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UFF Presidential Consultation Meeting

April 15, 2020

Zoom Meeting

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

FSU-BOT:
John Thrasher
Sally McRorie
Kyle Clark
Janet Kistner
Renisha Gibbs
Carolyn Egan
Rebecca Peterson
Lisa Scoles
Lynn Hogan
Tiffany Ward
Adam Donaldson

FSU-UFF
Jack Fiorito
Irene Padavic
Robin Goodman
Joe Clark
Michael Buchler
Matthew Lata
Scott Hannahs
Emily McCann
Frankie Wong
Nancy Kellett

AGENDA

Meeting conducted via Zoom teleconference

1. Minutes from Consultation Meeting on March 9, 2020

Renisha Gibbs welcomed everybody to the consultation. She affirmed that her team was present and ready to respond to the agenda items the UFF team had presented. She asked who would be taking the lead in the discussions for the UFF team.

Mr. Matthew Lata responded that he would be.

Ms. Gibbs thanked him, and asked for confirmation that the minutes from the previous consultation meeting had been accepted.

Mr. Lata confirmed that they had been.

Ms. Gibbs confirmed their finalization. She asked if UFF had anybody new on their team.

Mr. Lata asked if the FSU-BOT team had previously met Emily McCann, the new service unit director for the UFF team.

Ms. Gibbs confirmed that she had been present at the last meeting.

Mr. Lata continued that Frankie Wong from the College of Nursing was also present today.

Ms. Gibbs welcomed Dr. Wong, and with introductions concluded asked the UFF team to present their first agenda item.

2. Campus Closure Updates

UFF

Mr. Lata thanked her, and stated that one of the main questions his team had for this meeting was related to guidance surrounding the hiring of post-doctoral graduate students.

Dr. Scott Hannahs elaborated, stating that faculty members are in the process of planning for after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hiring commitments will need to be made and he does not want people to be caught in limbo. He is requesting some sort of timeline on when these commitments will be able to be made or guidance on how they can plan to move forward with hiring needs.

Ms. Gibbs answered him that FSU is in the same situation as many institutions across the country where the situation is changing on a daily basis and administrations are trying to figure issues out as they present themselves. She continued that the University would be announcing later today a decision to take the summer semester completely online; she wanted to let the UFF team know ahead of time here at the meeting. As far as the fall semester, no decisions have been made. University leadership thinks it's too early to make those decisions, but is hoping to do so by mid-July. The situation is changing so frequently, it would not be wise to make a final decision too early. In regards to hiring, the University is currently under a hiring freeze, but 9-month faculty positions have been exempted from that, as have post docs. There has been some contingency language added into some of the offer letters about things getting back to normal in the fall, but right now there are just so many unknowns it's difficult to answer the question with anything more concrete. She concluded by asking the UFF team to please understand that she and the other members of the administration are talking about all of these questions constantly, are looking at other institutions, are talking to the Board of Governors, and are talking to the Health Department. As soon as it's decided things can return to normalcy, while still ensuring the health and safety of the campus, they will.

Dr. Hannahs replied that he agreed with everything Ms. Gibbs stated.

Ms. Gibbs responded that they can expect to see an announcement about summer courses later on that day, and that everything beyond that is still being figured out.

Mr. Lata answered that the concern is just making sure that critical positions remain filled for the fall, which requires post docs and graduate students. He stated that his team would work to communicate the circumstances that Ms. Gibbs had just informed them about.

Ms. Gibbs expressed her appreciation for the help in communicating, stating the Post docs are very important to the administration and to the metrics, and she appreciates any efforts faculty

makes in helping to keep them connected.

Dr. Robin Goodman expressed one further concern, stating that online teaching is time-consuming and more work for faculty, many of whom aren't used to teaching that way. Having graduate students or staff available to assist with online teaching in the fall would be a huge help.

Ms. Gibbs replied that she understands the issue Dr. Goodman is alluding to. She continued that graduate students have been exempted from the hiring freeze, so she doesn't expect there to be any limiting impact there. However, how each college within the University is affected is going to be different and they will have to make decisions that are best for their particular situations. There isn't going to be a one size fits all response that works across all departments.

Dr. Irene Padavic stated that the UFF team had been heartened by how successfully the two teams had been working together on the impact bargaining Memorandum of Understanding, and she thinks they are getting very close to reaching agreement. She expressed respect for the rules regarding the protocol for consultation and not mixing bargaining items, but was wondering if generally speaking, there is any more information available on the items they have been discussing at impact bargaining.

