

**Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes**

February 24, 2021

8:00 am – 9:30 am

Zoom

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**Attending:** Kanakadurga Singer (Chair), John Pasquale, Annalisa Manera, Lola Eniola-Adefeso, Rachel Goldman, Rebekah Modrak, Michael Hess, Priti Shah, William Schultz, Sergio Villalobos, MaryJo Banasik, Elizabeth Devlin

**Absent:** Chitra Subramanian, Mark Rosentraub,

**Guests:** Provost Susan Collins, Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost, Sara Blair, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs, Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of English Language and Literature, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts  
Asha Muldro, Guidepost Solutions, Brad Dizik, Guidepost Solutions

8:01 Chair Singer called the meeting to order.

**I. Winter semester feedback and fall planning**

- a. Provost Collins requested feedback from committee members about their experiences teaching during winter semester.
  - i. Committee members reported that small in person classes of sixteen students or less are going well. The wellness day was well timed as faculty observed the students needing the time off due to more seasonal factors versus covid related stressors.
  - ii. Students with labs are expressing frustration with the inability to interact with experiments in the virtual environment.
  - iii. Committee members have concerns of teaching in person in large lecture halls, with masks still mandated, it could be difficult to understand or hear students. Faculty members that have received the vaccine are comfortable teaching the course in the lecture hall with a smaller number of students present who are not wearing masks.
    - Provost Collins indicated that the mitigations that have been made for COVID would be ongoing. There have no reports of transmission happening currently in classrooms. She requested feedback on how moving forward the administration could work together to make faculty more comfortable teaching in person.
  - iv. Research labs are up to 75% with the safety precautions in place. Undergraduate students have expressed how happy they are to be back in the lab and are less anxious about being able to continue to their work over the summer.
  - v. Students are sensing faculty burnout. There was the clinical overload with COVID patients, stress over lack of funding and the competitive nature of things right now in research academic environment. Unfortunately, when faculty are stressed the students feel that.
  - vi. Faculty members have noticed an increase of student engagement by using office hours, and students seem to be adjusting to learning in the virtual environments.
  - vii. Committee members have expressed some trepidation returning to in person teaching as although COVID infections have decreased among the student population, there are students that are not following recommended safety guidelines, such as staying in place and limiting social interactions.
  - viii. The current lack of vaccine availability does contribute to some faculty members' inclination to teach online versus in person in the fall.
- b. Provost Collins requested feedback from the committee about returning to the residential teaching model in the fall with the assumptions of increased vaccine supply and anyone who wanted a vaccine could get one by late summer with continued COVID mitigations.
  - i. Committee agreed that if those that wanted to get the vaccine were able to get it that they would be comfortable teaching in the fall.
  - ii. Committee expressed concerns about student and faculty vaccinations and agreed that mandating vaccinations for students could be problematic.
  - iii. The concern is the percentage and willingness of the student population getting vaccinated.

- iv. The data that has been provided thus far shows that students are wanting to come back in the fall in person.
- v. Committee agreed that there cannot be any mandatory vaccinations for faculty, staff, and students, if vaccines are still under an Emergency Use Authorization.
- c. Provost Collins asked the committee to consider if there were no constraints on vaccine availability, should the university mandate vaccinations and for whom.
  - i. Chair Singer indicated based on the limited knowledge of the vaccine long-term it would be difficult to mandate it on the health provider side.
  - ii. Committee consensus was that the university should not mandate vaccinations although some felt it could be for in-person teaching.
  - iii. Provost Collins requested committee members to place their feedback in the chat for her to review later due to time constraints.

**I. Discussion on Impact Statements:**

- a. VP Blair is requesting committee feedback on what impact statements might, could, should look like, who should be responsible for them and how they should be circulated. She would like to know what committee members have observed and their thoughts on how to move ahead.
  - i. Provost Collins indicated that no decision has been made about how to move forward, who should see the statements, whether they should be required and who should see them. There is a wide range of views of what would be helpful and what would be appropriate.
  - ii. VP Blair related to the committee the broad range of views currently circulating on campus.
    - 1. There are departments or groups of departments that are preparing the statements as opposed to the candidate that is objective and lists the pandemic impact in the field and may list the field lab closure.
    - 2. Departments are leaning toward fact sheets that are also highly objective that list the impact more specially to Ann Arbor, such as when research/practice spaces were closed and reopened and information about the K-12 closing/opening, lab densities and access/restrictions materials. This information may be relevant to a candidate's personal experience and may not impact some. The point is to provide an objective and fuller picture of the range of challenges that faculty may be or may have faced.
    - 3. Individualized assessment of the pandemic impact on faculty. For example, surveys based on a one to five scale.
  - iii. Recommendations
    - 1. Informational approach appealed to some committee members because it would provide a factual account of how the institution and surrounding areas were impacted.
    - 2. Inserting into faculty casebooks a description of what the landscape looks like at the university.
    - 3. In providing the information to reviewers there should be some level of private communication similar to what is done in a memo of modified duties, not necessarily to go to the department chairs, but to be filed with who has the role at the college level that an individual faculty can choose to do to elaborate on their situation.
    - 4. LSA would require an in between option as something general would not be applicable to the varying departments/units within LSA.

**9:01 Provost Collins and Christine Gerdes left the meeting.**

- I. Guidepost Solutions discussion:** Asha Muldro and Brad Dizik
  - a. Guidepost Solutions introduced themselves to the committee and spoke about their engagement with the university.
    - i. Guidepost Solutions was engaged by the Board of Regents and the President's office to help implement the WilmerHale report recommendations.
    - ii. Guidepost have also been charged with making recommendations to strengthen practices, protocols, and accountability around climate and retaliation issues.
    - iii. They are applying a holistic and collaborative perspective to include various stakeholders around campus.

- iv. They provide expertise in crisis management and cultural shifts in Higher Ed and Corporations.
- v. Guidepost is requesting feedback from AAAC on what recommendations they would make or issues they would like to see addressed.
- b. Committee feedback
  - i. The committee is requesting clarity in the next steps for the WilmerHale report recommendations and how they will be implemented.
  - ii. The committee has been charged with looking into changes to OIE and its processes.
  - iii. The committee has a list of recommendations based on their charges that they provided to the provost last year.
    - 1. Guidepost requested the list of recommendations for reference.
  - iv. Committee recommended a review of the administrator evaluation process and how to make it a more effective mechanism that could be used to in renewal and promotion decisions.
  - v. Committee recommended greater transparency by the administration with the selection process and criteria used for administrators.
- c. Guidepost requested committee members contact them at [umich@guidepostsolutions.com](mailto:umich@guidepostsolutions.com) if they have further contributions to the discussion.

9:30 The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Elizabeth Devlin  
Faculty Senate Office