

Faculty Senate Minutes – January 19, 2021

Zoom – @ 6:00 pm (details at end of Agenda)

- **Call Meeting to Order**

- **Approve minutes from the December 10, 2020 meeting**
 - Motion -
 - Second -
 - Vote – APPROVED

- **Update from Provost Noel Wilkin:**
 - We do not yet have the vaccine on campus but do have a taskforce comprised of faculty, staff, and students to develop a vaccine process so that people with more than a decade of experience can administer vaccines within hours of their arrival on campus.
 - We still have no guidance from the Mississippi Department of Health. Vaccines continue to be distributed through health departments but we are working with them to find all available appointments. I will post a link with more information about future vaccination openings.
 - More appointments were opened this week but were distributed around the state immediately.
 - If you meet the MDOH criteria for receiving the vaccine, please make an appointment to get the vaccine now and do not wait for the university to have it available.

Q: Do we have cold storage for the Pfizer vaccine, regardless of whether we expect that one to arrive in the short term?

A: We have no idea which kind we will get, but we do have cold storage on campus and the ability to administer whichever kind we get.

Provost Wilkin: Other state institutions have some unused vaccines, and we are inquiring to see if we can gain access to them.

Classes started today with the same protocols as in the fall semester (distancing and masks). We expect good compliance, as we did in the fall. We have people out checking on compliance as well. Dr. Fauci said a college campus is one of the safest places to be because of these protocols, and I feel good about our ability to adhere to those protocols.

Please see my recent reminders on how to ensure others comply or for you to report violations to student conduct or the appropriate dean in cases where faculty or staff are not observing the protocols, though we hope that is not happening.

If people test positive, there is a process to pull them aside discreetly and to help them contact employee health and take other steps as needed.

We're encouraging everyone to report a positive test regardless of where you acquired it.

There are no current mandates or plans for one to make sure people get the vaccine, but other vaccinations are required by IHL policy, so this might end up being required as well. The best protection right now is to get the vaccine.

Some experts have predicted that by the end of the year we mostly all will have gotten the virus or the vaccine.

We eliminated spring break to avoid contagion after travel. We will hold two commencements, one for 2020 graduates and one for 2021, but with protocols still in place if necessary. Announcements will come soon.

Q: How will UM handle return to campus by faculty and staff? Will people be required to return to campus?

A: That will be based on when the experts say we can relax our protocols. We are monitoring the situation closely. But we do have a lot of people engaging in classroom and other activities on campus and we don't have problems when people follow the protocols. Social and family gatherings are where most transmissions happen.

We will have asymptomatic testing again soon. We are switching to a new company and new test. Also symptomatic testing continues through the university health center.

We have contracted with a new company and switching from rapid tests to PCR tests for up to 500 people a week to be tested in the Ford Center parking lot.

Q: Who will get the vaccine in what order?

A: We will be able to distribute 450 vaccines per day but the task force is working on allocation. Note that anyone receiving a UM paycheck includes faculty, staff, grad students, student employees, and contract workers for the Aramark and other services. The committee recommends vaccinating according to age.

Q: Will there be any proof of vaccination people will have to show others when needed?

A: The CDC will give you a card with the vaccine information, date and type, and you will need to get the same type for your second dose. Second dose windows are not necessarily open for everyone. A certain number of days must pass between doses.

Q: Will grad students who serve as TAs or instructors will be treated as faculty?

A: Yes, but age will be a bigger determinant. Anyone working on our campus would be eligible--anyone who earns a paycheck from the university— but age will be the primary determinant in who goes first.

Vaccines are giving people hope, though they're not rolling out as fast as they should. If you meet the Mississippi Department of Health criteria, do not wait until we get ours to get yours.

Chair: Student health care workers have not experienced any undue or serious side effects, though the second dose is alleged to make you sleepier and more tired than the first dose but still nothing catastrophic.

Provost Wilkin: There is a very low rate of side effects with this vaccine.

Comment: For those trying to sign up with the state, my advice is to keep hitting refresh and eventually you will get in.

Provost Wilkin: Thank you for all you do. No one wants more disruption and we know it's a lot of work to keep our students and you on track. We will keep you all posted.

- The Chair rose on a question of privilege, reading aloud the attached statement. (See Chair's statement)

- **Committee Updates**
 - Academic Instructional Affairs (chair: Corina Petrescu) – Nothing to report
 - Academic Conduct (chair: Kenya Wolff) – Nothing to report
 - Finance & Benefits (chair: Joseph Carlisle) – Nothing to report
 - Development & Planning (chair: Jon-Michael Wimberly) – Nothing to report
 - Governance (chair: Dan Durkin)
 - An mail was sent to HR to request documentation on filed grievances
 - Research & Creative Achievement (chair: Donna Buckley)

- The American Education Research Association (AERA) has agreed to work with us to launch a research study on life under Covid and its effect on faculty. Please contact us if you know a faculty member or grad student who does similar research and would like to take on this project.
 - Q: Can you clarify the kind of research you need done?
 - A: We can tailor it to UM using the AERA guidance.
 - Chair: It's to help us quantify the kinds of impact Covid has had on us and how we can come out stronger and better after the pandemic. Another survey is circulating from the Strategic Planning Council through UM Today. Please take the survey and provide feedback on how things are working now and what might we do differently after Covid.
- University Services (chair: Carrie McCormick) – Nothing to report
- **Old Business**
 - Motion to close the session in order to deliberate whether to go into executive session was made, discussed, and dismissed.
 - Q: If a committee were to explore these issues, how would we proceed?
 - Chair: Bring forward policies and procedures to see if an existing standing committee should handle these or if another should be created. Look into where those policies have not been adhered to and recommendations can be made to go to appropriate standing committees.
 - Q: Shouldn't the chair be able to determine what committee should handle these items?
 - Comment: It may not be so obvious what committee one should go to, and this is feeling very uncomfortable, so I would like us to turn down the temperature.
 - Chair: If there are other issues of which I am not aware, please share them with me. If you want to be part of a committee you are not already part of, you are more than welcome to join that committee by contacting me. We can start listing the concerns and particularities and the evidence behind them so we can address them with the best possible evidence and pull it into a document of some sort and begin the investigative work.
 - Past Chair Brice Noonan: It is not what are we upset with but what we do know is disturbing but it doesn't necessarily mean the administration broke rules or policies or best practices. I doubt they have stepped out of the boundaries of SACSCOC, the law, etc.
 - Chair: We should focus on policy and how we can recommend changes to specific policies.

- Comment: I completely agree. We are not to litigate every issue but advise on policies and governance.
- Comment: This administration has shown a good bit of contempt toward policies and this might not be the only thing we should do but it's one I feel strongly we should do.
- Comment: We need to get to the bottom of the Ombuds office situation because we created that office and we need answers soon because if we have violated our charter, we definitely have an interest in that.
- Chair: we don't know the full picture even though we don't feel good about it.
- Past Past Chair Michael Barnett: We recommended the Ombuds, unanimously, but did not create it. It makes me feel better that the administration was so engaged with us in drafting that document and even afterward. In my experience Provost Wilkin went well beyond in supporting the Ombuds office.
- Chair: Continue to hold us accountable.

- **New Business**

- No new business

- **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

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- Motion
 - Second
 - Vote

NEXT MEETING: February 9, 2021 @ 6:00 via ZOOM

Zoom details:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/95304269922?pwd=M0NERC91RHZGdjBjemhraUxnYjFLQT09>

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