



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Board of Trustees  
Educational Programs Committee  
October 14, 2020  
Virtual Meeting  
MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Trustee Kenneth Bradley, chair of the Educational Programs Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Committee members Vice-Chair Caryl McAlpin, Trustee Sabrina La Rosa and Trustee Harold Mills were present. Committee members Trustee Joseph Harrington and David Walsh join the meeting in session. Board of Trustee Chair Beverly Seay was also in attendance.

**MEETING MINUTES**

Educational Programs Committee August 12, 2020, meeting minutes were submitted for approval. Vice-Chair McAlpin made the motion to approve, and Trustee LaRosa seconded. The committee unanimously approved the minutes as written.

**REPORTS**

**Provost Update**

Interim Provost Michael Johnson provided the provost update, beginning with the status of the Fall 2020 semester. He stated that both face-to-face and remote education have both worked effectively. Provost Johnson praised the campus community for working together to comply with COVID-19 policies and promote a culture of safety and consideration for others. While also updating the committee on tracing the spike in positive COVID-19 cases to activity at bars and other social gatherings around UCF campus, and continuing to emphasize to students the need for continued safe practices. Johnson was happy to report that the school's safety measures have prevented transmission within classrooms.

Provost Johnson also outlined fall academics, beginning with the 3.9 percent increase in enrollment due to an early summer decision to admit more FTIC students. He indicated that polls and forecasts suggested a steep drop in fall enrollment. That did not materialize for UCF, although it did for many other institutions. UCF returning first-year students has a preliminary 92.3 percent retention rate, our highest ever, and an increase in headcount.

Johnson outlined academic indicators and student success during the pandemic.

Despite the unprecedented stress for students, the provost outlined student successes, as they faced challenges involving health, family care, income loss, and disruptions to their regular class routines.

Johnson outlined some academic gains:

- Overall, our students have adapted well academically despite challenges caused by the pandemic.
- Student Course Outcomes comparison for summer 2020 with the previous summer
  - Despite severe disruptions, remote learning, and the many personal stressors students encountered, we saw a slight increase in the percentage of students with passing grades and a slight decrease in the rate of students who withdrew from classes. That's encouraging and rather remarkable.
  - Undergraduate students' successful completion of credit hours went up slightly this summer (the top item) with slightly improved GPA
  - We saw a small increase in the number of students who successfully moved off probation after entering the summer on probation. We saw a rather substantial 27 percent decrease in the number of students who entered probation during summer.

None of this is a direct measure of student learning, but it is encouraging to see this level of success. Also, faculty have worked very hard to make courses accessible and flexible; this semester, providing support to all students, including those who needed to be isolated or fell ill. Supporting students has taken much more time than usual. We have a deeply dedicated faculty, and I am very grateful for their effort.

Provost Johnson also shared a layout for Spring 2021 planning:

- During the Fall 2020 semester, about a fourth of class sections, were on campus, Also, about a fourth of students have at least one on-campus class. In a typical semester, approximately 80 percent of students would attend in-person on campus.
- Our goal for Spring 2021 is to substantially increase the number of face-to-face classes, beginning with subjects that would ordinarily be on campus. We know that the campus experience is vital for student success; we must do our best to provide it.
- We are comfortable with this path for several reasons: We know much more than we did in the summer about how to have a safe campus; our policies are well developed, as are our testing and tracing protocols; and, above all, this approach has worked, with no evidence of classroom transmission – at UCF or across the SUS.
- There are two significant limitations to our ability to offer face-to-face classes.
  - First, space must be available, continuing our COVID policies, including masks, physical distancing, and extra cleaning. Many sessions, however, will need to be offered remotely, simply because we can't fit them in the available space when distancing is an issue. For example, we have 40 rooms that will accommodate COVID capacity and only seat 14 or fewer students, but we do not offer a considerable number of such small classes.
  - Secondly, faculty members at higher risk should not teach face-to-face. We have developed a process to document high-risk conditions, a more formal process than we used in planning for the fall semester.
- It is difficult for me to predict the outcome of this planning. But in a regular semester, we have around 2,500 sessions on campus. This fall the number was about 600. We will seek to get as close to the typical number as possible, given the constraints of space, class size, and faculty availability.
- We seek to publish the results for students by early November, so they have time to finalize spring schedules and factor in travel and housing.

