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**ACADEMIC STAFF ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES**

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**Monday, October 12, 2020**

**3:30 to 5:00 p.m.**

Provost Karl Scholz called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

**Guest: Rebecca Blank, Chancellor**

Chancellor Rebecca Blank thanked everyone in the Academic Staff Assembly for their service. She also thanked Jenny Dahlberg for her service as ASEC Chair in the fall, Tim Dalby for succeeding Jenny as ASEC Chair in January, and Jake Smith, who has become the permanent Secretary of the Academic Staff. Chancellor Blank reported that we made our admissions goal, with 7300 freshmen and 1000 transfer students. A record share of that class, 13.5%, is from historically underrepresented groups. This is the largest share ever and has resulted from strategies of our admissions office, as well as success in raising scholarship dollars. Graduation rates continue to rise, with an 88.5% 6-year graduation rate. UW has many researchers working on problems related to COVID, from trials in the hospital, medications, and effects on communities. UW also has two new buildings open this fall, the Nicholas Recreation Center and the Meat Science Building.

Chancellor Blank remarked on preparations that were made for reopening in the fall. There were testing capacity for surveillance plans, data collection systems, various contingency plans, and thousands of courses were brought online. One week into the semester, there was a large spike in cases. There was an aggressive response, with student movements restricted, a 2-week pause for in-person instruction, and a quarantine of 2 residence halls. These decisions were not taken lightly, and the 2-week pause brought the count down. We have been slowly reopening but didn’t want to do this without some changes. Testing capacity has been expanded, with the on-campus lab delivering faster results, and testing in the dorms is happening more frequently than before. None of this could have been done without academic staff. In-person classes have resumed in some cases. We are doing our best to stay flexible, particularly with the freshmen. The protocols we have put in place are working, and there is no evidence that there has been any transmission of infection in classrooms or lab spaces. Messaging continues to emphasize the importance of health protocols and individual behavior. There are also consequences to students for violating health protocols. All courses go completely virtual after Thanksgiving, and if students are going home, they will be asked to stay home for the rest of the semester.

Regarding football, in August the Chancellors and Presidents of the Big 10 decided to delay the football season. A group of medical advisors from around the Big 10 put a series of protocols together for how play might resume. The Big 10 has contracted with a major national firm to run testing protocols for student athletes, coaches, and staff, who will be tested on a daily basis. Individuals being tested don’t get involved in anything until the results of those rapid tests are received. Chancellor Blank voted to allow football to play a delayed season because of these new measures, but this will be a very different season. There will be no one in the stadiums except teams, essential personnel, and some media. There will be no game day activities. All of this has created a budget crisis. We are hundreds of millions of dollars below our forecast. Most of this is in our auxiliaries, but there are also losses in state dollars with lapses in this fiscal year and the previous one. We face two problems: short-term cash flow problems and long-term base budget cut problems. To handle these, there were hiring and salary freezes, as well as 6 months of progressive furloughs. Reserves were used as well. We are putting our budget together this year and making decisions about further budget measures. Further furloughs are on the table, and if they are done, they would again be done in a progressive way. By the end of October, there will be more information on the responses to the budget.

The other crisis is one of racial equity, and UW is responding as a campus community in many different ways. There is work on diversity among students, with numbers up in the incoming freshman class. There is also work on diversity for faculty through the targets of opportunity hiring program. Chancellor Blank is thinking about what more we need to be doing for diversity among staff. We are working on training opportunities for faculty, staff and students on campus. We have created several spaces for students of color in addition to the Multicultural Student Center. On the topic of campus policing, Chancellor Blank reported on the ASM vote of no confidence in UWPD. She reiterated that UWPD is necessary on a campus of this size and has been on the forefront of a number of progressive policing changes. Chief Roman also launched a major racial equity initiative last spring.

Through all of this, we continue to focus on our core missions of teaching, research, and outreach, and Chancellor Blank thanked the academic staff for finding ways to be flexible and make changes to the way we deliver on these missions. She challenged those present to be thinking about the things we want to learn from this crisis to make UW a better organization and thanked academic staff for all that they do for the university.

**Guest: Brady Minter, President-Elect, Madison Academic Staff Network**

The Madison Academic Staff Network (MASN) is a professional organization that serves the community of UW-Madison academic staff. It provides information as well as a forum for discussing issues related to academic staff. There are also regular networking opportunities for members. MASN is working to adapt its offerings in light of COVID and would welcome any suggestions from the membership on events that they would like to see. Brady encouraged academic staff to visit the website at <https://madisonacademicstaffnetwork.org>, and information on joining can be found there.

**Automatic Consent Business**

The Academic Staff Assembly minutes of Monday, September 14, 2020, were approved.

**Reports**

Jenny Dahlberg, ASEC chair, encouraged attendees to look at the Smart Restart website for a variety of resources for employees, including leave options and numerous resources for supervisors. She mentioned that the deadline for the current round of applications for Academic Staff Professional Development Grants was October 23. Jenny announced that Lesley Fisher was recently hired as the new Deputy Secretary of the Academic Staff, succeeding Jake Smith in that role. Jenny also reiterated her appreciation to the Chancellor, the Provost, and the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration for the ability to have input into planning issues. She encouraged those present to send any issues or concerns to herself or to the Secretary of the Academic Staff Office. She also highlighted a forthcoming call for a new committee charged to help create curriculum for diversity training for employees.

Jenny Dahlberg delivered the ASPRO report. ASPRO has voted to offer a one-time limited reduction in membership cost for any new members. Membership payments through payroll deduction will be waived for three months. For members paying annually, the fee would be reduced from $175 to $135. Jenny encouraged those who are interested in joining to contact her directly. ASPRO also has a meeting scheduled to meet with Interim UW System President Tommy Thompson about the issues facing academic staff across UW System.

ASEC member Donna Cole presented the Report of 2019-2020 Academic Staff Assembly Business (ASA Document #740). The Assembly passed 11 resolutions in the last academic year, and those documents can be found on the academic staff website.

**Provost Report**

Provost Scholz has received questions on the status of the teaching and research professor titles and when they might be able to be used. Schools and colleges and respective units are drafting final guidelines that will govern their processes for using these titles. OHR is working to formalize the process for beginning to use the titles, and the schools and colleges have until the end of the calendar year to finalize their guidelines.

On the topic of spring modality for instruction, this is a difficult question. Provost Scholz reiterated his belief in support of the residential college experience, and it is different in the midst of a pandemic. There is a hunger for in-person instruction in some parts of the university, but campus must respect the virus and mitigate health risks as possible. The university is working hard to figure out what testing regime we can put in place for the spring semester, and these testing plans are important to determining the appropriate modalities for spring instruction. The course calendar is being finalized, and courses with enrollments over 50 will be held remotely. To the extent that it takes place in person, instruction will continue to occur with masks and physical distancing. Classes under 50 are designated with the modality of “being decided.” In mid-November, course modalities will be determined and the Registrar’s Office will design the course schedule.

The deans have been very active and have been meeting twice a week to share best practices and learn from each other in response to the pandemic. The deans are also focusing on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in one of those twice weekly meetings. We have three new deans: Daniel Tokaji (Law School), Karl Martin (Extension), and Eric Wilcots (Letters and Science).

Provost Scholz also highlighted several of the remarkable things that are happening during these challenging time. UW continues to receive large grants for research and continues to be a top university in securing patents. UW’s retention rates are improved, time to degree is down, and our graduation rates are the best they have ever been.

Adjourned at 4:54 pm.

*Minutes submitted by Jake Smith, Secretary of the Academic Staff*