

Meeting of CRC with President Morehead, Vice-President Shrivastav, MOTF, and PMAB Leadership 23 February 2021

NOTE: This meeting occurred before Governor Kemp's announcement of changes to the vaccination priority scheme on February 25. Thus, some references below are based on previous expectations about vaccination distribution.

Executive Summary:

- President Morehead provided an update and responded to various questions throughout the meeting.
 - I am **pleased with the downward trend of cases**, transitions from nasal swabs to saliva testing, and testing results on campus. He also reminded that everyone needs to continue to be very vigilant and follow the guidelines and best practices so that we continue to see these trend lines move in the right direction.
 - With respect to **enforcement and students, we have a COVID-19 Student Educational and Response Team (CO-SERT)**. That group's responsibility is to be a central point of contact, review reported concerns and questions related to students and their compliance with our expectations and standards.
 - **Violations by contractors** would be handled by Finance and Administration, working with our Office of Legal Affairs, to determine what action we can take against a contractor if they are refusing to get in compliance with institutional rules in that regard.
 - I have asked our Vice President for Finance and Administration to **put HVAC systems and safety at the top of our list this year for major repair and rehabilitation (MRR) funds**.
 - **Regarding communication with all employees, we use a variety of strategies** including flyers at time clocks and on employee bulletin boards, post newsletters in employee areas, make computer kiosks available to employees that don't have computer access, share these notifications verbally.
 - **I think for the summer, I fully expect we will continue to do as we're doing now.** Because I don't think that the mass vaccination plan that Dr. Russo discussed will be far enough along or completed for the summer term.
 - **In terms of the fall, we're not really at a position to communicate that kind of information, because the university system has told us to plan for a normal fall**, but to have contingency plans if that is not how the pandemic plays out. I think until early summer, or possibly even later, we're not going to be in a clear position of what the fall looks like.
- MOTF provided an update and responded to questions focused on vaccinations, safety, and enforcement.
 - **We have essentially followed the steps developed in emergency planning to plan for the distribution of the vaccine.**

- At some point, we will need to transition to a more mass-scale distribution site. The Ramsey Center would be the location for such a site so we will be able to scale up the process as demand increases.
- **The distribution of the vaccine has been slow.** Weather came into play last week and we (and the local DPH) did not receive anticipated vaccines. However, the production of vaccine has not changed so we should catch up pretty quickly.
- **In terms of the timeline for distribution, that is set at the state level by the DPH.** Recently, the DPH has made all vaccine providers re-sign a contract agreement. If you deviate from the prescribed path, consequences include 45 days of no vaccine.
- We partnered with the CDC this fall with five other universities to observe mask wearing on campus. So we observed from September through Thanksgiving break, including football games, with everyone who was on campus and **had over a 95% compliance rate with mask wearing.**
- PMAB reported they continue to respond to requests for assistance in determining mitigation strategies as well as other safety measures on campus.
 - For Spring 2021, **we've seen an increase in event planning requests** and have reviewed 65 proposals so far, many of which involve multiple requests. We scrutinize each proposal to determine how using face coverings and social distancing will be maintained, whether overnight stays are involved, whether food and drink are being served at the venues. We find that **each event presents unique challenges.**
 - We **revised the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Guidelines for Student Organizations**, refreshing and reframing them to include new guidelines for events, including masking, and other safety measures.
 - **Over 130 HEPA filters have been placed across campus.** We were able to move up to MERV11 (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) as the minimum standard. Then with some, where it was possible, we went higher to MERV13 where the systems could handle it. FMD is working to stay on top of the latest information that we get from CDC
- VP Shrivastav provided an update and responded to questions related to instruction.
 - We **processed the second round of payments to students** under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II based on a student's documented financial need.
 - I have started **meeting with various faculty groups** to discuss how the semester is going and what we need to do to help faculty and students handle instruction better this semester, as well as for planning for the future.
 - Looking at summer 2021, **Maymester study away programs are canceled; the rest of the summer study away programs are still on the books.** At this time, no decision has been made about these programs.
 - **Summer and fall semester planning is well underway.** For summer, I anticipate that we will use the same five teaching formats that we are using now, with the same definitions and clear labeling provided through Banner. For the fall, the word from USG is that we need to plan as if we are going back to normal, but a final decision will not come until later in the year, probably in the summer.

