
UFF Fall Presidential Consultation Meeting

December 3, 2020

Zoom Meeting

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

FSU-BOT:

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

FSU-UFF:

Matthew Lata
Irene Padavic
Nancy Kellett
Robin Goodman
Michael Buchler
Scott Hannahs
Jack Fiorito

MINUTES

1. Introductory Remarks

Renisha Gibbs welcomed everyone to the consultation. She confirmed the administration team was prepared and ready to discuss the presented UFF agenda items.

Matthew Lata thanked her, confirmed that the teams had worked together in the previous days to confirm minor edits to the minutes, and would now move on to the next agenda item.

2. Discussion of Missed Deadlines

UFF

Mr. Lata stated that it was a short agenda, so they won't get into missed deadlines here.

3. COVID Update

UFF

- A. The Projected Way Forward**
- B. Percentage of Classes Being Taught Face-to-Face**
- C. Outlook for The Summer**
- D. Status of the MOU**

Mr. Lata explained that, with how unusual that year has been amidst the COVID pandemic, the UFF team felt most of the agenda today could be handled in more of a discussion manner regarding updates and plans, rather than discussion surrounding an array of specific talking points. He wanted to begin by stating to President Thrasher that the faculty appreciated many of the points the President mentioned in his public address the day before, items such as COVID safety, the campus response to racism, and opposing guns on campus. The faculty appreciates all he has done for them to navigate the pandemic. His leadership has been very much appreciated. They have not heard of any faculty members being forced to teach face to face or feeling like they are being pressured to do so, as had occurred at other institutions.

Dr. Michael Buchler opined that the previous statement was true for the Tallahassee campus, but perhaps not so for the Panama City campus.

Mr. Lata agreed with Dr. Buchler's statement. He continued that the main FSU campus had learned face to face classes would not be resumed until January 19th, a few days later than traditionally would have been the case. He asked what the reasoning behind this change was.

President Thrasher responded that Provost McRorie had made the suggestion a few weeks prior, given the time frame with all of the students returning and moving into residence halls, that a little extra cautionary time to allow for testing and safe reintroduction to campus life made sense.

Provost McRorie added that there will be 400 new students moving into the residence halls, including first-time freshman and transfer students. They felt that the time after students had been in large gatherings from the holidays represented a potential risk, and wanted to allow extra time for everybody to be sufficiently tested following that period. Also, there will be a new food service company starting on campus and they wanted to allow enough time for it to get situated.

Vice President for Finance and Administration Kyle Clark elaborated that move-in time is a chaotic time even under normal circumstances, and there are very tight constraints around how many people can move in at one time that must be adhered to. So spacing out those times allowed more time for cleaning and other safety measures including testing to occur. The testing execution has been wonderful, as they are able to get back tests within 24 hours and test close to 1,800 people a day.

Mr. Lata agreed that testing had been one of the great successes of FSU during the pandemic, including the quickness with which the testing facility had been constructed. He stated that his son had taken a test in Nashville and the results took 5 days to get back. Here at FSU, they were receiving results consistently within 24 hours. He finished by asking what the testing plan is moving forward, and whether random testing would continue into the spring.

Vice President Clark added that to Mr. Lata's point, very early on FSU worked to establish a medical team with people from the College of Medicine, who they have listened to and drawn input from regarding guidelines and recommendations. The current line of thinking is that random testing would resume upon resumption of the spring semester; however, a final decision on that has not been made. The administration would continue to work alongside the medical team in discussing that, as well as monitor any guidelines for testing that the CDC puts out. He concluded that Dr. Van Durme from the College of Medicine is leading the team, and around the first of the year they would take into account the most recent information and conditions and make a final decision.

Mr. Lata asked, given the active COVID case count continuing to increase recently, whether the administration envisions a trigger point at which the campus might shut down again.

President Thrasher answered that he does not see that happening. He believes they are doing well at the University, which was reinforced a few weeks prior when Dr. Redford from the CDC visited and reviewed the campus. The administration will continue to monitor the positivity rate for testing on campus, which to this point has been less than 1%. He concluded with his belief that the University is doing the right things and that there are no projections for another shutdown at this time.

Vice President Clark elaborated that one other area of importance has been the messaging to students. The President has been very clear in terms of the direction he wants all students to follow. Additionally, testing for off-campus housing communities, such as the Greek community, was a priority that the administration was actively working on.

