

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

DATE: Monday, June 15, 2020

PLACE: Zoom Videoconference

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

ABSENT: Zhan

GUESTS: Timothy Killeen, Barbara Wilson

Professor De Groote, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

I. Discussion of how USC can help make an action plan for Black Lives Matter

USC members discussed how to support Black Lives Matter. Rather than making a statement, as many other individuals and groups have done, the group decided to propose an action plan that includes initiatives the system could support.

Members made suggestions on issues to take into consideration when preparing a document.

- Use a similar approach in preventing racial harassment as is being done with sexual harassment
- Put forth the same energy as with COVID-19
- Focus on changing climate and culture
- Educate our communities to be against racism, not just – not a racist
- Have more positive mechanisms in place – recognize achievement and talent
- Empower new student groups on campus
- Bring forward an action plan through the system
- All three campuses need to play an active role
- Show real leadership
- Include consequences
- Recognize unconscious bias
- Emphasize a culture of respect, value, and understanding
- Understand that denial of racism is a huge barrier
- Make racism abnormal
- Provide skills for reacting, calling out racist behavior
- Put strategy in academic content; focus on mission and education outcomes
- Recognize that people need to develop their own understanding; need to realize that they are part of the problem
- Issues are more than microaggressions and unconscious bias

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<sup>1</sup>Subject to approval at the University Senates Conference meeting of June 25, 2020

- Recognize this is a moment of widespread uprising in support of black lives; lead to demand for change
- Look at what needs to be changed internally
- Create better climate and more informed students, faculty, and staff
- Find ways to prevent biased policing

USC decided to create a small *ad hoc* committee to develop systemwide recommendations.

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

President Killeen said that each university has multiple task forces working on fall planning. There is a system coordinating committee led by EVP Wilson and VP Ghosh, which includes the provosts. A systemwide announcement will be going out soon that provides for each university to have flexibility. Plans will be nimble and agile as the epidemic evolves. Illinois could soon be in Phase 4 of Restore Illinois, which allows up to 50 people to congregate while still adhering to safety protocols. There have been investments made in academics. Planning includes a hybrid mix of face-to-face and online instruction. Testing, tracing, and contact tracking will be major aspects of what will need to be done during the fall semester, along with frequent sanitation and wearing masks. Dining halls and residence halls will make adjustments.

EVP Wilson said that, after the systemwide announcement goes out, each university will follow up with its own message. The academic calendar might look different. President Killeen said that there has been a slight growth in enrollment in Urbana for fall. There has been a drop in freshman numbers at UIC and UIS. IBHE will be providing a high-level guiding document. EVP Wilson has helped draft the document.

President Killeen commented that the U of I system will be best in class in testing. There have been over 20,000 coronavirus tests and over 6,000 antibody tests conducted. The system is developing a lower cost, very accurate test that can be deployed massively. The saliva test, called Illinois Shield, pools samples and can have results in a couple of hours. There will also be a digital contact tracing component, which links to public health entities and still preserves privacy. President Killeen said that there will need to be a major public health campaign that will help make it possible to get widespread compliance. There will need to be options for those who get sick and need to finish classes from home and for professors who need to teach from home. Different learning strategies should be taken into consideration as well.

President Killeen discussed financial planning for next year. Lost revenue and enhanced costs could hit the system with up to a \$300M deficit. There will be around \$50M in costs for technology and testing.

EVP Wilson said that all three universities will not look the same when reopening. Planning is being done with a certain level of optimism, but there is also acknowledgement that plans can change quickly. Decisions cannot wait until August. Hundreds of faculty have been involved in fall planning. She is working with experts in communication on how to communicate to students their collective responsibility for being back on campus.

President Killeen said that he received positive reactions to his message, Reflection on George Floyd Tragedy. There is still a pandemic of racism in the United States, and the system wants to be supportive of communities and be part of the solution. The message has to be that all are welcome, and we are free of systemic racism. Each university is putting out its own message.

Some members discussed the importance of listening and learning. There was a comment that small forms of racism can create a culture climate that can lead to extreme acts.

President Killeen commented that there is very good leadership at each university's police force, and they should be brought into the conversation. There are a lot of very distraught students. The U of I system will move forward by being deeply informed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.