

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA FACULTY COUNCIL (USGFC) Spring 2021–Council Meeting

Brian C. Ring, USG Faculty Council Chair, Presiding
May 7, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

Attendee List

USG: Tristan Denley, Karen Alliot, Stuart Rayfield, Steve Raynie, Angelia Thomas; Marti Venn, Steve Wrigley

Officers: Timothy Brown, Webmaster, GSU; Matthew Hipps, Chair-Elect, DSC; Sarah Mergel, Past Chair, DSC; Doug Moodie, Secretary, KSU; Brian Ring, Chair, VSU

Members: Barbara Biesecker, UGA; Matthew Boedy, UNG & AAUP; Lisa Branson, GHC; Michelle Brattain, GSU; Jeff Butcher CCGA; Dana Caldemeyer, SGSC; Mitch Clifton, UWG; Gyuheui Choi, AMSC; Ryan Currie, ABAC; Darlene Dickens, EGSC; Jennifer Flory, GCSU; Richard Foreman, Albany SC; Elizabeth Gurnack, GSWSU; Trisha Holt, GSU; David Kerven, GGC; Julia Kubanek, GT; Jamie Mitchem, UNG; Brian Schwartz, Columbia SC; Theresa Stanley, Gordon SC; Dan Williams, UWG; Dave Williams, Clayton SU

Guests: Harry Dangel, Retiree Council; Dorothy Zinsmeister, Retiree Council; Dustin Anderson

Introduction

Brian Ring opened the meeting at 11 am. He laid out agenda and stated that he proposed more meetings with the USG retiree council.

Travel

Stuart Rayfield mentioned that the state wide non-essential travel ban is still in force, but that there is more flexibility over what is essential. USG is monitoring the situation.

Chancellor's Remarks

Dr. Wrigley started by appreciating the Faculty Council's work, which he considered a great help for USG.

Budget

The state legislature passed a lot better budget for USG for the redo of 20/21 budget and for the 21/22 budget than he would have guessed last summer. They fully funded the formula funding increases. There will be no pay increases for 21/22. State revenue is however up, which looks good for the medium term.

Student Fees

The senate has a subcommittee looking at student fees (not tuition) and their affordability. The USG welcomes the chance to explain the fiscal situation behind fees, such as the state 30 years ago stopped paying for non-academic buildings such as dormitories, fitness centers, food places, parking decks, etc. Institutions cannot pay for non-academic buildings from state or tuition money. It is hard to explain the reason for fees, as they are complex, and many. He considers that there are too many fees and that this

exercise will be a good opportunity to tell a story on why such they need such expenditure and that USG needs sources of incomes for excellence. Some fees support instruction: many do not. There is also the problem as more students go fully online there is less paying fees like parking. However, institutions need revenue to pay off bonds.

Dr. Wrigley believes the existing pricing model for USG will have to change. There are big conversations on this topic.

Fall Classes

USG will present the Fall 21 class proposal to BoR next week. USG are basing such plans on Fall 19 class schedules.

Searches

Dr. Wrigley is not involved in the Chancellor search and has no inside knowledge on what is happening. USG is working on several presidential searches and has appointed interim presidents. He is definitely leaving on the 30th of June. There is a laid down procedure for presidential searches in an USG policy. For all except R1s, faculty chair initial search committee; a regent chairs a R1 committee. The committees consist of faculty, students, alumni, and local people. USG just finished Savannah State and should soon finish Clayton State searches. Georgia Highlands and KSU have interim presidents; Georgia State, Georgia College, and Eastern Georgia searches will await new chancellor.

Fiscal Situation

USG is in a good financial shape with good support from the state, which USG needs to maintain. There has been a tough fiscal state for the last 20 years. USG has to work on improving public perceptions on tuition and fees. Over the long term, there has been an erosion in public respect for higher education. We have to show that higher education is important as a way to get a first job and in economic development. There is an anxiety in the public that they are not getting value for their money. However, USG has good support from the legislators.

Course Content Information

Matt Higgs, President-elect, asked about what happened to the information that legislator Donoghue asked for about what instructors are teaching in the classroom. Dr. Wrigley explained USG sent a request to all provosts. Each provost did their own survey in the own way, and send it back to USG. USG the collated the information, which was about a foot thick, and sent it to the legislator. Dr. Wrigley had several telephone conversations with Donoghue explained the data.

Post Tenure Review Task Force

Covid sidetracked the PTR task force, so it is not finished as planned. However, it should report soon. It is a good committee with good representatives.

Consolidation

Consolidation conversations are ongoing but none planned at present. Budget savings did not drive consolidations, rather serving student better did.

