

**Meeting of the COVID-19 Response Committee (CRC), President Morehead,
and COVID Task Force Leaders
30 March 2021**

Executive Summary

Overall

- Dr. Fauci was a keynote speaker at the meeting of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health. He is very optimistic about Fall re-openings, but he did say **we are at the corner, and it is how we turn this corner that will impact our future. We need to continue our communication about what we need to do to end the pandemic. It is social distancing, it's limiting social gatherings, it's wearing a mask. We are not out of this yet.**
- **Students, faculty, and staff need to continue to take advantage of surveillance testing if they haven't received vaccinations.** There is a significant drop off in the use of the surveillance testing center. It is important to continue surveillance testing if you haven't been vaccinated.
- **Getting the vaccine is really important. When you get called, get scheduled.** We may get the J&J vaccine mid-to-late April, but no one should wait for J&J. If you are offered a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, you should take that opportunity immediately. If you have to leave at the end of the semester, many facilities are allowing you to get the second shot at their location. All the vaccinations work; they all protect 100% from severe illness and death from COVID.
- **If we talk in Bulldog lingo: "We can't stop a yard short of the goal line." Finish the drill. We need the touchdown.**

Vaccinations

- Process at University Health Center (UHC) is working well and scaling up is going smoothly as the number of vaccines and appointments increase. UHC has robust capacity with seven lanes of vaccinators per day every day of the week. They are currently offering about 500 vaccinations per day and can ultimately offer 1000 vaccines per day in that setting. When we get enough vaccine to be able to deliver that much per week, they will expand.
- UHC will try to get the Pfizer vaccine preferentially since the Moderna vaccine has been sluggish in its distribution. UHC has also ordered the J&J vaccine. Excluding those who have been vaccinated at UHC or elsewhere, UHC needs approximately 30,000 vaccines (at two doses per person) to complete the vaccination of campus (faculty, staff, and students).
- Essentially everyone at UGA is now eligible for the vaccine. Approximately 500 to 2000 people per day are receiving invitations depending on schedule saturation. Not seeing a lot of hesitancy even amongst individuals who may have previously appeared to be hesitant.
- Encouraging everyone to choose to get vaccinated. Do not anticipate that the Board of Regents will move toward mandatory vaccinations.

Safety Measures for Fall 2021

- The Chancellor has expressed a desire for the Board of Regents to develop a level of uniformity on how USG campuses come back to normal operation. He has appointed a group of six

presidents, including President Morehead, to meet with him and Board of Regents staff on a regular basis to begin answering questions about Fall. However, we may not know the answers until as late as mid-summer as we see what happens with the pandemic.

Instruction for Fall 2021

- We are planning for a fairly normal Fall. But several issues may continue to need accommodation (e.g., people who are immunocompromised or not able to be vaccinated).
- We have an optimistic outlook for international students at this time, but we cannot make predictions about their ability to return to the US or whether accommodations can be made for students who cannot return to campus.
- Making predictions about August and September in March is very difficult. In mid-to-late summer, we will have a better handle on what Fall will look like.

Mental Health Resources

- The pandemic has changed how UGA Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) does its work. Virtual services have reduced a lot of barriers and access to CAPS is getting easier. We anticipate all mental health services being robustly available this coming Fall. The University System of Georgia (USG) also received an \$11.5 million infusion of money from the Governor to improve access to mental health resources on the campuses of the 26 USG institutions.
- For faculty and staff, the USG Employee Assistance Program. (https://www.usg.edu/well-being/site/article/usg_employee_assistance_program) has partnered with Kepro in a program that provides free confidential counseling and support 24/7.

Enforcement and Violations

- We are still under full masks, social distancing and hand hygiene requirements on campus.
- The COVID-19 Student Educational and Response Team (CO-SERT, https://faculty.studentaffairs.uga.edu/content_page/COSERT) is a collaborative team, charged and led by Student Affairs, to provide a central point of contact, review and response or referral on identified questions and concerns involving students and COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. CO-SERT can be reached at askstudentaffairs@uga.edu.

COVID Impact on Work Performance

- We depend on our Deans and our department heads to make individual assessments on job performance. For staff, it would be up to each department head to determine whether the circumstances in a particular situation justified some special accommodation or consideration.
- Anticipate that the Chancellor's Task Force will discuss any extension related to promotion/promotion and tenure delay. The pandemic is now essentially at the one-year mark, so if it continues unabated for the next several months, it's conceivable the Board might give the campuses the option to consider a further extension.