- We are **taking the necessary steps on the back-end to maintain our flexibility** in case we have to switch formats. Both summer and fall semester structures will need to be fully approved by USG.

Minutes from the CRC and Task Force Meeting:

The meeting was convened at 10 a.m.

In Attendance

President Jere Morehead

Medical Oversight Task Force (MOTF)

- Dr. Garth Russo, Executive Director, University Health Center
- Dr. Shelley Nuss, Dean, AU/UGA Medical Partnership
- Dr. Marsha Davis, Dean, College of Public Health

Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB) co-chairs

- Dr. Shelley Nuss, Dean, AU/UGA Medical Partnership
- Mr. John McCollum, Associate Vice President for Environmental Safety

Dr. Rahul Shrivastav, Vice President of Instruction

Dr. Kyle Tschepikow, Assistant to the President

COVID Response Committee (absent members crossed through)

Co-Chair Janette Hill, Professor, Learning, Design, & Technology, MFE COE	Co-Chair Annette Poulsen, Professor, Sterne Chair of Banking & Finance, Terry COB
Secretary Stuart Ivy, Senior IT Manager	Asim Ahmed, President, UGA Student Government Association
Don DeMaria, Director, Washington Semester Program	Paula Krimer, Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine (unable to attend meeting)
Bill Lanzilotta, Associate Professor, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Franklin Arts & Sciences	Christine Scartz, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Law (unable to attend meeting)
Cynthia Tope, Graduate University Representative, Graduate Student Association	Kari K Turner, Associate Professor, Animal & Dairy Science, College of Agricultural & Environmental Science
Janet Westpheling, Professor, Genetics, Franklin Arts & Sciences	Beth Woods, Executive Director for IT, Franklin Arts & Sciences

Co-Chair Hill:

Thank you President Morehead, VP Shrivastav, and task force leaders for meeting with us today. We'd like to give you just a brief recap of our activities. Since we last met with you in January, we've been continuing to meet weekly to discuss concerns that we've heard from UGA constituents. Mayor Kelly Gertz, Dean Nolan, Ms. Savannah Hembree, and Dr. Ted Ross have joined us as guest speakers for our weekly meetings in the last month. We shared the report of the January meeting through ArchNews. We've also updated the Qualtrics survey that we've been using with the full university community to remind everyone of the charge of the committee: to listen, to give voice, and to report. As you know, we have a few questions to focus our discussion today. But before we begin that, are there any updates or things that you would like to share with us?

President Morehead:

I'm going to keep my remarks very brief, because I know you have a number of questions today. I'm pleased that the number of positive cases on the campus continues to trend downward. That's encouraging. The transition from the nasal base to the saliva base testing seems to be going very well. Over the last month, we have tested roughly 2400 people per week through our surveillance testing program and the positivity rate has steadily declined during that period. The rate was 1.3% last week. Everyone needs to continue, of course, to be very vigilant and to follow the guidelines and best practices so that we continue to see these trend lines move in the right direction.

Dr. Russo:

We are also seeing declining positivity rates at the University Health Center. The clinical picture is mirroring the surveillance picture well. We are pleased with the level of adherence to social distancing and masking. We are actively vaccinating, and I will be more than happy to focus my conversation on that topic. However, I will let my colleagues do their introductions and then wrap back around to that content.

