



Academic Affairs Committee

December 1, 2020

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Priddy (Chair); Mona Edwards; Betsy S. Oakley; Ward Russell; Austin Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT WITH NOTICE: Kathy Manning

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Franklin Gilliam; Jim Coleman, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Kelly Harris, Assistant Secretary to the Board; and other members of the administration, faculty, staff, student body, and general public.

PROCEEDINGS:

Chair Priddy called the meeting to order at 1:20PM.

The roll call was read and a quorum was confirmed.

He reminded committee members of the Conflict of Interest (COI) statement from the State Government Ethics Act and their duty to avoid COI and appearances of COI, if any should be identified. None were identified.

On roll call vote, the minutes of the September 22, 2020 committee meeting were unanimously approved with no additions or corrections.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

AAC - 1 Provost's Remarks (Coleman)

Provost Coleman informed the group of his top priorities thus far in his role, the first being helping shepherd Academic Affairs through budget reductions. The budget was adjusted to deal with a potential \$24.2 million dollar shortfall. Approximately \$8 million was covered by the CARES Act, with a remaining \$11.2 million reduction in non-state funds, and then a \$5 million reduction in state funds. There was roughly a 2.4% reduction in Academic Affairs. Non-academic units took a 3.3% cut in their state budgets. About 70% of the reductions were taken from salary reserves (vacant lines) and 30% came from OTP (other than personnel), which

means operating funds. In some units, this was difficult—Arts and Sciences has roughly 97% of their budget devoted to salary. At present there are no plans for academic personnel to be laid off. At UNCG Online, thirteen cuts were made due to broader circumstances. The bulk of non-state budget reductions took place in Student Affairs, due to reduced residency and housing. Student Affairs developed plans for reduction of \$6.1 million dollars, half of which came from an internal loan, 20% from holding vacant lines open, 20% from operating, and 10% from a deal made on debt service. No one was laid off, furloughed, or terminated.

Faculty, staff, and students did well in adjusting to the Fall 2020 semester. In terms of delivery, 42% of courses were taught online, and the remaining 58% were face-to-face instruction or hybrid. Faculty have been creative in supporting students—for example, a professor held an event at Oden Brewery so piano students could perform in a safe, socially distanced environment. Also, despite challenges to research activity, research dollars have increased.

The issue administration heard about from SGA was the perception of heavy workload in online delivery. Although students felt the semester was far better than the quick pivot to online that was done last year, they still felt that some faculty did not learn to calibrate workload in an online environment.

Another challenge UNCG faced was adjusting classroom seating distance from five to six feet. This will be further improved next year.

Student Government Association (SGA) and Graduate Student Association (GSA), along with students unaffiliated with those groups, said Fall 2020 has been a difficult semester. Adapting to COVID-19 and to new course delivery has left many students stressed and exhausted. SGA and GSA requested Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading in order to provide academic relief. After much discussion, Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council voted to implement an Academic Relief Package including two courses or eight credits of Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading. Additionally, students are allowed to take “WE” (withdrawal with extenuating circumstances) rather than “WF” (withdrawal failing). WE does not count against GPA or system caps on withdrawals, so students who choose to take courses over will not have courses from Spring 2020, Fall 2020, or Spring 2021 count against that limit. Spring 2021 will look a lot like Fall 2020, barring major changes in COVID-19. Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council have already passed this Academic Relief Package for next semester as well.

Coleman then discussed progress to UNCG’s integrated student success model, where structures are organized seamlessly around students. Everyone at the university should feel that student success is their responsibility. During a full day Zoom retreat with the Provost Team, eleven areas were identified as key components to this plan. Task forces will be used across campus to give recommendations.

Coleman has the goal of implementing interdisciplinary programs more effectively, given that major challenges to society are not constrained by discipline. Two common forces are barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration: who has control, and who gets the money? Every university has this challenge and solutions need to be culture specific. Graduate School Dean Kelly Burke is looking at best practices to more nimbly create and integrate cross-unit academic programs.

Coleman reminded the group that he views universities as an ecosystem. As with any ecosystem, diversity needs to be embraced. Coleman will work on implementing an action framework that Campus Climate Fellows Andrea Hunter and Julia Mendez-Smith are developing. One critical item is getting a campus-wide personnel policy for non-tenured track faculty that clarifies titles used, structure, and promotion process, and that demonstrates the value of non-tenure track faculty to the campus. Currently, a lack of policy has led to an inconsistent approach across units. Senior Vice Provost Alan Boyette will look within our campus culture to get a non-tenure track faculty process into place. This is important for EDI work because many non-tenure track faculty are minorities and women.

Coleman has continued to support Andrea Hunter and Julia Mendez-Smith's recommendation to participate in a professional leadership development program at the national level. Coleman hopes to get a provost fellow whose focus is developing a mentoring program for faculty of color.

Some of UNCG's successes in developing innovative programs and curriculum include the Masters of Education in Instructional Technology program, as well as a certificate in e-learning. eSports has become a major business, and there is a need in the workforce for working professionals to enter or rise in the eSports industry. The chancellor will talk further to the Board of Trustees in the Spring about eSports.

Coleman then discussed cross-campus planning to develop some specific niche areas that can be signature themes for UNCG. This will underscore UNCG's strategic plan and fundraising campaigns. Seven cross-campus themes are being explored. The first step will be to bring faculty members together to brainstorm a vision of what it would take to make those areas pillars of distinction for UNCG.

Coleman thanked the board for their time.

In response to a question from Trustee Mona Edwards, Coleman said many of the potential pillars for distinction already fit into UNCG's current strategic plan. Chancellor Gilliam added that the strategic plan identifies some broad umbrellas that specific things could fit under. UNCG needs to build to its strengths, and plans must evolve and be malleable.

Given the scope and breadth of initiatives, Edwards asked how leadership will calibrate the sequencing, prioritization, and impact of programs happening simultaneously. In response, Coleman said he will guide the deans on how to focus resources on new hires.

AAC - 2 Student Mental Health Update (Akens, Whitney)

Vice Chancellor Cathy Akens and Counseling Center Director Jennifer Whitney provided an update on student mental health across campus. Akens' team has focused on well-being and support for students, understanding that mental health and well-being align with student success.

Whitney provided an overview of campus mental health and how the unit is addressing COVID-19 challenges. Whitney serves as the director of the Counseling Center and Spartan Recovery Program. The Counseling Center is the primary mental health provider for UNCG students and provides case management, crisis management, and intervention, along with clinical consultation and outreach programs. These services have shifted to tele-mental health. The Counseling Center also provides training for programs including social work, counselor education, and clinical psychology. Mental health has an impact on academic success. Sixty-four percent of young adults who are no longer in college are not attending because of a mental health related reason. Seventy-five percent of lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 24. The second most vulnerable time of brain development occurs during the college-going ages. Anxiety and depression are the highest concerns for our students.

Chair Priddy thanked Dr. Whitney for her wonderful service to UNCG and the community.

ACTION ITEMS:

AAC - 3 Candidates to be Awarded Degrees and Certificates in December 2020 (Coleman)

Coleman recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the awarding of degrees and certificates as presented in the official transmittal form in agenda item AAC-3 and delegate to the Chancellor the authority to act on additions and deletions to the list as appropriate.

On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

AAC-4 Update on Research and Engagement (Shelton)

Chair Priddy encouraged everyone to look at the update on research and engagement that was included in the pre-meeting materials. He congratulated Vice Chancellor Terri Shelton on her excellent results in this difficult environment.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Harris
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees