**Faculty Caucus Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, August 25, 2021**

**Approved**

***Call to Order***

Academic Senate chairperson Martha Callison Horst called the meeting to order.

***Elections:***

***Council on General Education replacement***

Yvette Pigman (replacing Carla Pohl, 2017-2023)

***University Curriculum Committee replacement***

Gina Hunter (replacing Jean Sawyer, 2020-2023)

***University Appeals Board replacement***

Andrea Jamison, TCH (Mallory Jallas, MIL, 2021-2024)

The individuals were unanimously elected by slate.

***Textbook Affordability Committee (1 Faculty Senator)***

Adena Meyers, PSY, was unanimously elected for a two-year term (2021-2023).

***ISU Police Chief Advisory Council (1 Faculty Senator)***

Tammy Harpel, FAC, was unanimously elected for a one-year term (2021-2022).

***Illinois State University Annuitants Association Faculty Board Member (1 Faculty Senator)***

***\*\****ISUAA membership required; membership may be obtained after election

No faculty senators volunteered to serve. A call for volunteers to faculty at large will be done.

***Financial Implications Form and Process Approval ad hoc working group (1 Faculty Senator)***

Dimitrios Nikolaou was unanimously elected.

***Team Excellence Award Committee election (2 year term)***

***(Replacing Michaelene Cox, 2019-2021)***

Andrea Jamison, TCH, 2021-2023

Arash Zadeh, MKT, 2021-2023

Arash Zadeh, MKT was elected to serve for a two-year term (2021-2023).

***Discussion Item:***

***Mask use and enforcement suggestions***

Senator Horst: The Executive Committee thought it was important to have some input on the face covering use and enforcement. Thank you everyone who talked to your constituents and sent me replies to the three questions I’ve asked you. I’ve got over 125 responses. Question one, regarding the compliance by the students in the classrooms, there was a lot of positive response. A lot of people said there was 100% compliance. Question two was a little mixed. Question three, which had to do with the faculty experience, was mixed. I sent the responses to Provost Tarhule. I made special note of the desperation that some faculty were feeling as they were trying to teach three courses in a row with a mask, and just the overall heat in the buildings was leaving some people really physically exhausted. I send these 125 responses to Provost Tarhule and the Steering Committee last night, but would anyone like to give more direct feedback on any other kinds of questions on the mask use policy that we have started? Provost Tarhule would you like to make any comments?

Provost Tarhule: I just want to thank Martha so much for doing this survey and to acknowledge the very odd situation we find ourselves in. It’s not ideal. I know that from experience because I’m also teaching. I teach with my mask on, and I can tell you that I completely relate to the experience of how hot it is to be excited, and teaching, and moving around. So, I can relate to it. It’s not ideal. We continue to explore to see if there are any kinds of alternatives, ideas, or others ways in which we may ease the situation for all of us. The survey, we looked at it this morning. We’re going to share those results with the Steering Committee, although the first reaction one gets is, we’re almost in a situation that seems to be a necessity and options appear to be limited. I guess what I would say is acknowledgment of the difficulty and the challenge, and maybe a commendation for your efforts, and your understanding for putting up with this. And then the second would be asking to see if you have any kind of ideas or other thoughts that would make the situation better for all of us?

Senator Cline: I think this is representative of what you’re mentioning. In Fine Arts, I’ve gotten only very positive response that students are masking. The issue is, and I do think this probably falls outside of your purview, Provost Tarhule, is the cleaning staff. Studio artists inhabit the buildings basically 24 hours a day working in their studios. Our faculty are often there late as well working in studio space. Their response has been that almost none of the cleaning staff are masked. One of my faculty colleagues said, what am I supposed to do? I feel impowered to say to a student, I have your grade in my hands, put your mask on your face. But to a staff member cleaning or the maintenance crew, it’s a different matter altogether. The students were actually pretty perturbed that on a constant basis none of the cleaning staff had masks on. I think it puts you in a difficult position, it puts lots of people in difficult positions, but if the students are being required, they get pretty grumpy when other people aren’t. That’s just something to consider.