Dean Nolan:

The PMAB has received and reviewed more than 440 requests for help. For Spring 2021, we've seen an increase in event planning requests and have reviewed 65 proposals so far, many of which involve multiple requests. Events vary from small student-oriented organization meetings to college-level ceremonies. There are those that occur completely on University property and involve only University employees and students. We've looked at events occurring in our facilities with a mix of UGA and non UGA participants. We've looked at outside groups using UGA facilities. We work with the units responsible to develop plans, recommendations, and requirements for the usage. We work with UGA groups using non UGA facilities. We provide the same kind of safety assessment and advice for these events. For each category, we assess the types of social interactions, the duration of the event, the space in which these events occur, and the overall background in which the event is occurring. We scrutinize each proposal to determine how using face coverings and social distancing will be maintained, whether overnight stays are involved, whether food and drink are being served at the venues. Beyond these basic parameters, we find that each event presents unique challenges. There is no cookie cutter approach today.

Dr. Shrivastav:

I have three or four things to share with you. First, we just processed the second round of payments under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II that has been provided to students based on a student's documented financial need. There is an appeals process and we have more than 450 appeals being reviewed and processed.

Second, much like we did last semester, I have started meeting with various faculty groups to discuss how the semester is going and what we need to do to help faculty and students handle instruction better this semester, as well as for planning for the future. I met with the University Curriculum Committee last week. The Educational Affairs Committee has its meeting scheduled later this week. The Provost is joining me for these meetings. There are several other groups I will be meeting with as well. We will collect information from these groups, synthesize it and work on supporting the needs described.

Third, looking at summer 2021, Maymester study away programs are canceled but the rest of the summer study away programs are still on the books. At this time, no decision has been made about these programs. We are now working to identify alternate ways to support students who were scheduled for the canceled programs as well as faculty who were planning to teach in those programs. We'll be releasing more information shortly about options for faculty and students.

Fourth, summer and fall semester planning is well underway. For summer, I anticipate that we will use the same five teaching formats that we are using now, with the same definitions and clear labeling provided through Banner. Students and faculty are pleased with the Banner information. For the fall, the word from USG is that we need to plan as if we are going back to normal, but a final decision will not come until later in the year, probably in the summer. From a scheduling perspective, we are moving forward with regular class scheduling. But we are taking the necessary steps on the back-end to maintain our flexibility in case we have to switch formats. Both summer and fall semester structures will need to be fully approved by USG. We are in touch with Atlanta on those issues.

Co-Chair Hill:

In our survey responses, we are seeing some important themes, and also some very specific questions. We're going to try to provide a sense of what the community wants to know with our questions today.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

Thank you all for your reports. They are very illuminating and bring home to us how much work you are all doing in this challenging environment.

The primary theme from the responses to the survey is the request for more information about the vaccination process. There are two big questions. First, what is the expected timeline over which we will be receiving and distributing vaccines. The second is how priorities will be established within the vaccination pool as the vaccine becomes available.

Dr. Russo:

I'll start by going backwards a bit in time. Since 9/11, we have had various iterations of emergency planning between, amongst others, myself, and UHC and Director Steve Harris of the Office of Emergency and Strategic Preparedness and his group. One focus has been on mass distribution of needed resources, including medication. We have essentially followed the steps developed in emergency planning to plan for the distribution of the vaccine.

At some point, we will need to transition to a more mass-scale distribution site. The Ramsey Center would be the location for such a site. Ramsey has the space and is very close to the University Health Center, where both medical and human resources would be available. The Ramsey Center is also close to the Pharmacy School and the School of Veterinary Medicine. So, we will be able to scale up the process as there are more and more supply and demand.

The distribution of the vaccine has been slow. Weather came into play last week and we (and the local DPH) did not get an anticipated set of vaccines. However, the production of vaccine has not changed so we should catch up pretty quickly.

In terms of the timeline for distribution, that is set at the state level by the DPH. Recently, the DPH has made all vaccine providers re-sign a contract agreement. If you deviate from the prescribed path, consequences include 45 days of no vaccine. So every group has had to sign on the dotted line to be a more accountable.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

Dr. Russo, have they given you any indication of once we move to 1B of how quickly vaccines will be coming or the quantities of vaccines that will be coming? [Note: the meeting was held before Governor Kemp's announcement on February 25 of the revised plans for vaccine distribution that emphasize K-12 educators and those with specific disabilities and comorbidities.]

