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Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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September 8, 2020

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Faculty Senate MINUTES – September 8, 2020

[Zoom – @ 6:00 pm \(details at end of Agenda\)](#)

Senators Present: Alex Lopez, Alex Watson, Angela Green, Brad Jones, Brian Boutwell, Brian Reithel, Carmen Sanchis-Sinisterra, Carolyn Higdon, Carrie McCormick, Carrie V. Smith, Charles Stotler, Chris Mullen, Christy Nielson, Cole Stevens, Corina Petrescu, Daniel Durkin, David Golgor, Donna Buckley, Hyunwoo Joung, Jenny Bucksbarg, Jim Cizdziel, Joel Mobley, John Lobur, Jon-Michael Wimberly, Jordan Ballou, Joseph Carlisle, Julia Bussade, Kathleen Fuller/Robert Van Ness, Kenya Wolff, KoFan Lee, Kyle Fritz, Lance Yarbrough, Lauren Cardenas, Mandy Perryman, Mary Hayes/Shari Holt, Meagan Rosenthal, Michael Repka, Mikaela Adams, Phillis George, Randy Dale, Richard Gordon, Stuart Schafer, Sue Ann Skipworth, Tom Brady, Whitney Sarver, Willa Johnson, Zenebe Beyene

Senators Absent (Unexcused): Aaron Joy, Chip Wade, Christie Ellis, Fei Lan, Darren Grem

- **Call Meeting to Order**

- **Approve minutes from the May 12, 2020 meeting**
 - Motion
 - Second
 - Vote – all in favor

- **Update from Provost Noel Wilkin on COVID-19 response**
- Provost Noel Wilkin thanked everyone for their hard work and reported overall good compliance across campus, with a few notable outliers.
- The protocols and procedures seem to be working well.
- The health center is getting a reduced number of calls for testing, though they continue to have capacity for anyone who requests a test. Baptist Hospital can do a higher capacity of testing, if necessary.
- As for quarantine, the Health Department’s guidance has changed three times and relatively quickly. First, we had to remove students out of housing immediately, though we encouraged students to have these conversations with their families before making the decision and we have offered them a space on or off campus. Now they are asked to temporarily quarantine in place so we can do contact tracing. If they are a close contact they are then instructed to talking with their families about where would be best for them to quarantine.
- The contract tracing team has been doing a phenomenal job, all having completed training by Johns Hopkins. We have students in apartment complexes, hotels, and other spaces nearby. The biggest lag is getting in touch with students.
- Regarding the fraternity pictures on Twitter: We have been working with these groups for a long time to get them to see the benefits of virtual activities. This went very well despite what the pictures seem to show. The members were having dinner in shifts to ensure compliance with capacity and they asked if they could take a picture as a group during the change between shifts, and Sorority and Fraternity Life representative agreed to that and they know that they should not have, and they are remorseful for that decision. They agreed to one picture with a mask and one

without, and for less than 15 minutes. Student Affairs has agreed to take approvals of these things going forward. But please understand the great amount of pressure these students have been through in getting to this point.

- Sentinel testing: Led by group of faculty, staff and students, with physicians, this is a true surveillance testing program with a random sampling of the population to determine the number of asymptomatic cases of the virus. We've been talking with the company for some time, but they told us last week they are not under state contract and we could not procure with them. We were able to get this added to board agenda within a day, but IHL did not approve it. We had to let the community know that something was coming. Friday when the papers were signed, we hit the send button and invited the 1000 members of our random sample community where they can be triaged into groups based on risk level. This is a rapid antigen, not an antibody, test. It does test for the presence of virus and results arrive usually in 30 minutes or an hour. Those test results will be reported and will give us an idea how prevalent the virus is in our community. This effort is being headed up by Douglas Sullivan-Gonzalez. We are also contacting Aramark and Sodexo to ask them to test their employees as well. This testing is totally free.
- Options associated with Pass/Fail grades, Z and P options: this question is still in process, so please let your wishes be known to the committee.

Question: Are there updated fall enrollment numbers?

Provost Wilkin: Census date was moved to November 1, I will come back later to give enrollment numbers. No official numbers to report yet but will provide them as soon as that information is available from IREP.

Question: Oxford is now in the top three in the nation for COVID cases. At what point do we pull the plug? Despite our great efforts at contact tracing, is there a plan for closing the campus like we did in the spring?

Provost Wilkin: We responded in the spring by closing the campus until capacity could catch up in our healthcare system, then we as a nation slowly reopened. The dashboard is meant to show how we are managing what is happening and how the virus is affecting the community. Capacity is still a central question. Fortunately, hospitalizations are down nationwide and locally. Once we lack the local ability to respond, we will begin to make that call, though we are already pretty scaled back and there have been no cases of transfer between students and faculty so far, so we seem to be capable to responding.

Question: Is the option to hit pause on the tenure clock still open?

Provost Wilkin: We need to get clarity from IHL on what authority we have.

Question: What can you tell us about the financial status of the university as lines are being frozen? Are furloughs likely?

Provost Wilkin: We are doing everything we can to prevent that from happening. Based on projections for the impact on our budget we had conversations with deans about how they would absorb cuts within their units. We worked with them to prevent salaries from being affected and from having to implement furloughs.

Our budget seems pretty well aligned with our reality today, but who can predict the future? If our enrollments stay mostly where they are, they we should be in pretty good shape. If we are thrown a curve and we have no control over it, then we would have to have other conversations.

Question: Tenure extension has been talked about as a method of helping faculty get more time to conduct research, but delaying tenure can also can have negative effects. Is it worth discussing with deans and chairs how do to determine what is possible when it comes to conducting research during a pandemic so that those policies can be revised?

Provost Wilkin: Those conversations are being had in the disciplines, in the respective colleges.

Question: On budget and finances for intercollegiate athletics, what impact are recent restrictions on stadium capacity have for our budget. Any forecasts or plans for sustaining our athletics programs?

Provost Wilkin: I'm glad I'm not involved in athletic operations but Larry [Sparks] would be and he might be someone to invite to the senate.

Question: Can you offer any insights into the hiring of a law firm on August 20, and is that related to faculty grievances?

Provost Wilkin: The hiring of legal counsel is handled by our in-house counsel. I don't have a window into the hiring of law firms.

Question: Can you clear up anecdotal reports that no COVID cases are occurring on campus and not just on the Square?

Provost Wilkin: Anecdotal evidence is not very reliable.

Question: Are we still on track for contracts by September 11?

Provost Wilkin: Yes. Sabbatical supplements are also being considered. I haven't heard anything to the contrary.

Question: Has there been any consideration of using DocuSign or other technology to execute faculty contracts?

Provost Wilkin: Yes, but quotes are in the mid-six-figure range not including annual costs to use DocuSign. Stay tuned.

- **Update from Dean Grandjean, leader of contract tracing team**
- The team was charged back in June to keep us operational and safe. We asked for volunteers and got 20 faculty and staff who were willing to do contract tracing, all of whom went through Johns Hopkins training, plus HIPAA training. We are operating within a bubble of health consent. Reporting can take place through the Everbridge App or the university health center. All positive cases are placed in a spreadsheet and assigned a contract tracer. Their goal is to get to the positive

case within 24 hours, talk to their close contacts, but also contact close contacts of *their* close contacts, to get in front of the spread of the virus. On-campus positive cases are isolated, and contacts are asked to quarantine. Off-campus we just contact close contacts of positive cases.

- Some students voluntarily go off campus for a test. They are issued quarantine documents by their provider, which are good through the time they receive their test results. They can then return to normal classes or their residence. We work closely with housing and SSL to get to positive cases very quickly so quarantine can be lifted quickly. External communication is brokered through student and employee health services or Alex Langhart.
- There is a misperception that we are replacing state department of health contract tracers with our own; we are not at all. We are filling the gap between when a person tests positive and when the state health department takes over. We issue the quarantine document. If the student lives on campus, the university provides a place on campus or nearby to quarantine, though some students have chosen not to. It's something they discuss with their families. Contract tracers are not sending anyone home.
- Rumors that students are refusing to take phone calls so as not to be quarantined are unfounded. They have been very forthcoming and very willing to share their information. Even with the best contract tracing, though, it's hard to identify specifically where one has contracted the virus, whether on campus or not. The evidence we do have does not support transmission on campus between students and staff or students and instructors. There are currently zero cases among faculty. Off campus groups seem to be the likeliest candidate but we can't definitively say that, just that our protocols appear to be working.

Question: Dashboard says there are 21 cases in student housing but how is that defined, by floor, by building? Is the university providing guidance for protecting family members from students who quarantine back home?

Dean Grandjean: We are providing quarantine space locally in the hopes of keeping them here, the best option, rather than going home. But these are decisions made in families.

