

Tulane Staff Advisory Council

April 21, 2021

Present: Trina Beck, Monique Hodges, Anita Jobson-Wolfe, Lea Goodwin, Steven Coy, Janel Fielding, Brittney Hamer, Tsetsa Dankova Rosensteel, Korey Lane, J. Malbrough, Kathy Carneiro, Kevin Grant, Evan Nicoll, Shannon Aicklen, Robert Morton, Marie Maywalt, Barbara Ryan, Carmen McCaffrey, Gale Marie Abbass, Kristen Jones, Lucia La Salle, Will Ferbos, Ashley Hicks, Antoine Young, Jonathan Remkes, Julie D'Antoni, Julie Henriquez Aldana, Laura Doré Wiley, Lindsay Hellwig, Matthew Tombaugh, Natalia Fuentes, Philip Stitt, Shawn Potter, Taryn Vinet, Brittney Yandle, Christopher Stokes, Kim Fleming, Barbara Nazar, Amy Hurd

Excused: Jean Paul Lefort, Kady Weingart, Margaret Bell

Guests: Dionne Weber, Lavonzell Nicholson

Call to Order 3:01 pm

Welcome everyone!

Please email us at sac@tulane.edu to confirm your attendance if you are on Zoom on your phone.

1. **Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Minutes from the March 2021 meeting prepared by Anita Jobson-Wolfe were reviewed and voted on. Minutes are approved with one minor correction.
2. **Guest Speaker:** Dr. Susan Hassig from the School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine is an epidemiologist and has been out front with the COVID pandemic.
 - The virus ebbs and flows across and within countries which makes it challenging to understand what is going on. Brazil and India have very high case counts right now. For cumulative deaths, the US has one of the worst records and we have hit over 3 million deaths globally. In both cases and mortality, the virus has had a differential impact across different communities across the globe, with some populations hit much harder than others. On a global level & in US, the number of cases being reported is a minimal number of cases as compared with actual numbers – testing is not universal, and sometimes even if people are tested, it is not reported. We should look at CDC numbers as the lower boundary- actual numbers could be 2-5 times higher. Current case counts are lower than in December / January but not as low as we could be, and cases have been going up recently which is cause for concern. We are currently seeing as many cases as we saw during the summer peak last year.

- The UK variant is believed to be driving the case expansions in Michigan, the Northeast and Florida. Louisiana is not testing enough isolates to determine prevalence of the UK variant here.
- COVID is challenging to predict as it varies based on where it is and what else is going on in that area. The vaccine is helping to keep people out of hospitals and stopping transmission if one has the vaccine.
- Louisiana and Mississippi are two of the worst states for per capita mortality. SPHTM scientists are looking at why we were impacted so severely.
- Louisiana cases have been flat for about 3-4 weeks, but please be alert to the fact that the latest data suggests that cases may be going back up. We need to watch the hospitalization numbers for Louisiana as they are starting to go back up as well, and this is concerning to Dr. Hassig.
- Vaccines in Louisiana are off to a good start. The state has reached around 1 million vaccinations and we have totally vaccinated about 25% of our population. Region 1 Orleans (above 40% vaccinated), Region 7 Shreveport, and Region 2 Baton Rouge are usually best performing areas in the state. We are concerned about those in the older age groups who have not been vaccinated. We have a lot of work to get Louisiana vaccinated so herd immunity can chop off transmission. We need to get the 18–50-year-olds vaccinated.
- The world has come a long way in a year. The politicization of the vaccine may wind up being a real challenge to making the US safer.
- The future depends on a lot of variables – COVID keeps evolving – Orleans Parish has specific challenges as it is a tourist city and needs to let in others to survive but needs the visitors to be vaccinated. Human behavior is hard to modify or predict. Masking will still be important as well as the distancing.
- *Question:* What percentage of the population needs to be vaccinated to come to herd immunity? Estimates are the entire adult population (75-80%). About 20% of US population is under age 18. Pfizer may be authorizing a vaccine for those between ages 12 and 16 which will help.
- Maintaining herd immunity is important as is maintaining it in different environments, i.e., different regions having different levels of vaccinations. Variants are challenging.
- This type of RNA virus mutates easily; the more people it cycles through, the more likely it is to mutate further. If we do not get the virus under control globally, the P1 variant may

mutate again into a more problematic variant. This is one of the reasons vaccination is extremely important.

