Franklin College Faculty Senate—Special Session

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday, August 25 2021

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 PM via Zoom, DeLoris Hesse presiding.

Members Present: Benjamin Britton, Peter Brosius, Clifton Buck, Tom Cerbu, Brian Condie, Maduranga Dassanayake, Gauri Datta, Inge DiBella, Timothy Gupton, Cindy Hahamovitch, DeLoris Hesse, Steve Holland, Richard Hubbard, Caner Kazanci, Emily Koh, Kristin Kundert, Sidney Kushner, Vera Lee-Schoenfeld, Alisa Luxenberg, Kendall Marchman, Soroya McFarlane, Emily Mouilso, Vasant Muralidharan, Jordan Pickett, Khaled Rasheed, Nancee Reeves, Matthew Shipes, Leslie Gordon Simons, Anne Summers, Cynthia Suveg, Michael Usher, Alberto Villate-Isaza, Hang Yin

Proxies: Dorset Trapnell for Chris Peterson, Amy Ross for Jennifer Rice, Joseph Keller for Cassia Roth, Jason Aryeh for Bala Sarasvati, Rene Jagnow for Rohan Sikri

Members not present: Yohannes Abate, Michael Bachmann, Vince Du, Alison Farley Raffle. Tianming Liu, Chris Pizzino,

President DeLoris Hesse's Remarks: Dr. Hesse began the meeting by informing all attendees that the meeting is being recorded and will be transcribed and uploaded to Franklin Senate webpage. She will have more procedural comments before discussion of the resolution

Dean Dorsey's Remarks

- Thanked Dr. Hesse for her service to the Franklin Senate during this challenging time
- This special meeting the faculty senate was scheduled in accordance with the bylaws and the Senate due to a petition received last week with over 100 faculty signatures. The sole agenda item as set by the Executive Committee of the Senate is a resolution regarding mask and vaccination policies for the campus.
- Students are excited to be in class. It is important for their mental health and well-being to have in-person instruction. The resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic, fueled by the delta variant of the virus, has caused great concern for everyone, threatening the health and safety of the campus and the Athens community, and this has tempered enthusiasm for the resumption of in person instruction.
- The only way out of the pandemic is for widespread near total vaccination of the population and to continue preventive health and safety measures such as mask wearing and handwashing.
- Current USG policies do not require or mandate either vaccinations or masking. UGA is bound by these constraints. The University leadership is doing everything possible within these constraints to support the health and safety of the Community. President Morehead and other members of the UGA senior leadership team are vigorously promoting vaccinations and the wearing of masks inside campus facilities and the University Health Center continues to offer COVID-19 testing to students and employees.

New Business: Discussion of Petition/Resolution. Dr. Hesse discussed the procedures for discussing the resolution, reminding Senators that this is a discussion item, to be voted upon during the next normally scheduled meeting. All persons who commented supported the resolution; many commented that UGA's actions extend beyond students, staff and faculty, it also

fails to protect children at home and in the Athens community; some suggested that Franklin College institute an immediate mask mandate.

