

**Meeting of CRC with President Morehead, MOTF, and PMAB  
23 November 2020**

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

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

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| 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   |
| 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 Annette Poulsen welcomed all to the meeting and thanked President Morehead and Task Force Leaders for meeting with the CRC. She reminded everyone that as last time, we will record the meeting and that the recording will be deleted once notes have been taken and reports prepared from the meeting. She also provided a brief recap of CRC activities since the last meeting, including:

- The CRC met weekly to discuss concerns from UGA constituents.
- Dr. Brandy Burgess joined the CRC as a guest speaker to inform us about COVID-19 and UGA activities related to the virus.
- The CRC prepared a report of our last meeting and shared it with University Council members last week (11/18) as well as the UGA community.
- The CRC initiated a Qualtrics survey that has been circulated to University Council members and will be shared with the full university community. The CRC is collecting responses and will use the responses to inform our discussions with President Morehead and members of the Task Forces about issues that the faculty, staff, and students would like addressed.

Dr. Poulsen invited President Morehead to share any issues or statements that he would like to present prior to turning to questions from the CRC related to campus operations.

President Morehead offered the following in his opening remarks:

- Campus community responded well to the push for pre-Thanksgiving testing. He reported that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November, testing increased to 2544 participants, thus accomplishing the goal of increased testing. He also mentioned that the case volume has stayed relatively stable and that any spread that is occurring seems to be from outside of the classroom environment.
- He emphasized the importance of concern for the mental health of students, especially 1<sup>st</sup> year students. He also shared the need to be mindful of faculty and staff and how they are doing as well.
- He indicated that spring semester will not be any easier than the challenging fall semester, emphasizing that we need to continue to support each other and continue efforts to slow the spread of the virus while also providing our students with the very best education possible.

President Morehead then asked the task force chairs to share updates since the last meeting.

Dr. Russo shared a report for the Medical Oversight Task Force (MOTF):

- He reported that the goal of 1000 tests a day was met, sharing that the test positivity rate decreased a “tad.” The University Health Center is not seeing a significant increase in positivity.
- He shared that the community around UGA is heating up in terms of positive tests – Clarke County positivity rates are increasing as are those for the state. However, our campus bubble is relatively stable.
- He reported on the testing strategy going forward. Surveillance testing will continue through finals exams and up to winter break when campus closes. During the break, the Vet School lab will be transitioning to saliva test processing for spring semester.
- He reported that we will continue to run DawgCheck through break but the verbiage will change somewhat to reflect current campus circumstances (i.e., more students being off campus). Faculty, staff and students will continue to be encouraged to check in every

day. It serves as both a reminder and is a good tool for reporting positive testing during the break period.

- He also shared an update on vaccines. He is anticipating that UGA will have the vaccine by early next calendar year. There is a lot to be known about the specifics of distribution. UGA is part of the strategic national stockpile and have asked for 50,000 series of vaccines – 2 doses per series so 100,000 individual doses. The vaccine will come in slowly and UHS will follow federal and state guidance on how those are distributed. We will likely get two different types of vaccines and will be able to administer them according to best practices.
- There will be a ramp up of surveillance testing as students return to campus in January. At minimum, they should be able to handle the same number of tests as pre-Thanksgiving and hopefully more. More information will be forthcoming on these plans.

Dean Nolan shared a report for the Preventative Measures Advisory Board (PMAB):

- She noted that the PMAB has received several requests for advice in preparation for spring and summer semesters, including procedures for field studies and study away activities that require travel.
- PMAB is working with people on what to do with big events, recommending that people follow the Governor's executive order – 50 people or fewer in attendance. Events require extensive advance planning so PMAB is responding quickly to requests for assistance in this area. PMAB is recommending virtual events to the extent possible.
- PMAB is committed to helping the university community identify risks and helping to mitigate them.

Vice President Shrivastav offered a report from the Office of Instruction:

- He reported that they are working on setting up instructional formats for classes and helping departments set up classes to meet the new definitions. He noted that there are more than 10,000 sections that needed to be scheduled and allocated to classrooms. He shared that additional space for teaching has been acquired to meet instructional needs (e.g., Chapel, Tate Theater, West End Zone of Sanford Stadium and some rooms in the Georgia Center).
- Registration is going smoothly; numbers are about as expected.
- He reminded everyone of the recent memo from the Office of Instruction detailing plans for spring semester, including spring break and revisions to the spring calendar. Spring semester will start later than originally scheduled and will include 3 instructional break days during the semester instead of a week of spring break.
- He shared that they will be updating the technology in 39 classrooms across campus during winter break to enable easier video conferencing during spring semester.
- Additional details for spring break are being worked through, including with input from the Educational Affairs Committee and University Curriculum Committee of University Council.