The meeting was convened at 11 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
- Dr. Lisa Nolan, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine

Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB) co-chairs

- Dr. Lisa Nolan, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine
- 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

Co-Chair Janette Hill, Professor, Learning, Design, & Technology, Mary Frances Early College of Education	Co-Chair Annette Poulsen, Professor, Sterne Chair of Banking & Finance, Terry College of Business
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
Bill Lanzilotta, Associate Professor, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Franklin Arts & Sciences	Christine Scartz, Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Law
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 for meeting with us today.

Just a brief recap as we're getting started about our activities since we last met with you. We've continued to meet weekly to discuss concerns that we've heard from UGA constituents. We prepared a report from our February meeting and shared that with everyone, and hope that you had a chance to also review that report. We've collected almost 2000 responses on our survey to date and as in the past we've been using those responses as well as other data from email messages and discussions with groups and individuals to form our discussions and questions with you about issues that the faculty, staff, and students would like to have addressed. We have prepared questions to focus our discussions today. President Morehead is there anything that you would like to say before we start with our questions?

President Morehead: No, except to indicate that we received another large shipment of vaccines this week and Dr. Russo has made a request for significant amount of vaccines going forward. We're hopeful that we'll see our allotment rise as the state receives more vaccines in the coming weeks. From my vantage point, the faster we can get the university community vaccinated, the better, whether they get it here or anywhere else. But I'm not going to present a report; I'll let you get to your questions.

Co-Chair Hill: Thank you President Morehead.

Co-Chair Poulsen: We're hearing very good things about people getting access to vaccines through the University Health Center, both in terms of availability of vaccinations and with their interactions with the UHC. Thank you. Our first set of questions focus on vaccinations and we will ask those in turn:

Q: Can you provide a general overview of vaccinations at the UHC?

Dr. Russo: We feel comfortable with the process that we've put in place at UHC in terms of inviting individuals to receive their vaccinations and in administering the vaccinations. We have been able to scale accordingly as we have received more vaccines and will be able to do so into the foreseeable future.

We initially requested about 10,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and a greater number of the Moderna. As of this moment, we've received about 6000 doses from Pfizer and about 1600 from Moderna. Going forward, we're going to try to get Pfizer preferentially since Moderna has been sluggish in its distribution. This week we've had a very nice infusion of vaccines after we had pretty much depleted most of our supply through last week. We've been able to ramp up to around 500 vaccinations per day and we'll continue that this week.

Q: What progress have you made in vaccinating faculty, staff and students at UGA?

Dr. Russo: Given the priorities recently set by the Governor, essentially everyone at UGA is now eligible for the vaccine. By the time the new priority scheme took effect last Thursday, we had already worked through our previous hierarchy of inviting those by age ranges, with and without co-morbidities for those 55 and above. Also, all students and all faculty and staff with co-morbidities, 16 and up, had

been invited to receive the vaccine. So, as of Thursday last week, we began inviting those individuals who had no co-morbidities, whether they had established through our survey that they wanted the vaccine or not. We started with those who said they wanted the vaccine, and then immediately followed with those who didn't answer the question. So essentially everybody is getting an invitation. We're not excluding anybody from those receiving invitations. We're pleased that of those who didn't take the survey or who answered no, a significant proportion of those are still taking advantage of the invitation. Thus, we're not seeing a lot of hesitancy amongst individuals who may have previously appeared to be hesitant to receive the vaccine.

We've finished inviting all of those who are 30 and above. As we go into the next 24 to 48 hour cycle, we'll be working our way through those in their 20s. We're looking at ranges of invitations from between 500 to 2000 per day, depending upon how far out our schedule is saturated.

Q: What is the capacity at UHC for offering vaccinations?

Dr. Russo: At UHC, we have robust capacity with seven lanes of vaccinators per day every day of the week. We believe we can ultimately offer 1000 vaccines per day. When we get enough vaccine to be able to deliver that much per week, we will expand capacity to that level. We are still considering offering vaccinations at the Ramsey Center. However, the splitting of our staffing between two locations is a concern for us in terms of staying efficient. If we can get up to 1000 vaccinations a day at UHC, I think we'll stay in the health center. We do have Ramsey as our backup plan.

Q: People have asked about offering the J&J vaccine, since it might be a better choice for students who might not be on campus for their second shot. What are your expectations with respect to offering the J&J vaccine?

Dr. Russo: The J&J vaccine is an excellent vaccine for our transient student population. However, students should take any vaccine they are offered. We will be ordering the J&J vaccine; it first appeared on the order sheet this week. Order sheet orders go in on Tuesdays by five o'clock, and then you generally know the following weekend what your next week's allotment is likely to be. Today, we're going to estimate what we think we need for the rest of the semester, and we're going to place that in one large order.