Covid

Georgia is returning to normal. There has been no decision on compulsory vaccination or the need for booster shots.

Chancellor Thankyou

Many members of the Faculty Council thanked Dr. Wrigley for his work as chancellor, both leading USG and negotiating with the legislators. He has been very supportive of the faculty Council. USG is vast and complex and he has worn out his vehicle visiting the many campuses in USG.

Other Reports

Retiree Report

Harry Dangel of the USG Retiree Council gave his report. They meet twice a year and the last meeting was in April. They had problems with virtual meeting with Teams so used Zoom. Many members do not have USG email accounts. Members from 18 institutions were present; no one from central office. There are about 19,000 USG retirees. Health care is the main issue, due to moving from a defined benefit to a defined contribution system. Some folk cannot use the health websites for HRA accounts. USG has given good support. Clayton State surveyed their retirees on health issues. There has been an increase in the use of health webinars. The retiree council is working on getting library access and email retention for all retirees. Communication is a big challenge as no master list of emails available. Some members find annual password changes too difficult. Covid made getting hold of people via phone more difficult.

USG Covid Report

Stuart Rayfield reported that DPH handles vaccine requirements and rules. Most campuses have onsite injections; small campuses have arrangements with local providers. Vaccines are plentiful; problem is getting people to come in for shots. Campuses plan to offer vaccination at orientation events, etc. If you get a shot then you do not have to quarantine if exposed to infected people. There will be more marketing campaigns to encourage people to get shots. Going back to normal in fall, depends on people getting shots. All this is subject to change if medical situation changes.

Matt Hipps asked if there are any plans to have different plans for different campuses, depending on local situations rather than one size fits all across the state. Campuses liaison with local DPHs, so will react to local conditions.

At present, mask policy is to wear masks indoors. If this changes, USG will notify all. It is unlikely that USG will give this decision individual faculty. Student life plans normal events this fall with appropriate behavior. They base decisions on events and gathering based on safety rules. Athletics will follow their conference guidelines. USG is hosting panel on the vaccines during the summer. Vaccines are not 100% likely to stop disease but is far are 100% likely to stop serious illness.

Summer Contracts

Marti Venn stated that the only contracts are the annual ones. However, faculty should get letters stating what summer courses they might teach, their remuneration, and the minimum number of students that would avoid cancellation of a course. Summer teaching is depends on student demand, as cannot make up summer money with annual budget. The institutions not USG will make these decisions. All should get letter of conditions before they teach. However, many said this has never occurred. USG will tell provosts they should send out such letters. The Faculty Council will do a survey to find out what is happening at each institution on summer teaching letters. Then there can be a broader conversation on this subject.

Health Care Report

Karin Elliot stated so far, due to Covid, health care is under budget. However, many Covid claims not yet processed and some delayed treatment due to Covid may come later. USG is estimating a 3 to 4%

increase in medical costs next year. The federal government only pays for vaccines not for vaccination administration costs. So, USG will have to cover that cost.

Some 22% of employees claimed some Wellbeing money, but only 8% of family members. There was a big increase in mental health costs (16%). USG is now offering offerings on mental health, and support to small HR offices. The Foundation continues to complement spending on this. KEPRO offers free counselling to members (4 a year). Governor signed 3 weeks of parental leave for all state employees, including USG. So, USG developing a new policy for parental leave.

Academic Report

General Education

Dr. Denley stated that USG froze the Gen Ed changes, until a new chancellor decides on where to go next. However, new communications lines between different institutions have developed. USG has launched the concept of template courses that institutions can copy without USG approval. This will avoid USG looking at every new Gen Ed course proposal, many of which are copies of existing courses offered elsewhere in USG. Statistics is the first template, which institutions can offer as an alternative to math in areas A2. Freshman Data Analysis is another such template for area D.

SAT/ACT

USG waved SAT or ACT for Fall 2020 admission due to non-availability of tests. However, SAT offered a March date, which 80% of students managed; ACT had an April date, which 95% students managed. Thus, USG and institutions will have to decide on SAT/ACT policy for Fall 21. Surveys have shown most students want to use SAT for admission.

Webinars

Faculty have attended in large numbers past webinars, and over 1000 have already signed up for summer webinars. Please give USG suggestions for suitable topics for webinars. Over 940 people attended the Momentum virtual meeting.

Dr. Denley thanked faculty for all the efforts they made that got USG through the Covid emergency with minimum effects on students.

USGFC Next Steps

Office elections will be virtual and occur shortly. Please be ready for emails on process. Note that if you stand for Chair-elect, that is a three year commitment. We are also looking for parliamentarian. Please send details of new USGFC representatives to the USGFC.

Doug Moodie, Secretary, May 8, 2021.