Ms. Gibbs answered that her team had been discussing the progress of impact bargaining earlier that morning. She does not want to discuss details at the consultation, but assured Dr. Padavic that her team would be providing a response to the UFF team very shortly.

Dr. Padavic thanked her and told Ms. Gibbs to feel free to call her at any time on these items, as often times verbal conversations may be preferable to written ones.

3. Budget Update

UFF

Mr. Lata stated that he realizes the governor has not finalized a budget yet, but was wondering, in terms of E&G appropriations and potential bonus payment appropriations, if there was any information that could be shared.

Ms. Gibbs responded that as everybody knows no budget has been passed yet, and as a result administration think it would be premature to discuss any specific figures. She continued that some trickle-down effect on the budget that reflects what the state is dealing with can be expected.

Mr. Lata inquired as to whether the current budget proposal figure was known.

Ms. Gibbs answered that she does not know the answer off the top of her head.

Dr. Goodman stated that she has received communication from the Chair of her department conveying that the budget has been set and the outlook for the upcoming year is not anything to worry about.

President John Thrasher responded that there has been no signed budget from the Governor yet, so it would be inaccurate to suggest that one has been finalized. Not only has the Governor not signed a budget, there is speculation that he might arrange for a special session to make cuts to any budget that was passed. He concluded that it would really be unwise to speculate on anything budgetary at this point, as nobody knows what the numbers are going to look like and anybody who says that they do is misrepresenting the situation.

Vice President of Finance and Administration Kyle Clark stated that what Dr. Goodman's Chair may have meant was that they have submitted their budget requests to the finance office, as this is in line with what they have been asked to do. He continued that if the Governor does announce a budget, the departments will be asked to submit updated budgetary requests.

Mr. Lata asked if there was some sort of criteria the administration is looking to meet prior to lifting the spending cap, or if the picture is just so uncertain right now that what those criteria might be are not even defined at this time.

Ms. Gibbs replied that the hiring freeze, if that's what Dr. Lata was referring to, was put in place so that the only positions that would be filled are those that are critical for keeping University operations running. Others are not as critical and if a budget reduction does occur, some of those positions may have to wait to be filled. But to respond to Dr. Lata's question, there is no specific criteria or number that will automatically lift the hiring freeze.

Mr. Lata wondered if enrollment numbers are seeing a direct impact from the pandemic.

Provost Sally McRorie answered that her office is keeping a close eye on summer and fall enrollment numbers. They are anticipating a drop in summer enrollment numbers but hoping it won't be too substantial. There are concerns for the first-time students who will be starting right out of high school in summer C, as the online modality would be unfamiliar to them. As for fall enrollment, the enrollment deadline is currently set for May 1, but that may be extended. Currently fall enrollment looks pretty good. Numbers are around 6,200 for new first-year students, which is close to what they were expected to be.

Mr. Lata thanked her, and asked his team if anybody had any further questions regarding the budget. As there were none, the UFF team proceeded to the next agenda item.

4. Faculty Poll Results

UFF

Dr. Jack Fiorito introduced the next agenda item, stating that the results of the annual faculty poll were in and he would like to share with both teams. He noted that, significantly, the poll was conducted in March before the pandemic loomed large, so he asked for that to be kept in mind. Some of the questions are fairly standard and won't be impacted, but some questions may be sensitive to the change that's come about over the last month and a half. Dr. Fiorito said that in terms of salary preferences, there was a slight shift towards covering the increase in cost of living, as 87% of faculty responded that they would like to see an increase of this type. In the multiple-choice section as well, an indication of cost of living increases being preferred over merit increases was present. Outside of salary, health care was identified as the top priority. A

form of phased retirement that includes health care coverage was cited as a priority by 60% or more of respondents. The results indicated a drop in the perception of faculty morale among colleagues. The percentage of faculty agreeing that online teaching should be on a voluntary basis rose 5% compared to the previous year. This was, of course, before everything switched to an online format and he wondered if those numbers might be different if the question were posed again today. In administrator ratings, there had been a slight drop for most administrators. President Thrasher still emerged with the best rating, followed by Deans and Chairs. Beyond that, there had been a bunch of feedback in the form of comments. The full report has been made available on the UFF website if anybody would like to look at it in more detail. He concluded that there had been some very interesting comments.

