

Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes FY 2020 – October 21, 2020 – Webex

Present: Dr. Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Dr. Cameron Jeter, Dr. Elda Ramirez, Dr. Jennifer Bailey, Dr. Nicholas R. De Lay, Dr. Joseph Alcorn, Dr. Catherine Ambrose, Dr. Elaheh Ashtari, Dr. Meena Bhattacharjee, Dr. Linh Bui, Dr. Nachum Dafny, Dr. Carmen Dessauer, Dr. Rashedah Ekeoduru, Dr. Nahid Rianon, Dr. Bethany Williams, Dr. Licong Cui, Dr. Luca Giancardo, Dr. Kirk Roberts, Dr. Debora Simmons, Dr. Daniel Harrington, Dr. Kurt Kasper, Dr. Dharini van der Hoeven, Dr. Michele White, Dr. Sandra Branson, Dr. Vaunette Fay, Dr. Carole Mackavey, Dr. Seth Stephens, Dr. Cecilia Ganduglia-Cazaban, Dr. Craig Hanis, Dr. Ross Shegog, Dr. Michael Swartz, Dr. Kulvinder Bajwa, Dr. Nate Carlin, Dr. Syed Hashmi, Dr. Assaf Gottlieb, Dr. Ariadne Letra, Dr. Donald Molony, Dr. Hugh Pierpont, Dr. Francine Snow, Ms. Ankita Podichetty, and Dr. Pauline Monsegue-Bailey

Guests: Dr. Jair Soares, Mr. Scott Forbes, and Ms. Kate Crawford

Ex-Officio Attendees: Dr. Kevin Morano and Dr. Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş

Administrative Personnel: Ms. Terrie Schade-Lugo

I. CALL TO ORDER | APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES *Dr. Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, IFC Chair FY 2021*

Dr. Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, IFC Chair FY 2021, called the meeting to order at 11:32 AM and welcomed the outgoing IFC members from FY 2020. She explained that the September meeting each year is the IFC's transition meeting, where incoming and outgoing members attend. At the transition meeting, the members of the Governmental Affairs Office at UTHealth attend the IFC meeting to provide the Annual Legislative Update. We were unable to coordinate with the Governmental Affairs Office for September but are pleased to have them visit this month and have invited the FY 2020 IFC members to attend.

Dr. Champagne-Langabeer polled the members for any objections or corrections to the minutes for September 16, 2020. Upon motion made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved, as presented.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS *Dr. Kevin A. Morano Associate VP for Faculty Affairs & Development, UTHealth*

An article about the awardees for the 2019 President's Scholar Awards was published through Public Affairs. We also circulated the call for nominations for the 2020 President's Scholar Awards that are due to the UTHealth Office of Faculty Affairs & Development on December 1.

The Postdoctoral Office was limited to sponsoring J-1 Visas on an annual basis. We encountered several inconveniences with the J-1 Visas, such as the requirement of paying each year. In these cases, if there were an accompanying spouse, they would be on a J-2 Visa, which had a one-year limit and made it difficult for them to obtain employment. Dr. Morano advised that the policy has been changed, and now, all post-docs will be sponsored for the period equal to their fundable employment (e.g., if your funding source for a post-doc is for three years, we will obtain a three-year Visa, etc.). This policy change aligns us with our sister institutions and peers across the country and should make us more competitive to secure post-docs for the labs. Further, we will permit existing post-docs on one-year Visas to shift to a multi-year Visa if time and money are available. Dr. Morano advised if there were questions, please contact him or Ms. Leslie Beckman in the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

At a meeting recently attended by Dr. Morano, Mr. Kevin Dillon gave a 30,000-foot overview of our financial situation. Despite everything that has happened in 2020, our financial situation is very strong right now. Dr. Morano extended his thanks to all the staff and faculty that spent time and energy to assist in this process by taking vacation time or leaves of absence. There was a huge financial obligation on the books for vacation time, and it is essentially under control.

- Question: Does the school have a set procedure for the expected pandemic increase?
 - Answer: We are not aware of any new plan; we will watch it closely and continue doing what has been keeping UTHealth safe. Our positivity rate is in the low 1-2% positive rate for COVID. Social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, etc., will continue.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Mental Health and COVID

Dr. Jair Soares, Chair, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences; and Executive Director, UTHealth HCPC, McGovern Medical School at UTHealth

Dr. Champagne-Langabeer advised the membership that she invited Dr. Jair Soares to speak on mental health during this pandemic crisis.

