

NESS Meeting Minutes February 11, 2026

Attendance: Helena Dahlen, President; Barbara Ann Smith, VP; Cathy Fu; Monica Green; Gina Hoagland; Wendi Myers; Kyle Pokorny; Teresa Reese; John Roemer; Sabrina Sapp; Tenley Stewart; Amanda Turner; Terisa White.

Guest: Carlos Jensen, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs.

- Background: Carlos arrived on campus in August. His background is in “the touchy-feely side” of Computer Science
- Portfolio includes
 - Honor’s College, INDS, Academic Transition Programs
 - Student engagement and success programs like undergraduate research, Meyerhoff and McNair scholars, SSS (student support services) program.
 - K-12 engagement and pipeline
 - Academic Success Center
- New initiatives
 - Extend student success programs to grad students
 - Examine and fix policy discrepancies between graduates and undergrads
 - Partner with AOK library and Faculty Development Center to support faculty
 - Be more intentional about getting the word out about new student success initiatives.
 - Cross-training among his staff; Look for ways to work more effectively.
- Question: What did you find to be your most challenging tasks upon arrival?
 - Budget climate!
 - State of many academic policies– Are they being put into practice?
- Question: Can you tell us of a particularly rewarding experience here?
 - UMBC’s focus on the student experience. We really live our value of inclusive excellence.
- Question: What would you build if you had unlimited resources?
 - Build out testing center in the UC.
 - Develop undergraduate research as a pipeline to graduate school
 - Explore a “4 +1” class schedule where students are in class four days a week and spend the fifth day in experiential learning, research, etc.
- Question: How can NESS help you get your message out?
 - He’ll think about it. He’s still familiarizing himself with our shared governance structure.

Guest: Erica D'Eramo, Director of Communications and Outreach (DoIT), discussing Digital Accessibility requirements and the timeline. See Erica's [slide deck here](#).

- Digital accessibility means designing digital content so that **everyone**-- including people with disabilities --can access, understand, and interact with it effectively.
- On April 24, 2026, a new federal requirement goes into effect requiring that online content be accessible.
- For those using Blackboard, Ally is a tool to help with accessibility.
- For those creating content on UMBC websites, use Silktide to help with accessibility.
- Don't panic! DoIT is reviewing UMBC content and will partner with us.
- Where to begin?
 - Learn about digital accessibility
 - Review the content on your website and make sure it's updated
 - Stay connected with others doing this work

Election season.

- **Election of new NESS Senators** for the period 2026 - 2028. Current senators up for election for the 2026-2028 period: Crocetta, Kyle, John, and Erica. Erica will step down. Monica Green will run for the Senate in the next two-year term.
 - As a reminder, senators vote for President and VP and pledge to attend NESS meetings on a regular basis.
 - Poll will be sent out in March, results announced at the April meeting.
- **Election of President and Treasurer** for the 2026 -2028 period in May. Current President Helena and Treasurer Terisa are ending their period in the spring of 2026.
 - Terisa is happy to serve as Treasurer for another term.
 - Helena cannot serve another term as President. Please consider running for this office-- it's a fun job and Helena will help you.
 - Poll will be sent out in April, results announced at the May meeting.

Report from previous Committee meetings

- AI Sub Committee meeting, Helena Dahlen
 - This is a subcommittee under the AI Steering Committee-- AI from the admin. Perspective.
 - They are seeking input from departments: What are appropriate and inappropriate uses of AI? What are the issues that AI brings up? Is AI actually saving time and/or money?
 - Helena will send NESS members a questionnaire to gather information to bring back to the subcommittee. Jack Suess will join us at a future meeting.
 - See [this link](#) for Generative AI tools. Helena is going through certificate training with Google, see [this link](#). Some offerings are free and some have a minimal cost. There is also free training through Skillssoft.

- The University Steering Committee will meet this Friday. Barbara and Helena will attend.
- CUSS, Cathy Fu
 - A new state parental leave program is coming! PFML will grant 12 weeks of paid leave without draining leave balances. Stay tuned.

Ad-Hoc Information: None

Open Committee Positions within NESS. [Senators and Committee Assignments](#)

- Faculty and Staff Care and Belonging Committee: Monica Green is our new representative.
- Inclusion Council Committee/ No longer active.
- Alternative CUSS rep. (Cathy Fu is primary)

The next meeting is scheduled for March 11, from 11:30 to 12:30 pm. Our guest will be Lisa van Riper, VP of University Communications and Marketing.

--- Cathy Fu, NESS Secretary