



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 Joseph Harrington, Trustee Sabrina La Rosa, and Trustee Harold Mills were present. Trustee David Walsh joined the meeting in session. Board of Trustees Chair Beverly Seay also attended.

**MEETING MINUTES**

The Educational Programs Committee approved August 12, 2020, meeting minutes as written following Vice-Chair McAlpin's motion for approval and Trustee La Rosa's second.

**REPORTS**

**Provost Update**

Interim Provost Michael Johnson provided the provost update, leading off with the fall 2020 semester status. He said both face-to-face and remote education worked effectively overall. Johnson praised the campus community for working together to comply with COVID-19 policies and promote a culture of safety and consideration for others. He attributed a recent student spike in positive COVID-19 cases to activity at bars and other social gatherings around the UCF campus, emphasizing students' need to continue safe practices. Johnson said it was essential to recognize that the school's safety measures have prevented transmission within classrooms.

Johnson said preliminary enrollment for fall showed a 3.9 percent increase, primarily due to an early summer decision to admit more FTIC students. UCF's returning second-year FTIC students have a 92.3 percent retention rate, contributing to increased total headcount. Johnson outlined academic indicators and student success during the pandemic.

Despite this challenging time of unprecedented stress for students, which involves factors such as health, family care, income loss, and disruptions to their regular class routines, the interim provost said our students appear to have adapted well academically overall.

Johnson outlined these academic highlights for summer 2020 compared to the previous summer:

- UCF 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, which is encouraging and rather remarkable.
- Undergraduate students' successful completion of credit hours went up slightly, with an improved GPA.

- A small increase occurred in the number of students who successfully moved off probation after entering the summer on probation. There was a substantial 27 percent decrease in the number of students who entered probation during summer.

Johnson said none of this is a direct measure of student learning, but it is encouraging to see this success level. 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. This support has taken much more time than usual. Johnson said UCF has a deeply dedicated faculty, and he is very grateful for their effort.

Johnson also shared a layout for spring 2021 planning:

- The goal for spring 2021 is to substantially increase the number of face-to-face classes, beginning with subjects that would ordinarily be on campus. The campus experience is essential for student success, and UCF must do its 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.
- It is difficult to predict the outcome of this planning. But, in a regular semester, we have around 5,600 sections on campus. This fall the number was about 2,100. We will seek to get as close to the typical number as possible, given space constraints, class size, and faculty availability.
- We intend to publish the results for students by early November to allow for time to finalize spring schedules and factor in travel and housing.
- During the fall 2020 semester, about a fourth of class sessions 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.
- There are two significant limitations to the 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 with social distancing. For example, UCF has 40 rooms that will only seat 14 or fewer students under COVID distancing, but we do not offer so many small classes simultaneously.
  - Secondly, faculty members at higher risk should not teach face-to-face. UCF has developed a more formal process to document high-risk conditions when planning for the fall semester.

Johnson emphasized spring plans can be changed if necessary. If conditions deteriorate as the next semester approaches, UCF will pivot towards remote teaching. He indicated plans for Spring Break would begin soon.

Interim Provost Johnson summarized the academic discussion by emphasizing the commitment to provide a robust campus experience. He stated that the college experience is about more than academics and that

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, he said.

Johnson stated that many offices and groups work to provide these experiences, with safety considerations, 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.

Johnson commended the thoughtful work of Dr. Maribeth Ehasz, UCF's 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.

Johnson noted that Ehasz has announced she will retire in February 2021 after 26 years at UCF, including 15 years as vice president. Johnson described her as a champion for student success who has influenced thousands of students during her tenure. Johnson said she is a significant reason why our university is a leading choice for aspiring college students in Florida and beyond. He said she would be deeply missed and has earned this next step, along with UCF's gratitude.

Interim Provost Johnson announced the preparation for three dean searches involving the Library, College of Sciences, and College of Optics and Photonics. He noted good news around campus:

- 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. Delfyett, recognized for "pioneering contributions in the development of ultrafast, mode-locked, semiconductor diode lasers.
- Recent *U.S. News & World Report* rankings show UCF improved to 77<sup>th</sup> as a public national university. UCF is only one of three public universities in the nation to have improved our ranking in each of the last four years.

Johnson said a more in-depth look into the *U.S. News* rating algorithm is telling. UCF's outcomes are in the top 50 among public universities. That includes student success measures, including graduation and retention, social mobility, graduate indebtedness, and student excellence. UCF's financial resources and student-faculty ratio are far from the top 50, he said, and insufficient resources hold back the university's ranking.

Johnson emphasized that the university should be proud of performing well. But he said the constant burden of doing more with less weighs heavily on faculty, advisors, and administrative staff across UCF. Johnson said the return on investment at UCF is tremendous and that we need to help others understand how investing in UCF pays off.

Chair Bradley recognized Trustee Walsh, who added that contributions made by Ehasz are immeasurable and exemplary. Walsh said Ehasz had been a great representative of UCF across the country and region and that the university is blessed to have her.

Chair Bradley stated agreement and said there would be an opportunity to bid farewell to her as she heads into retirement. By acclamation, he noted, UCF appreciates and thank her abundantly for all that she has done.