Provost Wilkin: Yes, students get information from housing on quarantining safely. Housing has those conversations. The state Department of Health defines an outbreak as three people in a wing or on a dorm floor or in a sorority or fraternity house. Or if someone tests positive on day 2 after contact, then another a few days later, and then another a few days after that, that counts as an outbreak.

Question: Is there an enforcement mechanism for failing to quarantine or isolate or otherwise comply?

Dean Grandjean: We gather the information and share it with the health clinic and they are sharing them with others across campus.

Provost Wilkin: The key part is they are following up when they have enough information to pursue a violation of a health order, which can be either a misdemeanor or a felony. Students charged with these violations so far seem largely remorseful, though the fines do not seem to matter much. Conduct is following up with them and we had have conversations with OPD but usually the evidence is too flimsy to uphold claims.

Question: What should I advise students to do if they are concerned that someone in their class has tested positive without arousing hysteria?

Dean Grandjean: Protocols and parameters in classrooms have been in place since this summer, with masks and social distancing enforced. This seems to be working well. If a student comes into class and others are positive, they should use the protocols and parameters, since they are working. A classmate sitting six feet away with a mask is not considered a close contact for our purposes, so their masks and distancing are sufficient.

Provost Wilkin: Partners working together in class for less than 15 minutes wouldn't meet the definition of close contact. The hair stylists wearing masks with clients wearing masks and no one testing positive is affirmative evidence masks work.

Question: How are positive cases formally reported on the dashboard, and how areas active determined to no longer be active? When are they removed from the active list? Also, can you comment on the pages being updated extremely late at night?

Dean Grandjean: Contact tracing ends at 8:00 PM, so the numbers are often updated late at night. Active cases are those testing positive but no longer symptomatic and not yet out of isolation. The date of when they become symptomatic and/or when they were tested if they were asymptomatic is when they are counted as positive.

Provost Wilkin: Dashboard was designed to meet Clery Act requirements [for reporting violations]. Active cases are deactivated after clearing the 10-day window.

A lot of people think we should not be open. We get lots of emails and calls and lots of people working to navigate our operations while keeping people healthy. Thank you for what you do. We are happy to help you continue the work you are doing.

Grandjean: We are the only university with testing, contact tracing, and a dashboard in the state of Mississippi. Thank for you for helping to enforce those protocols and keeping us all safe.

- **Reconsideration of Social Media and Media Relations Policies – discussion and feedback**

- Chair Meagan Rosenthal provided additional context: a small group of faculty including senators and non-senators have worked with the marketing and communications team over the summer to revise these documents. Documents we circulated are representative of additional comments and meetings.

Question: thanks to all on the committee. It is a lot clearer that this is talking about official correspondence. But some members in History are uncomfortable with the last page of the Media Relations policy and its implications that faculty's free speech might be curtailed.

Rosenthal: This last page represents guidelines intended to be best practices and not enforceable policies. Additional consideration will be passed along to the committee.

Question: Two things that came up in the library were whether the policy extends to events open to the public with media in attendance, would that fall under the purview of the policy? Also, what about access and sharing of archival documents with members of the media doing historical or other research?

Chair Rosenthal: Please forward these items to me by email and they will be forwarded on.

Question: On the first page of the actual policy, specific college, department or “area” with “other academically responsible centers.”

Question: Per 2.7 of the social media policy, how would the academic freedom committee handle policy violations? Renewing of contracts? The sanctioning process?

Chair Rosenthal: We will circle back around if you will email me the part you have a question about. Student groups and their accounts are not part of this policy but may be included in some future version of the policy.

Question: Per 2.5 of the social media policy, on student privacy, how does this affect posting recommendations for students on platforms like LinkedIn?

Chair Rosenthal: I will forward your question to the committee.

- **Committee Updates**

- Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Corina Petrescu)
 - No report
- Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff)
 - No report
- Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle)
 - No report
- Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly)
 - No report
- Governance (chair: Angela Green) – a revised Grievance Policy proposal is forthcoming
- Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley)
 - No report
- University Services (chair: Carrie McCormick)
 - No report
- Executive (chair: Meagen Rosenthal)
 - No report

- **Old Business**

- **New Business**

- **Adjournment**
 - Motion
 - Second
 - Vote – Meeting adjourned

NEXT MEETING: OCTOBER 6, 2020 @ 6:00 via ZOOM

Zoom details:

Meagen Rosenthal is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Faculty Senate Meeting – October 6, 2020

Time: October 6, 2020 06:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99793206156?pwd=MVhCOUdrVkFzMytxRTd3WUVGMVAzQT09>

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