

Academic Senate Full Faculty Senate Meeting

Wednesday, January 27, 2021 at 4 pm via Zoom

Panel: Tiffany Huitt PhD; Mark Williams PhD; Kathryn Neill PharmD, FNAP; Puru Thapa MD; Shuk-Mei Ho PhD; Stephen Mette MD

Call to Order: 4:07 pm

- I. **Introduction:** Tiffany Huitt reviewed the Academic Senate activities during the past year, and specifically in the response to Covid19. She reviewed the collaboration with UAMS entities. She asked people to reach out to Faculty Chairs for additional involvement. She recognized that the pandemic has impacted every faculty member. The panel members were introduced.
- II. **First Panel Speaker:** Mark Williams was introduced as the first speaker. He provided an update on the Covid19 forecast for the state of Arkansas. He provided the 15-day forecast. The 60-day model forecast was shown. Both models showed an increase in cases. The 15-day hospitalization forecast was presented, the 15-day forecast of Covid19 deaths was shown. Deaths will cross the 5,000 threshold. He compared this to military deaths in WWI and WWII: this is comparable to the number of deaths by Arkansans in both World Wars. He discussed the effect of the vaccine and herd immunity by the vaccine. In Arkansas, more than 2.6 million Arkansans will need to be vaccinated. They expect a resurgence of cases, hospitalization and deaths after the next couple weeks. UAMS can benefit by doing a post-hoc analysis of the Covid19 response, so that we can be prepared for the next pandemic.
- III. **Second Panel Speaker:** Tiffany Huitt thanked Mark Williams, and introduced Kathryn Neill, to discuss the academic faculty experience in relation to Covid19. Kathryn Neill discussed the primary challenges, including classroom capacity, eating locations, PPE supply, screening requirements and clinical placement availability. She celebrated the work of the Office of Educational Development and AV tech team, by posting sessions and training within days of the shutdown, and continuing support with virtual learning platforms. She discussed the challenges with academic licenses available, that Zoom should be used for educational sessions and Microsoft Teams for business meetings. She recognized the COM Covid19 elective course that was shared with other colleges. The Office of Interprofessional Education is available for support. She provided the website for Covid19 guidelines for academic affairs. She discussed the academic visitor process, events for campus and how to work through the process – forms can be accessed on the Academic Affairs website (<https://academicaffairs.uams.edu/covid-19-guideline-for-students/>). The expansion of service was rapid, including partnerships with testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, Stocked & Reddie outreach. The Telehealth service expanded more rapidly. She completed with what to expect this Spring 2021. It should look similar to Fall 2020. They have seen huge success with the hybrid teaching model, and anticipate that this will continue in the future.
- IV. **Third Panel Speaker:** Tiffany Huitt introduced Puru Thapa. Puru Thapa discussed the faculty and student wellness response to Covid19. He reviewed the stress related to self well being of the faculty, and also their concern for the students. There has been reduced ability to bond with new students, and increase in isolation. He showed the increase in utilization of

Wellness Services by students, comparing 2019 to 2020, an approximate increase of 15%. He reviewed the initiatives that were created in response to Covid19 stress. There was a focus on faculty with children at home, and the attempt to increase flexibility for the faculty. Two big resources developed were the Covid-19 Comprehensive Resource Guide and The Covid-19 Wellness Resources. He also discussed the Mindfulness sessions that have been popular for faculty. Individual deans are also taking initiative to explore strategies to improve student well being, and communicating the resources.

