

Meeting of CRC with PMAB and MOTF – October 19, 2019

The meeting was convened at 10 a.m.

In Attendance

President Morehead

Medical Oversight Task Force (MOTF):

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

Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB) chairs:

- Dr. Lisa Nolan, Dean, College of Vet Med
- Mr. John McCollum, Associate Vice President for Environmental Safety

Vice-President of Instruction Rahul Shrivastav

Assistant to the President Kyle Tschepikow

COVID Response Committee

Co-Chair Janette Hill, Professor, Learning, Design, & Technology, MFE COE	Co-Chair Annette Poulsen, Professor, Stern 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
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 Dr. Hill welcomed all to the meeting and after introductions, she reviewed the resolution passed by University Council and summarized the role of the CRC committee as follows:

- “Give voice” – Giving “voice to concerns” of undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty.
- “Listen” – Be correctly informed about the efforts of PMAB and MOTF.
- “Report” – Report on the efforts and actions of task forces to University Council, EC and other constituencies.

President Morehead reviewed the establishment of the Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB) and the Medical Oversight Task Force (MOTF) in June, their complementary but distinct functions and the leaders of each.

The PMAB was established to advise the senior leadership team and the campus community more broadly on prevention and mitigation strategies related to campus operations. Dean Lisa Nolan and Mr. John McCollum are the co-chairs of this advisory board.

The MOTF coordinates processes and information exchange related to COVID-19 testing practices, surveillance strategies, and clinical services. The MOTF also serves as the point of contact for coordinating contact tracing with the Georgia Department of Public Health. The MOTF is chaired by Dr. Garth Russo and includes Dean Marsha Davis, Dean Shelley Nuss and Dean Lisa Nolan.

Vice President of Instruction Rahul Shrivastav also attended the meeting to answer questions related to instruction since he is leading planning efforts in this area.

President Morehead expressed appreciation to all members of the PMAB, the MOTF and VP Shrivastav for tireless efforts to lead the UGA community through the COVID crisis. He then asked the leaders of each group to summarize their roles and activities in turn.

Dr. Russo provided a summary for the MOTF, including;

- We have responded to changes as the pandemic has evolved.
- We initially saw our role as to gather information, to make sure testing is done properly, and to understand the magnitude of the problem. We also wanted to make sure that all health and safety resources at UGA were heavily involved in planning and implementation. Understanding the evolution of the pandemic on campus has informed today’s decisions.
- It is important to report and record data accurately on campus activity. The analysis started with a Qualtrics survey for top administrators to report the experiences across campus and also off campus. We wanted to obtain a broad understanding of how COVID was affecting the campus community. It became clear that there would be a lot of

necessary actions to be as safe as possible especially as the campus became more densely populated with Fall semester.

- The initial Qualtrics survey was augmented with other databases and these databases evolved into DawgCheck. DawgCheck is the primary method of collecting data and aggregating and communicating that data. It is especially important to report the positive tests and real-time actions that are generated by these reports. DawgCheck is the beginning point for contact tracing and also for actions taken by Student Care and Outreach and Facilities Management Division (FMD).
- The relationship with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has been successful so far. The preliminary data from DawgCheck is shared with DPH in a way that is readily used by DPH. This is a positive example of a large institution interacting with DPH.
- Before Fall semester, we knew it would be important to have surveillance testing for the campus community. Health services would also be heavily used. Thus, with the approval of the Diagnostic Vet School lab for surveillance testing, we separated surveillance from general University Health Center (UHC) activities. Surveillance testing has been extremely successful. The Legion Field site was ready to go when classes started.
- There was a significant trend upwards and a peak of COVID cases in the 1st week of September which has now trended down and plateaued. The committee attributes the increase with the entry of students back on campus. MOTF actively looks for hot spots and tries to prevent and stop congregation of students and others. Thus, the emphasis now is on continuing to do surveillance level testing to identify asymptomatic cases.
- Most importantly – the basic principles of wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, and washing hands are better than surveillance testing at stopping the spread.
- Surveillance data are used to identify potential areas of concern. As of now, campus is very de-densified. However, as we move to optimizing face-to-face educational experiences with safety measures, we need to monitor carefully.

