

Meeting Minutes
Executive Committee of the AFSE
January 8, 2021
12 NOON via Zoom

Present: Rosa Krajmalnik-Brown, Marcus Herrmann (chair), Dianne Hansford (secretary), Jitendran Muthuswamy, Chris Buneo, Tony Lamanna, Doug Montgomery, Rod Roscoe, Sefaattin Tongay, Samantha Brunhaver, Yalin Wang, Andreas Spanias
Absent: George Pan
Guest: Dean Kyle Squires

1. **Approval of December 2020 EC Minutes.** Minutes were unanimously approved.
2. **Impact of COVID-19.** An update from Dean Squires. President Crow sent his spring semester note. The reference in the President's note included "pleased to share that all ASU instructional staff who will be teaching in the classroom during the spring semester will be included in Phase 1B (K-12 education and childcare workers,)," which is something the University has been advancing. There was news yesterday as the University of Arizona released similar news. As you might suspect, it's still a pretty fluid situation. I have some insight into it because I have a family member who is a health care worker and has received the first of two vaccinations, and if it works in a similar fashion, there is a roster of individuals, who go into the system. Then you get contacted about coming, schedule, you sign a waiver, the vaccination is carried out at the fairgrounds as a drive thru. Banner is the one doing it. That part is easy but other questions arise. Would ASU be a place for distribution of the vaccine? As you might also suspect the University has been advancing that position as well. We have COVID testing at Lot 59 and other places on campus. Some of those places could be repurposed to deliver vaccine. It's too early to tell. One thing we also know is that the distribution of the vaccines has been slow. Another position being advanced is getting people trained to deliver the vaccine; then just do it 24/7. All these things are churning, moving around. I think it's utterly important that we have people back on campus. We've talked about this a ton. We've talked about how to promote engagement and how difficult it is. We've talked about field trips, we've talked about all the things that are hard to do in a COVID environment. We're trying to get people together and also be safe. The devil is in the details regarding how we get all that done, established, and built out so people can do it. The University is also advancing the notion of a critical worker being say Academic Advisors. Directly engaging students, you can begin to go through those hierarchies of others within the university that should be identified for vaccination. People who are on this list will get contacted, the system will start to roll but there are a ton of questions out there. We need to get this done. In the meantime, other questions have come up. Classes start on Monday. The various modes are what we've been talking about for quite a while in terms of some classes having the option for in person; some classes are In-Sync only, lab courses are set up in certain ways; faculty have accommodations/don't have accommodations. There's been a lot of questions this week. COVID numbers in Arizona remain pretty bad. It's also interesting when you go to the [COVID-19 Management webpage](#), where our ASU COVID dashboard is located, we summarize things like numbers that are positive and random testing. The random testing really hasn't moved that much. The ASU community remains a pretty safe community.

President Crow also said he was going to increase the rate of random testing to 25% instead of 15%. This is signaling the need for COVID testing to be part of an ASU employee's work week. It's something people should do. You're doing it for the people that you're with.

Rosy -- There was an article that said Arizona has the highest rates in the world. Right now it's worse than in the summer.

Kyle -- What's going on? Check out the webpage contained in President Crow's email message this morning: [COVID-19 Management webpage](#).

Yalin -- At the end of the last semester, our department had a long conversation about the reduction in TA and grader assignments for spring 2021. The faculty are concerned about the impact on the programs. Limited resources impact the structure of classes, faculty effort, and the reputation of the university. CIDSE's program numbers have increased, but TA/grader resources are decreasing. Is this a temporary state due to COVID?

Kyle -- We have had pretty substantial budget impact over COVID that's true. I don't expect it to be at the equilibrium that is a steady state whatever you want to call that. I expect there to be some recovery to occur. The other thing while we're in this period how do we leverage technology as we work our way through it knowing I do expect a little better outcome coming out on the other side.

The other part that I would also add. Across the board -- students, staff and faculty -- people are under a lot more stress. We're trying to be as proactive as possible about reaching out making sure people are aware of resources, trying to be helpful. For all of us who have a class in the spring that's going to be something that we'll have to be extra vigilant on with the students in the class and communicating where there are resources for help. Between our academic advisors and the resources from the Dean of Students we get reasonable coverage. For employees, things like employee assistance, going to supervisors and so forth -- that's kind of the moment. It will be a good opportunity to encourage colleagues to do that where you see issues or raise them with me so we make sure we're not missing anybody. We realize it's a challenge.

Marcus -- Is there a plan to get people who have accommodations right now back into the classroom for the spring through vaccination? Or is there an option plan?

Kyle -- Knowing the situation is fluid. If you accept the premise, as I do, that universities are places where people go to do things together, and faculty access to accommodation, health condition, whatever the case might be, then vaccination would make it possible for them to safely and healthfully teach on campus and we should promote that. How that gets codified in policy or process I don't know. In my mind, let's get people vaccinated especially people who are at risk and then have the conversation what's the right way to get back into the full throttle.

Marcus – The mail from Michael Crow sounded like those would not be included in this first group.

Kyle – In the spring teaching schedule, subtract out people who teach Sync only classes, which are those that have a large enrollment. I don't know if the system is that granular. There are a bunch of ways you can attack it right? You want to make sure for example to reprioritize things from the lower division because it's important for retaining students and all the other things you try to do for a person just starting the college experience. Perhaps you work with that group first.

Marcus – The email lists staff. What about TA's?

Kyle – This is all in part of the swirl, but those individuals who have instructional responsibilities are included in one version of this conversation. Again, there's a lot of complexities. I'd like to think of our front line as in -- are you teaching? Those would be included in it. Believe me there's a list of 100 other questions that are arriving.

Rod on Chat: I am curious about trends in teaching evaluations from last spring and this fall?

Kyle -- We have been scanning across teaching evaluations to do that. Are we seeing patterns? I don't have anything substantive to report now. Let's look for signs of duress in their comments; how can we be helpful. Kyle has nothing to report as of now.

3. **Invited Speakers in Zoom Environment – testing plan and speaker suggestions.** – All of you have had a chance to look at the spreadsheet and it's time that we pick somebody that we approach to see if they're interested in giving the dean's lecture. Are there any recommendations of people you want to move forward from this list? Present your case.

Rod – Suggested earlier that it would be a good idea to identify a woman of color as an additional consideration. Our last 3 speakers have focused on a rather narrow demographic. If the typical student is here for 4 years they have four chances to see someone like them on that stage. This is year four and this is our chance for some of our students. This is obviously not the only consideration but should be part of the conversation when making a final decision.

Marcus -- Should we contact two at a time, set up lectures one in spring, one in fall? The EC decided to pick the #1 and contact them with the dates and then contact the #2 with a more general 2021 timeframe. The EC reviewed the list of potential speakers and decided to submit Sangeeta Bhatia, Ellen Stofran, and Majumdar Arun to Dean Squires.

4. **Other items from EC members.** No items from the committee but it was announced during the meeting that FSE's new Vice Dean for Research and Innovation is Sridhar Seetharaman. His official start date is February 1st. A formal announcement will be made before that date.

Next Meeting:
February 5, 2021; 12 NOON; via Zoom