
UFF/BOT Spring Consultation Meeting

February 24, 2021

Zoom Meeting

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

FSU-BOT:

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

UFF-FSU:

Irene Padavic
Nancy Kellett
Robin Goodman
Matthew Lata
Michael Buchler
Jack Fiorito
Emily McCann
Arash Fahim

MINUTES

1. Minutes from Consultation Meeting on December 3, 2020

Renisha Gibbs welcomed everyone to the consultation. She stated UFF's suggested revisions had been incorporated into the minutes and with no further changes they could confirm its finalization. The administration team had no further additions to the agenda, and indicated UFF could present their first item.

2. COVID Updates

UFF

The UFF presented a set of questions and concerns centering on safety precautions in light of COVID 19, as follows.

- A. Information about Air Circulation and Replacement in Classroom and Lecture Spaces
- B. Prioritizing Vaccines
- C. Timing of Faculty Members Scheduling Vaccines
- D. Administration Efforts to Educate Members of the University Community about the Vaccine
- E. Protocols for the Fall, specifically if not all have been Vaccinated
- F. How to Deal with Those Who Choose Not to Vaccinate
- G. Protocols for the Summer Session

Matthew Lata thanked Ms. Gibbs and explained that the first item was to simply raise general discussion surrounding COVID issues and the University's response.

Vice President Clark responded that as UFF had been gracious enough to provide these items in advance, he has a response prepared. Beginning with questions pertaining to air circulation in classrooms, all filters across campus have been upgraded to MERV-13's which are hospital grade filters. They are being changed every 6 months which exceeds what is recommended by manufacturers. A large amount is reserved in storage in case there was ever a supply chain shortage. This does not mean they have in any way reduced any preventative maintenance on existing HVAC systems, which is still being done, as everybody understands how important air circulation is right now. He did want to raise a point regarding opening windows for air circulation, as he believes there is a misconception on campus. The opening of the windows actually hurts efforts to circulate air as it interferes with the work of the HVAC systems. He has been attempting to educate people about the opening of windows in that regard. He concluded by stating that the Tucker Center is a University facility and has also received the enhanced filters.

Dr. Robin Goodman asked if there was any place of reference for information about when filters get changed at specific locations on campus.

Vice President Clark replied there is an internal system in place for tracking this timing; however there was no outwardly facing public dashboard currently.

Dr. Irene Padavic requested further explanation on why opening windows can potentially be counter-productive.

Vice President Clark replied that, while he is not from a scientific background, his notes indicate that opening windows in buildings which are undergoing HVAC treatment can introduce untreated air and additional humidity that create mold in the facilities. His staff has been working hard to educate campus. Not all buildings on campus have operable windows, but in those that do, people are being encouraged to leave them closed.

Dr. Padavic thanked him for this very helpful answer.

Mr. Lata raised an additional question on behalf of a faculty member who is a cancer survivor and interested in teaching face-to-face but wanted to be reassured there would be sufficient air circulation in the classrooms and that her risks would be minimal.

Vice President Clark replied that he would be hesitant to say that any risk is minimal. He is not able to discuss this matter further or quantify risk of exposure without knowing which faculty member this was, which classroom they are potentially teaching in, etc. With those factors known, the University could do an assessment and make sure that protocols are being followed and advise the faculty member on appropriate actions to ensure minimal risk. He would encourage this faculty member to take advantage of the vaccine that the University has made available to the vulnerable population of employees. He has many people working in his office who are happy to address this sort of concern from a faculty member, but he could not speak to it in any further here without knowing more specifics.

Mr. Lata thanked him for this detailed response.

Dr. Jack Fiorito sought clarification on whether the filter replacements had taken place solely in classrooms, or across all University spaces.

Vice President Clark replied that the majority of classroom buildings had had all filters replaced prior to

the fall semester and now those filters were being cycled through and changed regularly. There were a small number of buildings that had window units that made it more challenging to find MERV filters for them. He understands the importance of these questions and is happy to answer them at any time.

