
UFF Fall Consultation Minutes

December 12, 2018

FSU/Westcott Building – Room 201

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Attendees:

University

John Thrasher
Sally McRorie
Kyle Clark
Janet Kistner
Carolyn Egan
Lisa Scoles
Renisha Gibbs
Rebecca Peterson
Danielle Staats
Adam Donaldson

UFF

Jack Fiorito
Matthew Lata
Scott Hannahs
Tom Wazlavek
Michael Buchler
Nancy Kellett
Robin Goodman
Harsh Jain
Joe Clark

The meeting began at 3:00 p.m.

1. Minutes from Consultation Meeting on September 26, 2018

Renisha Gibbs welcomed everyone to the Consultation. She asked if UFF had any changes on the minutes, as they had previously communicated only a few small edits, which had been accepted.

Dr. Scott Hannahs replied that UFF was in agreement with finalizing the minutes from the previous consultation.

Ms. Gibbs expressed her appreciation, and confirmed the minutes would be finalized and distributed out to both teams.

2. Status of Ethics Policy in Development

UFF

Dr. Robin Goodman stated that UFF had heard there was a new ethics policy in development, and inquired about the point person for the development of the policy and a summary of the changes being made.

Ms. Gibbs responded that the institution does have a new Chief Ethics Compliance Officer, Robyn Blank, and she has been working hard over the last few months to investigate and develop a new policy. During that time, Ms. Blank has sought input from various groups on campus including the Faculty Senate. Ms. Gibbs indicated that nothing had been finalized, and she would be happy to take further input from any affected group.

Matthew Lata asked if there was any specific timeline in place as to when the new policy may be completed.

President Thrasher answered that they are taking the process step by step, as required by the Board of Governors, and the University has hired a consultant to assist with development of the policy. He would expect completion to be in early 2019.

3. Sexual Harassment Training Requirement

UFF

Mr. Lata talked about the mandatory sexual misconduct on-line training course. He said that it created a lot of confusion among UFF members, as the initial roll out communication appeared to come from a third-party, and as a result many people thought it was a spam email. He asked if there could be better communication to faculty about what the course is and why it is required. If there are faculty members who don't feel in "good conscience" that they can complete the course, he asked what the repercussions would be.

Ms. Gibbs responded that there had been an initial email from President Thrasher to advise everybody that this training was coming; however, between the President's email and the subsequent communication from the vendor, Hurricane Michael hit Tallahassee, and that delayed the vendor communication. Her office did hear from a number of people who thought the vendor communication was spam, and had tried to reach out to those people and tell them that it's not and the training needs to be completed. The initial deadline was November 30; however, that has been pushed back and December has been given as a grace period. At the end of December, her office intends to reach out to Deans and Chairs about those who have not completed it and see if they can give them an "extra push" to get the course completed. Ms. Gibbs further explained that at some point, once enough time has gone by and her office has provided multiple grace periods and reminders, if there are faculty members or employees who are just refusing to do it, her office will look at what type of repercussions might be appropriate. Ms. Gibbs reminded UFF that the federal government is always asking about what type of training has been provided to faculty in this regard. It is not an attempt to punish or trap anybody and she understands it's a busy time of year. It's a 30-minute course and can be completed while at work.

Dr. Hannahs replied that the language from the email stating "you've been selected" was problematic for some and made it appear as though select individuals had been targeted.

Ms. Gibbs agreed that she could see how it could be interpreted that way. She believes that was standard language used by the vendor, but her office is looking at creating its own language for next time. She continued that she appreciates UFF's feedback and understands it was not quite as smooth of a roll-out as everyone would have liked it to be.

4. Retired Faculty Email Follow-up

UFF

Dr. Jack Fiorito introduced the next topic, stating that it was one that came up during the last consultation, at which time UFF had handed over a draft proposal on updates for the retired faculty email policy and UFF was interested in hearing what had transpired since then.

Ms. Gibbs stated that she does not recall the previous draft language, however she has an update on this topic that she believes would be helpful as she recently met with Provost McRorie and Michael Barrett to discuss this issue. While they are not ready to discuss it in detail as of yet, she believes UFF will be very pleased with where they've landed on this topic and she would ask them to grant her until the beginning of the upcoming year for a further update.

Provost McRorie added that she recently sent out an email to all retired faculty and staff who have ongoing email accounts and told them that they will not be affected by any upcoming changes.

Dr. Fiorito asked about the impact on faculty members who will retire in the next year.

Ms. Gibbs answered that she is not in place where she can divulge details of the policy update yet, but as she stated previously she thinks UFF will be very pleased with where they have landed on this issue.

Dr. Fiorito stated he had one further question, that being whether students get to keep their email addresses after graduating.

Vice President of Finance and Administration Kyle Clark replied that yes they do, and his office has been looking into data on this topic, including how frequently those accounts are being used and whether the cost associated with maintaining those accounts is worth it.

5. Anticipating the Legislative Session

UFF

Mr. Lata asked President Thrasher if he had any insight to share about the upcoming legislative session, and also stated that UFF appreciated his comments at the last Faculty Senate meeting.

President Thrasher replied that with new leadership taking over it's hard to predict anything with much certainty. He continued that he was named by the Governor-Elect to the education transition committee, the only university President that was appointed. He also explained he held a community event at his house and the Governor-Elect attended, which President Thrasher thought was a positive sign. President Thrasher continued that he received further good news that the University's PECO project was approved by the Board of Governors and all of the University's projects have already started and already been funded. He stated that he anticipated that Hurricane Michael will have an impact on the budget of the state of Florida. The damage to FSU's Panama City campus alone was \$8.3 million. He is doing everything he can and working in cooperation with the school's allies to secure another positive year for Florida State.

Mr. Lata stated that he was surprised to see that the gun bill had been re-introduced.

President Thrasher answered that he was not surprised to see someone else pushing the gun bill. He has made his stance on this matter very clear many times.

Mr. Lata replied that UFF would be willing to do everything they can to work with him on that, if need be.

President Thrasher responded by thanking Mr. Lata, and stating that he is optimistic for a positive outcome.

Dr. Hannahs asked if President Thrasher foresaw any specific challenges from any of the constitutional amendments that had passed.

President Thrasher answered that the bill on new student fees being prohibited is one he intends to watch closely, and that he wishes was not there. He stated he felt that it should have been resolved in the process as opposed to putting it in the Constitution. He assured UFF they would be kept up to date on anything that changed, and finished by saying that the legislative session starts in March, so it may not conclude until the first week of May, if everything stays on schedule.

6. Plans to Protect Students and Faculty from Active Shooters

UFF

Dr. Joe Clark stated that UFF appreciated President Thrasher's advocacy as it pertained to the guns on campus bill. He continued that he understands that at some point in the past there had been discussions of more physical changes around campus, deadbolts, cameras, things of that nature. He inquired as to whether there had been any progress or updates about these physical changes.

Vice President Clark replied that over the past several years, Florida State has added ten new police officers to its force in response to the Board of Governors' mandate that each institution add police officers to reach a certain ratio of officers to students. The goal was to add 3 officers per year, an aim that has carried into this year as well. He continued that Florida State has also provided additional training and tools for the officers to use around campus, including an array of tools they can use to avoid lethal force. There have been discussions at past consultations about the new cameras that are being installed around campus, as well as other investments that have been made in other technology and resources. In terms of classroom improvements, if there's a specific issue or classroom that faculty members would like the police department to take a look at, they just need to contact Chief Perry. That is something we have done in certain situations.

Dr. Clark thanked him for his thorough answer, and stated that Vice President Clark had mentioned some changes that had been made to certain classrooms, and asked if he could expand on those.

Vice President Clark responded that it is taken on a classroom by classroom basis and he does

not want to discuss what's been done for every classroom on the campus as that would consume a lot of time, however, generally, new alert systems have been added to a lot of classrooms across campus.

Dr. Goodman exclaimed that she had an alert system in one of her old offices, one time it went off and was very loud and there was no way to shut it off. She recalled having to cancel her class as a result. She asked whether that was what Vice President Clark was referring to when he mentioned alert systems, and if so, she hopes that they have improved their functionality since the incident she referenced.

Vice President Clark replied that he remembered the situation in question. His office has tried to survey and test the alert systems wherever they've been put in. He obviously does not want to invest in something that does not work properly. If there is a current specific situation she is concerned about, he would recommend reaching out to Chief Perry about that.

Mr. Lata stated that he recalled mention of deadbolts or other mechanisms that would allow classrooms to lock from the inside, and was wondering if there was any update on those.

Vice President Clark answered that part of the concern with deadbolts are if the shooter happens to get into the classroom, the shooter could deadbolt the door and lock everyone in the room. He continued that he would want Chief Perry present to address any more of these specific types of questions, as Chief Perry is the expert in this realm. Vice President Clark offered to arrange a meeting between Chief Perry and UFF if they would like to ask him more specific questions.

President Thrasher asked whether UFF had had an opportunity to view Chief Perry's Run-Hide-Fight training video that he had put out about campus safety, and he stated that it is really a very good watch and worth checking out for those interested in campus safety specifics.

7. Use of Offices during University Closures

UFF

Dr. Goodman stated that she and Ms. Gibbs have held several offline conversations about this topic. Dr. Goodman said that during Hurricane Michael, she had work she felt she needed to do, and it couldn't be done at her house with no electricity or internet, so she spent a lot of that time period in her office, during which she saw other faculty and students around campus as well. She was very thankful to have a secure office to be in; however, there was no air in the building during that time which she found to be a major inconvenience. She was wondering if there was any update in response to that situation.

Ms. Gibbs replied that it is the University Administration's expectation that during a hurricane or severe storm, when the University is closed, no faculty or staff should be in University buildings. It is an issue of safety first and foremost, particularly since not all of the buildings on campus are equipped to deal with hurricane-force winds. The Panama City campus, for example, incurred tons of damage, broken windows, and other things of that nature. Ms. Gibbs further explained that the air conditioning was not on in Dr. Goodman's building because the building was closed.