Q: What is your estimate of the number of vaccines you will need to finish vaccinating students, faculty and staff?

Dr. Russo: Our full population of potential recipients of the vaccine is 55,000. We are now down to about 30,000 who might still need the vaccine from UHC. Most of those 30,000 are students. But a significant number of people have been able to get their vaccine elsewhere, which is a good thing. We think about 50% of the 30,000 will be a target for us to anticipate vaccinating. So, given two doses, 30,000 vaccines, plus or minus 5000 to 10,000 is probably the number that we'll need. We're going to order that in one big order so they know what we want. We will order a good amount of the J&J vaccine, so the order would be adjusted appropriately.

If we use the Pfizer vaccine, there is a three-week period before the second dose. We will be working down the group of student invitees pretty aggressively, with the hopes that we will have a three-week window before commencement to try to finish vaccinating with Pfizer before students leave campus.

Q: Are you concerned about hesitancy on the part of students in receiving the vaccine?

Dr. Russo: We do not think there will be significant hesitancy amongst students. The precedent for that is that there were many, many, many students who got tested for COVID before Thanksgiving, because their parents wanted them tested before they came home. I can see that same encouragement of students as they plan on going home for summer, or to a job. Hopefully, they will take advantage of the opportunity for a vaccination here rather than thinking "it's not really necessary."

Q: Do you anticipate including information on the COVID Dashboard about vaccines received and vaccinations given?

Dr. Russo: We've planned to include the vaccination numbers all along. It is in the works now for us to publish that data. One thing I will say is it's probably going to be more important to focus on how well we're using the vaccines that we get rather than how many people we're actually vaccinating because supply is not in our control. If you look at dashboard information for Clarke County, the county is a leader in the state in terms of percentage of the population getting vaccinated.

Q: Once you are able to successfully vaccinate the UGA current community, do you envision moving to retirees or dependents or any other categories that are connected to UGA but not directly part of the closed Point of Dispensing (POD) criteria at this time?

Dr. Russo: We're not planning on expanding the POD at this time. We will have conversations with the DPH about how we can refocus our purpose relative to what they see as a need once we finish vaccinating the University community. We're meeting with the regional director on Thursday and that will be one of the questions asked. We are also thinking about what the summer will look like when our population decreases and the needs when we return to campus in the fall with new people coming to campus. Those are all questions that we are queuing up right now. We don't have answers yet, but the conversations with DPH and others are starting.

Q: Many have asked whether all employees and all students will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination, with exceptions for religious or health considerations, to be on campus in Fall 2021. We understand that there is a concern about whether this can be required given the emergency use authorization status of the vaccine, but some have suggested it could be legal to do so. As we look ahead to Fall 2021, do you envision a vaccination mandate?

President Morehead: I'll be very surprised if you see the Board of Regents move toward mandatory vaccinations. I do think that there will be an intensive and focused effort to get all populations to choose to be vaccinated. I know, for example, that both Coach Kirby Smart and Coach Joni Taylor were vaccinated this past weekend, not by UGA but through Piedmont, and photographs were taken so that they could be used on social media to encourage others to follow their lead. You'll see from our own

marketing division some new efforts to encourage everyone to choose to be vaccinated. But, again, I would be very surprised if you were to see a mandate from the Board of Regents, particularly while the vaccine stays under the emergency use authorization status.

Dean Nuss: Hospitals historically require physicians to have vaccinations and TB tests. It's not been decided that I know at this point whether our local hospitals will require the COVID-19 vaccine, but if they deem it required to do your job, I think they probably could even under emergency use authorization. It wouldn't surprise me if some hospitals do require the vaccine but you've read the news that disappointedly sometimes only 50% of our frontline healthcare workers are choosing to get it. This is despite the fact that results show that it's working. The rate for healthcare workers getting COVID-19 across the United States is dropping significantly, which is good to see.

Dr. Russo: The University Health Center is the clearinghouse for enrolled students. There are existing mandated immunizations and we are beginning to get those reports for early admission students now. We're building into our materials for students the overall value and importance of getting the COVID-19 vaccine. As we get closer to the beginning of Fall, we have strategies that we typically use to communicate with students as to how to navigate the first week or two and will include vaccination access information in that material.