Mr. Lata asked, given the recent news regarding progress being made on developing a COVID vaccine, whether the University would be considering any long-term plans to assist with distribution of that.

Vice President Clark replied that there is a committee on campus directed towards working on a number of issues related to vaccine storage and distribution. Resources from the Wellness Center and the Care Clinic are being put towards assisting this goal and he believes the University can be an asset to the local and state community on this objective. He continued that he and Ms. Gibbs meet with the State Surgeon General and Florida Department of Health routinely and have expressed a desire to help in the community however possible. Cold storage for vaccines and storage of mass quantities of dry ice to enable vaccine storage are both possibilities that are being explored. He concluded that the University has a team comprised of the best medical minds in the community working together on this, and he is confident that the University can be a leader relative to vaccine storage and distribution when the time comes.

Mr. Lata thanked him for this information and continued by asking that, given the general skepticism regarding vaccines, whether there would be any sort of campaign on campus to encourage students and others to get it.

Vice President Clark replied that the administrative team has already begun working to address that. They are concerned not only about students but all of the campus community, and colleagues who are minorities may have additional concerns. The University is engaging all of its marketing channels to make sure the vaccine can be offered to everybody and that they understand the challenges and benefits it presents. The University will continue to remind everybody of the value of social distancing and mask-wearing, as those actions should not subside once the spring begins just because a vaccine has gone into circulation.

Mr. Lata expressed his appreciation for these initiatives and stated if there is any way the faculty can help encourage students to please let him know. Additionally, they were wondering what the number for face to face courses for the spring semester looks like.

Provost McRorie answered that currently 50-56% of classes are being taught face to face, including Law and graduate courses. The breakdown for registration indicates 60% of graduate courses are face to face, Law school is about 78%; these are pretty typical numbers. The College of Medicine is 10% face to face, as can be expected. Undergraduate courses were around 47% face to face, and that's with about 71% of undergraduates having registered. Overall, University enrollment was at about 55% face to face, and that includes hybrid courses. She finished that there have also been plexiglass screens going up all around the

University in classrooms for teachers that requested it, as well as the other safety protocols President Thrasher and Vice President Clark had touched on.

Dr. Robin Goodman stated that she had attended the recent Board of Trustees meeting and recalled hearing that some of the adjustments that had been made throughout the pandemic had worked well and may continue after COVID concerns have subsided. She was wondering if the administrative team could elaborate on what those might be.

Provost McRorie responded that the remote work preference has increased among employees, and there has always been pressure from the Board of Governors to work in more remote coursework at the institution. Teaching remotely can work well for certain classes and reach more students. There are many potential positive changes that are being considered.

Vice President Clark articulated that the differences aren't just on the academic side, but on the student services side as well. The scope of what the University can do is going to change after the pandemic. He cited examples like curbside delivery and the ability to deliver food to students around campus. He also stated that the telecommuting policy will be updated post-pandemic and there is going to be more flexibility around telecommuting relative to what the University had before.

Dr. Goodman stated that relative to Vice President Clark's point, she had heard on NPR that morning the Legislature talking about raising tuition and she wondered if FSU was a part of that.

President Thrasher answered that FSU is not a part of that. That was the idea of an outgoing senator largely in response to the economic shortcoming. He articulated that it would be premature to get involved in that at this point with so many steps until it becomes a possibility. There are arguments for both sides in his opinion, but the Legislature will have the responsibility of filtering through that discussion.

Mr. Lata asked, even though the evaluation window is still open, whether there was any sense as to how students are reacting to the change in instruction type. His assessment has been that graduate students prefer face to face while undergraduates prefer remote.

Provost McRorie replied that while there haven't been enough responses yet to tell, she can pass along that the nomination window for teacher of the year award opened this week and already 200 teachers have been nominated, so that tells her the teachers have been doing an amazing job.

Mr. Lata articulated that the next item the UFF team would like to discuss is that of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pertaining to the impacts of COVID-19.

Dr. Irene Padavic said that she would like to continue the MOU, as she thinks it has been very successful. She asked the administrative team what they thought.

Ms. Gibbs responded that the two teams should schedule some time to discuss this in further detail. Administration feels as though there are useful elements within the MOU that should continue, while there are others that should expire.

Dr. Padavic replied that the MOU currently contains an end date of the end of the calendar year.

Ms. Gibbs answered that her team will work to schedule something in the near future.