Dr. Poulsen started with the first question related to mandatory testing: We continue to hear that mandatory testing is not possible given decisions by USG. President Morehead, we know that you are asked this question in essentially every meeting, but it is also the question that is asked of us most frequently.

- We know that there is mandatory testing at many public institutions, especially if in on-campus housing, including Clemson, University of Kentucky, University of Tennessee, and U of Florida in relatively close proximity. Is there any chance that USG will reevaluate its guidelines? Perhaps at least for students in campus housing?
- What are the capacity constraints for doing so – medical supplies and personnel? Quarantining facilities?
- Why are students not required to present a negative test and quarantine before returning to campus for spring semester classes?

President Morehead offered the following response:

- Absolutely no is the answer from the Board of Regents with respect to mandatory testing. No system school has mandatory testing. We are leading the system with our testing capacity, except for GA Tech who are using a different type of test. Our College of Veterinary Medicine has been key to this expanded capacity. We expect to be able to increase our testing in January, and by delaying classes a few days and with students who will want to return to Athens right after the new year, students will have ample opportunities to get tested leading up to the beginning of spring semester.
- Dr. Russo said that they will strongly encourage students to get tested and will be putting up mobile testing near housing or other large congregations of students. They want to make the opportunity to get tested difficult to side-step.
- Dean. Nolan mentioned that saliva testing with 1-millileter samples is easier to manage than the PCR tests offered at Legion Field.
- President Morehead also shared that he has heard the Chancellor speak on the issue of mandatory testing and the Chancellor thinks it is largely ineffective since testing is only as of one point in time. Instead, the Chancellor continues to encourage students to make safe choices and not engage in risky behavior. President Morehead is also hopeful that students are better recognizing the outcomes of their actions and are making better decisions based on the decreasing case count of students. He also mentioned that the quarantine room capacity will remain high, at a significant expense to the institution.

Co-Chair Janette Hill asked the next questions related to staff concerns: Many discussions about COVID-19 tend to focus on classroom interactions but we also need to hear much more about staff well-being and the commitment to their health and safety. Staff are in the buildings and on campus, and unfortunately, we continue to see the greatest numbers of COVID-19 infections among UGA staff.

- Staff are put at risk by students who do not follow guidelines and the lack of enforcement of mask policies in many settings.
- News reports from U of Alabama suggest that all staff and students might be required to return to campus full time in January unless they have a medical excuse. At UGA, staff

feedback suggests telecommuting options vary by supervisor – especially in cases where the employee has not filed for ADA protections.

- Can we expect changes or clarifications to HR policy or guidelines – particularly with respect to telecommuting expectations – for spring given the expectation for more in-person instruction and higher campus populations?
- Staff face very real concerns about keeping their jobs. Are there additional plans to mitigate layoffs, especially if campus is closed down?

President Morehead offered the following response:

- I have seen the announcement from University of Alabama; if true, it will likely set off a flurry of interest by stakeholders in the state of Georgia who might want the state to move to this also. However, I think we will essentially see a steady state for operations going into the spring. We will have more f2f interactions between students and faculty in the spring and we will continue to encourage more of this type of interaction as long as safeguards are kept in place with social distancing, masking and cleanliness. F2f interactions are needed to keep student retention high but we must also keep campus safe.
- We do not plan to change the flexibility for staff for any units as long as they are getting the job done. It is largely going to come down to department-by-department decision making, not an institutional mandate. Departments need to make the decisions on what is needed from staff. The institution will continue to provide as much flexibility as possible. There are processes in place for occasions where individuals believe managers are being unreasonable.
- In the current environment, we remain relatively optimistic about the ability to avoid layoffs like just occurred at GA Tech. It is our highest priority to avoid layoffs but there are areas where we are restricted in our ability to do so. For example, we are not allowed to use state funding for Auxiliary Enterprises. Thus, we are doing everything possible to encourage activities that support Auxiliary Enterprises. Layoffs will continue to be a concern in the spring and we will continue to closely monitor and work with Departments. Universities are at a 10% layoff rate across the country. UGA has been able to avoid this through new and creative ways to keep employees in jobs.
- The Governor has indicated that he does not anticipate any additional cuts to the budget – but we work on a month by month basis given the possibility of lower tax revenues due to more COVID cases.
- Units are encouraged to be very slow in replacing employees who retire or leave the university.
- We need to get through a worrying period in January – with all the cold weather and indoor activities. But there is hope that things will continue to improve throughout the spring with the vaccine and better weather.
- Dr. Russo shared more information about the vaccine: Being realistic, we need to just focus on January now. But we do expect general improvement over the course of the spring and vaccines should work well at controlling the virus also. Large volumes of vaccine should be available by March / April but we don't know any of this with certainty. Access to the vaccine will be determined by level of risk for an individual and by the

amount of person-to-person contact. He expects basic guidance for allocating vaccines will come from the federal level and then states will put in more specific guidelines.

