

General Faculty Meeting: Minutes

March 31, 2020

3:30pm

Online Zoom Webinar meeting (ID 650-893-714)

*A full transcript of this meeting will be available at a later date.
video and captioned [Panopto](#) file is available.*

Please refer to transcript for details not included in the minutes.

Presentation slide information is available from the [Agenda for the meeting](#).

Chair Nedret Billor called the meeting to order at 3:32pm and introduced panelists and executive committee members. She then gave webinar attendees instructions on how to participate via Zoom.

Approval of minutes from the General Faculty Meeting from October 29, 2019: Chair Billor called for a motion to approve. A motion was called and seconded. The minutes were approved by poll with 64 votes to approve.

Remarks and Announcements

President Jay Gogue – President Gogue spoke on the impact of Coronavirus on Auburn operations and on Auburn students, faculty, staff, and alumni. There are three guiding principles to managing Auburn during the Coronavirus uncertainty:

1. The Health and Safety of Students and Employees
2. Continuing the Auburn Mission
3. Maintaining a commitment to shared governance

President Gogue closed his remarks with a reference to the 1862 Morrill Act that, during the devastation of the American civil War, led to the creation of Auburn University.

Question: Tony Moss asked about circumstances for going forward with the Summer Semester. President Gogue said he would defer details to the Provost but he is optimistic for enrollment. The Summer full semester will be remote, as will the first mini-mester. The second mini-mester session is still under consideration for on-campus.

Question: An anonymous attendee asked if there would be a hiring freeze. President Gogue answered that a hiring freeze was not being discussed.

Dr. Fred Kam – Dr. Kam gave an update on Auburn University and the Coronavirus pandemic. The most effective weapon against the virus is containment and mitigation. Dr. Kam then gave state and city statistics on virus cases and deaths. He noted that East Alabama Medical Center has recently opened up a second Intensive Care Unit to handle critical patients. Dr. Kam then thanked the AU leadership for their strong reactions to the virus and reemphasized the importance of distancing. Auburn University is in talks with the Alabama Department of Public Health to provide surge capacity for coronavirus treatment if necessary

Question: Tony Moss asked for Dr. Kam’s opinion on mask wearing. Dr. Kam answered that he is now encouraging mask-wearing in public, even for those who feel healthy.

Question: Susan Youngblood asked about planning for Fall Semester and what Auburn might do with a second or third “wave” of coronavirus cases. Dr. Kam stated there is no way to know the details of a second wave but that models say it will likely happen in the Fall between September and November. His goal is to push things into the future as far as possible in hopes for improved treatment regimes.

Question: Greg Schmidt asked about PPE Supplies at EAMC. Dr. Kam reported that the AU Clinic is in good shape but EAMC is in “not as good shape.” The hospital is managing many critically ill patients and may face dire shortages if resupply isn’t forthcoming. He thanked Engineering and Veterinary Medicine for helping EAMC and the AU Clinic maintain supplies.

Question: From an anonymous attendee. What are so many buildings on campus still open? Ron Burgess answered that while the University is open, many buildings will remain open. Auburn is attempting to follow the lead and directions of State and Federal agencies.

Question: Anthony Moss asked is faculty should prepare for a sudden shut-down order from State authorities. Dr. Kam answered that a sudden shutdown is a real possibility. President Gogue added that a complete shutdown is something Auburn hopes to avoid, as it would significantly impact research and animal care activities on campus.

Question (anonymous): Is Samford Hall open? Ron Burgess answered that yes, Samford is open, but with minimal staffing.

Provost Bill Hardgrave – The Provost thanked faculty and staff for remarkable transition to remote delivery of instruction. He also praised shared governance and the quick feedback given to the Cabinet about remote delivery.

The Provost echoed the remarks of President Gogue regarding the plan for the Summer sessions, noting that a decision regarding the second mini-mester will be made by June 1. He encouraged Colleges to be aggressive in offering Summer courses as many students may have extra time on their hands.

All Summer Study Abroad programs are cancelled, as is Spring commencement exercises. Spring Commencement exercises will be combined with Summer Commencement scheduled for August.

The Provost announced that most tenure-track faculty are eligible to extend their tenure clock by one year. There is no approval necessary. Applicants need only to file the paperwork with the Provost’s Office.

The Provost announced that Student Evaluations of Teaching for Spring 2020 will be sent to the faculty only for the purpose of feedback and that SETs will not be figured into annual faculty evaluations or decisions to do with merit.

The Provost closed with a description of Summer programs for core courses being offered at a discounted rate for incoming freshmen and others in need of core courses.

Question from Mark Bransby: What is the advantage of the 2nd minimester being local? The Provost answered that this will enable Auburn to offer some classes that aren’t suitable for remote delivery.

Question: Will regular courses have regular tuition or will they be billed as online courses? The Provost answered that regular summer courses will be billed at regular summer tuition rates. Regular classes are still regular classes, but with remote delivery.

Question from Benjamin Fagin: Asked why a decision to extend the P&T clock rests with individual tenure-track faculty. Provost answered that it puts the decision into the hands of faculty and doesn’t force anyone to delay when they don’t want to. The provost reemphasized that there is no approval process.

Question: How will Faculty be able to plan for the second summer minimester? The provost answered that faculty should talk to their department chair with concerns. Auburn hopes to be open for the 2nd minimester.

Bobby Woodard, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs: There are still 69 Auburn students in residence halls. These students are either restricted from traveling home or they have a vulnerable family member present in their home.

Move-out for students from residence halls is happening every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 8am-8pm through June 28. Auburn is hoping this extended schedule allows for social distancing during move out.

Auburn is continuing to maintain the campus food pantry for needy students. About 38 individuals of families visiting each week.

Housing sign-up for the Fall Semester is going well.

“Tele-help counseling” for students is starting next week. AU’s insurance approved this just recently.

Question: Michael Stern: what are the Plans regarding Camp War Eagle? Woodard says plans will be announced within the next two weeks.

Question (anonymous): Why are any buildings open or still unlocked? Ron burgess answers that the campus is still open and that there are students on campus and student that come to campus to use the internet. Also, we are required to open during tornado watches.

Ron Burgess Remarks:

Ron Burgess thanked faculty and workforce at Auburn.

He then discussed the creation of two COVID-19 Working Groups in February and March and the eventual merging of the two groups. The working groups continue to operate to deal with the situation.

Internal and external communications plans are in place to communicate to all stakeholder groups.
University guidelines are evolving in regard to identified COVID-19 incidences.
All business operations are continuing, and the remote learning IT system is holding up well. Our bandwidth capacity is for the most part functioning well. Students and staff in rural areas may struggle with their own internet service capabilities but there are few alternatives for them.

Nedret Billor Remarks

Coronavirus has been a challenging period for all of us, but we are rising to the challenges and taking precautions. The University’s adaptation has been remarkable.

Election of Officers

Donald Mulvaney, Chair-elect announced the results of the officer elections. Ralph Kingston, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts, was elected as the incoming Secretary-elect. For the Chair-elect position, no candidate won a majority of the vote. Per the Faculty Handbook, a run-off election will take place in the five days following the Spring Annual Meeting. The run-off candidates are Herbert Jack Rotfeld, Marketing Department, Harbert College of Business and Administrative Fellow to the Graduate School and Todd Steury, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

After calling for any additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 pm.