Dean Davis: To reiterate what President Morehead said, we are filming a video on Friday, with Dr. Nuss moderating, talking about vaccinations: why it's important, some of the issues of vaccine hesitancy, etc. The video will be distributed to our campus community, but also to Georgia at large through the PSO units and Cooperative Extension. We are making a special effort on campus with those groups that may be more likely to be hesitant to have more one-on-one peer outreach.

Co-Chair Hill: Those videos have been so powerful. We really appreciate all that you're doing in that area. Safety concerns remain an important issue in the questions that are shared with us.

Q: Given that vaccinations are likely not to be mandatory soon, will UGA continue its existing health and safety measures on campus this fall, such as masking, sanitizing, physical distancing and surveillance testing?

President Morehead: The Chancellor has expressed a desire for the Board of Regents to develop a level of uniformity on how the campuses are coming back to normal operation. He has appointed a group of six presidents – I am one of them – to meet with him and Board of Regents staff on a regular basis to begin answering some of the questions that you have posed. I would expect that we'll know a lot more about some of those answers in the next several weeks. I also think that some of the questions you're asking we may not know until perhaps as late as the middle of the summer, when we see what's actually happened to the pandemic as a result of President Biden's effort to have mass vaccination take place.

We'll certainly be in a position to pivot pretty quickly on any of these issues, depending upon what directives we get from the Board of Regents after they have heard from the advisory group formed by the Chancellor. There is a desire to see UGA, Georgia Tech, Georgia State, and the smaller institutions

across the state approach these issues in a fairly uniform fashion. I'll be surprised if there's a lot of deviancy from campus to campus, but I just don't know at this point for sure and I really think it's more or less a question that the Chancellor will have to answer later this spring.

Co-Chair Poulsen: We also have questions related to dealing with the continuing aspects of COVID on mental health, productivity and other workplace issues.

Q: We understand that expectations for the classroom in the Fall will be a return to “normal” as long as conditions continue to improve. However, what accommodations will be available for those who are immunocompromised or might not be able to be vaccinated for health or other reasons.

VP Shrivastav: We are planning for a fairly normal Fall. But I agree, several of these issues may continue. DRC has done a great job of handling accommodations for students who needed those. Our faculty members have been very flexible as well when there is a documented need. Making predictions about August and September in March is very difficult. We are having regular conversations with USG and internally about what to anticipate and how to handle Fall, but on paper right now we are planning to go back to normal to the extent possible. In mid-to-late summer, we will have a better handle on what Fall will look like.

This is true for international students also, who may or may not be able to return to campus depending on international travel restrictions. We have a fairly optimistic outlook for international students at this time but we cannot make predictions about their ability to return to the US or whether accommodations can be made for students who cannot return to campus.

Q: The pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health of students, faculty and staff. What are the anticipated continuing resources to alleviate some of these issues?

Dr. Russo: The pandemic has changed how UGA Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) does its work. In many ways, it's been improved. Virtual services have reduced a lot of barriers and access to CAPS is getting easier. We have a new CAPS director who has a very fresh perspective on access. We also have more online resources for support. We anticipate all of those services being more robustly available this coming Fall. In addition, the Health Promotion Department of UHC, over the course of the past year, has worked aggressively to partner with and train faculty for awareness, and we see these efforts increasing significantly going into the Fall. Resources available from CAPS and the Health Promotion Department are currently being publicized by our marketing department.

The Division of Student Affairs, as part of its 2025 strategic plan, has a robust aspiration to create a network of care. This is designed to connect academic and student-life related resources. Student Affairs is student focused, but a lot of stress experienced by faculty is related to the stress felt by students. Thus, these resources may indirectly take some of the stress away from faculty. The University System of Georgia (USG) also received an \$11.5 million infusion of money from the Governor to beef up access to mental health resources on the campuses of the 26 USG institutions.

Dean Nuss: I'll just make a comment or two about faculty and staff. Yesterday I spoke with Juan Jarrett, Associate Vice President for Human Resources regarding mental health support for faculty and staff. He directed me to the USG Employee Assistance Program. (https://www.usg.edu/well-being/site/article/usg_employee_assistance_program), partnering with Kepro, offered through USG benefits. It's a program that provides free confidential counseling and support 24/7. Faculty and staff receive regular communications from USG benefits regarding Kepro. In fact, you may have seen an email in your inbox yesterday about the program. Kepro offers phone coaching around emotional health as well as offering stress-reducing daily habits and tips.

Q: Communication continues to be an important issue. The posted FAQs are very helpful and the quick updates to changes in policies and recommendations from the CDC, USG or the Governor are appreciated, such as guidance for those who are fully vaccinated. We have been asked multiple times about how students can report violations of policies confidentially. Could you review those procedures?

