

Meeting Minutes
Executive Committee of the AFSE
November 6, 2020
12:00pm via Zoom

Present: Christopher Buneo, Marcus Herrmann, Dianne Hansford, Rosa Krajmalnik-Brown, Anthony Lamanna, Doug Montgomery, Jitendran Muthuswamy, Andreas Spanias, Yalin Wang

Absent: Samantha Brunhaver, Rod Roscoe, Sefaattin Tongay, George Pan

Guest: Dean Kyle Squires

1. Approval of October 2020 Minutes. The October Minutes were unanimously approved by the Executive Committee.
2. Impact of Covid-19. Kyle: We are in the midst of registering for spring semester. We are seeing fewer students registering than we would normally see looking back a year ago. That is a concern. We teach by zoom and classroom. Campus is a safe environment with lower rates of infection because we don't have a lot of people around. But this makes it difficult to convince students of "why are you here"? How does that strike you from the perspective on ways that we can increase engagement among students?" Many faculty seem unsure of how to further engage students. People have found their minimum energy state with respect to engagement. This state could have been arrived at in August; when the temperature was miserable it was easier to stay in the dorm and flip open the laptop rather than walk across campus. If you're a first-year student, your college experience started in August unlike any we have ever had. Some of those kids are questioning -- should I come back?

Is there any difference between the on-line vs. on campus data? As you'd expect, the greater level of uncertainty is with first year students and then as you move into upper division students, who can see the end and won't opt out. They're going to keep going. I think in the online space there is some impact. Not surprising when the economy is not super. There are a lot of stresses on the system right now. How much down are the numbers from last year? Within Engineering it's in the 5-6% range. Kyle will get another update later today.

How much of ASU's revenue is from tuition? ASU's budget is north of \$3.2 billion per year. The lion's share comes from tuition. It's important to understand that tuition is very important. From an operations perspective, there are really significant ramifications, and this is true around the country. We haven't been very welcoming to people coming to the US from overseas to go to school or go to work. A lot of international kids just didn't come. We're working on fixing that situation. There are real financial impacts. ASU altogether has 125,000 students. The impact within engineering that we're looking at with the international cohort is 1,000. They are paying market price. Our ability to attract them has driven the way we build our structure and when things get that strongly disrupted it's a big impact.

Do we have an idea of why people are not coming back? We've always had competition with the community colleges. Students can pay less for their first two years at the community college. What's our value proposition? On campus offers the energy, connecting within groups, ventures, involvement in research. They came to be with friends and make friends. Without these experiences, community college comes out ahead. Will we be able to make up for the lack of in-person/face-to-face experience? We aren't there yet. This is why we need to step up.

Do you know what the split is between the lower of the first two years and the upper division? No. the numbers are shifting a lot and that's why it's getting a lot of attention. To just let things go we end up in not a very good spot come spring. We're trying to hire faculty, trying to do things to advance this place and you need some things in order to do that.

How can faculty through their instruction increase engagement? Does it have to be through their instruction? Chris in SBHSE is having a town hall but first sent out a survey asking what they wanted to talk about. In most of the responses the students were fine with the classrooms. Where they were hurting was on the other side – social and other types of engagement. Tony in SSEBE asked about whether field trips would continue. They build a lot of their teaching around construction site visits. Kyle will have to get back to him on that. Another way to increase engagement is through field trips – gets groups together. Kyle is going to have his ASU 101 group walk labs. Kyle will provide guidance on the range of activities. Jit in SBHSE commented that just being on campus makes a big difference. Perhaps there might be a socially distant mixer or something similar. There are also outdoor classrooms available for the Spring. Tony reported on a construction alumni forum designed to do things with students. They had a social mixer over zoom with over 60 students attending and gave prizes. They want to do it again. Getting alumni involved would be helpful. Kyle says we can also do things through the career center. For the most part, the way we deliver classes working well enough. We should continue to improve how we do it. It's more about what happens outside: mixer, field trip, and lab tours.

We're also trying to craft some optional messaging for faculty because I think we're going to be asking faculty to create some excitement for enrolling in the spring. The instructor for the spring continuing course could visit your class to create some excitement about the course. Another idea would be to crowd source ideas from students. Each of you all give me 2 ideas -- we'll take some of the best ones and put them into practice and also communicate to the students before the end of this term.

