THE MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE (AS-02)

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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Office of the Academic Senate

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September 27, 2021

Members excused: F. Chen, L. Jakobs, G. Kim

Members absent: N. Akhavan, B. Mason, B. Munoz, B. Taylor

The Academic Senate was called to order by Chair Hall at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing.

1. Approval of the Agenda.

MSC

1. Approval of the Minutes of 9/13/21.

Amendments by Senator Ram added

MSC

1. Communications and Announcements.

Communications from President Jiménez-Sandoval:

The President referred to the excitement on our campus about the success of our football team.

The dashboards on COVID-19 data have been built and work is being done to have the data ready for input. The dashboards will be available soon.

The President referred to California Senate Bill 170, which has been signed by the California Governor and includes an allocation of 30 million dollars for the Fresno Merced Future of Food Court, a joint effort between UC Merced, Fresno State and Central Valley Community Foundation to establish a world class center on food production (in the context of a growing world population and increasing demand for food production) and promotion of jobs in agriculture. It received bipartisan support in congress. Additional funding could be requested later.

HEERF money (23 million dollars) is made available on top of financial aid for students, to be distributed (allocation is financially based, but efforts made to try to cover everyone as much as possible) between Oct 11 and Oct 18. Students need to apply – they should have received an email about it.

The President will be working on a strategic plan for the future of Fresno State. An RFP for a consultant will be put out.

The university has applied for the Seal of Excellencia [for campus support to LatinX students] and we should hear about this soon.

Questions for the President:

**Senator Holyoke** wanted to know more about the funding for UC Merced and Fresno State in California Senate Bill 170. Is this a series of grants or is a center going to be established?

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** explained that there are various elements to this, but one of the elements is a PhD between Fresno State and UC Merced in engineering to increase the number of PhDs in this sector in the Central Valley, another element is job creation, and another is innovation in food production. The money has been allocated and in conversation with the various partners, the money will be divided between the institutions. Information about this will be shared with the Chair of the Academic Senate to share with the senators.

Provost Fu could not attend today’s Academic Senate meeting, but will be holding an open forum for faculty on Sept 30 at 1pm.

VP Adishian-Astone was invited to present data on COVID-19 related matters in lieu of Provost Fu:

The presentation was shared with the chair of the Academic Senate to distribute to the senators.

**VP Adishian-Astone** shared a PowerPoint presentation including OIE data on COVID-19 cases, self-certification rates, vaccination rates, and testing compliance (as of Sept 24).

On vaccinations:

Among State and auxiliary employees, 69 per cent have self-certified as being vaccinated. Among students, 81 per cent have self-certified as being vaccinated.

The data demonstrate progress on vaccination rates. However, there is still work to do and reminders about vaccine clinics and deadline for self-certification are going out.

She also noted that only non-represented employees are required to complete the self-certification form by Sept 30 – represented employees (four unions have completed the meet and confer) have until Oct 27 to do so, so the vaccination numbers can still go up.

On self-certification:

Among our students, 960 still need to complete the self-certification form, but only 356 of those students are taking in-person courses. All 960 students have to complete the self-certification form, and, in this group, the 604 students who do not have in-person courses have to indicate that they will not be on campus and to update the form if their status changes. The call center has been calling all 960 students to remind them of the requirements to be met by Sept 30.

Among employees, 952 still need to complete the self-certification form, but represented employees have until Oct 27 to do so.

On testing compliance:

Reminders for testing requirements are also being sent out to students and employees (testing at no cost for students and employees). In total, 4,237 members of our campus community need to get tested (but this number may go down because it may include students who will not come to campus, but have not declared this yet, for instance) and 1,415 tests were completed last week. The percentage of campus members complying with testing will grow as students and employees are still completing their self-certification. The testing data is also still aggregate (at this time unable to distinguish between faculty and students who are not complying with testing) but we will be able to get a compliance report that will distinguish between student and employee data this week.

On confirmed cases:

On our campus, 137 campus members have tested positive while being on campus since Aug 16. Some cases are still being reviewed.

**VP Adishian-Astone** added that we do not know how we compare to other campuses for now. Anecdotal information seems to indicate that we are a leader in launching a robust and convenient testing program. Some sister campuses have not started testing yet. On our campus ASI has played an important role in distributing the message of the importance of vaccines to students. There is still work to do on testing compliance, but we are improving and getting messages out and sharing information.