- *Question:* Why are we doing better? Because we are outside? Not sure why. Not sure we really are doing better as we are not testing as much as we used to. Dr. Hassig does not like the uptick in the hospitalizations even if case counts are not going up.
- *Question:* What if one has had COVID and is afraid to get the vaccine? Dr. Hassig recommends getting the vaccine even if you had had COVID. It is like COVID was the first dose of the vaccine but it's not a robust/durable enough immunity without the added help from the vaccine. Wait 2-3 months after your infection to get vaccine. If one has had Long COVID, some data suggests that the symptoms improve after receiving the vaccine. Talk with your doctor.
- Email Dr. Hassig (shassig@tulane.edu) if you have other questions.

3. **Announcements by Human Resources:** Kim Fleming has no updated news from HR. She wanted to remind everyone about the COVID resource for employees on the Tulane HR website [COVID HR Resource website: <https://hr.tulane.edu/covid-19/employee-resources>]. Kim encourages everyone to reach out to their HR Business Partner (HRBP) with any questions. The HR business partners are also resources for managers to share concerns. To share ideas, suggestions, concerns, or interests contact HRBP as a resource: <https://hr.tulane.edu/employee-relations/hr-business-partners>

4. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. **Board of Administrators (BOA)** – Kathy Carneiro reported that the Board met on April 15th. There was a State of the University discussion with annual reporting from President Fitts, the Alumni Association and Academic Affairs. University position is strong. The framing of meeting was where we started with COVID to where are we now and where are we going. Tulane's guiding principles around the COVID-related depopulation and repopulation of the campus are based on our place-based relational positioning as a residential institution in New Orleans, as well as on health-based considerations: we want to protect our populations and our community, but we also recognize the value of being here on site in NOLA. Use of scientific and evidence-based

research and reporting – i.e., work out of the SOM, SPHTM, TNPRC – to guide testing protocols and vaccination rollout. We have had a lot of success with the arrival center and return rates; 80% of courses are in person with 95% of students returned to campus. Positivity rates are incredibly low now; in the 7 days prior to this Board meeting, we had conducted 12,000 tests with only one positive. Vaccine rollout going smoothly with 50% of Tulane staff at least partially vaccinated. We are planning for commencement and a return to normal for Fall 2021 with staff returning to work. Tulane's finances are strong with more investment in research. Admissions numbers are growing. EDI initiatives are increasing funding to multicultural affairs. Research Enterprise to meet the AAU guidelines. Expanding faculty support for grant support, i.e., grant writers and seed money.

- i. *Question:* Natalia Fuentes wants to know what Tulane did that that gave us this success? Kathy thinks being proactive in March with all the planning which included the community as a whole; the rigorous testing; the intake center; and listening to the experts in the Tulane community. Tsetsa Dankova-Rosensteel added that securing the funding for the testing and securing quarantine facilities was also critical.
 - ii. *Question:* Was the Building Naming Task Force report presented to the Board? It was not presented but will be presented at a special meeting soon.
- b. University Senate – Trina Beck reports that President Fitts delivered a similar State of the University as at the Board of Administrators. Had a discussion of returning to work and if they were planning to record classes. They are working on these metrics. Want zoom classes available if students fall ill. They would like to take advantage of our new digital world but want to respect the faculty's time. The Vice President for Research Giovanni Piedimonte reported record success for research grants with more funding now than ever before. The university is writing more grants and increasing lab space, Tulane has a new partnership with ULL, and we are creating new centers of excellence. Presidents Fitts thought the Tulane population would be 100 % vaccinated within a month or so.
- c. Budget – Janel Fielding reports they have not met.
- d. Committee on Committees – Trina Beck reports they have not met.
- e. Equal Opportunity – This committee has not met. There is an open non-exempt representative position – if interested email sac@tulane.edu. Email Natalia Fuentes if you have any questions on the committee.

f. Benefits – Trina Beck reported that:

- there will be retirement plan changes with Fidelity and TIAA. Multiple record keepers mean we pay more in fees versus a sole record keeper. Tulane is moving to a sole record keeper to save costs. This has been in the works since 2018 and HR is in the final stages of selecting the record keeper between the two finalists, Fidelity and TIAA. HR realizes this will be a major transition for everyone and are planning a lengthy and intentional roll out of the change.
- The committee talked about the impact of COVID on the medical plans. We have paid out 2.7m in COVID-related claims but balanced out with deferred medical costs as people delayed their planned surgeries etc., Tulane has come out slightly ahead financially.
- Tulane did pay out more life insurance claims last year.
- There was a boom in virtual visits including telehealth visits.
- Tulane is getting a specialty pharmacy in network for special medicines.
- There will be a second Tulane wellness clinic at Broadway.
- Tulane Medical is partnering with Teledoc to create a virtual services platform with Tulane doctors.
- HR is currently considering including more infertility services with our benefits package, which currently only covers testing. This may have minimal impact on premiums overall and it is something that other higher education institutions are including more often in their plans.