Dr. Fiorito replied that he was mostly wondering whether conference rooms that get used for seminars were included among the rooms that had had filters replaced.

Vice President Clark confirmed that in buildings where filters had been replaced replacement had taken place throughout the entire building.

Dr. Fiorito expressed his appreciation for this information.

Vice President Clark moved on to the next agenda item, pertaining to the process for vaccines. He noted it's worth pointing out that the University does not set priorities for the vaccines, but the Governor is issuing executive orders that determine those priorities. Currently, healthcare workers and people who are 65 years of age and older have been identified as having priority. Vice President Clark had worked this winter to finalize an agreement with the hospitals whereby FSU was able to offer vaccinations to its vulnerable population, one of the only institutions in the state able to do this. There were specific parameters that had to be met to permit this, such as having a medical professional certify that an individual was a part of that vulnerable population. He continued that he has dedicated an immense amount of time since December toward building the proper relationships that would allow FSU to offer these benefits. The people who are helping the University don't have to help FSU, but they are doing so because of the relationship that has been built and the trust that they have in FSU. He expressed surprise at the percentage of FSU's population that are accepting the vaccine and making appointments, with that number being roughly around 30% of the eligible population. The University is being incredibly careful with all of the questions that are being asked around information that is HIPPA-protected. The school doesn't receive any money for doing this, but is doing this because it sees this as part of the service mission at the University, and colleagues at the medical center and various supportive facilities are working 20 hours per day and doing vaccine distribution and logistics on top of their normal jobs. He is incredibly appreciative of the professionalism of this group and their willingness to help. Employees from Human Resources are assisting with communication and booking for patients and are working additional hours on top of their normal jobs to satisfy the demand. He is hoping to announce an additional clinic for vulnerable people in the coming week if they receive more vaccinations that could be available to more FSU faculty. He has always been proud of Florida State, but is particularly proud of the efforts and all that has been done to help the community during this pandemic. He believes a future challenge, once the vaccine reaches a certain percentage of the community, will be identifying the other individuals who are not actively trying to get vaccinated. He wants to encourage people to get vaccines and is preparing to work with the Department of Health preparing media spots and advertisements around the importance of the vaccines and working on a campaign for the summer to get promotions released that will appeal to students and encourage them to seek out the vaccine.

Vice President Clark continued that preparations have begun to set up specific clinics in advance of the fall semester to get people vaccinated before any large-scale return to campus. They understand the 2-week vaccination efficacy period, so it would be ideal to hold those clinics at least 2 weeks in advance of the fall semester so everyone's immunity is fully built up upon return. He said that he and his team would do everything possible to get the vaccine shots in people's arms. He understands why some would support a mandatory vaccine policy; however, he hopes everyone would also recognize how big of a challenge that would be and probably not practical. His belief is resources would be better placed educating people on why they should get the vaccine; he has not heard of any public university mandating the vaccine and FSU's initial reaction is that this is not a road they are prepared to go down. The school is working on an educational piece on the importance of the vaccines but has no plans to mandate it at this

time. If the state ends up mandating it, they will support that 100% and be behind it, but it would be difficult for the University to follow through. The Tucker Center can currently give 700 shots a day.

Mr. Lata replied that he had a couple of questions, but first wanted to thank FSU, and he stated that the University has done an amazing job with testing and vaccines. When he speaks with colleagues at other institutions, it confirms that FSU really is at the forefront. He believes the faculty members have no issues whatsoever with the way FSU has responded to the pandemic, as it has been cutting edge and he congratulated VP Clark and the entire administration. His first question was if there was a way to get colleagues, who would love to resume face-to-face teaching but are hesitant to do so without first receiving the vaccine, into a queue to receive it.