On campus resources:

We have had vaccination clinics in collaboration with the School of Nursing. Nursing students are also helping with case management with the EHS team. COVID-19 related leaves and a temporary telecommuting agreement for staff are still in place. The call center has been helping answer questions and communicate with students and staff. There is a new EHS communication protocol since Sept 13 for positive cases in the class room. We have had work done to improve ventilation and filtration. Supplies (such as masks) are still available at no cost to departments from the University Warehouse.

Questions:

**Senator Ram** wanted to know how much the required testing for unvaccinated members of the campus community is costing the campus (including the tests but also additional staff) and is this coming from COVID relief funding.

**VP Adishian-Astone** explained that the majority of the increased costs have been due to testing. Each test costs 30 dollars, and we have committed to a minimum number of 1,500 tests per week. This cost is covered with HEERF funding, same as classroom supplies. HEERF funding has not been used for additional staff, except for temporary custodians and temporary staff in EHS. Nursing students have been getting clinical experience and getting credit, and this has been invaluable for them and for us. We have also been using PAW ambassadors [Peer Ambassadors of Wellness] at our Student Health and Counseling Center, and they may help to enforce mask wearing in the library. The aim is to be mindful to spend resources where they will have the most importance for safety and supply reasons.

**Senator DeJordy** asked whether the data differentiates between students who indicate in their self-certification form that they will not on campus and students who do not have face-to-face courses. The latter may still come on campus to use the library, for instance.

**VP Adishian-Astone** responded that we are differentiating between them. Students who do not have in-person courses still have to attest that they will not be on campus for other reasons than class if they are not vaccinated or do not claim an exemption, and they need to change their status if they will come on campus.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** added that the current focus is on testing compliance. We are considering registration holds and holds on key cards (*e.g.*, to block access to the library).

**Senator Pooya** referred to a survey sent to students on Sept 14 about their experiences with in-person classes and wanted to know whether the questions from this survey have been validated.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** does not think that was a survey that was sent out by OIE but he would double check. The survey senator Pooya is referring to could have been a survey distributed by a student.

**Senator Lent** enquired about mechanisms to enforce testing compliance and whether vaccine exemptions (we have about a 10 per cent exemption rate among those who have self-certified) are being vetted to ensure that they are valid, because this rate seems higher than expected.

**VP Adishian-Astone** mentioned that she is working with colleagues in Student Affairs to develop progressive responses to student non-compliance. If self-certification is not completed, we could consider a hold on enrollment, for instance, but there is no final plan of disciplinary action yet. The focus is now on communication with students who have not complied with testing, for instance, and on other steps to take. We cannot individually follow-up with everyone who is not getting tested, so we are looking at ways to address compliance, and to ensure weekly compliance.

She added that a medical exemption requires documentation from a licensed medical professional. It is explained in the self-certification form that people may be asked for a statement if they claim a religious exemption, but general counsel and the Chancellor’s office have advised against asking for such a statement at this time, but anyone who claims an exemption has to get tested.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** added that the percentage of exemptions is similar across campuses. The CSUs and UCs are following the same protocol. UCs have the capacity to meet students who claim religious exemption individually and to explain the reasons why it is a good idea to get vaccinated.

**Senator Walter** asked about mechanisms to encourage appropriate hygiene and safety measures among faculty. There are several faculty members who are teaching face-to-face and have not been masking properly.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** responded that this should be reported by students. This report would go to Faculty Affairs.

**Interim AVP Schmidtke** is working on disciplinary steps in line with the CBA and APM. Reminders were sent out to remind faculty of required mask wearing. The immediate response to individual reports is a reminder to wear masks properly. Disciplinary action is more challenging and is not a quick process due to CBA and APM requirements.

**Senator Wise** wanted to know how many tests are being done each week.

**VP Adishian-Astone** replied that about 1,400 tests are done each week. This number has been increasing each week thanks to positive reinforcement and making testing convenient.

**Senator Wise** mentioned that this concerns a significant amount of HEERF money that could be allocated elsewhere if vaccination rates increased. Also, not all faculty know that, even when they are vaccinated, they can use the testing center, so faculty should be informed about this.

**Senator Ram** mentioned that department Chairs need to confirm course modality for spring courses this week. We cannot know how the pandemic will evolve, but some faculty are asking whether they need to wear a mask in spring, because, if they do, they would rather teach virtually.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** explained that we will have to consult with the county health department about this, and will try to be as flexible as possible. But we have to be careful and not dip below a certain percentage of in-person courses because of WASC requirements. Provost Fu has sent out surveys and is working on it now.