And I would also say, I understand today’s heat index was 108 degrees, and pretty soon we’ll be freezing to death; but in the rotunda spaces where we have large classes, the students are consistently complaining about the heat. And we don’t want them to feel like they need to take their mask off to cool off. If we could crank down the air conditioning, especially in those giant classrooms where the body heat really raises the temperature in the room quite quickly, I think that the students would be appreciative, and so would I; but it’s about them.

Senator Horst: Senator Cline, you mentioned the building worker’s staff. Something I learned in this survey was the classroom spaces are going well, but many remarked (this was particular with the Library) that non-classroom spaces, they’re seeing a lot of non-compliance. So, that’s something that maybe the Steering Committee can be made aware of as well. Provost Tarhule, do you have anything you’d like to add?

Provost Tarhule: Not really. I welcome the feedback. As you get these observations please share them with us. I sound like a broken record but it’s really because these are difficult times. The provosts of all the public universities in Illinois meet once every three weeks or so, these are exactly the same questions coming up in all the other universities and everyone is struggling with exactly the same answers. So, sometimes when we hear these challenges, I post them to the group and say how are you doing on your campuses? We are getting the same kind of feedback. Other people are asking the same thing. At this point, it’s almost a question of perseverance, understanding, working with each other, reminding people, as the President said, in a supportive way. For most people, they seem to be doing really well. I mean, in my class I’ve seen a couple of students whose masks slip. I just do this, and they say, oh sorry, and they pull it up. I know that in some cases it’s just a reminder and support. I would hope that those instances where people are belligerent, just outright refusing to cooperate, are really few and far between. I really wish I had better news but at this point I think it’s perseverance and support. I really hope that our numbers improve to the point where we don’t have to do this much longer.

Senator Bonnell: To elaborate a little bit more about the Library space. When students come into the Library, they almost always have their masks on. It’s when they sit down, and they begin studying. It’s situation where they might be eating or drinking. So, it’s not like this willful kind of thing where they’re not wearing anything. I don’t want anyone to think that there’s a lot of non-compliance in the Library. It’s just a really specific set of situations, I think, when it mostly comes down to eating and drinking, and I think maybe they forget. It’s so much better than it was in the fall of 2020, so I wanted to be positive about that. Students are great in the Library, there’s just some situations.

Senator Meyers: Something that came to my attention recently that’s related to this issue of eating and drinking is that we have some students that are on campus all day long, and they’re used to being able to eat lunch during a class. They obviously can’t do that right now, so we’ve tried to make some accommodations, so they at least have like a half hour break. That’s not enough time to walk over to the Bone, buy food, and eat it here. So, I inquired about it and was told by my chair that it is okay to take your mask off while eating and drinking. And it sounded like he was told that was true anywhere. So, I guess there’s just some lack of clarity, but also that this is an issue. I figure any staff member who’s on campus that doesn’t have their office would have the same challenge. You either have to go buy food or eat outside, which won’t be feasible once the weather gets cold. I’m just hoping we might be able to get some clarification about the eating and drinking piece.

Provost Tarhule: I will check with the Steering Committee, but clearly if people have to eat, unless eating is prohibited in a particular environment, I think what we’re seeing is you take off your mask to eat. There’s another aspect to this issue that comes up often when we discuss it. Two things. Number one is trying to see that people around us are complying, it’s encouraging to see that they’re complying as much as possible, but the one aspect that we can most control is us. So, it’s what you can control and what the other person can do. It’s harder to control what other people can do. We know we can control to a certain degree what we can do. So, if you can, and you’re able to be vaccinated, as you saw from those numbers that President Kinzy quoted, people who are getting seriously sick after vaccination is 0.004%. It’s really low. So, I would say continuing to make sure that we vaccinate ourselves, and we’re careful, when that happens, even if the other person’s compliance is not 100%, you have reasonably protected yourself. It’s much harder to influence the other person’s behavior than it is to influence yours. We’ll continue to try as much as possible, and please continue to bring those observations to me, and any kind of suggestions you may get about how to deal with it. The Steering Committee meetings have between three to five hours. Gathering all of this input, going over one by one, and looking at what the options are. And sometimes it’s still hard to come up with options because there are no good options. So, I come back to the same comment I made before: perseverance, understanding, support, and education. We hope that those instances where people are not complying are small enough that it doesn’t jeopardize the whole community.

Senator Horst: Thank you, Provost Tarhule. I just want to add one final thought. I know that the Steering Committee has struggled with the idea of treating all of the different employees of Illinois State University the same, and I tried to make a case in my report. I don’t think faculty want to take our masks off now, but at some point, because of what we do, how we perform, and how we try to engage students, it’s very difficult for us to do our jobs effectively with a mask. At some point, if they could consider that. Maybe not now, because it’s not that safe, but I don’t think that it’s necessarily fair to say, well, the building worker has to wear a mask, so the faculty have to, too. Our job description requires that we put as much effort as possible into teaching. I think all of the people in the survey were really saying they’re having a tough time being effective. But I think what you’re saying is I don’t think we’re there right now.

Provost Tarhule: No. The one aspect that I mentioned to somebody is whether faculty can teach with the shields instead of the masks. I passed that comment to Ani, she’s going to take it to the Steering Committee, and they’re going to review it.

Let me make one more comment. It’s a little bit of an aside, but I think it’s relevant to the discussion. Sometimes people read a comment online and they say, U of I has done this, why hasn’t ISU done it? So, when you read a comment you can come to a conclusion as an individual immediately about what you think is good for us to do. As a community, when we get that information it goes to the Steering Committee. They have to schedule a meeting to discuss it. Then it goes to the cabinet as a recommendation. We adopt that before it becomes a policy or communication that you hear. So, the time lag between when information comes out and when it’s translated into policy or communication for the University based on the group decision making is always naturally harder. But sometimes I get reports that the state announced yesterday that we could do this, why hasn’t ISU taken a position yet? It’s not one person that takes a position. We need to get people together, they have to discuss it, they forward those recommendations, the committee makes that decision and then we announce it. So, there will always be a lag between when individuals think they have an understanding of an issue and when the University, as a community, can put up information. So, sometimes if there’s a lag, it doesn’t mean we’re not working on it or we’re not going to say something about it. It’s just that normal process of having that consultation and reaching that group decision.

Same thing with this issue. Like I said, it just came to me a few days ago, and I’ll pass it on to the Steering Committee and they’ll meet and consult with some experts, look at what the best practices are, what the recommendation are, and then we’ll be able to say something. Whether we’re there or not, we can’t say yet, but I can assure you that we are aware of the complaints and the challenges that faculty are having, and that we have communicated that to the Steering Committee to look at what the possible alternatives are, including can faculty use those shields.

Senator Horst: Thank you, Provost Tarhule.

***Adjournment***Motion by Senator Cline, seconded by Senator Garrahy, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Attendance |
| Avogo, Winfred | 1 |
| Beucher, Becky | 1 |
| Blum, Craig | 1 |
| Bonnell, Angela | 1 |
| Cline, Lea | 1 |
| Garrahy, Deb | 1 |
| Harpel, Tammy | 1 |
| Hollywood, Mary | 1 |
| Horst, Martha | 1 |
| Lahiri, Somnath | 1 |
| Marx, David | 1 |
| Meyers, Adena | 1 |
| Midha, Vishal | 1 |
| Nahm, Kee-Yoon | 1 |
| Nichols, Wade | 1 |
| Nikolaou, Dimitrios | 1 |
| Novotny, Nancy | 1 |
| Otto, Stacy (virtual) | 1 |
| Pancrazio, Jim | 1 |
| Peters, Steve | 1 |
| Qaddour, Jihad | 0 |
| Samhan, Bahae | 1 |
| Schmeiser, Benjamin | 1 |
| Seeman, Scott | 1 |
| Smudde, Pete | 1 |
| Stewart, Todd | 1 |
| Torry, Mike | 1 |
| Valentin, Rick | 1 |
| Vogel, Laura | 1 |
| Zhang, Kevin | 0 |
| Horvath, Chris (Chairs' representative) | 1 |
| Vacant - 1 Faculty Associate | 0 |
| **QUORUM IS 17** | 29 |
| (Provost Tarhule - NV) Present |  |