g. Information Technology – Antoine Young reports there was a presentation from IT to the committee focusing on what will be the new normal. Mike Griffith from ILC said they are taking lessons learned and bringing them into the Fall. There will be a number of improvements in classrooms with a focus on the digital journey. He mentioned the evolution of support services and big data. They are reintroducing the Innovation Council in July which will be a Center of Excellence of Digital Scholarship. Another new item is a Student Customer Relation Management Tool will take a lot of present data, i.e., retention, advising, advancement; to give a lifecycle view of the student. This is something called journey mapping. This will be led by Dr. Porter. The Data Warehouse is in the third phase and is evolving. Another piece is the Research Computing, IT will try to provide a “One Stop Shop”. There will be 3-tiers, but issues are a barrier to usage due to cost with using each option. There needs to be equity associated across departments as not all can afford to pay. The e-Clinic Life Sciences Digital Platform is going forward.

Research Data Management services coming up. The Globus platform is resuming in July. Grant Life Cycle Management is back up.

h. Facilities – J Malbrough reports

- i. housing Phase 1 on schedule and under budget and set to open in July 2022. Phase 2 is on hold.
- ii. Paul hall is fully underway and are selecting the contractor within next few weeks. They are expecting to open Paul Hall in Spring 2023
- iii. Charity hospital expansion is still under negotiations still ongoing for rental/ lease. Tulane will be an anchor tenant of the East Tower bordering on LaSalle by the School of Medicine Hutchinson building. It will house administration and expect multiple schools – School of Medicine, School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine, and the School of Professional Advancement, to be in the building. Estimation for occupation is late 2024 or early 2025 –
- iv. Uptown TUPD substation is getting under way and expected to be open spring 22 on Broadway.
- v. The Downtown gym in the Deming Pavilion is under construction and should be open in Fall 2021 (more likely in October)
- vi. 1351 Gravier -the old Warwick hotel – should be open July 2021 as an apartment building for Tulane students, faculty, and staff. They are taking applications now.
- vii. Richardson memorial building renovation is in the early planning stages and awaiting approval.
- viii. Committee voted to bring the parking items to the full Senate for ratification. These were the All-Hours Parking Policy and the Overall Parking Policy for Uptown and Downtown which needed to be updated after 10 years. Updates included the removing the police from the parking policy; judicial function process policy; and the parking appeals process.
 1. *Question* – What is the Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the housing plan? Phase 1 is the Bruff Commons housing site and Phase 2 would be the tear down of Phelps, Irby, and Patterson and replacing these with 3 new buildings.
 2. *Question* – How do people apply to Warwick? Not sure – will check.
 3. *Question* – Will Warwick have temporary housing? Pretty sure it will not.

5. **SAC COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. Community Service – Trina has nothing new to report,

- b. Health & Wellness – Amy Hurd currently promoting Bike Easy Challenge with 50 riders and over 1,000 miles logged. Amy would like to step back from being the Chair of this committee after serving since 2016. If interested, please email Amy Hurd or Trina Beck.
 - c. Staff Appreciation – Football game dates are Thursday, October 7th night game or Saturday, September 25 with the time announced two weeks before. A Zoom poll was held and the committee voted in favor of selecting Saturday, September 25.
 - d. Staff Issues – Natalia Fuentes reported they have met. Working on setting up a schedule for meeting.
 - e. Electronic Technologies– Antoine Young reports that a new thing is a SAC team on Microsoft Teams. He hopes to have a larger conversation to set goals & make plans.
 - f. Constitution – no active business
6. Old Business –
- a. Still need committee staffing positions – have one non-exempt Senate Committee position to fill on the Equal Opportunity Committee. Will be checking in with the reps to make sure they are on SAC committees.
7. New Business -
- a. Committee guidelines were shared with all. Before we really dive into committee work we are taking time to regroup and think about the role of the committees.
 - b. Congrats to Will Ferbos on the Yvette Milner Jones Award which is so well deserved.

Next meeting is May 26th at 3pm on Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31pm.