

MINUTES<sup>1</sup>  
UNIVERSITY SENATES CONFERENCE

DATE: Tuesday, May 19, 2020

PLACE: Zoom Videoconference

PRESENT: Brennan, Burbules, Campbell, Dallesasse, Danziger, De Groote (Chair), Erricolo, Fisher, Jenkins, Kar, Razfar, Stroschio, Tolliver, Vincent, Wade (Vice Chair)

ABSENT: Hunt, Span, Strahle, Zhan

GUESTS: Timothy Killeen, Barbara Wilson

Professor De Groote, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

I. Updates from the three universities and how each are reacting and planning

Professor De Groote said that UIC has special concerns, such as students and employees who use trains where there is high exposure and buildings with a lot of elevator use. Current discussions have most classes online for the fall. Small, in-person classes would meet in large spaces. The Provost is offering instructors with classes of 70 or more students a teaching assistant with the idea that an asynchronous course would be built over the summer.

Professor Vincent said that the health colleges have many challenges. Clinical experience guidelines change often. Many classes already have remote students.

Professor Stroschio is hearing that research labs may be opening soon with distancing. Those over 65 and with underlying health conditions can stay home. Professor Vincent added that these groups are strongly encouraged to stay home.

Professor Danziger said that one idea is to have 50 or less students in a very large room, such as 25 students in a classroom with a capacity of 200. Even then, there are concerns with putting people together in closed spaces and adequately cleaning buildings. Professor Vincent said that there will still be the option for students to not attend in-person for classes that meet face-to-face.

Professor Fisher said that planning is being done more centrally at UIS. Because the campus is small, units do not have their own buildings. Faculty have not heard details of any plans, so there are concerns that there will be very little time to plan for fall when decisions are finally made. She would like for shared governance to be brought into the process. Professor Vincent suggested that UIS might want to consider UIC's practice where the UIC Senate Chair and Vice Chair regularly meet with the chancellor and provost. Professor Fisher added that the decisions being made are very critical for academic work and student affairs. More information is needed before decisions are made. They are supposed to be given information

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<sup>1</sup>Subject to approval at the University Senates Conference meeting of May 29, 2020

in mid-June, but now would be the time for broader input. She commented that summer classes will be completely online. They have received no information about research projects.

Professor Burbules questioned what rights students, faculty and staff will have to opt out of meeting in-person once procedures are in place. He expressed concern with having a one-size-fits-all policy. Professors Brennan and Tolliver both thought that there would be opt-out for anyone who did not feel safe meeting in-person. Professor Burbules commented that, for liability protection, no one should be required to teach or work in-person.

Professor Vincent said that the College of Nursing is in six campuses, so there is always the option to participate electronically. Students can decide to delay clinicals.

Professor Karr said that there are hundreds of people on various committees, many of them experts in their fields. Planning is extremely difficult. 50,000 students went home. There is fear of bringing them all back to one place. While there are faculty and administrative voices in the process, he expressed concern that there needs to be a community voice. He described some of the interactions at UIUC, such as the SEC meeting every week and meetings with the associate vice provost for academic affairs who is on the executive steering committee for Covid-19 planning. Professor Kar got the sense that many people are in the dark and want to know more. He commented that AAUP put out guidance for faculty on fall opening. Reasonable accommodations must be met for students. UIUC should learn plans by June 15.

Professor Wade said that the local community is not being brought into the conversation. The university could be bringing many people into town. It will be difficult to have 18-20 year-old students who want to hang out adhere to social distancing. It only takes one person to start the spread. People in the community tend to support the current strict measures.

Professor Vincent said that she is hearing that there will be no compromise with student safety. Everything now is contingent.

Professor Brennan discussed the reasoning for announcing that the campuses would be open, which is largely due to enrollment issues. Professor Jenkins said that his unit has hit its number for fall. There will be more information in three weeks that will help make decisions. He thought that opt-out will be an important part of the conversations and did not believe that the university would make decisions that would put people at risk. It will be important to get more adept at contact tracing and testing.

Professor Tolliver said that it was a good idea to convey the message that if it is not safe, we should not do it. It is honorable to share fears of loss of revenues. There is a balancing act but, if there is any question, money should not dominate the decision.

