

Minutes of the USMH Board of Advisors meeting

11/14/24

Attendees: Heather Guessford, Jim Holzapfel, Jim Kercheval, Dr. Jacob Ashby, Erin Harman, Lisa McCulloh, Kim Eichelberger, Dr. Chris Masciocchi, Dr. Jim Klauber, John Barr, Michelle Gordon, Dr. Maulik Joshi, Dr. Allison Wrynn (via Zoom), Jason Rappaport (via Zoom), Dr. Gaye McGovern, Tyesha Clark, Dr. Ann Davis, Dr. David Sovine.

Dr. Joshi brought the meeting to order. He welcomed everyone, and mentioned how he appreciates everyone's engagement. He also thanked Dr. Ashby and the USMH team for all their work.

Dr. Ashby told the members that Heather Guessford was recently recognized with a Distinguished Citizen award. She received congratulations from the members.

In trying to integrate more active participation into the board meetings, Dr. Ashby introduced Dr. Chris Masciocchi, a Frostburg professor teaching psychology. Dr. Ashby said that, with some of Chris's insights, we can create some benchmarks for new program.

Dr. Masciocchi gave some background information about the psychology program which launched in fall 2010. It started with six students, but the program gets about 16-20 new students each year, most of whom are full-time. Psychology typically offers four classes per semester. There were more pre-Covid. The courses are hybrid. Dr. Masciocchi went on to tell the members that he goes to HCC and FCC three to four times each semester to talk to prospective students. The biggest benefit is sharing information about the psychology program and USMH. He said he's been invited by various HCC and FCC faculty to give presentations to their respective psychology clubs, adding that he often speaks with HCC and FCC staff who don't know about USMH. He believes increased advertising would be very beneficial across the board.

In terms of opportunity for growth, Dr. Masciocchi said many students prefer to take classes 100% online and he believes they should be accommodated. He tells students that if they can manage one class a week in person, they'll be able to complete the program successfully. Students appreciate being geographically close to an online program. Dr. Masciocchi passes out questionnaires about course modalities and while several students prefer online classes, the reason they come to USMH is because it's geographically close to their homes. About half of spring classes are online classes. A lot of students do want in-person courses, and it's a struggle to accommodate everyone's preferences.

A master's in counseling program has a possibility of being offered at USMH, according to Dr. Masciocchi. This has been a class that has been discussed for a while and there is a lot of interest. The main campus has a master's in counseling. Another opportunity is for a program in addictions counseling. In Maryland a student can become a counselor with only a bachelor's degree. Advertising should be done with four things in mind – geographically close, inexpensive, evening hybrid courses, and online courses. He added that another frequent comment he hears is that students want more activities that are like a traditional college or university experience.

Jim Kercheval asked if there is any outreach to local mental health students. Dr. Masciocchi said there are a lot of indirect relationships. He gave the example of Dr. Burke with Brook Lane who often gives presentations to Dr. Masciocchi's classes. Dr. Ashby said he serves on the board of directors at Brook Lane and said it's been discussed to try to connect with all mental health providers in the region, at meetings, etc. Dr. Masciocchi said there are about ten mental health facilities locally, and Dr. Ashby added that we'd also want to reach across state lines.

Ms. Tyesha Clark, student advocate and representative to the board, told the members that, based on the previous meeting, she has been strategizing. She and Katy Coleman, the part-time student services coordinator, had a Meet the Student Advocate night. They set up tables with food and beverages near the elevators. Almost thirty students participated, primarily SU and FSU students. Ms. Clark said they've talked about doing it again and would like to try to capture a different population of the other universities.

Ms. Clark and Ms. Coleman distributed a survey to students asking what they enjoyed the most about attending USMH, what challenges/difficulties they've encountered, their thoughts on the availability and accessibility of resources, and whether they've experienced any negative issues with the facilities. The results follow.

Regarding what students enjoy the most about attending classes at USMH, 20% of the respondents like the smaller class size. 35.6% like the location, accessibility, and being close to home. Other mentions were online/hybrid classes, clean facility, good professors and staff, and the availability of evening classes.

