Faculty Consultative Committee
January 21, 2021
Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes**: Conversation with President Gabel; Student Athlete Health; FCC Chair Election Announcement; New Business]

PRESENT: Phil Buhlmann (chair), Ned Patterson (vice chair), Mark Bee, Thomas Chase, Carol Chomsky, Les Drewes, Will Durfee, Carl Flink, Jayne Fulkerson, Frank Gigler, Jennifer Goodnough, Ann Fallon, Michael Kyba, Colleen Flaherty Manchester, Keith Mayes, Barb McMorris, Gopalan Nadathur, Marcia Nichols, Julie Olson, Amy Pittenger, Tracy Twine, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Cliff Steer

REGRETS: Robert Blair

GUESTS: President Joan Gabel; Myron Frans, senior vice president, Finance and Operations; Julie Tonneson, associate vice president, University Finance; Joi Thomas, executive associate athletics director, Health and Performance

OTHERS ATTENDING: Chris Cramer, Deb Cran, Scott Creer, Vickie Courtney, Rachel Croson, Michael Goh, Sumanth Gopinath, Frances Homans, Missy Juliette, Linc Kallsen, Bri Keeney, Julie Manning, Tim McCleary, Bill Haldeman, Ken Horstman, Perry Leo, JB Shank, Eva von Dassow, Katie Stuckert, Megan Sweet, Jonathan Sachs, Jakub Tolar, Travis Workman

1. Conversation with President Gabel

Chair Buhlmann opened the meeting by welcoming President Gabel and telling members that the first hour will be dedicated to her updates. President Gabel first reported that Dr. Calvin Phillips was recently hired to fill the Vice President for Student Affairs position, replacing Maggie Towle, who had been interim Vice President for Student Affairs for a number of years. She told members that Dr. Phillips will report directly to her. She then provided the following additional updates:

<u>Spring Semester/ Vaccine Rollout</u>

President Gabel reported that the University has not been notified of any clusters of COVID-19 among students or staff, which she believes demonstrates the University community's commitment to the safety measures in place. She acknowledged that there have been individual cases on campus, but that they have been sporadic.

Regarding the COVID vaccine, Gabel said that Boynton Health is a designated vaccine provider but can only provide based on who the state determines should receive them. An offer to serve as a larger dispensing site when vaccine supplies in Minnesota expand has been submitted to the

state, and the request is currently in front of Governor Walz. Gabel expressed confidence that the University can be an efficient and transparent partner as part of the state system for vaccine distribution.

Gabel also told members that the University is requesting that the faculty be treated the same as the K-12 teachers in terms of qualifications for the vaccine. Members discussed the likely tension that the University will have to address in prioritizing vaccines for instructors that have to teach on campus based on their discipline versus instructors that could teach remotely but chose to teach on campus, which is something that K-12 educators will not have to face. Gabel noted that concern and explained that the University is currently focused on getting the allowance to be treated similar to K-12 educators, and will then address the nuances of faculty distribution.

PRISMH Update

Gabel told FCC members that the President's Initiative on Student Mental Health (PRISMH) has been a priority for her since she joined the University, and it is ready to be implemented. She explained that the initiative is modeled after the President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM) in that it will be an action group with broad representation across University constituencies, with identified champions, and with the intent to roll the initiative into the Office for Student Affairs permanently after a few years. Gabel announced that the champions will be Professor Tabitha Grier-Reed, College of Education and Human Development, and Maggie Towle, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, and a call will be sent out shortly to populate the committee. She said the work is intended to amplify, organize, and fill gaps around the work that is already being done to address student mental health.

MPACT 2021 Metrics

Gabel shared the draft Systemwide Strategic Plan (SWSP) Metrics with FCC members and explained that the Board of Regents (BOR) will vote on the draft in February. She asked members for feedback, and received the following comments:

- Scott Creer, chair-elect, P&A Consultative Committee (PACC) expressed concern on behalf of the PACC that some of the metrics listed were conflicting, and provided examples for consideration. Gabel acknowledged that there are some metrics that appear to conflict, but explained that the intent was to pick metrics that complement each other and also, in some cases, have a natural tension. The tension is a positive thing, she said, and was designed intentionally to push the priorities forward. She provided the example of decreasing student debt and explained that the institution wants to focus on that metric, but not at the expense of other metrics.
- Eva von Dassow, president, AAUP chapter, asked for additional information about the intent to increase the number of collaborations involving arts and humanities. Gabel explained that the intent is two-fold: (1) the institution values the arts and humanities and wanted to build a strategic plan that highlights that importance and communicates that it is impossible to have a comprehensive plan without them, and (2) there are fewer objective measures to quantify the arts, related to other disciplines, and this metric is

something that is capturable and reportable to audiences that may not understand the nuances of the arts and humanities. Carl Flink suggested that perhaps objective measurements are not appropriate for the arts and humanities, and instead, the institution should focus on creating an affirmative statement about the value of things that are ephemeral and non-objective at their core.