Johnson emphasized that this plan can be changed if necessary. If conditions deteriorate as the next semester approaches, we will pivot towards remote teaching. He also stated plans for spring break are yet to be determined but expect a decision very soon.

Provost Johnson summarized the academic discussion emphasizing the commitment to provide a robust campus experience. All of us know that the college experience is about more than academics. Students want to engage in activities and be with other students. Belonging to a campus community is a crucial ingredient of retention and eventual graduation.

There are many offices and groups to provide these experiences — safely, in a time of COVID.

Some examples:

- More than 450 new UCF students came out for the physically distanced Knighting welcome event on Memory Mall.
- Students made approximately 18,000 visits to Recreation and Wellness facilities in one month.
- More than 700 students participated in a virtual registered student organization fair.
- And more than 670 students rushed a fraternity or sorority.

He commended the thoughtful work of Dr. Maribeth Ehasz, our vice president for Student Development and Enrollment Services, her team, and others whose creativity and determination help to provide students with a well-rounded campus experience despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Regarding Dr. Ehasz; she has announced that she will retire in February 2021 after 26 years at UCF, 15 years as vice president, bittersweet news. Maribeth is a champion for student success who has influenced thousands of her students during her amazing tenure. She is a major reason why our university is a leading choice for aspiring college students in Florida and beyond. We will miss her deeply, but she has earned this next step, along with our gratitude. He stated that Maribeth is a champion to our students.

Provost Johnson announced the preparation for three dean searches, and good news around campus:

- College of Optics and Photonics
- College of Sciences, and
- Library
- Pegasus Professor Peter Delfyett has earned the 2021 Arthur L. Schawlow Prize in Laser Science from the American Physical Society. The society selects one scientist each year who has made outstanding research contributions in laser science. Dr. Delfyett was recognized for "pioneering contributions to the development of ultrafast mode-locked semiconductor diode lasers, including the scientific understanding of the underlying physical processes, and their application in ultra-wide bandwidth optical communications and signal processing. Including the application of semiconductor lasers to fiber optic communications – the backbone of the internet." As you can see, national awards of this sort are a huge deal. Congratulations to Professor Delfyett.
- Rankings recently released by U.S. *News & World Report* shows UCF improved to 77th as a public national university. We are only one of three public universities in the nation to have improved our ranking in each of the last four years.
- A more in-depth look into their rating algorithm is telling. Our outcomes are in the top 50 among public universities. That includes measures of student success, including graduation and retention, social mobility, graduate indebtedness, and student excellence. But as all of us are painfully aware, our financial resources and our student-faculty ratio are far from the top 50. Insufficient resources hold us back in the rankings and reality.
- We should be proud of performing well. But I know very well that the constant burden of doing more with less weighs heavily on faculty and advisors and administrative staff across UCF. We are an excellent investment – the ROI is tremendous. We need to help others understand what a significant investment we are.

Chair Bradley recognized trustee David Walsh; who added that contributions made by Dr. Ehasz as immeasurable and exhalatory. She has been a great representative of this school across the country and region; it has been a blessing to have her here.

Chair Bradley stated agreement; and commented that we would all have the upcoming opportunity to bid farewell to her as she heads into retirement. By acclamation, we appreciate you and thank you abundantly for all that you have done.

Bradley continued with additional comments on the provost update:

- Recognizing Pegasus Professor Peter Delfyett for his prestigious award win. He stated that the professor probably did not seek to win an award but instead focused on teaching well and do good research. Bradley noted that those of this stature should be recognized and praised.
- Touting the remarkable growth of numbers for the fall semester, stating UCF grew the equivalent of a small university; which is remarkable.
- Reminding the Educational Programs Committee of the charge by chair Seay to study the student-faculty ratio. An upcoming discussion on the university's research function will inform our findings and work related to the student-faculty ratio. Educational programs leadership staff will soon present to the committee on the student-faculty issue. We need the background of the research discussion before we attempt to tackle this issue.