**Senator Walter** challenged the idea that WASC will take away accreditation over course modality because there is a pandemic. What evidence is there that that is at risk?

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** responded that with the high vaccination rate that we have, WASC may challenge that we need a large percentage of courses online in spring. This is the idea across the system.

**Senator Crowell** mentioned that after Oct 4 course modality for spring can only be changed under extreme circumstances and wanted to know whether having under-vaccination-age kids would count as an urgent reason to change modality to virtual in spring.

**Interim AVP Schmidtke** responded that the goal is not to make a lot of changes once spring schedule is in place because changes create a lot of confusion. We do not know how the pandemic will evolve, but if things improve, it will be easier to bring people back to campus.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** added that this would be a question for the Provost and Deans.

**Senator Karr** wondered how WASC could challenge spring course modalities that need to be decided this week, which we cannot do intelligently right now given the current COVID infection numbers – numbers in California are still higher than they ought to be. We also do not know what COVID variations may still come our way that may make the situation worse, even for those who are vaccinated.

**President Jiménez-Sandoval** noted that faculty want more flexibility about the spring schedule and he will communicate about this with the Provost. If the situation changes dramatically, *e.g.*, due to other variants, we will of course need to change with it.

**Dr. Forbes (Chair Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies)** added that, ideally, Chairs make decisions on teaching modality based on curriculum requirements, but they also need to take into account lecture entitlement, ADA accommodation, etc. Chairs are now receiving mixed messages from scheduling, HR and the Provost’s office about whether or not virtual synchronous or virtual asynchronous will be allowed, about Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), etc and clarification is needed.

1. New Business.

None

1. APM 676 – Policy on Review and Approval of International Agreements.

(First reading)

**Mullooly (Chair AP&P)** explainedthat no substantive changes were made to APM 676, only a procedural change, *i.e.* on the role of the Senior International Officer (SIO), and cosmetic changes.

**AVP Lam** added that the revised APM 676 matches the practice and revisions were needed to correspond with Executive Order 1080.

**Senator Ram** wanted to know whether the SIO is the AVP for International Affairs.

**AVP Lam** answered that that is correct.

**Senator Ram** mentioned that there seem to be overlapping steps in the review process of international agreements. Item 3 says that the SIO reviews the agreements after department and college review, but then goes back to the college, so is the same level reviewing an agreement twice?

**AVP Lam** explained that an initiative can originate at different levels (*e.g.*, faculty member or a request by university to the AVP, who will then approach a faculty member). It is a consultative and collaborative process and it is difficult to pinpoint where it starts. Either way, an agreement will not be forwarded to the Provost for final review and approval until all the constituents have been consulted. Final approval comes from the Chancellor’s office.

**Senator Ram** also asked about vetting of the partner institution: this is done by the SIO (item 3) and by the College (item 4)?

**AVP Lam** responded that vetting is done at different points of entry. All the constituents are involved and asked for approval.

**Senator Ram** also wanted to know about the various constituent groups: is it clear who they are and who proposals should be sent to?

**AVP Lam** affirmed that that is the case and referred to the first paragraph of the revised APM. She alsoexplained that there are a few types of agreements. When it is academic, the program, Department and College will review. An agreement can also be non-academic, which will then go through procurement.

1. Resolution in support of stable budgetary support for Library Collections.

**Senator Janetvilay** recognized Dolly Lopez and Kimberly Smith.

Lopez and Smith presented a PowerPoint that will be shared with the senators.

Lopez explained that due to a fluctuating collections budget, library collections have been reduced, in two waves (in the first wave, journals and data packages that were costly but infrequently used were canceled; more cancelations were done in a second wave, but still fell short of the goal). A set of recommendations were made by the Library.

Kimberly Smith explained the standards for libraries in higher education by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The Library is concerned that they will not be able to meet the standards regarding support for the teaching and research mission of our institution given the cuts to the library collections.

Lopez explained that we score low on expenditures for collections compared with peer institutions and other CSUs, hence the resolution in support of stable budgetary support for Library Collections, asking for additional funding to reinstate some collections and get new resources – there is no budget for new resources now. The budget for streaming media is very low, and there are faculty who are buying their own media to use in their courses, and it is the mission of the library to provide curriculum support for teaching.

At time.

This conversation will continue in the next Senate meeting.

The Academic Senate adjourned at 5:15p.m.

The next meeting of the Academic Senate will be October 11, 2021, via Zoom video conferencing.

Submitted by Approved by

Tinneke Van Camp Ray Hall

Vice Chair Chair

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