

NESS Meeting Minutes March 11, 2026

Attendance: Helena Dahlen, President; Barbara Ann Smith, VP; Crocetta Argento; Cathy Fu; Justine Gonzales; Monica Green; Wendi Myers; Teresa Reese; John Roemer; Terisa White.

Guest: *Lisa Van Riper*, VP of University Communications and Marketing

Lisa arrived at UMBC last fall. Since then, she's been working on several initiatives with her team:

- Revamping UCM's mission, vision and commitment statements.
- Culture and mindset change: From her staff being "short-order cooks" to being more intentional with job requests from the campus
- First 100 days plan focus areas are
 - Team structure and strengths, including leadership training
 - Improve internal communication
 - Refreshing the UMBC brand
 - Website refresh
- Question: What is the difference between UCM and Institutional Advancement?
Answer: IA is focused on fundraising and UCM is focused on communications and marketing. Of course, there are definitely times when they collaborate.

Guests: *David Hoffman*, Director, Center for Democracy and Civic Life and *Ciara Christian*, Director, Division of Institutional Equity

Even though the concept of "Inclusive Excellence" is in our DNA, we haven't really explored what the term means.

- David and Ciara created UMBC Talks as a way to engage the campus community with this issue. They've drafted a structural framework and are seeking participation from the campus to flesh it out.
- There are 90-minute structured conversations around Inclusive Excellence planned for different campus groups (and some sessions open to all) in the next few months. David and Ciara are also willing to set up a session just for NESS-eligible staff.
- Helena: We would love to join with ESS for a session if they are interested.
- Question: What is the end product of this process? Answer: Senior leadership will be given a final version of the framework and will communicate it to the community, then we'll go from there.

Election season.

- **Election of new NESS Senators** for the period 2026 - 2028. Current senators up for election for the 2026-2028 period: Crocetta, Kyle and John. Monica Green and Cathy Fu 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 at the end of March, results will be 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. Barbara has one more year in her VP term.
 - 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.
 - A poll will be sent to senators in April. Results will be announced at the May meeting.

Report from previous Committee meetings

- AI Sub Committee meeting, Helena Dahlen
 - Helena urges everyone to take advantage of training through Professional Studies.
 - Perhaps we can eventually create an AI well of information for all to utilize.
- The University Steering Committee, Helena and Barbara
 - The planned USC retreat will now be a breakfast.
- Report from the quarterly CHRO meeting with Lynne Adams, Helena and Barbara
 - Reminder that supervisors need to submit PDs for all non-exempt staff by March 31 so HRSTM can determine the status of each position as Confidential or bargaining non-exempt.
- Talent Ambassador meeting, John Roemer
 - The group will meet three times per year. The primary involvement for us seems to be communicating any events or initiatives? John is unclear on this.
- CUSS, Cathy Fu
 - A new state parental leave program is coming on July 1! PFML (Paid Family & Medical Leave) will grant 12 weeks of paid leave without draining leave balances. Leave will be available for similar reasons as the federal FMLA, plus the definition of “family member” will be expanded.

Ad-Hoc Information

Remember to fill out the AI Survey that Helena sent a few weeks ago.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8 from 10:30 to 11:30 pm. Our guest will be Cael Mulcahy, President of USC and ESS. Note the change in time to accommodate those who would like to attend the President's town hall at noon.

--- Cathy Fu, NESS Secretary