The University had established several shelters on campus that were open for faculty, staff and students who had to leave their homes and that were determined to be safe. Besides these designated shelters, other buildings on campus are not to be used to shelter during a hurricane or other natural disaster.

Dr. Goodman inquired as to whether Ms. Gibbs would be fine with doing work in the Civic Center.

Ms. Gibbs answered that she would be and has done so in the past, specifically during the three hurricanes that have occurred in the last three years.

Vice President Clark explained that his office is considering in the future opening a shelter on campus that is just for faculty and staff, separate from the shelter where students are held. But until that time there are many buildings on campus that are not safe in hurricanes. It is standard procedure that after a storm concludes, a review of campus is done and an "All Clear" gets issued that alerts everyone that it's safe for people to return to campus. Before then, the hope is that the buildings are not occupied during storms.

Dr. Goodman responded that part of the challenge for her was that the storm had only lasted one day but the campus was closed for a full week.

President Thrasher responding by explaining that it was his decision to close the campus for that length of time. He had looked at the forecast for the storm using all the available resources, and the speed and magnitude of the storm had been terrifying. He made his decision based on wanting to allow the students ample time to relocate somewhere safe. He gave them a day to prepare, then the storm hit, and then multiple days were needed to clean up the campus and ensure the safety of everybody upon return. He stated that he would make no apologies about closing the University for the amount of time that he did, with the safety of the students as his main concern.

Dr. Goodman answered that she was not at all trying to criticize the President's decision, she agreed with him.

8. Clarification of Comments Made during Recent Deans and Chairs Meeting UFF

Dr. Michael Buchler stated that UFF had heard from several colleagues that at a recent deans and chairs meeting, a senior administrative University official misrepresented the role of the union, saying that they could not hire more faculty or give more increases because of UFF.

Vice President Clark replied that he believes those quotes were taken out of context, explaining that he had made some remarks, during the question and answer portion of the meeting. He explained that a faculty member had asked a question along the lines of "How do we go about hiring more staff?", a process which has not changed. This faculty member kept asking about more staff support, saying they didn't need more faculty, but that hiring more support staff should be the University's priority. Vice President Clark had replied to these comments by

stating that he understood the thinking behind those comments, that he and the Provost were there and hearing these questions and concerns and making note of them, but that it might also be useful for the faculty member to voice these sentiments to their union representative. This was the conversation he had had with this faculty member, just reiterating that everyone should know what their priorities are and make those clear to their union representation. That was the spirit of the conversation and there was no ill will.

Dr. Buchler thanked Vice President Clark for this clarification.

9. Communication Regarding Bargaining Outcomes

UFF

Mr. Lata stated that UFF works very hard during the bargaining process to reach an agreement and positively sell that contract to the faculty, and when the email goes out from the University administration about the contract that was agreed upon, it does so without mentioning the bargaining process. UFF thinks it would be helpful to them if some reference to the bargaining process was included on occasion in the communications that go out from the President's Office.

President Thrasher answered that he understands the sentiment and appreciated the feedback.

10. Issues with Canvas

UFF

Dr. Harsh Jain noted that faculty members were experiencing issues with Canvas, and was inquiring about if there have been any systems put in place to prevent these sorts of issues in the future.

Dr. Joe Clark stated that while he is not directly involved with Canvas support, he understands that there was an issue recently with enrollment data that was provided to Canvas, which was removing students from classes. It took a little while to find and fix the error, but he does not think any data was lost. He has seen a draft email addressing what caused the issue and steps that can be taken to prevent it from happening again. He did not want to speak any further and risk speaking for anybody or saying anything that was untrue.

Dr. Kistner articulated that she believed everything Dr. Clark just said was helpful and factual. Her office is making efforts to build checks and balances into the system so that if errors occur, the system will stop and not proceed any further. She had been impressed with the depth of thought and discussion that was being put into preventing this or other errors from happening in the future.

Dr. Jain replied that one of his primary concerns was whether the data from Canvas was backed up.

Dr. Kistner answered all temporarily lost data was able to be recovered.

Dr. Clark explained that it had also been mentioned to him that using the "disaster recovery" functionality, and rolling everybody back to that state in the system was an option. He thinks that could have created alternate problems.

Dr. Kistner answered him that her office has also considered posting some language about these issues online to help people navigate them. She is unsure the timeline on that, but it is in discussion.

Mr. Lata stated that he had heard this most recent issue was caused by a third-party vendor updating things in the system at the last minute and that was what had caused the errors. He was wondering whether those changes could possibly be made at a time that wasn't as critical to the functioning of the University.

Dr. Kistner replied that had not been the case for this situation, that the issue had been caused by human error.

Ms. Gibbs asked if there were any further questions or comments. Upon nobody responding, she thanked everyone for their time, wished everybody a happy winter break, and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourns at 4:59pm