- V. **Fourth Panel Speaker:** Tiffany Huitt thanked Dr. Thapa. She introduced Shuk-Mei Ho, to speak on the effect of Covid19 on research. Shuk-Mei Ho began her presentation showing 2020 awards and funding prior to Covid19, an increase of 55% up to March at the onset of the pandemic. At the onset some urgent issues were recognized: they were told about the limited PPE; technicians work in a space that does not allow social distancing; they were told no graduate students could come to lab. Clinical studies and clinical trials were put on hold. She showed a slide that showed the majority of funding comes from NIH and from other federal funding, which have strict guidelines. The new funding coming in targeted Covid research, and required BSL3 lab which was not available at UAMS, which presented another big challenge. She showed the investment of ABI funds, and discussed that priorities had to be rearranged. The Pilot Grants that were awarded in March were unable to be used due to the financial crisis. They moved the funding to Covid19 time-sensitive grants. By September, new initiatives were established to mentor staff on how to be productive, while working from home, so the grant submission rate was not compromised. Shuk-Mei Ho wrapped up with what she learned from this experience, including communication, collaboration with other colleges and groups regionally, pilot grant funding, strong leadership and the importance of early coaching of rising stars. She gave special recognition to the team at Research & Innovation. The aspiration is to improve the UAMS ranking in research.
- VI. **Fifth Panel Speaker:** Tiffany thanked Dr. Ho. She introduced Stephen Mette. Stephen Mette addressed the Clinical Faculty experience after Covid19. He offered observations and reflections on how things changed over the past year: innovation, agility, advancing faculty career, resilience, work-life balance, and the creation of a shared sense of community. He started his comments by emphasizing that UAMS is doing very well financially; year to date (November), UAMS is 34 million in the black. The primary improvement in margin is due to clinical volume, in addition to the Cares Act. The bureaucratic process was broken down by Covid19, allowing for more agility. He discussed the statistics of Covid19, including the number of Covid19 patients admitted, on ventilator, the number cared for, the number of testing that has been completed and the number of vaccinations completed. Herd immunity is not expected until September at the earliest. He anticipates that we will continue to adapt. His goal is to achieve 90% vaccination among faculty. He discussed the Innovation that has taken place, including the Institute for Digital Health. He gave an example of the agility in creating the Drive Thru Screening within a couple days. He shared concerns that we need to pay attention to our own health, and take advantage of the Wellness programs. He wrapped up with recognizing that UAMS has been working together as one entity, working toward a goal as a single organization.

VII. Question and Answer: Tiffany Huitt thanked Dr. Mette for his comments. She opened to questions from the audience. She introduced Andrew James PhD and Edgar Meyer PhD, who facilitated the discussion.

1. For Dr. Williams: Do the statewide Covid models incorporate regional information? And is that used for a regional response? Answer: They use a county analysis, to look at hot spots. They can understand where the virus is expanding most rapidly in the state. Mobile testing was recommended for specific counties, based on their data.
2. Given that the mortality rate will be higher among non vaccinated, how does that affect the percent that should be vaccinated? Answer: They are trying to determine how to incorporate this information and new information into the model. There is no evidence that herd immunity does not matter in the short term. The long term models seem to be “crashing” because they cannot deal with the high volume of data.
3. For Dr. Neill: Are there recommendations for regional meetings, or research-based meetings that can be held on UAMS, and include speakers from outside UAMS? Answer: Any meetings for the Spring and Summer should be organized as virtual meetings. They will continue this until recommendations from Arkansas Department of Health recommendations change. She said that there are exceptions for some visitors. Dr. Ho had a follow up: NIH continues to support conference grants. They should consider on how to delay for one year, or how to change the format to a virtual format. UAMS should not shy away from organizing activities, they should continue to do it in a virtual format.
4. For Dr. Thapa: In addition to the Wellness resources, what are some additional resources that will be provided to support faculty from the top down? And to prevent and to treat faculty burn out? Answer: He replied that he works at an individual level, and not an institutional level. Faculty burn out is driven by institutional factors, and he does know that the institution is aware. He encourages faculty to reach out and talk at an individual level. Tiffany Huitt followed up asking if there was anything specific that came out of the Council of Deans? He said that those talks were focused on the trauma of the students. By extension, improving the student well being, should also help with the faculty well being. Wendy Ward PhD. added there is a workshop for leaders, so leaders can have a plan to offset the stress for their unit. She spoke to other programs available, through the Office of Interprofessional Development, and a workshop given by herself for Directors. Shuk-Mei Ho added a follow-up: Instead of only acknowledging the PI, acknowledge the team.
5. For Dr. Ho: Nationwide women appear to be disproportionately affected by Covid19. What resources are available at UAMS for women who are PIs? Answer: We need treat this pandemic as a traumatizing experience for all of us. We should be able to take a time out from tenure and promotion, and treat it as maternal and paternal leave. It would give faculty a piece of mind, so that faculty can continue to drive their career forward.
6. For Dr. Mette: UAMS is not in this alone. To what extent can UAMS reach out to other regional partners to learn how they are reaching their mission, and to collaborate? Answer: In March, A Covid19 task force was created in Little Rock to coordinate efforts to successfully treat Covid19. That group includes UAMS, SVI, Baptist, Heart Hospital, ACH, Surgical hospital, the VA: best practices are shared. UAMS did not furlough anybody’s job due to Covid19. Hourly workers had decrease in hours, and faculty took temporary pay decreases, but no one lost their jobs. Dr. Neill added on that collaboration with other UA system partners has been effective. IPE work has also

been completed with non-UA systems universities. Dr. Ho discussed 1-2-3 Go. A concept can be put on a website, and others interested can join in, promoting new concepts and new research collaborations.

VIII. Wrap up: Questions that were not answered in the chat will be sent to the panel speakers.

Adjournment: 5:58 pm