Dean Nolan provided a summary for the PMAB, including:

The PMAB was formed to anticipate and facilitate the mitigation of COVID hazards, with a need to facilitate the return to campus with minimal risk. The PMAB consists of group of experts who have the overriding goal to assist in reducing risk of COVID-19 and helping UGA operate as safe as possible.

Critical components of the PMAB include:

- Identify risks and hazards from COVID.

- Help supervisors identify critical control points where intervention could minimize and prevent hazards.
- Created a support help line pmab@uga.edu to be used by anyone with safety concerns. PMAB has answered close to 300 queries, some by phone or zoom calls, some by emails and some by field trips to a specific site.
- PMAB consults with many groups, including FMD, campus transit, MOTF, Office of Emergency Preparedness, Human Resources, UGA Legal, University Health service, College of Public Health, and the Georgia DPH.
- PMAB membership incorporates a wide variety of expertise in infectious disease, transmission and control of infectious disease, and risk communication. Dean Nolan provided background information for each member of PMAB.

Additional information about PMAB was provided by Co-Chair Mr. John McCollum:

- The broad base of the PMAB has been very valuable. Its first responsibility was to reopen campus for staff and faculty during the summer. With the beginning of Fall semester, the focus turned to students and the classroom environment.
- Now, as research projects are getting underway again, it is working with faculty to determine best practices in their research.
- As CDC guidelines have changed, the PMAB adapts and changes to those guidelines.

VP for Instruction Rahul Shrivastav:

- VP Shrivastav reported that he had met with dozens of groups over the past several weeks for input on instruction in Spring semester and going forward from there. Groups included faculty governance committees, teaching advisory boards, and student groups. The primary focus of these meetings was to ask what is working and what doesn't work.
- Overall, in Fall semester, students are following protocols and there is little evidence of infection spreading in classrooms. The importance of masking, social distancing and hand washing, plus following other PMAB recommendations, seem to be working well.
- VP Shrivastav referred to a detailed memo sent out in mid-October that covered extensive recommendations for instruction in Spring semester. Recommended items include increasing in-person attendance, more synchronous teaching, clarifying and holding to attendance policies, and clarifying hybrid teaching methods.

Following the overview and updates from President Morehead, leaders of the MOTF and PMAB, and VP Shrivastav, we moved into a question-and-answer session. What follows are questions posed from the CRC and the responses received.

The first topic focused on testing, including:

- How are surveillance efforts going – sufficient participation, incentives to improve participation?
- Are we changing classroom and building guidelines as CDC changes its guidelines about the virus being airborne?
- Is contact tracing working and is DawgCheck accurate?
- Do we have sufficient testing on campus? Do we need to expand testing, hire a third-party to help? Are there new testing options as new procedures and methods are developed?

Dr. Russo responded:

- Surveillance testing is working well. Initially, as people returned to campus, there were lines, a longer time to wait to get a test for surveillance but testing is no longer saturated and there is excess space in testing. Basically, we have sufficient tests for the people who are willing to do it.
- We are now introducing a second form of tests – saliva-based tests. The tests are much easier since they are self-administered (spit into a tube), and require less PPE and fewer other protective measures for the health care worker. Our current saliva tests are from Rutgers so Rutgers is acting as a backup lab. Saliva tests will be the test type of choice in the future as the Vet School is getting ramped up to do the testing.
- The University Health Service can do about 200 tests a day and they have been doing a lot of testing. This level of testing is hard to sustain and still be able to provide robust clinical services for all illnesses and needs. What has helped is that the COVID precautionary measures (e.g., masks) have also decreased the number of other respiratory diseases seen at the UHC.
- Any virus spreads through the air and it is good that the CDC has explicitly recognized this. There are clear scenarios of aerosol transmission; however, we have actually not seen that at UGA. We must maintain vigilance for the possibility but it does not seem to be a major factor now. In specific, classroom density is very low and we have little spread from classroom contacts.

