

## Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes

October 28, 2020

8:00 am – 9:30 am

Zoom

**Attending:** Kanakadurga Singer (Chair), John Pasquale, Mark Rosentraub, Annalisa Manera, Rachel Goldman, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Rebekah Modrak, Michael Hess, Priti Shah, Chitra Subramanian

**Absent:** Sergio Villalobos, William Schultz

**Guests:** Provost Susan Collins, Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost

8:04 Chair Singer called the meeting to order. She shared the approved charges for AAAC with the group and she provided a summary.

8:05 Chair Singer stated that an open discussion would take place during the meeting. She asked Provost Collins to discuss feedback on how leadership has responded to outcomes of the Faculty Senate motions.

Provost Collins mentioned that plans will be announced for winter term in early November. These decisions will relate to the data that is being followed as well as events on campus. She posed a broader question given the context – what makes the most sense in light of decisions that need to be made.

Provost Collins discussed the dashboard and thinking about best teaching modalities. One of the most important things for teaching modalities has been choices of completely remote, then public health informed, then after the stay in place order only courses that must be taught in person must be taught in person, and those courses where instructors decided to teach in person. She thanked SACUA for help with the survey on these issues. She requested input and feedback was discussed.

Provost Collins and committee members discussed the current status of COVID cases in the community. Student feedback was discussed. Provost Collins indicated that a survey was completed and is in the process of being interpreted. The sense from preliminary data is that there is a wide range of perspectives on the issues. This also varies by discipline.

A committee member expressed concern about lecturers needing to cover courses for faculty who chose not to teach in person. Tenured faculty were also asked to teach courses they weren't accustomed to teaching.

Chair Singer asked how the Provost ensures that individual unit feedback is being received. Provost Collins indicated that UM's size and decentralization is challenging, and that contexts are very different across campus. Many things are implemented at the school, college, and unit level. There is often a balance of how much is centralized and decisions need to be made much more quickly than usual during a pandemic and the decisions were really new and important. A discussion followed on the balance of what things should be centralized.

A committee member noted that there is nervousness among both students and faculty. Evidence of outbreaks on campus are seemingly not tied to in person teaching. It was suggested that this could be explained better during the COVID updates.

Provost Collins indicated that a number of surveys are being conducted, and that data will be shared. Follow up surveys are also anticipated. Follow up surveys will likely have some open-ended questions. Groups are gathering input from faculty, students, and staff.

Provost Collins solicited feedback about the Friday COVID-19 updates.

Action item: The group will consider what should be the focus during the town hall.

8:47 Anti-Racism Efforts. Chair Singer asked Provost Collins to touch on these items. Provost Collins made reference to a recent article in the University Record that included details about anti-racism initiatives that are happening across campus. She is working most actively on a faculty cluster that will build expertise across campus. More information will be coming about how that will work. Faculty and deans will be invited to come up with proposals with at least 2 to strengthen our expertise in this area. There will be some funding available to support faculty doing anti-racism work. There are also efforts to gather input on how to put together the charge and populate a task force on public safety. Nominations are being solicited. Other initiatives were also announced.

A committee member asked what efforts were made to collect information from schools/colleges/units toward this effort. They expressed that there has been a wide range of complaints about curriculum and lack of race and ethnicity coverage. Individual program needs are going to be different across campus. A suggestion was made for there to be a race and ethnicity course for all students taught by experts.

9:00 Provost Collins thanked the group for their feedback and left the meeting.

Chair Singer expressed that the conversation was useful.

Action Item: Chair Singer asked committee members to send their feedback on winter semester to her so that she could forward this to the Provost's Office.

9:03 Chair Singer requested updates from COAA and for the WilmerHale Task Force.

Professor John Pasquale, Chair of the Committee on Administrative Oversight (COAA) gave an update about the committee. He explained that the committee is brand new, and the committee is working on finding its identity. There will be the most overlap with AAAC concerning OIE, and the grievance process. COAA met with Associate Vice President for Institutional Equity, Tami Strickman, last week, and she gave an overview of changes in her office. Strickman is trying to establish OIE as a trustworthy and reputable organization. The employee advisor component of the conversation is still open. He described a meeting that occurred with the provost's office about volunteer advisors.

Chair Singer gave a brief overview of the advisor role. Professor Pasquale explained that he doesn't think the faculty understand the implications of participating as an advisor (having to

pose uncomfortable questions, effect of dropping out, student responses). Professor Pasquale stated further that COAA suggested using volunteers from the law school.

#### 9:13 WilmerHale Task Force

Professor Rachel Goldman gave a report on the WilmerHale Task Force. She stated that they have had one meeting. They talked about who commissioned them, what authority they have, and who is going to listen. There was discussion about oversight of OIE and how that has changed and how it should be moving forward. The task force talked about making recommendations about changes to the process of hiring and reappointing sr. level administrators. Professor Goldman indicated that 7 deans were recently reappointed, and it was unclear if there were faculty or department chair consultations. Another issue is around the vetting and evaluation of administrators.

#### 9:20 Communicating Updates on the WilmerHale Response

The committee discussed the WilmerHale Report briefly.

Action item: The WilmerHale Report will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Chair Singer reminded committee members to send input for future town halls to be shared with Provost Collins, and the committee discussed other issues including testing and quarantine housing.

#### 9:47 Meeting adjourned