

## **UAMS Academic Senate**

### **Special Council Meeting**

**May 7, 2020, 3 pm**

Present (via Zoom): Tiffany Huitt, Mary Burgess, Gunnar Boysen, Brendan Frett, Abdallah Hayar, Andrew James, Saleema Karim, Leanne Lefler, Bradley Martin, Ashley McNatt, Priya Mendiratta, Edgar Meyer, Grover Miller, Corey Nagal, Steven Post, Elizabeth Riley, Cherika Robertson, James Selig

Abdullah Hayar asked permission for recording the meeting.

Tiffany Huitt welcomed everyone.

Slides were shown:

**Slide 1:** Agenda of the meeting

**Slide 2:** Summary of the Senate communication prior to this meeting: Took email traffic and tried to capture q's, comments, concerns.

**A.** Asking for a virtual town hall to increase transparency. Communication different across colleges.  
Need Clarification: Reductions, communication about strategic plan

**B.** Who is impacted, who is spared, was Senior Leadership cut or how did this impact senior leadership?

With so many working FTE or more, how are they justifying cuts for those faculty

How much is anticipated in savings with this reduction?

Who is aware of these voluntary reductions?

**C.** Ask for a written evaluation of the Strategic Plan

Long term projections, how will reevaluation occur?

**Slide 3:** Highlight of the Chancellor's statement

- Committed more than \$8 million to screening and testing for the state. He discussed some of the actions so far to mitigate, including discretionary spending, hiring freeze.
- He did allude to their expectations. Including losses to be much more.
- Options: Short term option to reduce normal work load, reduce normal work hours. Mentioned part of AR legislation is to pay for time worked.

Tiffany asked for questions or anything needed to add to this Summary of Council Communications:

Leanne Lefler: A couple points: #1 when COVID started in March and we started ramping up. Senior leadership agreed to continue salary regardless of if people working or not. Point is that no one mentioned this, talked about it. Employees had no decision making into this decision. Now: Oh my god, I can't believe this has happened.

Also that this will be revisited in May. How do you not know what your costs will be. So why wait another month to make a decision?

Every time the chancellor has a video, he never addresses this in a specific way. He thanks people and I love all this. It has been talked with the Chairs, but not at UAMS.

We have asked as Academic Senate, to be involved in communication and transparency at beginning of issues. Now we're in trouble and now they ask for faculty input.

Abdallah Hayar: The next day after our annual meeting with Dr. Gardner, we had the cuts.

Gunnar Boysen: Also mentioned at the BOT meeting, that they had contacted the governor. Have we gotten aid? Or are we still waiting for it. Have we gotten it and we are still in the negative?

Tiffany Huitt: I think that's included in the questions in this Communication Strategic Plan. Also Leanne, to your point, how is this information helping them to make financial predictions?

Brad Martin: Reductions so far are temporary. The rush was that they were going to run out of payroll in the next few weeks. I get that. The cardinal thing is the question, is Senior Leadership immune from pay cuts? I want us all to be in this together. I have buyer's remorse, now that I have volunteered and Senior leadership has not.

Priya Mendiratta: I am pretty sure the leaders are going to take the cut, it is coming.

Grover Miller: They are leaders they should have taken the first hit. And then asked others. I am on Faculty Retention committee. They ask us to always give, and we always do. But administration has to sacrifice like everyone else.

Brad Martin: I think they have.

Priya Mendiratta: I think they said in 2 weeks they are revising the plan.

Tiffany Huitt: I think you are exactly right.

Corey Nagel: I took a voluntary pay cut. The idea that senior leadership would offer to take a pay cut, and told by BOT that it's not approved. That they didn't insist, and do what they are asking all the colleges have done. We were told that we have a couple of hours to take a voluntary cut.

Gunnar Boysen: I am pretty sure they know that.

Steve Post: Do we know #1 who is senior leadership that you're talking about. I know people at the Dean's level that have taken cuts. The BOT not voting, doesn't mean senior leadership did not take cuts. We do not know if they did or didn't take pay cuts. I have heard it was substantial. I would be careful.

Tiffany Huitt: Absolutely agree. That is what I understood at what was presented at BOT.