Next, questions related to student behavior were posed, including:

- What is happening with policing of student activities and meetings? For example, how is Greek Life handling policy enforcement?
- What about football games? Other big gatherings?
- What is happening with encouraging students to do the things we know work?

President Morehead responded:

- VP Student Affairs Victor Wilson and the Dean of Students Bill McDonald have pointed out that the greatest challenge is off-campus activities. The university has no jurisdiction in those areas that are more than 500 yards from campus under state law, so does not have much flexibility in those cases.
- Students need to buy-in to appropriate behavior and some groups have taken steps. For example, the Interfraternity Council (IFC) has banned large social events, limiting gatherings, and no tailgating around football games. Nevertheless, there is still concern about student behavior.
- With respect to football games, the Athletic Department learned some better ways to protect fans from the first football game. For example, you can't have a roving camera crew because students rush to the camera. Athletics persuaded CBS to not use a roving camera in the 2nd game. The Athletic Department also did a better job at controlling the crowd by 2nd game, enforcing social distancing, and keeping people in their socially-distanced seats.
- Commencement went well. Family units were kept together in their family pods rather than putting all the students together. The platform party and faculty participation were also limited.

Questions related to faculty and staff were posed next, including:

- Is there recognition that face-to-face instruction is highly frustrating and that COVID-19 causes much anxiety for all University constituents?
- How can we better address the stress caused by enforced F2F interactions whether in teaching or other settings and also recognize that some teaching processes enforced result in worse teaching pedagogy?

Vice President Shrivastav responded:

- There are two major changes to be made for Spring semester (see the October memo from VP Shrivastav's office for more specifics). Looking at Fall semester, it was almost as if our system was too flexible, making it very difficult for faculty to teach and for students to manage schedule and expectations effectively. This was partially due to the timing of student registration for Fall -- classes were scheduled before we knew how instruction would be affected by COVID. For Spring Semester, students should know when they register what the expectations will be.
- Two major recommendations being made for Spring. First, we will do more to make the classroom feel like it is in-person instruction while maintaining social distancing. Second, synchronous, rather than asynchronous, instruction will be emphasized. To assist with these recommendations, more classrooms are being updated to allow video

conferencing and we are adding features to eLC to assist with interactions and with attendance expectations.

- Better communications will provide students with clearer expectations for Spring semester classes. We are at the point where everybody is looking for clarity. A big part of improved communication will be to identify the attendance policy for each class when students register. Faculty can require attendance; that has not changed, but faculty do need to keep flexibility for those who might be home when sick or quarantined.
- Faculty flexibility in teaching continues. The only mandate is that “fully online” needs approval; using synchronous or asynchronous lectures, flipped classes, or breakout sections will be up to faculty. Faculty will have full freedom to determine teaching methods, other than going fully online. There were very specific guidelines for online instruction before COVID and those guidelines will be maintained going forward.

Finally, questions related to communication were posed, including:

- How can we better communicate to USG that there is broad-based support on campus for letting our university administrators make decisions that are appropriate for UGA, and not being treated by USG as a whole system?

President Morehead responded:

- The Board of Regents sent a copy of a resolution last week that stated a desire to see a system-wide increase in in-person classes. They have expressed great concern about the number of online classes as well as practices that they have heard about related to hybrid classes where faculties are not requiring an in-class component (i.e., cases where students are essentially taking a hybrid course as a purely online course). They have also indicated that they may begin to look at tuition differentials if a class is not in-person, which President Morehead strongly opposes.
- Looking around the SEC, the University of Florida president has asked for more in-person classes; Auburn says all classes will be in-person, and rumors are Arkansas is about to do the same.

Vice President Shrivastav also responded:

- Students are struggling with the current environment that incorporate changes to a teaching format that has been in place for decades.
- Economic challenges for students and their families are hard to handle – by changing our expectations we hurt the students that are most vulnerable.
- We are continuing to work closely with PMAB to create the safest environment possible.

Conclusion of Meeting 10:59 a.m.

Co-Chairs Janette Hill and Annette Poulsen thanked the President, members of the PMAB and MOTF, and VP Shrivastav for their time and described the process now in which the CRC will write a report of this information for distribution to the members of University Council.