The final comment from chair Bradley was Kudos and Thank you to UCF faculty; they have been incredibly flexible over the past six months.

The record indicates Trustee Joseph Harrington has joined the meeting and is called on by chair Bradley to deliver the inspirational spotlight.

#### Inspirational Spotlight

Trustee Harrington recognized two people who put him on his career path, recognizing and entirely appreciative of the circumstances in which he was born. Both parents have a Ph.D., and the town he grew up in had a great public school. Harrington spoke about their love of science, being influenced by his parents' careers; his father worked as a power company, a nuclear engineer, and an environmentalist. Harrington stated that because of his father's influence and inspiration, he was able to get an early start in science and put him on the path to becoming a scientist.

Trustee Harrington speaking of his mother stated that she learned about the sky because of a subscription to an astronomy magazine. She would point out and describe stars to him from the night sky, which is how he got his astronomy interest.

In closing, Harrington stated inspiration from both parents spurred his curiosity in science and put him in the direction that he lives today.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **2021-22 Undergraduate Admissions Tests (INFO-1)**

Chair Bradley introduced Provost Johnson and Dr. Gordon Chavis, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services, to present this information item, which outlines data on UCF applications and future test submissions.

The impact of COVID-19 has caused many test centers across Florida and the nation to cancel test administrations due to students' and parents' safety concerns. Over one million fewer students nationally, and nearly 44,000 fewer students in the state of Florida, have been able to take the SAT this year versus this time last year. SAT or ACT for admissions required by the Board of Governors Regulation 6.002. Given the lack of ability for a significant number of students to take a test this year, on August 4, a recommendation was made by the SUS Admissions Deans, requesting a one-year temporary relief from the BOG admissions requirement.

Chavis went on to explain that due to the lack of access to safe test environments. It is impacting all new student applications and test receipt trends. Information presented shows receipt of applications and test scores for the first few weeks of the new admission cycle, 2020-2021. A similar report is shared weekly with campus leadership, and there is a concern about what the report shows.

Chair Bradley questioned if there has been any response from SUS to the request. Chavis indicated none has been received to date. However, work continues to provide additional test opportunities for students; the situation should gradually improve.

Trustee Harrington was recognized. He wanted to make clear the distinction between SAT and ACT.

Gordon Chavis continued by highlighting summer and fall FTIC application trends for the same period and student submissions of SAT and ACT. However, several trends are negative, but positive areas do exist:

- Fall trends are promising and moving in the right direction.
- The number of prospects for this increased compared to last year
- UCF continues to be the number one university in the state where high school seniors send their test scores

Chavis shared two other points with the committee:

- Trends in applications this year are inconsistent with applications and test trends that we have seen in the past five years, which were positive. Therefore, we believe that COVID-19, family economics, safety concerns, and the inability to get a test administered are impacting not only UCF application trends but also those throughout the SUS.
- ACT administration shared their practices for increasing test opportunities for students coupled with college board efforts for the SAT administration and UCF adopting recruitment and marketing practices that show positive signs during this COVID environment. There is a reason for optimism for the future.

Chair Bradley recognized trustee Harold Mills; he asked about these tests' role in the admissions process? Chavis answered that the approach is holistic and a combination of the high school curriculum's strength, along with high school performance being better indicators of success than a test. Also, other factors like letters of recommendation, student writing, and previous employers.

Trustee Walsh was recognized and shared that the University of Chicago has abandoned these tests as a requirement for applicants and would hope that UCF is not moving in that direction. He asked, what is the long term thinking about these tests? Dr. Chavis answered that UCF is not headed in that direction and reiterated the importance of all the admissions process components in determining if a student is the right fit or can be successful. There are many indicators of future academic success. We need to continue to think about all pathways.

