

## Notes from Faculty Senate Call Today

Wutoh, Anthony K. <awutoh@Howard.edu>

Sat 4/18/2020 1:17 AM

To: Alfred, Marcus <marAlfred@Howard.edu>

Cc: Cole, Angela P. <apcole@Howard.edu>; Dixon, Anthony <anthony.dixon@Howard.edu>; Medford, Edna Greene <emedford@Howard.edu>; Kelly, Lynne J. <ljkelly@Howard.edu>

Dr. Alfred,

Good afternoon. I provided a great deal of information during our call earlier today, and thought it would be helpful to document below;

On the call: Dr. Marcus Alfred, Dr. Lynne Kelly, Dr. Angela Cole-Dixon, Dr. Edna Medford, Associate Provost Okianer Christian Dark, Dr. Anthony Wutoh

Provost Wutoh noted at the start of the call that we are dealing with a crisis, which is changing on a daily basis, and requires immediate and at times emergency decisions and actions. This will likely continue into the summer, and possibly the fall. There will be necessary immediate decisions made on a daily basis, including during the summer. Provost's recommendation to the Faculty Senate is to identify a small team, either the leadership, or some extension that can receive information, provide advisement, and be prepared to move expeditiously, whenever necessary, including during the summer. Greater information can then be shared with the larger group.

Provost provided the following updates:

### **Hospital**

- Partnership with Adventist already yielding benefits regarding access to supplies, PPE, additional administrative expertise.
- Tent erected in front of the ER for triage, 12 beds, waiting room, in preparation for additional surge.
- In hospital currently 11 COVID positive patients, 21 patients under investigation for COVID.
- All hospitals in DC experiencing increasing volume of positive and suspected cases.
- We are increasing capacity at the Hospital to more than double the number of beds.
- Remodeling of HUH is underway.
- Availability of test kits is still a concern.
- Reports nationwide of greater incidence and severity among African Americans, likely secondary to increased co-morbidities – hypertension, diabetes, asthma, obesity. All of which are linked to susceptibility to COVID-19. Greater incidence in coastal cities (New York, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Baltimore, Washington, DC) with high proportions of African Americans likely contributes to this.
- Decrease in positive results for two weeks prior to any “return back to normal”.

### **Enrollment**

- Accepted Students Day today – Current numbers (over 24,000 applications, over 1,000 permits or paid deposits) tracking at double the number of paid deposits from previous years.
- Increased number of admissions to over 9,300. Average GPA of admitted students over 3.06, average SAT score over 1200.

## **Middle States Accreditation**

- Now rescheduled for the Fall, 2020, following request of site visit team. Awaiting confirmation of the fall dates.

## **Pass/Fail - Undergraduate Students**

- Over 5,600 students requested letter grades for all, or at least some of their courses. Registrar will be processing.

## **University Finances**

Prior to the announcement of the Federal Stimulus, the University was projecting over \$40 million in lost revenue, additional expenses secondary to pro-rated refunds of student housing charges (@ \$6-8 million) and other fees, losses incurred from decreased revenue in the hospital due to cessation of elective surgeries, costs incurred from gearing up to deal with COVID-19 patients, increased PPE, ER tent, additional testing, renovations in the hospital, lost research expenditures secondary to the shut down of the main campus, anticipated decreases in contributions, etc.

The CARES ACT (Stimulus) will help to abate, but not eliminate this negative financial concern. Included in the Act are;

\$13 million as a direct appropriation to HU through the CARES ACT. (This was intended to help address the negative impact on COVID-19 on the University. This was approved because HU does not have access to Title III funds made available to other academic institutions through the stimulus.) Over \$50 Billion is being provided to academic institutions across the country to mitigate COVID-19 impact.

- \$8,723,244 in the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund; 50% (\$4,361,622) mandated to be used as emergency grants to students. This will be distributed to students based upon need (influenced by Pell Grant status, with priority to Graduating Seniors).
- \$3,111,132 to Howard University Hospital.
- \$200,000 to WHUT in Stabilization Grants parceled out by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Provost Wutoh asked for any recommendations from the Faculty Senate regarding how the University should address the large significant negative revenue impact.

Provost Wutoh then focused on the academic calendar. We have previously announced that both summer sessions will proceed online, starting and ending on the scheduled dates. Also, all summer programs have been asked to move their instruction to online and virtual, including summer enrichment programs, test prep programs (GRE, MCAT, DAT, PCAT, SAT, etc.)

The focus of attention is now on what might Fall, 2020 look like? Provost indicated that the plan is to proceed with a Fall semester, though some institutions are openly considering postponing until 2021, once COVID-19 has abated. The question is whether the stage of the pandemic will permit for face-to-face instruction, or we will need to continue remote and online courses. Consortium institutions have been meeting and discussing various options ranging from delaying the start of the fall semester, offering smaller courses face-to-face, and some other proposals. At this point, we are planning for both contingencies; face-to-face instruction, as well as online courses. Obviously, the ability to return to face-to-face instruction will depend upon whether the risk of transmission to students, faculty and staff has been sufficiently lowered, or if we are still in a high transmission environment. We will likely need to commit either way by late May or June to give students and families sufficient time to plan.