- Barb McMorris asked what the institution envisions as a target for online/ hybrid course offerings, which is currently listed as a 12% offering on the matrix; particularly given that a significant amount of instruction has been moved online during COVID and has now been proven possible in a lot of areas. Gabel acknowledged that things have been disrupted over the past year, and that it will likely lead to a lot of different appetites for how people would like to teach and learn. She said that she is confident that the institution should do more than 12% hybrid, but explained that it will be up to the faculty to decide what they want.
- McMorris also suggested language changes to the metric related to clinical training and new models of care, specifically to be more inclusive of the wide range of collaborations and new models that are available across dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, etc. rather than specifically focused on the medical school only.

Gabel thanked members for the feedback, and requested that any additional feedback be sent to the president's office.

Campus Safety

Gabel reminded members that Dr. Cedric Alexander was hired to review and consult on campus safety issues raised by the community in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd. She cautioned that the intent is not to identify any particular shortcomings of the University of Minnesota Police Department, but to learn, in part, more about what it means to respond to emergencies while also acting in an inclusive way. She said that the institution finds itself in the middle of a social question that has been asked for a long time, but which has been recently amplified. She said Dr. Alexander will help the University think about how to address the uptick in crime around campus, and also help identify ways to make the community feel more safe, in all senses of the word.

She explained that she anticipates that Dr. Alexander will recommend that a group be identified to implement his recommendations, with the intention that Myron Frans, senior vice president, Finance and Operations, will oversee and report on progress to the Campus Safety Committee.

Athletics Budget

Gabel acknowledged that the institution's financial circumstances are difficult and complex in any year, and especially so in the 2020-21 academic year. She explained that transformational, collaborative decisions have been made in order to position the University to be financially stable during a volatile time, but more needs to be done to make up for lost revenue. She said that the University will, and often does, use tools to invest, bridge, and fill gaps in budgets, and that work will need to be done to help auxiliary services and the athletics department with significant revenue decreases. Gabel noted that athletics has had a particularly difficult year with

changes to fall sports, loss of spectator revenue, and the cancellation of the NCAA March Madness basketball tournament. While the institution addresses these issues, administrators will be careful not to undermine the core mission, she assured the committee.

Gabel then introduced Senior Vice President Frans and Julie Tonneson, associate vice president, University Finance, to give the committee background on the athletics finances, the current status of their budget, and how the institution plans to address the losses from COVID. Tonneson explained that athletics entered the academic year with a $4.5 million shortfall, and is projected to hit a $45 million shortfall by the end of the academic year. She cautioned that the number is likely to change before the end of the year, based on a number of future decisions, including whether the March Madness tournament is held.

Frans told members that as a CFO, he would generally caution that the principle of financing operations by taking out loans is not a good business plan. That said, it is being considered for athletics and other auxiliary services (i.e., housing, dining, and parking) because the assumption is that the departments will return to normal, revenue generating operations within the next year or two, and will therefore have revenue to pay back the loan.

Following Frans and Tonneson, Gabel clarified that athletics is a designated auxiliary in the budget, and therefore considered a business at the institution and expected to generate revenue to cover direct and overhead costs. Therefore, the activities that athletics participate in, for example the March Madness tournament, are not done as an aside to collect additional revenue, but are exactly what athletics is designated to do, which is to operate in order to collect revenue to sustain their business. These types of long term loans, Frans added, are not typically considered for other non-revenue generating departments.

Frans also explained that the intent is to secure a 12-24 month financing arrangement for the athletics department and other auxiliary departments to start, which gives the institution and the departments time to determine what the long term debt structure would look like. He projected that with the institution's commercial paper lending and borrowing opportunities, a loan at less than one percent interest is possible. He added that he hopes to secure interest payments below $500,000 for the first year, but cautioned that once refinanced, the interest payments could be above $2 million, which will need to be accounted for in the budget.

Myron concluded by saying that the athletics department will have to figure out how to get back to normal, revenue generating operations to cover their costs, and in addition, will need to figure out how to pay the loan back.

Sumanth Gopinath, vice president, AAUP chapter, asked Frans who will be responsible to pay for the potential $2 million in debt servicing on the loan. He expressed that many people on the academic side of the institution could finance a number of things with that money, including graduate and fellowship teaching positions or other programs that have been cut during COVID. Frans told Gopinath that both the principal and the interests will be paid by the auxiliary department taking the loan. He said one of the things that the University can do to help these departments is negotiate a good interest rate because of the financial health of the institution. However, the debt will be the responsibility of the department borrowing the money.

AAUP chapter president von Dassow asked Frans how the University could be considered financially healthy if jobs were being cut, and how the systemwide strategic plan metrics will be accomplished with jobs being cut. She explained that the AAUP is particularly concerned about the security of the non-tenure track faculty. Gabel explained that Frans description of financial health means that the University can borrow well, meaning at lower rates. She cautioned that it does not mean that the University has extra money. She explained that the athletics budget is an acute, immediate problem, but then there are also issues, like von Dassow described, that will need to be addressed long term.

