



Student Relations Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2021

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Present: Harish Ganesh (Chair), Michael Atzmon (SACUA Liaison), Simon Cushing, Ashley Gearhardt, Charlie Koopmann, Helen Look, Laura MacLatchy, Jeannie Moody Novak, Jessica Pasquale, Monica Porter, Yaacov Ritov, Jennifer Schrage (Student Life), Claire Liu, Peiyu Ryan Wang

Absent: Martino Harmon, Xiomara Santamarina, Amanda Peters

Administrative: Pam Morris, Elizabeth Devlin

Guests: Judith Pennywell, International Center
Kerin Borland, University Career Center
Monita Thompson, The Program of Intergroup Relations

Chair Ganesh called the meeting to order at 11:33am. Committee members reviewed the agenda and the October 15, 2021, meeting minutes for approval. There being no changes, the minutes were approved. Chair Ganesh indicated that the responses to the questions brought forth by SAUCA Liaison Atzmon would be available in the November minutes and encouraged members to review them. He indicated that if the committee would like to have another discussion regarding this COVID topic to please let him know.

Chair Ganesh welcomed the committee members and asked the two student representatives to introduce themselves to the rest of the committee.

Student Life Update: *Jennifer Schrage, Associate Vice President for Student Life*

AVP Schrage gave an overview of the VP Harmon's campus briefing report. She spoke about the student interest and educational experiences that go beyond the classroom. She shared the impact report with the committee.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sXcDBpaWEXCazpNyUgKNmslGFmjOtUDDejp7MVk8cb4/edit?usp=sharing>

AVP Schrage indicated that the data was collected over a one-month period, which captured over 7500 unique educational experiences with students. She highlighted to the committee that Student Life is continuing its emphasis on student health and well-being and including continuing engagement, programs, and events available to students.

Chair Ganesh invited committee questions about the Student Life update.

The committee suggested exploring the new CAPS online platform as a special topic at a future meeting during the winter term. <https://record.umich.edu/articles/caps-piloting-online-platform-to-support-student-mental-health/>



Priority Agenda Topic: *Student Life & Academic Partnerships*

Overview of FY21 SL Partnership Inventory & FY22 SL Partnership Goals

Focus: Strengthening academic partnerships (current & future possibilities)

Presentation Topic: [SL Academic Partnership & the Student Learning Agenda](#)

Presenters: Judith Pennywell, International Center, Kerin Borland, University Career Center
Monita Thompson, The Program of Intergroup Relations

The presenters gave an overview of Student Life and Academic Partnerships, their importance, impact and interdisciplinary reach.

The presenters requested the committee's feedback:

They asked what may be helpful to build partnerships with student life and collaborations in areas of shared core work.

Q & A/Member Discussion

Chair Harish opened the floor for discussion.

The committee was interested in receiving a more detailed report of the partnerships already in place at individual schools or colleges so they may support the programs already in place and to create more partnerships.

- AVP Schrage indicated that one of Student Life's goals and priorities is increasing the visibility of these partnerships. They are working on creating a more detailed report.

Chair Ganesh and the committee discussed how UCC matches coaches with students.

- Currently one career coach is embedded in Rackham and is working in partnership with several academic departments. This coach also does individual coaching based on individual needs. The committee suggested considering having a graduate student center.
- Dean Solomon is an advocate of internship experiences that go beyond the academic setting. Kerin Borland indicated that they are partnering with Dean Solomon to provide students with opportunities for experiences outside their PhD experiences.

The committee discussed what resources are available for doctoral students to help with socialization and timelines for applying for jobs in industry versus academic jobs.

AVP Schrage will follow up and provide the committee with these resources.

The committee discussed exploring normalizing the discussion for non-academic career trajectories with students. If possible, to discuss with students openly at the beginning of the process instead of towards the end.

- Kerin Bordland indicated that they have begun working on starting this conversation early in the process. She gave examples of including information in graduate student orientation, holding round tables within departments and continuing to work on broader scale events. She indicated that the normalization of this discussion is a process.

The committee discussed how groups identified for partnerships are prepared when they are on opposite ends of the spectrum of opinions.



Monita Thompson gave an overview of the undergraduate workshops and courses available to prepare and build trust for difficult conversations.

The committee discussed how international students are welcomed and acclimated to the university.

- Judith Pennwell indicated the International Center has an extensive orientation program with 20 online teaching programs and online speakers that help get students get ready for the classroom. They have several programs available throughout the year that engages students in activities on campus. They also have several programs that address any issues international students are having in a timely manner as they adjust to campus life.

Chair Ganesh asked if the committee had any additional questions for the guest speakers.

Ryan Wong asked if Student Life hosts events for students as well.

Monita Thompson indicated that they do several things across the Student Life spectrum. There are constant activities and initiatives to get students involved on campus. They also provide a lot of services that come from the International Center such as immigration and visa work.

Kerin Borland thanked the committee for its invitation to speak to the committee.