Dr. Russo:

We have not received indication of how quickly we will get the vaccine. The amount of vaccine the state has been receiving has gradually increased. Part is controlled by the state, the other is federally controlled. For example, the vaccines going to long-term care facilities are federally directed. While the large private pharmacies such as Walgreens, CVS were vaccinating primarily at the LTCFs at first, they are now distributing more widely as part of DPH distribution. We're at about 200,000 vaccine per week coming into the state while we started at about 100,000 or 120,000 vaccines.

The timeline of providing vaccinations has been very prescriptive. The definitions of 1A, 1B, 1C have changed a little over time but the stepwise progression concept has not changed. The definitions have become a little cleaner with critical infrastructure workers pretty much in the 1B category. Category 1C will be people with comorbidities progressing in age from 64 on down. All other people will be in phase 2.

Co-Chair Hill:

Dr. Russo, with the more refined definitions, how are educators being defined within those groups? Are they still in 1B? Does education mean just K-12 or does it also include higher education? If it does include higher ed, would all employees at UGA be considered 1B?

Dr. Russo:

Category 1B will include educators. As an educational institution, essentially all employees of UGA will be in 1B. There are very, very few individuals who would be in the 1C category. The 1B group will be stratified pretty much by age and comorbidity. Thus, the oldest, sickest individual who works at UGA will be the highest group down to the youngest, healthiest individual at the last group of 1B. We are also considering the amount of exposure the person has to students, etc. We will apply these factors and randomize the group selected to be vaccinated. We feel the greatest parity will come with these considerations.

We sent out a survey to determine the desire of individuals to be vaccinated and also the presence of comorbidities. About 2/3 of folks responded. We have resent the survey to those that did not respond and are waiting on the results from those people.

UGA's closed Point of Dispensing (POD) agreement is basically to provide vaccines to enrolled students and active employees of the university. So, yes, graduate research and teaching assistants, dining hall people, people who clean, all infrastructure labor – they're included as educators in 1B. We do not have guidance for individuals' home lives. I.e., if the spouse is immunocompromised, if there is a preemie baby at home. These situations are very difficult to get guidance on. In terms of students, we don't know yet the timeline of when we get to healthy students on campus. We very much hope to be able to get vaccines to students before they leave campus for the summer. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine would be ideal for students since it requires only one vaccination. As we get closer to student vaccinations, we will emphasize J&J vaccines in our ordering. The student population is a big population but as we get further down the road with our delivery process, we should be able to deliver the vaccine without randomization.

Co-Chair Hill:

Two other big areas that come up from the data we have collected are safety and enforcement. We have received several questions related to enforcement and what to do in situations when people are not wearing masks, socially distancing, etc. What can be done to make sure that they're adhering to the guidelines that the institution has established for keeping people safe?

Dr. Russo:

We have had significant conversations with contractors in particular about the guidelines. Those individuals are here by contract, and have to adhere to campus guidelines. For employees, it is potentially an HR action for someone who repeatedly breaches the guidelines. Enforcing student behavior is challenging. The strategy has been to remind students to wear their mask properly or asking them to mask up if they do not have one on. We do look good from the perspective of observational studies that have been done across university campuses in terms of the overall compliance on campus with our students.

We have put together a series of videos that will come out in the next couple of weeks that speak both to continuing to be vigilant in terms of masking and social distancing, whether you have or have not been vaccinated. Those safety precautions won't go away until everybody has been vaccinated, and COVID cases have dropped significantly.