Dr. Soares said that we are going through a very stressful time, and everyone hopes things will get back to what we all knew as normal soon. There is emerging data showing increased issues surrounding personal physical safety and that of family members, and concerns with the security of employment and personal financial situations. The data shows that depression and suicide rates are much higher in situations as described and socialized isolation situations. The question is, how to best cope with what we are going through? The answer is intuitive; however, it bears repeating. Self-care during times, such as the pandemic, becomes extremely important. Getting enough sleep is very important. Not treating anxiety by overindulging with alcohol is more important. Studies have proved that getting regular exercise impacts reducing stress, anxiety and decreases depression. There are tools that we can learn meditation techniques for relaxation, even on YouTube. When these basic self-care methods and techniques do not work, professional help should be sought. Our school has made it very easy to get the help needed. A flyer was provided and is made a part of these minutes. By calling 713-486-COVID, an appointment can be easily arranged with The Department of Psychiatry. This number is for anyone, inside or outside of the UTHealth community, to use.

Legislative Update

Mr. Scott Forbes, VP, Governmental Affairs, UTHealth and Ms. Kate Crawford, Associate VP, Governmental Affairs, UTHealth

UTHealth had a robust legislative program before the COVID-19 pandemic stripped it down to three things. Mr. Forbes covered one topic and advised that Ms. Crawford would take on our main Article II request, and he advised that they would tag team on the last one:

1. [Scott Forbes] We successfully created the Mission Specific Formula last session, generating about a \$13 million increase in state funding to UTHealth. It is labeled as a pilot study, so our big request for this session is to make it permanent, and hopefully, the Legislature will continue funding the formula increase generated. The funny thing about formulas in higher ed, unlike K-12 education, they are usually equal to how much the Legislature wants to spend on them.
2. [Kara Crawford] The next step to opening the \$125 million 264-bed facility is operational funding from the Legislature. When combined with HCPC, the 538 beds will make it by far the largest academic, mental health complex in the nation. Wes Stewart and his team saved enough money to add a fourth floor to the south tower to add more beds and treatment areas. It is expected to get the keys to the building in late 2021 and open for patients in early 2022. An exciting project that will add acute care capacity will have longer-term subacute beds (up to 60 days instead of 7 days for acute care) and ties with the Harris Center's new residential treatment center.

Our Requests:

- FY21 Supplemental of \$500,000 for recruitment of faculty in Summer
- For HCPC, asking to increase the per bed day rate to \$610 from \$530 actually to cover our costs, that is a \$4 million increase in appropriations per year, \$8 million biennium
- For the BSC, we'll have a rolling opening. For FY22, we ask for \$1.4 million for operational funding to start up and then ask for the same \$610 per bed day rate as HCPC. We will ask for about the same ratio of state-funded beds to third party beds as HCPC, the "HCPC model" (2/3 state, 1/3 third party Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance). HCPC has 182 state beds out of 274 beds, and the BSC is proposed to be 168 beds out of the 264 beds. We expect to be fully operational by the end of FY22 and are asking for \$14.2 million, plus the operational startup of \$1.4 million = \$15.6 million.

- For FY23, the request for the 168 beds at BSC is \$37.4 million for the year.
 - We are also asking for \$500,000 per year for accountability and outcomes reporting, essentially research to see if what we are doing is working after the state has invested so much into mental health—really looking for Houston to be nationally known for innovative solutions to mental health issues.
 - Total ask to open the new building and fund HCPC during an economic crisis for both FY22-23, plus the FY21 supplemental \$134.6 million. That is a net increase of \$61.6 million.
3. Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute’s (TEPHI) mission is to collaboratively prepare Texas better than any other state for the next public health threat by creating a Public Health Reserve based on a “National Guard” model for pandemic preparedness, including workforce and infrastructure preparedness, and an integrated research program on the long-term chronic health impacts of a pandemic, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Essentially, we get called up to assist the state and local health authorities who are in charge. We will have trained a workforce that can be mobilized, prepared labs, test sites, shelter plans, hospital plans, and importantly, have access to timely and accurate data to help decision making by leadership. This is a cost-effective way to prepare without having sunk assets at DSHS. These people will have full-time jobs and train part-time for PHEs. Labs can convert but will have other uses during non-emergency times, etc.
 - Will involve all of UTHealth, all six campuses of SPH, DSHS, TDEM, local public health authorities, other academic institutions, nonprofits, etc. There is also a request for funding to study the current COVID pandemic chronic health conditions, Long COVID patients, that will further advance future epidemics preparations.
 - It could be a good use of the CARES Act if funding is loosened only slightly. No deficit hole filling but can use for prepping for the next pandemic. Right now, the CARES funding only applies to the current PHE and is limited to only certain emergency functions like testing, hospital expansion if ICUs fill up, etc. We are looking at funding from Article II (health funding), Article III (education), etc.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Campus Reports:

Cizik School of Nursing

Dr. Sandra Branson

Announcements

- Associate Professor Hyocho “Brian” Ahn, PhD, ANP-BC, has been named Assistant Dean for Research at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth effective October 16.
- Dr. Elda Ramirez was selected to represent Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth on the American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s (AACN’s) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group (DEIG).