Chair Ganesh thanked the guest speakers and adjourned the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:39pm.

Respectfully submitted
Elizabeth Devlin
Faculty Governance Coordinator, Faculty Senate Office

Appendix A:

Professor Michael Atzmon's responses to Dr. Ernst:

Dear Dr. Ernst,

Thank you for your written response to the questions I raised at the 9/17 meeting of the Student Relations Advisory Committee. I had hoped to engage in direct conversation after your presentation, but no time was left for it.

Many of us appreciate the difficulty of planning COVID-19-related strategy for a university as big as UM, with circumstances that keep changing. At the same time, the community expects transparency and clarity about decisions that affect their health and possibly lives, and how they have been informed. This is evident in the passing of [Motion 2](#) at the 10/4/2021 Faculty Senate meeting, with over 1,000 votes cast. Unfortunately, your response does not allay student and faculty concerns about the planning and the accuracy of information shared with the community.

Your response is largely based on asserting that UM is following CDC recommendations. Before addressing it directly, I would like to point out recent changes



in CDC recommendations,* which I also detailed in a separate communication on which you were copied. As of 9/21/2021, CDC no longer recommends automatic classification of vaccinated individuals as “not close contacts.” In fact, vaccination status is no longer used as a criterion for determining close contact. Now it is quite apparent that UM is not following CDC recommendations. Having said that, I don’t believe my earlier points are moot. Transparency and use of pertinent and up-to-date data are needed in order for the community to have confidence in administration’s policies. The following are my reactions to your communication to the Student Relations Advisory Committee, including why I believe UM has not been following CDC recommendations, even before the recent updates:

1) You state that we “have an established campus experience?” There does not seem to be a solid basis for this assertion. With [vaccine effectiveness against any infection between 40 and 80%, as of August](#), and waning,* and 96% of students vaccinated, the number of vaccinated and infected students is several times higher than that of unvaccinated and infected students, yet the former group is not being routinely tested. As a result, the dashboard numbers are a gross underestimate that misleads the community. Most infected and vaccinated individuals are asymptomatic, so they never get tested, yet they perpetuate the silent spread. Also, are you suggesting that the University of Illinois, Cornell and Princeton, who test per capita several times what UM does, are wasting their precious resources?

2) ResponsiBLUE automatically defines a vaccinated person as not a close contact. You assert that UM is following CDC guidance in this regard. This assertion is inconsistent with the UM situation, even before the change in CDC recommendations. As detailed in the response to President Schlissel’s rebuttal of [Motion 2](#), the CDC guidelines, until recently, only defined vaccinated individuals as “not close contacts” if “both the infected student and the exposed student(s) [correctly and consistently](#) wore well-fitting [masks](#) the entire time.” One would be hard pressed to suggest that this describes the situation on campus. Anywhere one looks, visibly loosely fitting masks, and sometimes bandanas used as masks, are more the norm than the exception.

3) You support your use of the 80% vaccine effectiveness figure with an article you describe as “published by the MMWR on 9/17/2021” (presumably [this](#)). Closer look shows that this document refers to the 80% figure as the vaccine effectiveness *against hospitalization*. I am not a medical or public-health professional, but I assume that stating vaccine effectiveness without qualification, which I believe you did, should be interpreted as applying to *any* infection. More importantly, one does not need to be a professional to determine that it is the effectiveness against *any infection* that is most relevant to the spread of a virus (It is, of course, widely known that asymptomatic individuals contribute to the spread of COVID-19). The bottom line is that the [vaccine effectiveness against any infection](#) is far lower than the number you quoted.

4) The messaging from the administration seems to suggest that if one avoids hospitalization then all is well. This message is far too optimistic, given what we already know and what we don’t know about long COVID and its possibly debilitating symptoms.



5) I also have a follow-up question stemming from a 10/15/2021 CDC [update](#), which many think was overdue long ago: it states "CDC recommends fully vaccinated people get tested 5-7 days after close contact with a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19." This is part of what [Senate Motion 2](#) calls for. Is UM planning to restore contact tracing now, including vaccinated individuals, and make it more effective than it was before it was eliminated?

Let me reiterate that the students, faculty, staff, and the rest of the community are far more likely to have confidence in the administration's COVID-19 policies if the administration were to implement greater transparency and accuracy of data presented and used.

Yours,
Michael Atzmon

*[Appendix A](#) (last updated 9/21/2021), linked in the document [Considerations for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing in K-12 Schools and Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#), allows for only one exception to the 6 ft., 15 minutes/24 hours definition of a close contact: K-12 children. It is stated explicitly that this exception does not apply to adults. [Appendix A](#) also includes the language "People who are [fully vaccinated](#) should get tested 3-5 days after coming into close contact with someone with COVID-19." A 10/15/2021 CDC [update](#) contains similar language. The document "[Considering for Case investigation...](#)" also states "Vaccination status is not considered in determining close contact"