President Morehead:

I would just add two points. With respect to students, we have a COVID-19 Student Educational and Response Team (CO-SERT). That group's responsibility is to be a central point of contact, review reported concerns and questions related to students and their compliance with our expectations and standards. The Finance and Administration division ultimately has responsibility over contractors that are on campus. The contractors would have signed agreements with us, so those violations are ones that would be handled by Finance and Administration, working with our Office of Legal Affairs, to determine what action we can take against a contractor if they are refusing to get in compliance with institutional rules.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

Concern is often expressed about student activities and organizations. What are your observations about violations of our policies and how are you encouraging further adherence to them?

President Morehead:

Student Affairs has been very earnest in attempting to persuade our students to be responsible. And I think they have been responsible. Dr. Russo mentioned a study a moment ago, that our students are among the top in the country for their compliance efforts. Looking at the campus community, what's happening while we're on campus, I think we've had a lot of success there. Our student leaders have done a lot of very good videos and talks with our student body that have been important and persuasive.

Dean Nolan:

The Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB) is an advisory board. And we share recommendations based on the literature and the expertise of the people on the panel.

Mr. McCollum:

It is not a cookie cutter approach. We really try to look at each event and help them understand the risk involved, and then how to mitigate those specific risks rather than giving each group just a generic answer. We do try to get granular with them and not just give an across the board answer to try to help them have the best event they can.

Dean Nolan:

It's an earnest reaching out to try to do the right thing when people come to PMAB for advice. They come to us with their focus on how we can keep our people safe. Dean Davis was involved in a very important observational study related to mask wearing.

Dean Davis:

We partnered with the CDC this fall with five other universities to observe mask wearing on campus. We observed from September through Thanksgiving break, including football games, with everyone who was on campus. We had a more than 95% compliance rate with mask wearing.

Dean Nuss:

As part of the PMAB team, I was tasked with working with others on revising the *COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Guidelines for Student Organizations*. We took a detailed look at the guidelines from July 2020, refreshing and reframing them to include new guidelines for events, including masking, etc. We discouraged any activities from using food or drinks during a meeting and encouraged grab-and-go options delivered at the end of the group session instead. We capped the amount of people at 50 to follow the State guidelines; if they use the big venues, like some of the grand ballrooms in Tate, they can have more.

President Morehead:

The Vice President for Student Affairs brought up what he thought was one of the best examples of students trying to get this right. That was the UGA Miracle Event, which this year raised a record amount of more than \$14 million for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. They went through a complicated process of going from 2000 students in the Tate Center Grand Hall last year to a very small number there this year and everybody else being remote or on camera to avoid a mass gathering.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

Many of our survey responses are from individuals referring to a specific situation. We're trying to let you know about those, knowing that many times they're not the general case. Still, we want to let you know about these specific cases.

Co-Chair Hill:

Vice President Shrivastav, as you mentioned in your update, we have heard the message of "return to normal" for fall. Thus, there are plans underway to implement that, maintaining flexibility as the future situation may warrant. You also mentioned at our meeting in January that the low evidence of classroom transmission held true through fall, and that you were going to monitor that through the spring. Is there evidence that the observation of low levels of classroom transmission is still valid, especially given the increase in the number of students in classrooms this spring?

VP Shrivastav:

As of today, we have not seen any clusters arising in our classrooms. I'm in touch with colleagues around the country, and I'm hearing the same reports elsewhere as well. So, there is nothing that makes me feel that we need to change course at this point.

Co-Chair Hill:

As we look ahead to summer and fall, the guidelines that CDC put out in terms of K-12 schools re-opening emphasize the things that we're doing -- masking, social distancing, and the measures that you've taken in the classrooms to support that. One of the other big recommendations that they make relates to air quality, specifically airflow and ventilation. Are there plans for continuing to improve air

quality within the buildings, particularly as we think about “returning to normal,” particularly within the context of new variants of COVID that may challenge the effectiveness of the current vaccines?

VP Shrivastav:

Back in the fall, FMD changed the ventilation programming, so there was much greater air circulation. In some of the older buildings and they added HEPA filters. The fact that we are not seeing any clusters out of the classroom, suggests that they are they are working.