Mr. Lata stated that he had nothing further really to add. He tracks the trends of the survey results and compares them over the years. Items such as the satisfaction rating had flattened over the years, but whether that was significant he wouldn't be able to say.

Ms. Gibbs thanked them both for communicating this information. She stated that usually the UFF sends over a copy of the survey and its results, and wondered if they could do the same this year.

Mr. Lata confirmed they would be happy to do that.

Ms. Gibbs expressed her appreciation for that, stating that administration often reviews the survey results and finds them to be useful.

5. Legislative Update

UFF

Mr. Lata explained the next item is the legislative update but that was sort of wrapped up in the previous discussion regarding the budget. His biggest question is whether there would be a special session.

President Thrasher replied that he doesn't think anybody knows at this point. Each day brings the process a little further along, but the biggest question for him is how to go about re-opening the University and the economy.

Mr. Lata thanked him and stated his perspective that most of the concerns the UFF team had coming into the meeting had been well addressed.

President Thrasher responded that he hoped so. Unless the Governor completely strikes everything that has been talked about, he thinks the University should do reasonably well. The Governor is waiting to evaluate the full economic impact, sales tax revenue and things of that nature. Those items will have an impact not only on the University but on the entire state. The federal stimulus money will also be a factor. The University is getting ready to receive its first money from the federal government that will go directly to students, and a plan is being worked on for that. One additional note, as Ms. Gibbs mentioned, is that the University leadership is in close touch with the Board of Governors. They are meeting with each other regularly, with the next meeting being that upcoming Friday, at which point he is planning to present them with a

comprehensive update on everything that's going on. His teams are keeping in close contact with the people outside of the University that are trying to help. He thinks his staff have done a tremendous job in positioning the University where they currently are, given the circumstances. He appreciates all the faculty have done and how they have embraced the challenge of the difficult scenarios that they've had to deal with. His hope is that they can open back up to students in the fall, although he feels in his heart there are many issues that need to be dealt with to be able to accomplish that.

Mr. Lata asserted that he doesn't participate in mass courses, but the response he has heard from students is that they are somewhat disappointed with that format of class delivery.

President Thrasher replied that the students have really stepped up to the plate. He understands that the situation is currently a very difficult one. He has stepped into a few Zoom classes and seen for himself that attendance has been very high, and he thinks the faculty members have done a tremendous job. He thinks the entire institution has made this work in a very unprecedented and difficult situation.

Provost McRorie added that she has received communication from a number of students expressing gratitude for the courses that are being offered this spring and summer, and the extended opt-in time.

Mr. Lata thanked her and said that was a specific concern they had held.

Dr. Hannahs noted that he would like to follow-up on a previous item as well, that of separating out the unfunded actuarial liability charge from the actual retirement amount on pay stubs so faculty will know the exact amounts that are going into their retirement, as well as the feasibility and timeline for doing this.

Ms. Gibbs responded that she had looked into this and it is feasible and can be done. It is on the list of items to get taken care. The pandemic has shifted things in terms of priorities recently. The internal goal is to get the pay stub issue rectified by the end of the year, but that timeline is only tentative with so much uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 crisis. She invited Dr. Hannahs to continue to ask for updates in the coming months and she will continue to work on this.

Dr. Hannahs expressed appreciation and stated that update was fantastic to hear. He stated that everyone understands that HR has a lot on their plate at the moment, so an end-of-year resolution would be great.

Dr. Michael Buchler stated that he would also like to follow-up on a previously discussed issue, that of the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) and the assistance being provided for a blind student in the College of Music. He continued that to date OAS has been unwilling to render Braille for the student or to provide access to a Braille printer, which means that documents for classes are either not going to be able to be provided to this student or will have to be sub-contracted out to an entity outside of the University.

Dr. Kistner answered that she has been looking into this issue. She has reached out to Dr.

Rogers, the affected professor, and confirmed a meeting with her on this issue. At that meeting Dr. Kistner plans to share with her all the information she has learned and to follow-up with a few questions that she has.

Dr. Buchler thanked her, stating that since the OAS closed, he and Dr. Rogers are not sure where to turn to for accommodations with that student. They are looking forward to the follow-up meeting with Dr. Kistner.

