

2019-2020 Graduate Council

Thursday April 9, 2020

Members present: George Boulukos, Saran Donahoo, Themistoklis Haniotakis, Karen Jones, Usha Lakshmanan, Junghwa Lee, Liliana Lefticaru, Ruopu Li, James MaClean, Matt McCarroll, Trish McCubin, Caleb Mckinley, Marc Morris, Julie Partridge, Kyle Plunkett, Thomas Shaw, Emily Vajjala, Lindy Wagner, Jim Wall

Ex-Officio: Lizette Chevalier, John Dunn, Gary Kinsel, Meera Komarraju, Stephen Shih

Guest: Justin Schoof

Meeting called to order at 8:01 AM

Morris: Correction to last meeting's minutes?

No corrections were given

Morris: Motion to approve the minutes?

Seconded

Motion approve (14-0-0)

REMARKS FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Dunn: Good morning, everyone. First off, let me say a huge thank you to the faculty and students. The ability for the campus and the community to respond in an affirmative way since the pandemic is very commendable. We have been monitoring what has been going on with the online format and it seems like many of you have responded quickly and positively to the changes. Many of us, including me, are novices to the online courses. It's like taking two classes with the adjustment to the new format. We want to maintain a level of academic rigor while also making the workload manageable. But, let me end where I began. The ability you have demonstrated in converting to a different experience is very impressive.

I have a few updates on other items. I want you to know that in our building, Anthony Hall, the provost is here and the staff swap in and out. We are thin but we're working hard to make sure we support the kinds of initiatives that need to be sustained like promotion to tenure and sabbatical requests. Every day the cabinet meets to discuss updates on housing and finances, and how to better get information out to our students and community. We have an upcoming meeting with President Mahoney, SIUE and the School of Medicine. The purpose of this is to make sure that we're all on the same page with our messaging and accuracy of information. Beyond all that, every day we were meeting with the presidents and chancellors of the other public universities. The purpose of this, again, is to share information,

collaborate on ideas. IBHE and personnel from the governor's office are also a part of those meetings. We want to make sure that we are on the same page with the rebates that we are providing to students for housing. We still have not gone out with any policy for the fees that will be rebated. We are of course keeping our eyes on the enrollment. I'll be doing a virtual open house. We want to let students know that we have not forgotten them. We are more thoughtful towards our students' financial situations, due to high unemployment rate. Traditionally, we would restrict students from registering for classes if they owed us \$200. President Mahoney and I are going to raise that threshold to \$1500. We are also hopeful that the federal government has identified something to pass with the primary goal of helping students.

In terms of Covid-19 on campus, we have had 3 students test positive. 2 of those students live on campus and are ending their isolation period. They are doing extremely well. In addition to them, we had another 21 students quarantined because of their interactions with the confirmed students. They too have shown no signs. The third student is a graduate student off campus. He and his wife had traveled through Vermont and came back through Chicago. He's doing very well also. Kudos to our Student Health Center for responding so well.

We have communicated room and board rebates for the students who are no longer accessing those services. It is fair and reasonable and we need to get this done. Some of that money will be attributed to accounts that own us money and some will be direct deposits. We've also discussed rebating general fees, but this is a more delicate topic. Even though part of the general fee goes to the Rec Center, which students can no longer access, it also supports maintenance, which is always needed. We need to be a little more conservative when it comes to the general fee.

I do want to say that we have been very fortunate to live a rural area, with the number of cases per 100,000 being very low in contrast to those numbers for the north. We are also getting some very nice feedback on some good work from our biological sciences group that has a contract with the state. They have delivered on VTM, which is a vital medicine used for testing Covid-19. The governor's office and others are quite impressed. They have referred to SIU, Northwestern, U of Chicago and UIC as the go-to places for health in terms of the science that's needed. It's nice to be in that company.

As you know, we have already made the call to move summer courses to the online format. I think it's a good decision. Most of our colleagues in the state have done the same thing. To a large extent, we've also recognized that camps and other things that are historically held here are very much at risk. The interesting thing that we have to keep our eye on is where we will be in the fall. There are some signs in recent days that are more encouraging. We don't know what the governor will do after April 30th. We have made it clear to students that if they leave campus to travel, they can not return. We have had a few instances of student-organized gatherings on campus. It is important for all of us to help each other do the right thing and to think beyond our own needs. I know that all of you are taking those measures.

Questions for the Chancellor:

MaClean: If things come around, is there a plan for a summer graduation?

Dunn: We sent out a survey to our graduates to get their take on some options. One of those would be a virtual and another would be a ceremony for that group at a later time. The third would be walking at the December graduation.