Dr. Poulsen shared a series of questions related to graduate student concerns:

- Graduate students are the ones who are often expected to be in the classroom to cover for professors and to handle labs where social distancing is difficult. There are many concerns that their vulnerability is not being considered.
- With the delays in degree programs caused by COVID-19, will there be extensions of time-to-degree periods? Also, graduate students are very concerned about the continuation of funding, whether as a GTA or a GRA, as COVID-19 extends the time needed for degrees.
- Can guidelines be enforced at the Graduate School level rather than depending on the vagaries of individual departments.
- Are mental health resources being maintained and expanded?
- There are concerns that the graduate student health care plan does not provide full coverage for continuing COVID symptoms or mental health therapies. Is this being reviewed and corrected?

President Morehead indicated that Dean Walcott at the Graduate School would be the best person to respond to these questions and that several of the Task Force members and Dean Walcott met with graduate students last week to discuss some of these issues. He then asked Drs. Nolan and Russo to help address the questions.

- Dr. Russo shared: We invited certain cohorts to get tested during the fall. Invited 800 grad students to get tested – 22% to 25% participated and no one tested positive. Thus, didn't see a red flag in that cohort but still vigilance should remain high. Masking and proper spacing continue to be high priorities. Grad students are front-line people and we will do all we can to protect them. Right now, seem to be pretty safe.
- Insurance is now being mandated to provide coverage for COVID-related conditions. He expects those sorts of protections will be covered going forward. The graduate student health insurance plan is negotiated at the system level and benefits should continue.
- VP Shrivastav added: Dr. Walcott is the best source for questions related to degree timing and similar issues. However, it is VP Shrivastav's understanding that flexibility is being provided in terms of time-to-degree requirements. He also noted that there are several sources of supplementary instructional funds that can be used to provide some additional funding to graduate students. Funding has been given out for fall and spring. Financial resources are there and hopefully they are sufficient going forward.

Dr. Hill shared questions related to commitment from the UGA community: How do we get to greater commitment from the UGA community, especially undergraduates, to continue to protect the campus?

- We appreciate the efforts to increase testing via incentives such as t-shirts and gift cards and the pre-Thanksgiving push. However, testing rates are still less than desired and perceptions about student engagement in this communal effort varies.

- What will the institution be doing to engage students in being a part of the solutions to protect campus this spring?

Dr. Russo responded:

- It is not mythical that students are not getting tested, but it is much more inflated than it is real. Tests are being reported to the state from individual labs. We are not seeing much of a mismatch between what the DPH is seeing and what we are seeing for students and staff. There is leakage, but not something that we are losing ground over. There are other things he would observe and that would make him concerned if there were missing significant numbers of student tests.
- Dr. Davis also shared: Data from sewage analysis is tracking very closely with data from University Health Center and DawgCheck. That is reassuring as well.

Dr. Poulsen shared questions related to issues with DawgCheck and contact tracing:

- Are we getting good results from relying on the Department of Public Health (DPH) for contact tracing? There is much anecdotal evidence that cases are not being followed up quickly.
- It seems that the actual response rate to DawgCheck is very low. Is it providing the necessary information?
- Is self-reporting via DawgCheck a biased sample – e.g., biased towards fewer positives than reality since students perceive penalty to positive tests?

Dr. Russo responded, sharing:

- The Department of Public Health will only proceed with contract tracing once they receive a report from the lab. However, DawgCheck asks those who report positive cases some initial information that helps DPH with their data collection. He believes that for the most part DPH is able to reach out and talk to people within 24 hours, as long as individuals are accessible via provided phone numbers or emails.
- There is variability in the usage rates of the daily symptom checker – more likely to use if you do have concern about symptoms.
- Very strong confidence in the reporting of positive tests. We know about all of the UGA tests, obviously. But for those tests outside, DPH is comparing those results to the university's numbers and any difference in number of positive tests is remaining low.
- Daily response rate from screening is about 6K-10K daily.

Dr. Hill asked: Are there metrics – shared or not shared – that the administration will use to make decisions about keeping classes going and bringing staff to campus? I.e., is there a “shut-down” point.

- President Morehead shared that the Board of Regents has no plan to provide a specific metric for the shutdown of the university.
- Dr. Russo posed a question: What would make a person shut down the university? To him, the shutdown point would be when we begin to lose control of the number of new cases, have an atypical form of spread, or have an increase in intensity of illness. His

internal metric would be when he feels he does not have the resources to control the situation.

- President Morehead also shared that the Chancellor has said that if an unusual situation were to develop, the Chancellor would then engage in conversations with the Commissioner of Public Health and other experts about how to proceed. He is not going to lock himself into a metric in advance unnecessarily.

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 for all their hard work and dedication to keeping the UGA community safe.