Ms. Gibbs responded that it was the expectation of administration that none of the offices are closed. Offices are working to make accommodations and perform tasks remotely. She asked Dr. Buchler if he experiences any issues or non-responses as a result of office closure to please bring those to her attention. Everyone is working hard to ensure the needs of students and faculty are not being delayed as a result of the pandemic, and she knows there are employees going in to work to handle critical situations. The expectation is that all offices are operational, and if not she needs to know about it. This matter is of extreme importance to her.

Dr. Buchler thanked her for that information. He continued that he thought he had received a note stating that the entire OAS office was actually closed. In addition, Dr. Rogers had also been left with that feeling after communicating with them, and was under the impression that there would be no printing done on the Braille printer as a result.

Ms. Gibbs stated that she would follow up on this matter. All of the administration's external and internal communications have been very careful to say that things are open and operational, remotely. There are some employees going in to the offices periodically to make sure critical tasks get performed.

Dr. Buchler thanked her for looking into this matter, and stated that the unwillingness of the OAS to render Braille documents for the student was the central issue of concern.

Ms. Gibbs replied that Dr. Kistner would be following up on that for him in the near future. She asked if the UFF team had any other items to address.

Mr. Lata answered that he believes that was their last item. He and the entire UFF team were thankful for the frequent updates being provided by administration. Everybody understands this is uncharted territory and the University is having to adjust on the fly.

Dr. Fiorito stated he had one further question, regarding people who were expecting summer employment assignments. Now there will not be as many available as a result of COVID-19. He understands the University has made accommodations for these people where possible, but certain things are unavoidable, such as the study abroad centers now being closed. He was wondering what happens if those people go to the unemployment office and say they were expecting summer employment but did not receive it.

Ms. Gibbs answered that all unemployment claims are handled by the Florida Office of Economic Opportunity (DEO), which makes the determination as to compensation. The University makes no determination about that. The DEO would reach out to the University about

the University's position in response to any claim, and the University would respond according to what the records indicate. The University would not necessarily fight such a claim, but its response would depend upon what the records reflect. The Human Resources website will be updated regarding unemployment soon as HR is receiving a lot of questions on this topic.

Dr. Hannahs added that he felt broadcasting more information on that if possible and following up with the website update would be very helpful in informing faculty members.

Ms. Gibbs thanked him and said to expect those updates in the next couple of days. She asked if the UFF team had any further questions.

Dr. Goodman inquired as to if there were any plans for the collective bargaining negotiations between the parties to begin soon.

Ms. Gibbs answered that bargaining has taken a lesser priority recently as the University focuses most of its available resources on responding to the pandemic. She would meet with her team over the next week or so to work on getting a plan in place for bargaining to begin, perhaps a couple of non-economic articles can be discussed first. She said to expect a follow-up on that item in the next week or two.

Dr. Goodman thanked her for this response.

President Thrasher stated he had one further thought for everybody, something Dr. Lata had touched on. Communication during this emergency is so important, so he asked that if faculty had any ideas on the University response, to let the administration know. He wants everyone to know that he and his team are doing all they can to communicate with the entire University community. There are meetings taking place via Zoom all the time. The BOT meeting on Friday was going to be held via Zoom. Their Monday morning staff meeting is scheduled to take place as normal. He reiterated that communication and patience are key. This pandemic is like nothing he has ever encountered and he's sure that's true for others as well. It changes on an almost hour-by-hour basis. He wants faculty to know that what they think is important, they have his number, call him if they have thoughts relative to the fate of the University they are concerned about and want to talk about. His goal is to have things starting back up by September or the end of August, but there are a lot of factors surrounding that timeline, not many of which are within University's control. The University is planning for a virtual graduation on May 2nd and he wants all the students to feel some sense of how proud the University is of them for their accomplishments during this very trying time. The students have gone through more than he could imagine. He concluded that safety continues to be paramount, so he encourages everyone to continue doing as they've been advised: stay home when possible, wear masks and socially distance. It's going to require everybody to be patient and continue to communicate. He knows how difficult it must be for faculty to do online instruction, especially if they haven't done it before or aren't used to doing it. He wishes them all the very best and thinks they are doing an amazing job. He told everyone to stay safe and he looks forward to talking more with them soon.

Ms. Gibbs stated that she thinks that is a wonderful note and sentiment to end on. She stated it was great to see everyone and she will follow-up on all items that merited it soon.

Meeting adjourns at 10:44am