- Amy Ross (Geography): this resolution received strong support in Geography, and Geography would like to see a stronger statement. Some suggestions to ask Dean Dorsey to institute an immediate mask mandate and Mark Ebell to head the medical oversight task force.
- Kristin Kindert (Theater): This resolution has unanimous support from Theater and Film Studies. This department also does not believe that the administration or Dean Dorsey has gone far enough to protect the members of the UGA community. Faculty, staff, and students have children at home that are not being protected by any UGA measures.
- Pete Brosius (Anthropology): An informal survey reveals that a maximum of 40-50% of students are masking in small classrooms, and much smaller percentage in larger classes. This presents a huge risk and danger to students and faculty and staff and their families.
- Tim Gupton (Romance Languages): The least protected among us have the least protections in a large classroom, specifically, untenured and instructional staff and graduate students. Dr. Gupton supports the resolution and feels that it does not go far enough.
- Steve Holland (Geology): A low percentage of students are masked. Concerned about the final sentence of the petition which is a call for civil disobedience that carries no weight . It should be a real call for civil disobedience, such as a sick out, and allow faculty to take control over the safety of their classrooms.
- Sidney Kuchner (Genetics): Supports the resolution, but it doesn't go far enough. Franklin College needs to put its own mandate in place.
- Cindy Hahamovitch (History): Dr. Hahamovitch wrote this resolution and supports a stronger statement such as an immediate mask policy for Franklin College. She feels that even this does not go far enough and needs to be a mask mandate for all indoor spaces in order to protect all members of the UGA community and their families.
- Benjamin Britton (Art): Agrees that Franklin should take action to enforce its own mandate. He mentioned a "Die In" hosted by the UCW of GA on Friday, Aug 27 from 3-5 pm.
- Anne Summers (Microbiology): Are we the only campus doing this and could we get support from other colleges? Could distinguished chairs advocate for these measures? Are faculty no longer notified of positive tests? Are there consequences if faculty choose to mandate masks or teach remotely?
    - Jeanette Hill (MFECOE, visitor): MFECOE Senate has been in contact with Drs. Hesse and Hahamovitch about the possibility of a joint statement. There is currently a call for a vote. The Faculty Affairs Committee of University Council sent a letter to the administration that she will share with Drs. Hesse and Hahamovitch.
    - Kristin Kundert confirmed the notices were still being sent out if a student in a class tests positive.
    - Dean Dorsey stated that all USG employees are expected to carry out their duties and job responsibilities in accordance with USG policies and procedures and if an employee chooses not to do that there could be disciplinary actions.
- Cliff Buck (Marine Sciences): These consequences also include lost productivity due to a case of covid. Being ill means being out of the classroom for two weeks or more.

Furthermore, USG policy does not consider risk for the children of faculty, students, or staff.

- Nancee Reeves (English): There is a lack of masking in classrooms. University has failed in their responsibility to protect students. The vast majority of the English department supports this resolution.
- Dorset Trapnell (Plant Biology, prox for Chris Peterson): Plant Bio unanimously supports this resolution. This resolution should contain wording that reflects our core desire to keep classrooms safe. It's completely unconscionable that we're allowing politics to override scientifically substantiated facts and put students, staff, and faculty at risk of infection and potential long-term harm.
- Hang Yin (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology): BMB unanimously supports this resolution. He sees no distancing, no masking of students and wonders why UGA cannot mandate these measures as others have done.
- Vasant Muralidharan (Cellular Biology): There is a false dichotomy that seems to be set up that we don't want to teach in person, which is not true, we just want to do it safely. We are responsible for and want to maintain the safety of our students and our families and ourselves. UGA is not fulfilling its responsibilities at all, and in fact, is abdicating all leadership.
- Anne Summers (Microbiology): Asked for confirmation that several departments have written and sent departmental resolutions to Dean Dorsey and upper Administration. Dean Dorsey confirmed this was true. Senators confirmed that 22 departments so far have sent this resolution to their Deans, the Provost, and the President.
- Joe Fu (Mathematics, visitor): People at every level from administration on down seem to feel so disempowered. Individual faculty have a right and responsibility to ensure that their classroom is safe, and this includes a mask mandate in their classrooms and the decision to go on-line if necessary.
- Michael Hahn (Plant Biology, visitor): Other universities have mandated vaccines and masks and UGA should do the same.
- Barbara McCaskill (English, visitor): Supports Franklin mask mandate. Suggested a surcharge for the unvaccinated as well as better use of funding to encourage vaccination and masking. “Understand that the University of Georgia's response to COVID-19 is sending a devastating message nationwide about where we stand on diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Dr. Hesse tabled the discussion and sent the resolution to the executive committee for revision. She made a motion, seconded by Dr. Muralidharan, that the deadline for posting the updated resolution be extended to noon on September 6, 2021. That motion was passed unanimously. The Senate examined the current resolution and suggested edits for the executive committee to incorporate.

Final comments

- Anne Summers announced that boosters were available through UHC for those that qualify.
- Mandy Joye (Marine Sciences, visitor): There has been an abject failure to educate students, even microbology and 4th year biology students, on the very fundamental basic

understandings about COVID-19. She advocated for using the vaccine lottery money to launch a PR campaign.

- Ivan Ingermann (Theater, visitor): Wished to know if there was a written policy for requiring vaccines. Dr. Hesse answered this question, citing an email sent out to all faculty ("…students may be required by off-campus partnering organizations to wear masks and/or be vaccinated as a condition of participation in experiential learning opportunities such as study abroad programs, externships and delivery of medical services.")

Meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,
DeLoris Hesse
Franklin College Senate President and Senator for Cellular Biology