Frans asked members to understand that when the University requested funding from Governor Walz, part of the promise made was to take fiscal responsibility for the budget issues from 2020-21. The athletics department has made deep cuts, he said, as has much of the institution, and the goal for University Finance is to get through the year with as little damage as possible and with the most possible resources moving forward.

Professor Julie Olson, chair, Senate Research Committee, asked if the athletics department has a plan to increase their revenues to pay off the debt. She pointed out that athletics was already in a deficit before the pandemic, and appeared to just be skimming by. Frans told her that University Finance is working on a plan with them. He cautioned that many components of the sports world are shifting, so there are a number of unknowns at this time. He told members that the athletics department has been asked to build a framework for the 2022 and 2023 budgets, and then figure out how to increase revenue and cut costs further to pay back the loan.

Colleen Flaherty Manchester asked what strategics other institutions are using in similar circumstances. Tonneson said that other Big Ten institutions are facing the same budget issues, especially in athletics, and the Big Ten Alliance even considered creating a loan program for interested schools. Tonneson remarked that the university chose not to explore the alliance loan offering because the projected interest rate was too high.

Carl Flink asked if any parallel discussions are happening related to the visual arts, which has also been brought to a standstill because of COVID. While the arts do not bring in millions of dollars, the programs were similarly affected directly as spectator sports, he pointed out. Tonneson explained that University Finance has met with every unit on campus to discuss budget issues, and will do another assessment with each unit in March or April. Those discussions will focus on what is happening in the departments, where the impacts of COVID are hitting, whether there are balances or reserves to cover budget shortfalls, etc. Flink stated that there is a lack of high level discussion about visual and performing arts, which is afforded to athletics, and he suggested that there be more than a departmental discussion about addressing budget issues in the future.

2. Student Athlete Health

Buhlmann then introduced the next topic, telling members that he had received concerns from a fellow faculty member, Professor Jonathan Sachs, Department of Biomedical Engineering, about the health and potential risks to student athletes playing during COVID. Buhlmann explained

that Sachs' concerns were forwarded to Joi Thomas, executive associate athletics director, Health and Performance, who joined the meeting to address the concerns and provide information about athlete health, broadly, to FCC members.

Thomas began by giving background on Myocarditis, a cardiac condition reported extensively in the media after Dr. Wayne Sebastianelli, Penn State's director of athletic medicine, presented startling information about the links between COVID and Myocarditis, including that 30-35% of Big Ten athletes that tested positive for COVID also tested positive for Myocarditis. This statistic was a concern also raised by Sachs. Thomas acknowledged the fear that this statement provoked, and cautioned that the physician was sharing preliminary, anecdotal information at a State College Area Board of School Directors Meeting, which was later published formally at 15%. She assured committee members that the University's athletics department has done a lot of preliminary work to prepare for potential cases of Myocarditis, but presently has only had 0.7 percent of cases reported. Of those cases, Thomas said, the individuals have worked with a campus cardiologist and have already been cleared to compete.

Thomas was also asked in advance to address COVID transmission rates among athletes. She explained that all athletes that report a diagnosis at any point in time, have tested positive for antibodies, or have tested positive in their athletic program are tracked. That number, she said, shows roughly 44.8% of athletes have reported some form of diagnosis. She cautioned that while it feels like a high number, a majority of the athletes have been asymptomatic and/or have been tested and diagnosed during re-entry or regular testing. Thomas told members that any athlete that tests positive for COVID is provided medical care.

Regarding an athlete's right to opt out of playing if they do not want to risk exposure, Thomas said that the University did ask athletes to sign an acknowledgment waiver which included opt out language. Thomas emphasized that any student deciding to opt out of competition did so without any impact to their scholarship or services. She reported that 49 students opted out in the fall semester, and of those, the majority are returning to play for the University. Athletes that decided to play were not asked to sign a release of liability, which Thomas said was done at other institutions.

Sachs recommended that the institution immediately organize a public health messaging campaign to explain the measures that the institution is taking to protect the athletes and fans. Additionally, he wondered what money was being spent by the University to educate fans about the impact of people gathering to cheer on teams, and the likelihood that there will be enormous gatherings during the March Madness tournament. Thomas and Buhlmann both told Sachs that they would escalate his specific recommendations.

Thomas explained that the athletics department did a series of commercials and partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to help messaging to students and the general community. She also noted that the Big Ten is not allowing ticketed fans for any events this year, in any University facilities. Only essential personnel and up to 150 family members are currently allowed to attend the games, although to date, there have not been more than 50 spectators at any game. Thomas told members that the athletics department is in contact with MDH weekly, and is following all of its protocols.

Julie Olson asked when the athletes are expected to wear masks, given that they are not wearing them during competition. Thomas explained that the athletes are tested almost daily, and are expected to wear masks in every other venue other than during play and on the sidelines.

3. FCC Chair Election Announcement

Buhlmann reminded FCC members that the FCC chair ballot would be sent out shortly, and noted that Ned Patterson, as current vice-chair. is the only person on this ballot, as established in the senate bylaws. Patterson made remarks about his past experiences in FCC leadership and his goals for the future, if elected chair for the 2021-22 academic year.

Bobbie Erichsen
University Senate Office