

Senate Steering Committee Minutes

September 10, 2020

10:30 a.m.

Via Zoom: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/94046307146?pwd=U0JnYlZSbnY4MzRjWUxta29oMm56dz09>

Present: Sylvain Doré, Hans van Oostrom, Angela Lindner, Chris Hass, David Bloom, Joe Glover, Keith Diem, Keith Rambo, Ray G. Thomas, Juan Nino, Richard Scholtz, Laurie Bialosky, Rick Stepp, Sarah Lynne, and Taylor Rose.

Call to Order

Sylvain Doré, Chair

-The emergency meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Faculty Senate Chair Sylvain Doré.

University Calendar / Spring Break

**Angela Lindner, Associate Provost
for Undergraduate Affairs**

-Dr. Lindner presented a request from Provost Joe Glover to initiate the process to eliminate the week-long spring instructional break from the calendar for the Spring 2021 semester. The proposal is to start the Spring semester a week later than is currently scheduled, and the semester will not contain the usual break from instruction. The President approved this calendar change and Provost Glover is relaying the information to college deans.

Rationale for the proposal includes:

1. It will give any fall flareup an extra week to subside in December-January.
2. It will give a longer time in December-January for students to get the flu vaccine.
3. It will give another week's time for a potential vaccine to be developed and distributed.
4. Students will not have a week to travel and then return to Gainesville, potentially spreading and returning with the virus.

The committee discussed the merits and drawbacks of the proposal including:

- The removal of Spring Break may be highly unpopular with students.
- Travel may still be difficult in the Spring so many Spring Break plans and reservations may have to amended or cancelled, regardless of UF's academic calendar. Personal Spring travel plans will likely also be impacted by budget or environmental restraints in this COVID-19 period.
- Students and employees may appreciate the additional time allotted to them by the later start of the Spring semester to prepare for classes and to spend additional time with their families or in their home environment.
- In these strenuous times, it could be helpful to continue to provide students and employees a mid-semester mental health break.

Additional meeting discussion points included:

- To reduce possible backlash and provide clarity, clear and consistent community messaging is key.
- Although many Advisory Council of Faculty Senates (ACFS) colleagues have relayed to the Faculty Senate Chair that they are not yet discussing changes to their Spring academic calendar, Provost Glover noted that President Fuchs has been very preliminarily discussing various options with many of the State University System (SUS) campuses, including mulling possibilities of Spring Break and post-break calendar and class delivery modifications.
- The university should be cognizant of how this proposed schedule change may or may not align with the Alachua County school district's calendar.
- The [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), relative to Senate functions and the university calendar, was referenced: [Senate Bylaw 4 \(A\)\(8\)](#)

(A) Senate Organization and Procedure: Senate Function

As the legislative body of the University, the Senate is directed by the University Constitution to take cognizance of matters which concern more than one college, school, or other major academic unit, or which are otherwise of general University interest; and it is empowered by the University Constitution to legislate with respect to such matters, subject to the approval of the President and in appropriate instances the Board of Trustees and subject to the regulation procedures of the Florida Board of Governors, if applicable. Among such matters are:

- (1) The educational policies of the University
- (2) The creation of new degree programs
- (3) The abolition of degree programs
- (4) Curricula matters affecting more than one college
- (5) Criteria for faculty appointment, promotion and tenure
- (6) Matters of general professional importance
- (7) Recommendations of candidates for honorary degrees
- (8) **The University calendar**
- (9) Academic regulations affecting students

- A motion to add this item to the 9/17 Faculty Senate agenda carried unanimously.

- Associate Provost Lindner will reach out to Trevor Pope, Student Government President.

- Following an inquiry, it was noted that the fluctuation in numbers from yesterday on the *Monitoring Status of COVID-19 at UF* dashboard: <http://www.ufl.edu/articles/2020/09/covid-data.html> occurred because UF Health's data now encompasses individuals who are utilizing the isolation facilities.

- While some students are expressing frustration that they are not being made aware of fellow residents who are quarantining in their dorm, the university has noted that the privacy (and identity) of quarantined individuals must be maintained and balanced with these concerns.

Adjournment

Sylvain Doré, Chair

- The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.