Dean Nuss: I want to reiterate that we are still under full masks, social distancing and hand hygiene requirements on campus. You need to report positive tests through DawgCheck, which has been updated to include changes if you are fully vaccinated. It looks the same as before but the underlying logic gives specific guidance depending on whether or not you are vaccinated.

Dr. Russo: Student Affairs provides the resource for students to anonymously report a concern and they would directly handle it.

Dr. Tschepikow: That's right. The COVID-19 Student Educational and Response Team (CO-SERT, https://faculty.studentaffairs.uga.edu/content_page/COSERT) is a collaborative team, charged and led by Student Affairs, to provide a central point of contact, review and response or referral on identified questions and concerns involving students and COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. CO-SERT can be reached at askstudentaffairs@uga.edu .

Q: We continue to get questions related to ongoing considerations around work performance in terms of the impact COVID-19 on performance for all employees.

President Morehead: We depend on our Deans and our department heads to make individual assessments on job performance. For staff, it would be up to each department head to determine whether the circumstances in a particular situation justified some special accommodation or consideration.

Q: Faculty are continuing to ask for assurance that the impact of COVID-19 will be recognized for promotion and promotion and tenure decisions. For example, this year faculty members had the option to delay promotion or promotion and tenure consideration. Is that still under consideration for continuation into next year, and would COVID-19 productivity be recognized in future applications for promotion or promotion and tenure?

President Morehead: I think that might be one of the issues that comes up during the taskforce review that I mentioned earlier, although the sense I've gotten is that the Board of Regents is not going to extend the one year delay, that one year was a sufficient delay. I doubt there would be a second year offered at this point but circumstances could change it. The pandemic is now essentially at the one-year mark, so if it continues unabated for the next several months, it's conceivable the Board might give the campuses the option to consider a further extension. I haven't heard any serious talk of that at this point.

Co-Chair Poulsen: President Morehead, VP Shrivastav, Task Force leaders, and Dr. Tschepikow, thank you for your time today.

Q: Are there any additional statements or issues you would like to cover?

Dean Davis: Last week we had the annual meeting of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health, and Dr. Fauci, of course, was one of our guest speakers. He said he gets a lot of questions about what Fall is going to be like – will we reopen fully, have we turned the corner? He's very optimistic about Fall openings. But he did say we are at the corner, and it is how we turn this corner that will impact our future. We need to continue our communication about what we need to do to end the pandemic; it's not a time to let up now. It is social distancing, it's limiting social gatherings, it's wearing a mask. We aren't out of this yet, and we have to turn the corner well. I would ask you to help, as we're doing through ArchNews, to reiterate those messages so that we can be done with this.

President Morehead: Let me add to Dean Davis's very important point. We need to continue to have students, faculty, and staff take advantage of the surveillance testing if they haven't received vaccinations. We are seeing a significant drop off in the use of the surveillance testing center but it's still important for people who have not been vaccinated. We're going to do some things that we hope will help students show up: some t-shirt giveaways and things of that nature that we're going to fund out of the President's Office to see if we can jumpstart greater participation. That really is important because I think we've seen over the last few weeks a significant drop off in participation. Dr. Russo has been great in messaging to the campus that it's really important to continue surveillance testing if you haven't been vaccinated. Anything the committee can do in that regard would be really important.

Dean Nuss: Reinforce the importance of getting the vaccine. When you get called, let's get you scheduled. As Dr. Russo said, we're going to see a fairly good jump up in the availability of vaccine in the next two or three weeks. We may get the J&J vaccine mid-to-late April, but no one should wait for a J&J. If you are offered a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, you should take up that opportunity immediately. If you have to leave at the end of the semester, many facilities and pharmacies are allowing you to get the second shot to get that follow up. We don't want students waiting to picking their "preferred" vaccine. They all work; they all protect 100% from severe illness and death from COVID. It doesn't really matter which one you get. We just need people vaccinated. Encourage students to look for their email. I know they get 1000s of emails but when they get invited, let's get folks into UHC, because that makes us all stronger and safer.

Dean Nolan: If we talk in Bulldog lingo: "We can't stop a yard short of the goal line."

Dr. Russo: Finish the drill.

Dean Nuss: We need the touchdown.

Co-Chair Hill: We can't say thank you enough for all that each of you and all of you are doing every single day. I know that we see the tip of the iceberg with everything you do. Thank you for your time today and thank you for your communication with us. We will do all we can to help get that communication out to the broader community as well.

Co-Chair Poulsen: Thank you.

President Morehead: Thank you.