4. Budget Update – Anticipated Cuts for next fiscal year/Legislative Preview **UFF**

Mr. Lata pivoted to the next agenda item, seeking an update from administration as to how the Legislature might react given the economic challenges of the pandemic.

President Thrasher replied that they don't know yet about the holdback and there are no committee meetings in January. All that is known at this time is the holdback will be continuing for now. There was roughly a \$2 billion deficit for the upcoming year and how the Legislature will account for that nobody knows. FSU was planning to present its case for funding this Spring, showing that the University has done a good job managing the resources that have been allocated in the past and has shown a good return on investment. The Florida State University System (SUS) Presidents are united in this message.

Mr. Lata asked if there was any economic information the administration could provide to assist the UFF as it begins preparation of their bargaining items for that Spring.

President Thrasher answered that he doesn't think they can advise on that just yet; perhaps he will know more in a few months once the tone of the Legislature becomes clear.

Mr. Lata continued that in assessing the new composition of the Legislature, his evaluation was that it appears to perhaps be a little less friendly to higher education. He wondered if the President could share his view.

President Thrasher stated that he doesn't necessarily agree with that assessment. He believes there are differing points of view but that everyone understands the economic and other benefits that the University provides to the state, and his job is to continue making that argument. The Legislature is leadership driven, so a focus on the leadership is important.

Mr. Lata asked if there was any idea of where the guns on campus legislation that had been introduced recently might go.

President Thrasher replied that it had been introduced by the same individual that introduced it the previous year and he's not aware of a Senate sponsor, so he feels confident that issue will not go very far.

Dr. Padavic asked about planning for Summer 2021 teaching and whether restrictions to class size and course modality could be expected.

Vice President Clark responded that we would let Provost McRorie speak to the academic piece, but he could speak as to the University. The instructions that have been distributed at this time would be to plan for a normal summer. That is how they are approaching the summer and then, of course, monitoring conditions every day and ready to make any changes that need to be made. The hope is the colleges and departments are able to have camps for prospective students, that the University can conduct tours for prospective students and their families, and that the University would prepare for those activities and then make the final decision on going forward with them at a later time.

Provost McRorie elaborated that camps such as the music and circus camp are very important. Her goal is to try to have as typical a summer as possible, but much would depend on what develops in the coming semester. Applications are up and more freshmen are applying to start in the fall rather than the summer. It will be driven by student need.

Dr. Goodman voiced that she had a question related to travel restrictions for faculty and whether those might be loosened any time soon; for instance, she asked whether planning to attend a summer conference

would be a realistic pursuit.

Vice President Clark answered that this issue is one he has been discussing a lot recently. He posed this question at a meeting of all SUS Chief Financial Officers in the state earlier this week, and had heard that the current process of getting VP approval for any travel would be continuing at most of the schools at least through March. It was the University's intention to adhere to that plan, and his office is working on a communication to go out later today to inform everyone of that process. Relative to summer, it was too early to say at this point. He believes if a department wants to host a conference or camp and can do it safely in the current circumstances the University is operating under, then that will be something that could be potentially viable. The Turnbull Center is hosting some events. It is hoped the vaccine will be in use by summer.

Provost McRorie agreed a small conference could be doable.

Dr. Padavic recognized the need for both sides to voice approval of the minutes from the previous consultation, as there had been some small edits made.

Ms. Gibbs confirmed approval so long as there were no further changes, and apologized for not acknowledging that earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Lata stated, with a presidential search process now underway to identify President Thrasher's replacement after his recent announcement of his intention to retire, while he and the faculty haven't always seen eye-to-eye on everything, they have worked together very well through the years. Faculty survey responses have continually indicated President Thrasher is very well liked by faculty and his vision for the University has been appreciated by all. Mr. Lata stated that President Thrasher would be missed, and all that he had done for the University is deeply appreciated.

President Thrasher replied that he appreciated those comments, and it has been his pleasure to work with the UFF. He said that he suspected that he would continue working well into the spring and he plans to work as hard on behalf of the University as he has in the past. He stated they have had a wonderful 6 years of working together, and he appreciated all the participation from the UFF and what they have done on behalf of the faculty. He thinks the University is in great shape and on the brink of even greater things. Florida State is a great place and each and every one of the faculty members have helped to get it there and he thanks them for that.

Mr. Lata thanked him and wished everyone happy holidays.

Ms. Gibbs adjourned the meeting.

Meeting concludes at 11:48am