Gunnar Boysen: You never really know who is really in charge. There is no transparency. I hear that all the time "senior leadership" but don't know who it is. That is a good point.

Abdallah Hayar: Chancellor, Dean, Chair when I did my analysis. About 100 people, earn 32 million per year.

Priya: Even when talking senior leadership, there are senior leadership among nurses and others. WE should look at the UAB model. (missed some). Access staff has been cut. How much will they really get from those, it is not a compassionate thing to do.

Steve Post: Webinar leadership on Thursday last week. It went out to all supervisors. 600 some odd people invited to this Town Hall. Mostly they are about Be Nice. (Leanne Lefler interrupted that she was invited but couldn't attend). It is usually worthless. The one on Thursday wasn't worthless. The chancellor did address, HR was there and did their thing. It matches a lot in the statement that came out later. Then it went to the Deans; then the Deans brought it down to the Chair, and then everything fell apart. It did a lot of what we are talking about. He was saying the cuts to individuals who are not working at 100% FTE, is at discretion of supervisor. There is no across campus cut. Supervisors were asked, and had to justify time, were they expected to work at 100% in May? And based on that it went up the chain, and if weren't working 100% was supposed to be voluntary. Even the forms for volunteering were supposed to have defined dates. He talked about trying to get money from the state, from Grants. It was left to the Deans then the Charis to communicate, and they all did it in a different way.

Abdallah Hayar: I don't know if the chair was supposed to share. Who wrote these guidelines. Similar to when the RIF in 2018, pick and choose who to fire, now who to get the pay cut. Would like to know who is making this guideline.

Tiffany Huitt: I have not seen anything about quality or job performance on how these cuts are made. It was on projected load.

Edgar Meyer: Our chair was asking for justification for our time. And I think that she was doing this to protect us from mandatory cuts.

Steve Post: We did this in our department. It was supposed to be on FTE are you at 100% or not because of the COVID crisis.

Priya Mendiratta: Tele visits, are like our clinic visits. You are responsible for setting up the video visit. We are actively seeing patients. You are doing everything that you were doing in the past, except for listening to heart sounds, physical exam.

Tiffany Huitt: And from revenue generating I imagine this is better than nothing.

Priya Mendiratta: It is going to be reimbursed the same as a clinic visit. I think that if they ask us to cut I think we are working the same as before. And as of 2 days ago, it is paying the same as before. Surgery is not working as much.

Steve Post: I think that's why they (...unknown what he said)

Corey Nagel: It is not voluntary. My wife is a midwife and they were all asked to take a 5% FTE reduction. All the admin time was stripped down, and cut down .05 FTE.

Abdallah Hayar: My wife is Myeloma outpatient nurse, and she got 10% cut.

Steve Post: My role on the COM, I have no idea how it was done.

Mary: I can speak for the Clinic side. No one knows. There has been zero communication.

Priya Mendiratta: They have not seen any reduction in hours worked. But if they start reducing salaries for all these who are working, I don't know how it is fair. If they are going to cut salaries,

Steve Post: Priya I like what you said about UAB. They have to have a better plan than arbitrarily cutting.

Tiffany Huitt:

- Details about who is taking cuts, and description about what future cuts will look like. Including Criteria.
- Outcomes that they will evaluate.
- Need inclusion of the Senate at this level. No one in the Senate had been contacted.

I forwarded dialogue to Stephanie Gardner so she is aware that we are discussing the issue, but I have not had any response. That is concerning to me. Because leadership knows we are discussing and we are concerned, and there hasn't been a response.

Brad Martin: Most important thing to me, BOT has protected some individuals from salary reductions and who are they? That there might be a protected class of people from salary reductions.

Steve Post: Or they become untouchable if this becomes mandatory.

Brad Martin: Right. We need to find out first.

Tiffany Huitt: Any other serious concerns?

Corey Nagel: Echoing Brad, leaving who constitutes senior leadership aside. When people were asked to make a voluntary reduction. Was the chancellor a volunteer?

Steve Post: I don't think that we can know. Since it's voluntary, it's up to him to let us know. If it's mandatory we have to know. I agree, it would help with morale to know that.