Operations

- The CSON continues to work in a hybrid model for the fall, with didactic courses primarily online with simulation and clinical placement in our acute care and community settings.
- The CSON continues to work on the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) spring evaluation visit.

Grants

- Dean Diane Santa Maria received a three-year \$731,783 award from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) that will fund a pilot project to tailor and test a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) designed for delivery to youth staying in homeless shelters.

Scholarships

- Two operational scholarship funds have been created for doctoral students: The Joanne V. Hickey Scholarship for a DNP student focused on neurology and The Joan C Engebretson Scholarship for a doctoral student focused on qualitative research.

Publications

- Dr. “Brian” Ahn and colleagues published a [research study](#) on functional near-infrared spectroscopy to assess central brain responses in nonpharmacologic treatment trials of osteoarthritis in the *Journal of Neuroimaging*.
- Dr. Rebecca Helmreich and colleagues published a [systematic review and meta-analysis](#) on perceived stress and diet quality in women of reproductive age in the *Nutritional Journal*.
- Dr. Susan Ruppert and colleagues published an [article](#) outlining the rationale and procedures for conducting and documenting student visits that can be applied to recertification for the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification in the *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*.
- Dr. Jennifer Beauchamp and colleagues published a [research study](#) on caregiver burden and associated factors among informal caregivers of stroke survivors in the *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*.
- Dr. Daphne Hernandez and colleagues published a [research study](#) on the bidirectional relationship between housing stability and food insecurity in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Dr. Nicholas De Lay

Diversity and Inclusion

- GSBS will participate in an NIH study in Culturally Aware Mentoring beginning in January. They will need 25 faculty to participate in the study. Additional details will be sent out to GSBS Faculty soon.
- During graduate student recruitment, GSBS will be targeting schools that have a minority focus. GSBS has developed a faculty and student ambassador program to assist in this.

GSBS Leadership

- Since GSBS Co-Dean Dr. Michelle Barton left, the leadership of UTHealth and MD Anderson have decided to have only a single dean head GSBS, Dr. Michael Blackburn.
- To partially fill the vacuum caused by the departure of Dr. Barton, Dr. Bill Mattox was promoted to Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Education to take over some of Dr. Barton’s roles, providing a voice for GSBS and its students at MD-Anderson and attending many of the committees that Dr. Barton participated in.

Covid-19

- Graduate students continue to have difficulties commuting to campus due to concerns about taking public transportation and the limitations and cost of parking.
- This is an issue that GSBS leadership is continuing to examine and is looking for creative solutions. GSBS lacks the resources to provide free or heavily subsidized parking for students. So, alternative solutions will need to be found.
- GSBS has sent out an email providing students with additional information on parking and off-peak parking (<https://files.constantcontact.com/0bec6f59201/8f9f9028-7a92-4bd4-8984-cee4f387e425.pdf>) and escorts to vehicles at night (<https://www.utph.org/index/campus-safety>).

McGovern Medical School

Dr. Catherine Ambrose

- Four faculty received the 2019 President’s Scholar Awards. Although an in-person celebration was not possible, they deserve as much virtual acknowledgment as possible.
 - Bela Patel, MD (for clinical service)
 - Belinda Reininger, DrPH (for teaching)
 - Patricia Butler, MD (for teaching)
 - Maureen Mayes, MD, MPH (for research)
- The McGovern Faculty Senate has created a task force to work with Dr. Morano to develop a faculty mentoring program. This will be based on the work done by the IFC Faculty Status, Rights, and Responsibilities Committee last year. The MMS Faculty Senate committee is led by Nahid Rianon, MD.
- At our September meeting:
 - Dr. Luis Ostrosky gave an update on Covid-19.

- The Student Committee on Professionalism and Ethics (SCoPE) presented their compiled definition of ethics based on the values of Respect, Integrity, Compassion, Collaboration, and Self-Improvement and asked for feedback from the faculty.
- Dr. Mark Hormann and Len Cleary presented an update on the impacts of Covid-19 on medical student clinical and didactic training.
- In honor of Women in Medicine month, the Women Faculty Forum presented an overview of the past and planned activities.