Is there a way to know who of our students has registered? Kyle says yes but it needs structure. It needs to be determined how we can best organize that so we don't flood our advising staff with additional requests for information. Once the syllabi for spring classes are ready, that's the opportune moment for the instructor to push the note out.

An example on The Research Experience for Undergrads (REU). That's our value proposition and it comes back to the remark made about the community colleges. That's not within

their domain. That's why we get kids to come. It's things that are outside the classroom and we just need to tee up as many of those that make sense and do that.

Students who live on campus will self-assemble, form study groups, have their peers that they work with and go to classes with. That's clearly more difficult now. Do you think it's useful for faculty to encourage that and here is a mechanism that they could use -- zoom, other apps that they're savvier on? Dianne in CIDSE had a student complain that she was lonely, so Dianne suggested an app used by students within her informatics classes. The student tried it and was happier.

Engineering jobs are there and they are paying well. We have to find a clever way to get that message out. Starting engineering salaries are 90% higher than the state of Arizona average. Fender Guitar is in Scottsdale being run by our engineers.

Kyle – as you reflect on these ideas -- a unit town hall, lab engagement and social hour -- put those to practice. It will build momentum over time.

New Economy Initiative. A report by Dean Squires following a meeting with his board. The topic was to discuss the request by the Arizona Board of Regents for investment. That proposal is called the New Economy Initiative. It's a literal proposal (a public document) from the Board of Regents for investment in each of the three initiatives for a new economy of the future, future companies, etc. We did this last year. We were heading for funding in the spring; COVID disrupted everything. We're back at it. What do we want to do? Expand capacity – add faculty to the infrastructure; connect faculty research into the community, into companies to create shorten path between discovery and practice; add in infrastructure – classrooms, technology, teaching support for upscaling and rescaling the workforce. This is the same as last year. What's changed? This is what's happened over the past year. We're big enough now where companies are influenced by the Fulton Schools when they make decisions about relocating. We're actually involved; I get asked about it; I'm involved in recruitment. We're not the only reason companies come but we're a big factor. They're doing it because of our proximity to talent. Zoom is here, Infosys. Our request is 3 things – money for hiring faculty, money for science and tech centers and other investments in rescaling. The plan is to establish 5 science and technology centers. Actual places, faculty start-up companies, establish companies in proximity, accessing tools, growing talent providing opportunities for students as a way to accelerate economic growth in these sectors.

Part of the way to get the aerospace industry back on its feet will be to stand up advanced manufacturing in a more significant way. Aerospace is hurting. Automation, robotics, 3-d printing. That's something we're seeking investment in. The center of gravity of that center would be likely be the East Valley at Poly Campus.

Other themes include energy and human performance. This conversation has started over the past couple of months. Because the STC's are still conceptually framing, any reaction or criticism by the Executive Committee would be extremely helpful. EC members could send Kyle any feedback on industries both local and distant.

Are there issues out there that you're spotting that you can help with? Dianne read comments sent in by EC member Rod Roscoe who couldn't attend regarding COVID testing. He had concerns about the random testing. Some are being tested more often, some never. I learned that the testing team are open and responsive to feedback. They say it's a learning process and they have encountered a few errors and have fixed them. Some people were double listed on faculty, staff and student lists and had increased chances of being selected separately from each list. There were some instances where people have scheduled voluntary tests and then randomly selected less than 2 days later. There is supposed to be a 48 hour window where a person cannot be selected again. Sometimes that window has failed. There's also been an issue where someone has been contacted about testing and then didn't go. The way the messages are getting out in email are a bit whacky. I think the 48 hours has been addressed, contacting people who didn't respond has been addressed. The team is being pretty responsive. Issues are still being reported when using the app.

3. Invited speakers in Zoom environment – testing plan and speaker suggestions. Rosy in SSEBE had an invited speaker through the AAES lecture; something that happens yearly. There weren't a lot of people in attendance. There was also a faculty meeting with speaker which only had about 5 attend – speaker, Rosy and 2-3 people. If we do these, we need to figure out a way to be more aggressive in advertising it. This speaks to the minimum energy state. We have to get out of that "digital fatigue". People are picking and choosing what they want to do virtually.
4. Other items from EC Members. Town Hall reminder – November 20th, encourage everyone in your school to register; will be online.

Next Meeting:
December 4, 2020; 12 noon; via Zoom