Tiffany Huitt: I will speak for myself: I have felt pressure from chairs and deans, who have taken cuts. It is generating an atmosphere that this is expected and not voluntary.

Mary Burgess: Was it voluntary? In COM I think it was forced.

Tiffany Huitt: Chancellor has only disclosed voluntary cuts. But what I am hearing is that it was implemented differently. Faculty that are affected by mandatory cuts.

Steve Post: Academic appointment in a college vs. ICE appointment. COM, each department carried it out in their own way. Within COM, if some are mandatory and some are not, there should be communication how that decision was made and why. Pathology was not cut.

Abdullah Hayar: Each department has their own budget, and if they are good, then they are great. Eventually I think that everything is going to be gone, and Open Check book we will know who was cut.

Priya Mendiratta: That is an issue, some of these doctors cannot be cut at all.

Steve Post: I know they discussed federal contract money cannot be touched. H1 is a federal, I think.

James Selig: COP H1 visa were exempt.

Corey Nagel: Were the cuts voluntary:

James: The reductions were referred to as voluntary. But communicated that there was not an option.

Saleema Karim: We have had mandatory volunteering for contact tracing. And in the spirit of Public Health we should take a 10% reduction in salary and work 100% FTE, or 20% in salary and reduction in FTE. Now I am not teaching in summer and will be paid less. It wasn't really voluntary.

Nickolas Zaller: It was 20% higher than any college, exception if we were over 90% grant funded, or over 50% grants and teaching. Department chair indicated that people were being asked to take the cut. And the rest of us should opt in. it was a coercive tone. Was this senior leadership? Our dean? We didn't know. I received communication from other colleges, and lack of uniformity was challenging.

Steve Post: None of what I'm hearing about these mandatory cuts came out in the Webinar. This wasn't supposed to happen based on listening to him. It would be interesting to let Stephanie know that we as faculty were under the impression that we had to take these cuts. Illustrates the communication problem that he can tell the Deans and will be communicated down to faculty.

Grover Miller: I know we are concerned about reductions, and trying to balance budget. If the University is not going to take care of the staff. It is going to affect ability to have effective health care. It really is a Team UAMS effort. This is a lull. And it is going to get worse. When you go out on the streets, there is not care taken to take care of infection. Spouses have lost jobs, other stresses. Kids at home driving you nuts. We are at a nonprofit. We are not here to make money. We can be coerced to give more. For simple optics, this needs to be shown to be a Team Effort. I have been here a long time. This has been an issue, this is not pandemic related. They need to get ahead of the curve, they will not have staff to help people.

Steve Post: That is why this was supposed to be voluntary. As he said in that meeting. Closed door meeting with cabinet and deans, I don't know. But it was translated way different across different units.

Tiffany Huitt: Clarity on details. Request a meeting with Dr. Gardner on how this was implemented across colleges. Having a meeting with her about the implementation and the optics. The lack of team effort, and discord between voluntary and mandatory.

Nick Zaller: I would like to echo. Stephanie was the acting chancellor when the layoffs occurred and it seems like the same types of problems are occurring. Siting with her and saying this is happening again.

Tiffany Huitt: A full meeting or executive meeting?

Mary Burgess: A full meeting

Andrew James: I think a full meeting would be good. I think to get the information.

Leanne Lefler: I am concerned about disparity across campus. I wonder if they wonder is no one communicating with anyone else. We are the only watch dog. All this is very concerning. Our different areas are really just doing whatever. We hear "Team UAMS" and it is not. It is all an individualized decision.

Abdullah Hayar: Last year 1% bonus for everyone. Why not 10% cut across the board? Take 10% of everyone's salary, and see if this can be solved later, by government funds or whatever. Give the money, and if things recover they give you the money back.

Priya Mendiratta: How about the bonds? That could be another idea.

Grover Miller: I am hesitant to give the University money, and expect it to be given back. I think it will get routed somewhere else. I haven't heard from UAMS getting the money.

Leanne Lefler: What we don't know if someone's spouse lost a job. Taking 10% from them may not be right. Doing 10% across the board is not the right way to go.

Tiffany Huitt: It's 4 o'clock and some of these have a meeting to go to.

We are going to wrap up, letter, request Town Hall, and request meeting from Stephanie Gardner.