Bradley continued with more responses to the provost update:

- He praised Pegasus Professor Peter Delfyett for earning his prestigious award. He stated that the professor is focused on teaching and doing good research. He said Delfyett probably did not seek to win this award. Bradley noted that receiving honors of this stature should be recognized and praised.
- Touts the remarkable showing of UCF for the fall semester, stating UCF grew the equivalent of a small university despite the pandemic, which is impressive.
- Reiterated Chair Seay's charge to the Educational Programs Committee to study the student-faculty ratio. An upcoming discussion on the university's research enterprise will inform findings and work related to the student-faculty mix. Educational programs leadership staff will soon present to the committee on the student-faculty issue.

In concluding his comments, Bradley expressed his thanks and gratitude for the hard work and incredible flexibility of UCF during pandemic times.

Chair Bradley recognized Trustee Joseph Harrington to deliver the inspirational spotlight.

#### Inspirational Spotlight

Trustee Harrington recognized and commended his parents for putting him on a positive career path to becoming a scientist. Both parents earned doctorates; Harrington said their love of science had greatly influenced him. His father, an environmentalist, worked as a nuclear engineer. Harrington stated that he got an early start in science because of his father's influence and inspiration.

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

In closing, Harrington said both his father and grandmother inspired him, spurred his curiosity in science, and influenced the career journey that brought him to where he is today.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Chair Bradley introduced Interim Provost Johnson and Dr. Gordon Chavis, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services, to present this information item, which outlined 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-taking due to students' and parents' safety concerns. More than 1 million fewer students nationally and 42,000 fewer students in Florida have taken the SAT this year, versus last year. SAT or ACT scores are requirements for admission under the Board of Governors Regulation 6.002. The testing issue has led to a reduction in applications for UCF and the entire SUS in Florida. 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 for a one-year temporary relief from the BOG admissions requirement.

Chair Bradley asked if the BOG had responded to the request, and Chavis said there had not been a response given to date. While the lack of access to safe test environments impacts all new student application and test receipt trends, resulting in fewer applications, Chavis said work continues to provide additional test opportunities for students; the situation should gradually improve.

Chavis continued by highlighting summer and fall FTIC application trends for the same period and student submissions of SAT and ACT scores. Despite several negative trends, there are positive areas, he said.

For instance, Chavis said the number of prospects for admission had increased by 15 percent over the previous year. UCF continues to be No. 1 among state universities in Florida in receiving the most test scores from high school seniors. UCF has led the state in this category since 2008, Chavis said.

Chavis shared two other points with the committee:

- Trends in applications this year are inconsistent with the positive application and test trends of the past five years. COVID-19-related factors – such as family economics, safety concerns, and the inability to get a test administered – are adversely impacting UCF application trends and those throughout the SUS.
- On the positive side, the ACT administration has shared its adjustments for increasing testing opportunities for students. Those efforts, in combination with College Board efforts for SAT testing and UCF adopting recruitment and marketing practices that show positive signs – give a reason for optimism as we look to the future.

As part of this discussion, Chair Bradley recognized Trustee Harrington, who explained the distinction between ACT and SAT testing. Chair Bradley also recognized Trustee Harold Mills, who asked about the tests' role in the admissions process. Chavis said the approach to admissions is holistic. A combination of the high school curriculum's strength and a student's high school performance are better indicators of success than a test. He said other factors are also involved, such as letters of recommendation, student writing, and employers' references.

Trustee Walsh was recognized and said the University of Chicago had abandoned these tests as a requirement for applicants, and he would hope that UCF is not moving in that direction. He asked about the long-term thinking about these tests. 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. UCF should continue to think about all pathways, Chavis said.

Chair Bradley recognized Board of Trustees Chair Beverly Seay. She asked about the impact of ACT/SAT testing on scholarship opportunities. Will there be an additional burden on the university to provide scholarship resources from other areas that do not have the testing requirement? Chavis stated it would be necessary to evaluate candidates for merit scholarships, resulting from carefully evaluating 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 if the CARES Act could fund scholarships? Chavis replied that the funds had been exhausted, helping 20,000 students with various needs.

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

Chair Bradley closed this discussion by asking Interim Provost Johnson to keep the EPC informed and updated at future meetings. Also, he asked about the admission deadlines for the summer and fall of next year. 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 regarding regulations for graduate-level admissions exams.

Klonoff began by noting the request to modify UCF Regulation 2.003, which currently requires anyone entering a doctoral program and who does not have a master's degree to take some form of a standardized test. With the modification, UCF seeks to make this test-optional in 2021 for spring, summer, and fall, 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's discretion for incoming master's students. Many universities have elected to waive requirements to take the GRE. Klonoff said it makes sense to waive the GRE testing requirement of graduate programs due to the difficulty in applicants taking the GRE in the COVID environment.

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

Chair Bradley asked how UCF uses the GRE for admissions at the graduate level.

Klonoff said admissions at the graduate level are very different from undergraduate admissions. Leaders of degree programs know what they are looking for in students and better understand what they have done in the past. Also, there is a record of research, performance, and work experience, which is very different from high school students being in college for the first time.

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 effort that began in January 2018, as authorized and funded by the Board of Trustees. Cavanagh explained that periodic updates are a funding requirement for this strategic initiative; the project will conclude at the end of the year.

Cavanagh outlined progress on projected goals for the fiscal year 2020-21:

- Transform 100 courses: 96 are complete, and the program is on track to deliver 154
- Train 120 faculty: They found that UCF did not require 120 faculty members trained; 75 trained, with 80 expected by the end of the fiscal year
- Impact 50,000 enrollments: 81,305 are complete and the program is on track for 90,000
- Partner with five colleges: Nine are engaged to date
- Transform eight classrooms into technology-enhanced active-learning spaces: This task is complete