Provost suggested that there be bi-weekly update calls with the Faculty Senate to provide information and address concerns through the semester.

Several questions were raised by Dr. Alfred and Dr. Kelly;

***Is the University planning to lay off staff or faculty?***

Provost responded that while there are significant financial impacts to the University, and we need to address how to make up the projected losses in revenue as well as additional COVID-related expenses, there is no planned furlough or lay off in place for University employees this semester. Provost then added that the University contracts with several vendors including Sodexo and Thompson who may be implementing their own staffing reductions. Those decisions are made independently by those vendors, and not in concert with the University. Provost invited recommendations or a proposal from the Faculty Senate regarding how to address the projected revenue loss for this semester.

***Is the Administration noting governance documents regarding any employment action related to faculty?***

The Provost noted that there is specific guidance in the Faculty Handbook regarding tenured and tenure-track faculty, as well as a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) governing employment of adjunct faculty, and a CBA in negotiation regarding temporary faculty. Any future decision making will be done in accordance with those governing documents and agreements.

***Are there staff who have been asked to use sick leave towards the COVID-19 crisis.***

Provost responded that he is not aware of University staff being instructed to use sick leave towards COVID-19 absences, but he would inquire of Human Resources.

***What is being done to protect faculty from administrative abuse of online platforms and covert surveillance of faculty?***

Provost responded that to clarify, a number of schools have as part of their bylaws the expectation of peer review of teaching, and review of courses by other faculty, Chairs and/or other administrators, this includes online courses. However, the Provost is not aware of any circumstances where Deans or administrators have been spying on faculty or surreptitiously monitoring courses. The Provost is aware of complaints that have been lodged by students that a faculty member has not mounted an online course, responded to student questions, or provided any feedback regarding pre-Spring Break exams. The Administration has asked the Dean to investigate this complaint, and provide an update.

***What is the status of students who couldn't go home?***

The University supported a number of students to assist them in returning home. This included purchase of airfare, bus tickets, other financial support. @30 students couldn't return home for a variety of reasons. The University contracted with a housing complex in Maryland to provide apartments for those students. They will continue to be supported through the end of the semester.

***Will there be some additional compensation for faculty transitioning to online teaching?***

Provost Wutoh indicated that he would discuss this further with Human Resources.

***Is some assessment being conducted of online instruction to help us improve the process?***

Provost Wutoh indicated that a survey has been distributed to students regarding the impact of COVID-19 on them. It includes questions regarding the transition to online courses, and how the courses are being implemented, as well as feedback regarding the student experience. Provost will share this feedback. There has also been a survey distributed to faculty regarding their online experience, comfort

with this methodology, and interest in maintaining online teaching beyond this semester. This data will also be shared.

**What is being done to support employees with small children, whose regular school or daycare has been interrupted, particularly faculty, and how this may impact course evaluations?**

Provost Wutoh indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic is an unusual circumstance, and deeply negatively impacting the lives of students, faculty and staff. In the same way we ask for faculty to be understanding of the challenges that students are facing, we also ask that we are all considerate and understanding of the challenges that colleagues are facing. This may not only include young children, but also caring for an elderly parents, or dealing with a COVID-19 diagnosis personally.

**Flu Season - is it likely that there will be a surge in new cases in the Fall? How will we handle?**

This is one of the unknowns since we are dealing with a novel coronavirus. It has never previously infected people, so we have no idea whether there may be a surge in new cases in conjunction with the next flu season. Similarly, we do not know if it will dissipate when the weather warms up in the summer. We will continue to follow advisement from the CDC and the Department of Health regarding our response.

**Do we have an idea how many cases of COVID-19 there have been among students or faculty?**

We initially were tracking the first several cases of COVID-19 among students and faculty, since we would report them through the DC Department of Health or MD Department of Health for contact tracing. However, as students have moved home to various states, and countries, we are not receiving the same reporting from them that we had initially. We receive occasional reports based upon students being ill, and having difficulty completing course work. But, the reports have been inconsistent. Similarly inconsistent for faculty who are not necessarily reporting their illness to the University.

**Is that campus safe during this period?**

Provost indicated that every building is being monitored by Public Safety, there are daily sweeps of the locked buildings. Additionally, there is monitoring of the video feeds from buildings with working cameras.

**What is being done regarding buildings and labs with sensitive equipment that requires monitoring?**

When the travel restrictions were put in place by DC, MD and VA, we reported a number of essential personnel who should continue to have access to campus. We asked the Deans to also provide the names of individuals who would need access to buildings in order to check on sensitive equipment. Those individuals were designated as essential, and have been asked to check on sensitive equipment. Please check with your Dean who that individual is for your College.

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