Respondents mentioned numerous challenges or difficulties they've encountered. These included communicating with their professors and tech issues like difficulty hearing their professors during IVN classes and being able to access Wi-Fi. The cost of parking in the City deck, as well as lack of other available parking areas, is a concern and some remarked that this is an obstacle to enrolling in classes. Financial aid is a concern for several, as well as navigating their jobs, family, and classes. Some students remarked that they would appreciate a better enrollment process and a more detailed student orientation. In addition to the tech and Wi-Fi issues, many complained about inconsistent classroom temperatures in both summer and winter, and that the A/C is often out, particularly on the 4th floor.

Many respondents would enjoy more games and activities. Suggestions were movie nights, evening events, destressing events, therapy dogs, free food and beverages, and job and internship fairs. Almost 77% of the respondents said they always feel supported at USMH vs. the fewer students who say they feel only frequently, occasionally, or rarely supported.

As for improvements that could be made to help working adults engage more, free parking was the number one suggestion followed by increased communication and emails, evening and virtual events, increased staff present, weekend family-oriented events, and increased signage.

Ms. Clark continued by telling the board that there is a challenge of adapting to online platforms which isn't a USMH issue but rather a communication issue with professors. Another challenge is students who don't like walking to their cars at night, and she said that USMH's addition of another evening guard will help this concern. She wonders if students are requesting that one of the guards accompany them to their car. Related to improvements to help working adults,

Ms. Clark believes that having previous students return to discuss their experience at USMH would be beneficial, like a mentor program.

Dr. Wrynn gave a brief presentation next, sharing some highlights. She said it was great to hear about the psychology program. Further conversations about certifications are a great option for the region, addiction recovery, etc. She said that MHEC is holding a student success conference Thursday/Friday, and there is a high-level board meeting this evening, focusing on transfers. All campuses will come together to reflect on the state's attainment goal. The state has an attainment goal of 55% for associate and bachelor's degrees and is hoping to expand to credentials of value. A few other states have already taken this on. The Regional Higher Ed Centers (RHECs) are very important in the role of transfer students. Southern Maryland is working on their strategic plan, focusing on lessons to support strategic planning in Hagerstown and Dr. Ashby will be included. Planning has gone very well.

Dr. Wrynn went on to say that the state budget is not looking particularly hopeful right now and the system has been prepping for various scenarios. She said they are very fortunate to have Ellen Herbst who keeps them prepared for possibilities that may be coming. The system continues to reinforce the value of the RHECs to the local communities they serve, and they deserve to be uplifted not only in words but in funding.

Mr. Kercheval asked if the transfer of credits goes smoothly from the community colleges. Dr. Wrynn said that, as a system, they want to accept as many credits as possible and are working very closely with campuses on that acceptance. A lot of focus of this summit will be on equity and on making sure transfers are equitable for all students.

Mr. Holzapfel asked about money and is wondering if legislators look at the education budget but are possibly deferring money that could be going to the RHECs. Dr. Wrynn said there is a lot of money in that blueprint, but the system's universities aren't necessarily the recipients of that money. The blueprint requires the system to support incoming teachers, and we need that support. She said that have been conversations with Dr. Jennifer Lynch on the accountability board and those conversations are helping ensure that the message that higher education is an important partner in all this is heard. The blueprint will be an interesting point of discussion in the legislature this year.

Dr. McGovern asked if there have been any further discussions about the center being counted for students being serviced here but whose enrollment doesn't count. Dr. Wrynn said that the system must, at some level, move beyond education missions. Our campuses do more than just offer classes and the financing facet must be rethought.

Mr. Breslin was absent due to a foundation board meeting for the system, so he asked Dr. Ashby to let everyone know that the annual retreat looked at national enrollment trends, as well as looked at the USM strategic plan. Another meeting is set for next week and everyone will be updated. Dr. Ashby said that he and Mr. Breslin are working in tandem to plan for June's Board of Regents meeting here in Hagerstown.