School of Biomedical Informatics (SBMI):

Dr. Kirk Roberts

- SBMI held its annual PASS (Planning for Academic Success at SBMI) Day on September 25. PASS Day aims to prepare new SBMI students for completing their degree at SBMI, which is important due to the number of SBMI students from non-traditional educational pathways. The event features talks from faculty, current and former students, and a virtual mixer.
- An SBMI student team won an automatic healthcare fraud detection competition run by MITRE. The team (SBMIers) was advised by SBMI faculty Susan Fenton, Xiaoqian Jiang, and Kirk Roberts. This is the second fraud competition run by MITRE; SBMI students have won both. The competition was held this summer. The students will be presenting their submission to the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association this month.
- SBMI has wrapped up its COVID-19 Datathon, which featured two rounds and 12 teams participating. The Datathon was sponsored by SBMI, Rice, and the Gulf Coast Consortia. Plans are already underway for the next Virtual DATATHON to be held later this fall.

School of Dentistry

Dr. Michele White

- In-person (utilizing social distancing) didactic exams were given on 10/19/2020
- UTSD Research Showcase (Virtual) 10/20/2020.
- Working towards Phase 5 reopening for UTSD pre-doctoral clinics, possibly November 2020 (includes all dental chairs rather than half).
- Planning Faculty and Staff Relations Council Assembly (with in-person and Webex options)

School of Public Health

Dr. Ross Shegog

Faculty Council continuing and new items:

- Positioning for population health initiatives
- Statistical software review for student training.
- AAR and Peer Review updates (submission is complete, and peer-review is underway).
- Faculty mentoring occurs formally across departments (this year's AAR represents the first school-wide reporting on this). The next phase is enhancing the resilience guide for onboarding and steps for success for new and junior faculty and consumer-facing acknowledgment of mentoring on the UTSPH website.
- Review of faculty retention.

Upcoming public health campus events:

- [Advancing Excellence in Transgender Health: A course for the Whole Care Team](#) (Oct. 16-19).
- [Harris Country Public Health - One Health Conference](#) (Oct. 20 & 22).
- Environmental Occupational Health Sciences ([EOHS](#)) [Research Seminar](#) (Oct. 23).
- [10 Annual Postdoc Science Symposium at MD Anderson](#) (Oct. 27-29).
- [Asian American Pacific Islander Health Summit](#) (Oct. 29-30).
- [UTMB's Fourth Annual Conference on Migration and Health](#) (Nov. 16-20).

Media exposure (selected):

- Katelyn Jetelina, PhD, was interviewed by

- Catherine Troisi, PhD, was quoted in [The New York Times' front-page](#) story about COVID-19 trends as the U.S. nears 200,000 deaths due to the virus; interviewed by the [Houston Chronicle](#) about a decline in Texas cases and to [BisNow](#) about outdoor dining precautions in New York City; spoke to [BBC World News](#) viewers and [BBC Newsday](#) listeners about the U.S. reaching 200,000 COVID deaths; was quoted in a [CNBC](#) article and interviewed by [KCBS All News Radio](#) in San Francisco about the same topic.

Dissertation presentations

Three dissertations and four proposal defenses are occurring in late Oct. / early Nov. 2020.

The UHealth Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Update

Dr. Elaheh Ashtari

Dr. Ashtari provided the UHealth Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Recommendations presented to the University Executive Council on October 7, 2020; a copy is attached and made a part of these minutes. One representative from the student, faculty, and staff subcommittee presented their respective recommendations and slides on that date, and the recommendations were well-received. The next step will be to form a standing council on diversity and inclusion to accomplish various short-term goals.

- A brief discussion on implicit bias training being paused. If questions arise, contact the Diversity and Inclusion Office.
 - Dr. Ashtari provided a link for the IFC membership to access to review:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-combating-race-sex-stereotyping/>

V. MISCELLANEOUS

Dr. Champagne-Langabeer

Attachments were distributed for the following, and the copies are attached and made a part of these minutes.

- The Thomas F. Burks Scholarship for Academic Merit Selection Committee for FY 2021;
- The Faculty Tribunal Panel results for FY 2021; and
- The IFC Subcommittees for FY 2021.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Champagne-Langabeer

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Terrie Schade-Lugo, CAP, on November 15, 2020.

Approved by Interfaculty Council on November 18, 2020.