## II. Discussion of ways to connect with students

This discussion was included in the session with President Killeen and Executive Vice President Wilson.

### III. Discussion with President Killeen and Executive Vice President Wilson

EVP Wilson said that she would be sending a draft set of slides from the coordinating committee.

President Killeen discussed the system planning coordinating committee, co-chaired by EVP Wilson and VP Ghosh. Professor Dallesasse from USC is on the committee, as are the three provosts. The role of the committee is to assess best practices for an overall system approach, while realizing that the three universities are in very different settings. Planning is being done to see what the return to a normal academic process in the fall might look like with student life and student housing. We don't necessarily want to be one of the first to come out with a plan, but we want to be the best. The U of I system was one of first to shut down. Decisions are being made through real expertise, including epidemiological groups and those knowledgeable in student affairs. The President did not expect too much to come out until mid-June.

The President discussed tracking technologies, testing approaches, plans to measure temperatures, and the procurement of masks and other PPE. He mentioned that the Discovery Partners Institute has been working on these issues for the state. The state is now testing 20,000 people a day. It is clear that there will need to be regular testing in the fall. There is participation in national clinical trials for treatments and vaccines. The President said that USC might want to have the coordinating committee join a meeting. He also mentioned that the Governor has appointed him to a committee that includes other presidents who will be looking at re-establishing higher education in the state.

EVP Wilson commented that the planning process is encouraging creativity and preparing for possible future pandemics. The coordinating committee will develop guiding principles for issues such as course delivery modes. Classes will most likely be hybrid in order to offer choices and ramped up for quality. Every course should have an alternate method of delivery. This will be a big load on faculty. There must be flexibility across the universities.

At UIC, empty dorms or being repurposed for student distancing. Boxed lunches will be served. Urbana and UIS are still looking at single rooms. Move-in will be extended and there will be regular cleaning, temperature screening devices, and testing and tracing. The best apps for tracing that also take privacy into consideration will be made available for all three universities.

EVP Wilson said that staff issues are also being considered. Schedules will be modified to allow for staggered attendance. There is the need for a health campaign and effective communication. She is committed to putting together an expert task force. There are various task forces at each university. No proclamation will be made until mid-June.

President Killeen welcomed comments and suggestions. He said that it is important to have defiance against the virus. Society will be disrupted, and the number of jobs will decrease. Some things will manifest inequity. We must be on a path to take it on with verve and positive feelings in order to come out fundamentally better. The President commented that the commencements were touching, even though it was sad that they had to be held the way they were.

Professor Fisher said that, from the UIS perspective, there are tremendous communication challenges. While system perspectives can be external, university perspectives need to have conclusive information and inclusive decision-making. With science evolving quickly, it is difficult to know where people are in their thinking. When best practices are brought are internal to the universities, more voices need to be brought in.

The group discussed the challenges of effective communication and helping everyone feel the same level of trust. President Killeen said that information can seem overwhelming but still not meet all of the questions and concerns. The message should not create false confidence or false alarm.

EVP Wilson said that she has spent most of her career studying communication. There is no quick fix and not one model that works for everything. There is a lot of information with a lot of different sources, sometime battling each other and creating credibility issues. The role of the system can be a challenge. The universities need to communicate with faculty and be careful about rushing to do more without thinking strategically. She plans to get communication scholars together this summer to work on a health communication campaign that is clear and thoughtful.

EVP Wilson said that she would give the USC questions to the provosts so they know what the faculty are thinking about. She said that help is needed from USC to think through these issues. At some point there might need to be a massive FAQ. President Killeen added that there are wells of deep faculty expertise already involved. It would be good to find a way to give voice to them. EVP Wilson said that the three senates each have a role. This might be the more direct way to communicate with faculty.

Professor Tolliver said that it will be difficult to insist on compliance with undergrads. Students probably don't want to be reassured of being safe as much as they want to be reassured that they will have fun.

President Killeen said that compliance cannot seem like a punishment. There needs to be a feeling of embracing the community. Student Affairs have experts who can work on this.

EVP Wilson said that she would ask the provosts to provide responses to some of USC's questions that have not been answered.

#### IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.