Vice President Clark thanked Mr. Lata for his recognition of the University's efforts, and stated there are so many people within the University who have dedicated so much of themselves to this effort. He and the Provost are continuing to discuss the timing of vaccinations. The hope is that face-to-face teachers and teaching assistants who will be present in classroom can all receive the vaccine prior to Summer C session, but the University has to receive the vaccine quantity to allow that, and much of that will be dependent upon the supply chain.

Mr. Lata answered that he understands that FSU is not autonomous in this process. He asked how much of the recipient priorities are determined by FSU administration and how much is determined by the Governor.

Vice President Clark responded that the Governor basically sets the parameters. For example, anyone 50 or older teaching in the classroom can get vaccinated, so the University can open up to that population. Then if there are extra vaccines not utilized by that population the pool of recipients can then be expanded, but there is not a lot of discretion.

Mr. Lata asked what the plan was to deal with students or faculty who choose not to be vaccinated. He asked if students will be able to live in dorms with the rest of general population.

Vice President Clark answered that is a good question, one they don't know the answer to at this time. He thinks it will be important to continue to stress to everyone to continue practicing safety measures, masks and social distancing. He understands there will be people who do not want to get vaccinated, although he encourages people to get it. But he and the Provost believe that the same safety and personal hygiene measures that have been in place will likely continue to be in place over the next year, regardless of the vaccine. He remains hopeful that vaccines and tests will continue to become more prevalent, but he harbors similar concerns to those Mr. Lata is voicing and believes at the end of the day it is a shared responsibility among everybody to work together to educate the community about the benefits of hand-washing, face masks and social distancing.

Mr. Lata inquired as to whether any personal liability was present. As a professor he was currently mandating anybody who comes into his classroom wear a mask. Could a student choose to come in without one, and would there be any liability in that situation?

General Counsel Carolyn Egan replied that causation would be an issue, but fortunately that situation has not occurred. There is currently a liability limitations bill in the Legislature. In her opinion so long as employers are taking reasonable safety measures, she thinks there will be legal support. As far as students failing to comply with safety requirements, she has not heard of that happening; students are just happy to be back in school and complying however they can.

Mr. Lata replied that he would agree, all of his students have behaved excellently.

Ms. Gibbs elaborated that administration would continue to work on continuing education around the vaccine, as well as making sure students are aware that just because the vaccine is becoming more prevalent, it does not mean they won't have to continue to comply or engage in all of the same safety measures they have been doing.

Dr. Goodman asked Vice President Clark if she had heard correctly that only 35% of eligible people were currently accepting the vaccine.

Vice President Clark replied that anecdotally that was the number he had seen. There are a bunch of contributing factors to that number, including that the University did not trumpet available vaccines as loudly as possible as first because they wanted to be certain ample quantity would be in storage before accepting registrations. Therefore, a reasonable amount of the University population likely took advantage of getting the vaccine through the Department of Health or through their primary care physician. He would stress that no one can be sure how indicative that 35% number really was.

Dr. Goodman thanked him, and stated that within her department, the GA's had received an email from departmental leadership informing them that a Chairs and Deans meeting had occurred where it was announced everybody would be going back to face-to-face instruction in the fall semester no matter what, that FSU was not going to guarantee vaccines, and that she had been very concerned upon hearing this.

Vice President Clark replied that he was unsure where that message was coming from, as he does not believe they have held a Chairs and Deans meeting recently, but he can assure everybody that FSU is assisting TMH with vaccine distributions and will continue to do so. However, at every opportunity the priority has been to offer vaccines to FSU faculty and staff first and foremost. Currently, administration is hoping and planning for things to return to normal by the fall, but the University retains the ability to pivot at any time if circumstances change.

3. Legislative Update

UFF

4. Financial Outlook, Scenarios that May be Imposed Pending Legislative Decisions and the Timing of Budgetary Planning

UFF

Mr. Lata stated that as time was running short a move down the agenda was in order, so they could skip the legislative piece. He stated there were numerous bills of note in session that the UFF will continue to monitor. The most important item left for discussion is the budget. The UFF is interested in University projections of what is coming. A few faculty members had planned to attend the budget advisory meeting the previous day but then had been told they could not attend.