At this point, Dr. Ashby gave some updates. The kickoff event for the University of Baltimore MBA program was held last week. He said we are excited about the program starting in fall 2025. It is being offered by the prestigious Merrick School of Business. A Letter of Intent for

computer science should be issued tomorrow from FSU and will be submitted to MHEC. Additionally, we are working on building out a computer science lab and we just applied for some grant funding.

A new IT employee was recently hired for evenings, said Dr. Ashby. The exterior façade of the building has been painted. The security upgrade will begin in January. Dr. Ashby also mentioned that USMH is working with Nash Google for a certification program and will be available to anyone who is a student. He asked that this remain confidential for the time being.

Mr. Kercheval asked what is involved with the security upgrade. Dr. Ashby said that one of the items is replacing security cameras. There is also a plan to create an entrance into the vestibule but keep interior doors locked for entry. We will also be upgrading all the card readers and access points. Bluetooth cards will be used. Mr. Kercheval asked about camera coverage for students walking to their cars parked in the deck. Dr. Ashby replied that our building has a camera on each corner. They are now single lens, but the upgrade will have four lenses. USMH is working with the City to give HPD access to our cameras. Additionally, we added a second security guard in the evenings, so someone is available to walk students to their cars.

Mr. Holzapfel said that security seems to be a recurring issue. He asked for clarification on how many guards are available in the evening. Safety may not always be a concern, but perception is reality. He asked, "Are you getting the support you need from the City?" to which Dr. Ashby replied yes. He said the City is always flexible and responsive to us. Mr. Holzapfel said that there still is a perception, and he wants to make sure HPD supports USMH. Dr. Ashby told the members that there is an emergency light at the end of the courtyard and that we are going to replace that to include a full 360-degree camera. The new technology should make people feel safer. Mr. Holzapfel said that he's heard a lot of complaints about the cost of parking and asked if USMH provides any financial support to students. Dr. Ashby said we don't. He went on to say that we had thought about a fundraiser to raise funds to support parking but questioned if that takes away from other needs. Dr. Klauber asked if we could do something needs-based. Dr. McGovern said some people have worked hard in trying to get a student rate and that Jim Kercheval did a great job putting his two cents into those conversations. Mr. Kercheval told the board to keep in mind that there is a new council, three new faces, along with a new mayor. The staff wants to take more time looking at numbers. There is still free parking in other places. Dr. Ashby said that we need to do a better job of selling the issue to them because they are better having people in the garage than not. He said he's had some conversations with Scott Nicewarner and one of the issues was the City not getting parking fees in the summer. Mr. Holzapfel asked if a letter could be sent, and Mr. Kercheval said it may be beneficial for Dr. Ashby to have some sit-downs to gauge where they're at. He said City Council puts too much focus on listening to staff. If the new council is a bit more skeptical of what staff says there might be a better shot at getting a student rate. Mr. Holzapfel said a lot of people complain about the parking fee and there are unintended consequences of raising parking rates so quickly. Mr. Kercheval wonders if there is an opportunity to have a partnership with the County in the evening to use their lot at no cost since it would be relatively empty.

At this point, Dr. Ashby introduced Kim Eichelberger, USMH's new development coordinator. Kim said she is currently working on the Feaste & Frolic with Erin Harman. She said we are

over \$67,000 for F&F scholarships and one donor came back with a \$5,000 sponsorship, their first since 2017. She said she is being aggressive in contacting and soliciting sponsors.

Ms. Harman told the board that an outreach coordinator has been hired and she will be meeting with her to share information. She believes she will be a great fit and will start her new duties January 8. She will be involved in marketing for the UBalt MBA program.

On a final note, Dr. Ashby shared that, for efficiency, he speaks frequently with Eileen at Southern Maryland. As for enrollment, he is projecting a 20-student increase but there are no official numbers yet.

The final order of business was approving the minutes from the September board meeting; Mr. Kercheval made the motion, Dr. Klauber seconded, and the minutes were approved as written.

The meeting ended at 10:40am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa McCulloh