen, President; Barbara Ann Smith, VP; Jenny Carr; Cathy Fu; Michele Kimery; Wendi Myers, Kyle Pokorny, Teresa Reese, John Roemer.

Guest: *Mariann Hawken*, Director, New Media DOIT, presenting information about the *new requirements for meeting digital accessibility*.

- See [slide deck here](#)
- Questions for her
 - What were the requirements for digital accessibility in the past? *Nothing but voluntary requirements.*
 - Are there any digital areas not included in the new requirements? *Not really..*
 - How can NESS, as a University body, be helpful to your rollout? *Spread the word and take action now.*
 - Suggestion to give concrete examples of documents/applications that are not digitally accessible and how to fix them.

Guest: *Dan Petree*, Interim VPAF.

- Dan is retired and is a consultant who came to us through the registry. He has served in this role at other universities. The search for a permanent VP is ongoing; In the meantime, Dan will be our interim VPAF for at least the next few months.
- Good news: UMBC is not in financial crisis. Unlike some other schools, the financial picture is healthy.
- Challenging news: The state has cut \$14.8M for FY26 and expected \$10-10.5M in FY27, so we're looking at a cut of about 10%. This is tough, but not catastrophic.
- The plan: There is a commitment to no layoffs or furloughs, but hiring will be affected. Some initiatives will have to be delayed or cut back. But they are not just cutting everything by 10%.
- Questions for him
 - According to the FY 26 Chancellor's Compensation Guidelines, a 1% COLA will be added from July 1st. Do you have a timeline for when campus will receive the decision regarding the 2.5% merit increases for eligible staff? *There is a better chance we will get the COLA than the merit increase. Decisions will be made on Friday after meeting with the union.*
 - How can staff generally be mindful of spending money during the budget deficit? Do you have some advice? *Don't panic. All investments that make sense and will save us money in the long run are preferable. We can be much stronger two years from now with good decisions (look at insufficient processes, duplication of efforts, etc.) now.*

The Chancellor's Compensation Guidelines for FY 2026

Memo from Chancellor Perlman is attached.

- A 1% COLA increase seems certain.
- Providing a 2.5% merit increase is up to each institution, and this may vary between different staff groups (non-exempt vs. exempt, etc.). Stay tuned.

No committee updates: Several committees have not met since the last NESS meeting.

Request for a NESS representative to join the Community Collaborative for Inclusive Excellence (CCIE). (*Jasmine Lee, Associate VP, Community & Culture, Co-director for Center for Social Justice Dialogue.*) They meet four times/year.

ESS/NESS Cookout is August 13! Invitation to follow shortly

Wellness initiative and opportunities: What do we want to see that we don't have today, and what do we like that we have today? Please bring your thoughts to our July meeting, when we welcome Sara Shannon.

The next meeting will be July 9, 2025. We have invited Sarah Shannon from HR to discuss what wellness/wellbeing initiatives would interest the NESS community.

--- Cathy Fu, NESS Secretary