Vice President Clark answered the protocols for dispensing information about meeting times are under review, but he assured everybody there was nothing shared at the budget advisory meeting which had not been shared previously at the Chairs and Deans meeting that he knows many faculty members attended.

Mr. Lata asked how any restriction surrounding who could attend budget advisory meetings would jibe with the Sunshine Laws.

Vice President Clark responded that this could be discussed later, but he wanted to address the budget concerns first. He believes the University is in a stable position, relative to the pandemic. \$30 million in CARES Federal Stimulus money had been received, as well as \$45 million addition stimulus funds,

which hit the bank account in mid-February. Out of that \$75 million that had been received, \$45 million of it went directly to student financial aid. The Provost and her team had worked to develop a strategic financial model for the distribution of student financial aid over a period of time rather than one lump sum. The President had asked for none of the \$30 million second-round stimulus money to be spent until the picture is clearer as to what will happen with the legislative session. There is a lot going on as Mr. Lata had touched upon. Vice President Clark said his feeling was that the initial budget runs will contain mass reductions for universities. There was not a lot of empathy for higher education currently, in light of the federal government awarding so much money in their direction. The University has done its best to be very transparent throughout the pandemic about finances. The University was not banking on another round of stimulus money; however, the possibility for more funding does exist. He is not certain all institutions across the state have done as good of a job as Florida State has of preparing for and navigating the financial implications of COVID. FSU has developed a spreadsheet which shows the implications across the University, and now the Board of Governors (BOG) has instructed all universities to copy this spreadsheet so that everybody across the state can have a more detailed discussion. Florida State is currently rated as a double A plus institution, with the highest credit rating of any institution in the State, and he thinks that's indicative of the way all of the Deans have led across the University during the pandemic. He concluded that he believes a budget reduction is likely because the Legislature is desirous of more accountability regarding the stimulus funds and in their minds a budget reduction is the way to administer that. Vice President Clark opined that he is pessimistic by nature, so perhaps this won't be the case, but the University will be well prepared for a reduction should one come to pass.

Mr. Lata stated they have heard previously that the University establishes its budget priorities in March and was wondering if the administrative team could let the UFF know what those might be.

Vice President Clark replied he would be happy to pass along documentation which outlines the budget process for the University for the UFF to review. In January they had asked the Deans to outline ongoing and upcoming projects. Those are due back in March and then his office will review them with the President and decide which ones to invest in. This year's process will be slightly different with the presidential search going on. There is still a lot to be determined regarding this year's budget. At this time, Vice President had another call, so he thanked everybody for their time and professionalism.

Provost McRorie added that all Deans were asked to turn in their requests, which were couched in terms of the strategic plan, to her office. Those were being collected and reviewed now and will be weighed against requests that come in from other areas of the University. They would have to wait on the Governor before continuing. Governor DeSantis has displayed a tendency in the past to act quickly, which is a positive. Last year his vetoes had been extensive, which was one reason why the State had more money than a lot of people thought. That is essentially the current budgetary picture. The University was happy to receive the CARES money; however, the concern was that CARES money was non-recurring, and that many of the expenses in academic affairs are by nature recurring.

Dr. Goodman relayed that some of UFF membership are worried about layoffs. She asked if the administration could convey the likelihood of such an action occurring.

Provost McCrory replied that there are no plans at this point for layoffs or closure of any academic programs, a measure that various institutions around the country were indeed having to undergo. Funding for smaller class sizes such as 19 or fewer, which research has shown are best for students, and faculty may have to suffer a little bit, but that's a better outcome than having to do layoffs or close degree programs.

Ms. Rebecca Peterson noted that the meeting had ran past its allotted hour time limit and several members in attendance had a hard stop, so if there was nothing else of import to present, the meeting should be brought to a close. She thanked everybody for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:09pm