Chair Bradley recognized Board of Trustees chair Beverly Seay; she asked what is the impact of ACT | SAT testing to scholarship opportunities? Will there be an additional burden on the university to provide scholarship resources from other areas that do not have ACT | SAT requirement? Chavis stated it would be important to carefully evaluate candidates for merit scholarships, resulting from

high school GPA and test scores. If students do not have the opportunity to retake tests, they do not have the chance to increase scores, which could be the difference in obtaining a scholarship or not. The process will need careful review.

Chair Seay asked the question: could Cares Act Funds use for scholarships?

Chavis replied that the funds have also been exhausted, helping 20,000 students with various needs. There were time constraints for using these funds.

Trustee Harrington was recognized and stated that standardized testing discussions continue among faculty.

Chair Bradley closed this discussion by asking Provost Johnson to the EPC informed and updated at future meetings. Also, what are the admission deadlines for summer and fall of next year. Gordon Chavis stated that these deadlines are in the spring, and we will have a better picture of the admission direction in December or January.

#### Graduate Admissions Tests – Regulation Update (INFO-2)

Chair Bradley introduced Dr. Elizabeth Klonoff, Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, to present this information item, which represents the graduate level admissions exams, similar issues to the previous, such as the availability of testing sites.

Dr. Klonoff begins by noting the request to modify UCF Regulation 2.003, which currently requires anyone that is entering a doctoral program and does not have a master's degree, take some form of a standardized test. With the modification, we ask to make this test-optional for spring, summer, and fall 2021, based on department and program, giving the program the option to decide.

UCF local regulations require the GRE of all incoming doctoral students; it is at the program discretion for incoming master seeking students. In response to stated concerns, many universities have elected to waive requirements to take the GRE.

This request for approval has been reviewed and approved by the Graduate Policy Committee at UCF and is on October 22, 2020, Governance Committee's agenda for approval.

Klonoff stated it makes sense to waive the GRE testing requirement of graduate programs due to the difficulty in applicants being able to take the GRE in the COVID environment.

Chair Bradley questioned how we use the GRE for admissions at the graduate level?

Dr. Klonoff submitted that admissions at the graduate level are very different from undergraduate admissions programs have an idea of what they are looking for in a student, a better sense of what the student has done in the past; there is a record of research, performance and work experience. Very different from coming from high school and being the first time in college.

She also indicated that the Graduate Policy Committee is currently meeting to discuss if the waiver request should extend beyond 2021.

#### Digital Learning Course Redesign Initiative (INFO-3)

Dr. Tom Cavanagh presented an update on the DLCRI project, a three-year project authorized and funded by the Board of Trustees, which began in January 2018. Cavanagh explained that periodic updates were a requirement for funding this strategic initiative; the project will conclude at the end of the year,

This update will include plans as we advance and the following projected goals for FY 20-21:

- transform 100 courses, 96 are complete, and on track to deliver 154
- train 120 faculty, 75 trained and expect 80 by the end of the fiscal year.
  - found the need did not require 120, on track to end with 80 trained.
- impact 50,000 enrollments, 81,305 are complete; on track for 90,000
- partner with five colleges, with 9 engaged to date
- transform eight classrooms into technology-enhanced active learning spaces, and have completed eight,

Cavanagh also delivered a spring 2020 evaluation overview on migration to remote instruction, which included redesigned and adaptive courses to maintain or gain student success and all courses' success rate.

In closing, Tom Cavanagh indicated the project is running under budget according to accomplished objectives. The plan is to continue with the project until funds deplete while laying out a new focus of strategically recruited team projects.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Bradley adjourned the Educational Programs Committee meeting on October 14, 2020, at 10:01 a.m.

Reviewed by:

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Kenneth Bradley  
Chair, Educational Programs Committee

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Date

Submitted by:

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Janet Owen  
Associate Corporate Secretary

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Date

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