Remarks from the Provost:

Komaraju: Good morning, everybody. I wanted to start off by echoing what the chancellor mentioned and that is a huge thank you to all the faculty and instructors and the various units on campus that helped us complete the transition to online. In particular, I wanted to give a shoutout to IT and the Center for Teaching Excellence because they put in long hours to ensure that the transition went smoothly. We also received a lot of support from the community in terms of providing food to students. We are distributing laptops to students. The Provost's office has invested in 100 new laptops to provide to students. We know this is not enough but we are doing our best. One thing this transition has shown us is the amount of variation in students accessing resources. Pertaining to the delayed Spring graduation, we are leaving the survey open to students for a little longer. We don't know if they want a virtual ceremony or to be part of the December or following Spring ceremony. Summer and Fall registration started one week later than usually. The deans were asked to ensure that all summer courses would be offered online. You saw the email about the Pass/Fail option. We had some questions from students concerning that. For clarification, students will still need a C grade in classes where that is the passing grade or to satisfy a prerequisite. Advisors keep track of the grades and email students when they did not receive the prerequisite grade. This practice will not change because advisors will still see the letter grade before students opt to change it. In terms of the sabbatical, that notification went out to the applicants recently and the decisions and the promotion and tenure dossiers have been released to the applicants. As far as the job searches, we are continuing the search process for two deans. For the School of Education, we have two finalists. For the proposed College of STTEM, the list of names of the finalists are being sent out by the search committee. Many faculty hires were completed in the last few weeks. Some deadlines have been extended. For instance, the hiring plan for each academic unit has been extended to April 15th. Also, the deadline for faculty expressing interest in teaching the University 101 course has been extended to April 17th. Another update is in terms of our admissions numbers. Right now, we are focused on yielding students for Fall 2020. We have 5389 undergraduate students who have been admitted and we are doing our best to yield as many of them as possible. Last year, we had a yield rate of 27 percent and our incoming class was 1057 students. For new transfers, our admissions rate is up by 5.9 percent. For graduate students, we have admitted 382, which is an increase of 8.2 percent. We are focused on yielding more transfer and graduate students too. As the chancellor mentioned, we are having a virtual open house. This is for students who will be coming in future years. My last update is on the reorganization plan. RME for the College of Health and Human Sciences was approved by Grad Council. The RME for the College of Agriculture, Life & Physical Sciences is coming up for a second reading in Grad Council this meeting. We have several Article 9 meetings scheduled for the last of the school RMEs: We have 5 COLA proposals as well as proposals for Cinema, Radio & TV, Mechanical, Energy & Materials Engineering, Physical Sciences, Theatre & Dance and Automotive and Aviation.

Questions for the Provost:

Boulukos: I was slightly confused when you said the advisors would be able to see final grades before students can change to Pass/Fail. Would the advisors still contact the students beforehand?

Komaraju: I'll clarify the process some more. Assume there's no Covid-19. Students register for classes without knowing their prerequisite grades of the current term. When those final grades are posted,

advisors notify students who did not meet the C requirement and tell them to withdraw from the relevant course(s). On the first day of class, instructors are provided with a list of students who had not met the prerequisite but are still enrolled in the class. For this semester, if students wish to take a Pass instead of a letter grade, the Registrar will make that change only after advisors get a report of their letter grades. The same process will continue. A student's prerequisite requirements will not be waived even if that student take a Pass grade.

Boulukos: I have a comment relating to the yield. As a parent of a student who's applying, I found it difficult to get financial aid information that's accessible to me. The student has the information on their account, which parents can't access. Other schools mail information that breaks it down. Relating to the yield, if Financial aid information is more difficult to obtain at a given, then the chance of students picking that school is weakened.

Komaraju: If you have an example of what you got from other schools, that would be very helpful to us. I have clarified that I want financial information to be available to parents.

Boulukos: Thank you. I'll send you a scan of the document.

Morris: Regarding International students and new faculty hires, what is the process of getting them here?

Komaraju: This was brought up at Dean's Council. One possibility is that international students may need to take online courses if they can't be on campus. For new faculty, we may need to work with the respective academic unit to cover courses if new faculty are unable to arrive for fall.

Morris: I know a faculty whose OPT is running out. He's unsure if he will be able to start in the fall.

Dunn: I can add to this. When the United States went to a code 3 Japanese students out of our ESL program were sent back to their home university. Only Citizens of Japan were allowed to get on a flight to Japan. We also need to think of the logistics in sabbatical travel. Whether the proposed destinations can be traveled to.

Boulukos: What's the plausibility of students being able to come here on a Visa? Or, on the other hand, international students being able to travel home? I have a student from Korea who wants to go home for the summer.

Dunn: That's not a good idea. They should be advised to not leave the United States at this time. There's the challenging of getting back in.

Komaraju: The question is when the embassies will open up and when the admitted students will get their paperwork and Visa. This is unknown right now.

Donahoo: Should we still submit for funds for Fall travel expenses?

Komaraju: We still don't know if Fall conferences will be cancelled. We should treat the process as if nothing has changed.

Morris: I have a question regarding the Pass/Fail. If a student is retaking a class, what would count as the final grade? Will the Pass replace the letter grade from the first time?

Komaraju: Right now, the policy is that the two grades be averaged for the new grade. That is one possibility.