Co-Chair Hill:

Georgia Tech has also added freestanding air filter units in classrooms to try and help with air quality. Do we have something similar at UGA?

Mr. McCollum:

I checked in with FMD and over 130 HEPA filters have been placed across campus. Those were placed strategically, after an assessment was done in the fall. We looked at the capabilities of the HVAC systems in each one of the buildings, and then how much the air exchange could be increased in a particular building depending on the infrastructure. We tried to increase filtration efficiency, where that was possible. Some of the older systems could not handle it. We were able to move up to MERV11 (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) as the minimum standard. Then with some, where they systems could handle it, we went higher to MERV13. There were situations where it was not feasible to do an entire building system so we supplemented with the help of filters in classroom spaces. FMD is working to stay on top of the latest information that we get from CDC.

President Morehead:

I would just add one more point. I have asked our Vice President for Finance and Administration to put HVAC systems and safety at the top of our list this year for major repair and rehabilitation (MMR) funds.

Co-Chair Hill:

Thank you, that prioritization will give people a lot of reassurance.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

The overall message that we're seeing from our survey responses is the more communication the better. You have given examples today of where that communication is happening. We encourage you to keep it coming -- as much transparency about policies and decision making as possible is appreciated. We want to compliment CRC member Asim Ahmed on the video that he made for the students, it was very clear, and it was made with Dr. Russo's assistance. It addressed some of the common questions very clearly and concisely

One of the areas of communication that people have expressed concern about is making sure that all employees, including those who do not necessarily sit in front of a computer all day, are getting the messages about COVID mitigation and vaccinations. Savannah Hembree, president of UGA Staff Council, came to one of our meetings and talked about the issue, emphasizing the importance of using supervisors to get messages out to everyone. She suggested emails to supervisors, QR codes for employees being posted at places where they sign in and similar direct communication tools.

President Morehead:

That has been our strategy. If there are specific examples of where that's not happened, we'll obviously address those. But it's been our practice to place fliers at time clocks and on employee bulletin boards, to post newsletters in employee areas, to make computer kiosks available to employees that don't have computer access, and to share these notifications verbally. All of this has been a HR initiative with our supervisors. In any organization as large as ours, there could be individual instances where that's not happened and we'll be glad to address those.

Dr. Tschepikow:

We'll see two videos released to the university community this week. One will feature Ted Ross and focus on the vaccine itself. Another will feature Dr. Russo and he'll talk more specifically about the vaccine distribution process at the University of Georgia.

I also checked in with Vice President Nesbitt, regarding your question related to communicating to specific populations of staff. He did share some data with me related to the survey. As one example, some of the Auxiliary units had vaccination survey responses in the high 80%s and 90%s, and even 100%, which I think is evidence that they are effectively engaging those staff members in our communications efforts.

Co-Chair Hill:

As we are coming up to the end of our time together, are there other things that you can share with us in terms of longer-term plans for summer and fall as people are starting to shift their attention to the next academic year. For example, are we going to continue testing, are we anticipating that masking is still going to be needed, so that even post vaccination, people have an idea of what we will need to be doing according to the guidelines.

President Morehead:

For the summer, I fully expect we will continue to do as we're doing now. I don't think that the mass vaccination plan that Dr. Russo discussed will be far enough along or completed for the summer term.

In terms of the fall, we're not really at a position to communicate that kind of information, because the university system has told us to plan for a normal fall, but to have contingency plans if that is not how the pandemic plays out. I think until early summer, or possibly even later, we're not going to be in a clear position of what the fall looks like. I suspect we're going to learn a whole lot more in March, April and May, and that will inform what happens in August and September. We just don't know at this point.

Co-Chair Poulsen:

Thank you for taking the time today to help us understand the COVID situation at UGA and considering the ideas that we have brought forward.

Co-Chair Hill:

Thank you for all that you're doing. We see a sliver of what it is that you have to face every single day. We really appreciate all that you do for the UGA community. Thank you for your continued commitment and time.