Remarks from the VCR:

Kinsel: Happy to see you all this morning. First off, I want to acknowledge a few people. Our research faculty is really stepping up to support regional and state health care providers, so I extend my gratitude to them. 40000 viral transport mediums have come from SIU, which is 30 percent of the state's need. I also want to point out that many of our faculty have come together to help with donating supplies. We have asked by the state to provide a count of some of our health equipment, in case that becomes of need to them. We also need to know names of personnel who are trained to performance health related tasks- like running tests.

3 of our undergraduates have received the NSF Research Fellowship. These fellowships are very prestigious. Only about 10-15 percent of applicant receive this. Thank you to the Honors College and research mentors who helped make this possible. In respect to research, I want to stress that the only people who should still be in labs are those who support essential functions. This includes anything that requires constant maintenance. I've had questions from faculty of non-essential labs whose research is supported by federal grants. The federal guidelines on what's allowed in the usage of grant dollars is a bit vague. We aren't sure on how to interpret those guidelines. This will be more of a problem in the summer, when many faculty and graduate students are paid by grants.

Questions for the VCR:

Partridge: Will the REACH award announcements be coming out at its usual time?

Kinsel: We are currently judging and expect to make an announcement before the end of April.

MaClean: I'm one of the people who responded to the state's call for relevant personnel. I assume that there's no conflict of interest between dividing work between research and what the state has called for.

Kinsel: At U of I, equipment and personnel has been transferred to hospitals. In doing this, separate contracts had to be created. We would follow that contract template as well should it come to that.

Remarks from the Graduate School:

Shih: Good morning, everyone. First off, I would like to give a big thank you to my team at the Graduate School. I would like to share a few accommodating policies that the Grad School has created. We have been offering virtual SLATE training classes for anyone that is processing graduate admissions. An email has been sent out to all the graduate program directors to let them know. We are offering training everyday from 2-3. We have also updated the Thesis/Dissertation/research paper oral defense approval forms by allowing for faculty to give an electronic signature. Third, there's an initial draft for modifying the English proficiency requirement from international students, which was approved by the holistic graduate admission working group. Students will now meet the requirement if they received a degree from an overseas university whose primary language is English. We are putting together a list that identifies those universities. This move is to provide an additional pathway for international students to study here.

Questions for the Graduate School Dean:

Plunkett: Would the English proficiency modification mean that students coming from those approved schools would not need TOEFL scores?

Shih: Correct

Remarks from Grad Council Chair:

Morris: Our next meeting is scheduled for May 7th. We will continue to conduct our meetings via Zoom. Our Chancellor search is still ongoing. The consensus was that we continue our search. We hope to have a Chancellor by July 1st. Our virtual meetings for this will again be over Zoom. There's a 300 user capacity but the meeting will also be recorded for anyone unable to watch it. President Mahoney wants a lot of participation and feedback in this decision.

Questions for the Grad Council Chair:

MaClean: 300 is a pretty good number but what's the protocol in case a unit gets shut out by chance?

Morris: As far as the panel, which is predetermined, there will be accurate representation. I assume for everyone else, it's a first come, first serve basis. I don't know how that traffic would be monitored. I will certainly ask about it though.

Lakshmanan: My question goes back to what I asked last meeting. Is there a way that the meeting can be live-streamed so that more people can access it?

Morris: The Zoom meeting is already live.

Lakshmanan: But there's a restriction. How about YouTube and some other platform?

Morris: Another concern we had is about the secureness of the platform. We don't want the feed to be too open. Also, compared to the capacity of an on-campus location, 300 is a bigger number.

Lakshmanan: But maybe this is the perfect opportunity to be unrestricted in access since everybody is online. To bring more people in.

Morris: We are still planning on having the meeting posted afterwards. And we want to get as much feedback as possible.

Lakshmanan: Will non-panel participants be able to ask questions? How will that be done online?

Morris: From my understanding, there was never an opportunity for the general public to ask questions. But there will be separate meetings for other constituency groups to ask questions.

Jones: Could panel members ask questions through the chat feature?

Morris: That's a possibility. I'm not sure how many participants will use that medium. But, like I said, there will be other meetings for more questions.

Dunn: There can be the opportunity for more watchers if computer screens were shared among at least two people.

Lakshmanan: I think asking questions via chat is a great idea. The questions would come from more people than just the panelists and the questions would be spontaneous.

Morris: But keep in mind that we will have specific meetings for constituency groups. We will get more questions that way.

Jones: If questions were submitted during the candidates' presentations, would there be enough time for constituency heads to review those questions? Is the live meeting earlier or later in the schedule?

Morris: It's early.

Jones: That may be a way to get the questions asked. Another way is to provide contact information with the question so candidates can get back to the askers at a later time.

Morris: Ok. Good feedback everybody.

Report from GPSC:

Wagner: Our next meeting for GPSC is next week. We did a lot of our nominations. Our election is taking place soon. At our last meeting, we focused on how to best support graduate students at this time.