Emory University Faculty Council Meeting Minutes
Zoom Meeting
March 15, 2022
3:00-5:00 p.m.

Attendees: Octavian Ioachimescu, Grace Goh, Aaronnette McFarlin, Alicia DeNicola, Amir St. Clair, Anjulet Tucker, Aryeh Stein, Carlos Moreno, Caroline Driebe, Christa Acampora, Curtis Henry, David Howard, Donna Maney, Doug Bowman, Elena Pesavento, Erin Bonning, Florian Pohl, George Shepherd, Giacomo Negro, Gregory Fenves, Gustavo Pradilla, Hashem Dezhbakhsh, Holly York, Kamina Pinder, Kate Yeager, Lynell Cadray, Lynne Nygaard, M. Allison Burdette, Michael Epstein, Minnie Glymph, Modele Ogunniyi, Nitika Gupta, Patrick Sullivan, Rachelle Spell, Richard Castillo, Kendall Soulen, Tim Holbrook, Ulemu Luhanga, Victoria Pak

Excused Absences: n/a

Unexcused Absences: Dawn Comeau, Rkia Cornell, Ashima Lal, Tom Clark, John Petros, Dilek Huseyinzadegan, Vaidy Sunderam, Erin Tarver, Salmon Shomade, Jodie Guest, Munish Luthra

I.   Welcome and Approval of Consent Agenda, *Octavian Ioachimescu, Faculty Council Chair*

Dr. Rachelle Spell moved to approve the consent agenda; Dr. Alicia DeNicola seconded the motion. The motion carried**.**

II.   Update from Emory Ombuds Office, *Lynell Cadray, University Ombuds and Senior Adviser to Emory President*

Lynell Cadray began by defining what an Ombudsperson is and does, and emphasized the four basic principles upheld by the Ombuds Office: confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence. Lynell Cadray then presented some data on visits they receive, broken down by constituency, administrative units, gender, race, and category of concern.

Questions from the floor:
1) How do you negotiate the need of confidentiality while providing effective resolution to the conflicts that arise?
    a. Confidentiality is the pillar of our work, and we are very strict and consistent in maintaining the relationship of trust. All visitors who would like us to advocate on behalf of their issues and concerns will give us verbal consent to disclose their identity, but we take measures to prevent any retaliation.
2) Comparison to other institutions? What about disproportionate number of concerns from women? Are your data broken down by academic unit?
    a. For an institution of our size, we should expect a few hundred more visitors per year; we are in the median compared to peer institutions. Women tend to be more open to discussing conflict in general. See our annual report for data by academic/administrative unit (ECAS and School of Nursing are the top two for AY21-22).
3) Do we have a system in place for collecting data during exit interviews to identify structural issues or conflict sources that may be the cause of leaving?
    a. We are working on an integrated conflict management system to address this, since the existing system does not work.

4) In your view, what kind of data and processes would you like to see in place in different units and at the university level, to track the resolution of these cases?
   a. No existing way yet to track resolution once the issue leaves our office, unless the visitor shares with us, since we do not mandate outcomes. We often do not know how cases end up, but we have a good working relationship with most leaders across the institution, and they take seriously the issues we bring up. We do follow up with individuals to make sure their concerns were addressed/resolved.

III. **COVID-19: Past, Present, and Future Containment Measures,** *Amir St. Clair, Associate Vice President and Executive Director for COVID-19 Response and Recovery*

AVP St. Clair presented on the current COVID-19 condition and indicators; new modified protocols implemented in Spring 2022; and future plans. AVP St. Clair shared some data on transmission and infection trends, which show that all national and regional key indicators (including within the Emory community) have significantly declined since the Omicron surge in January 2022. Emory implemented three important measures: revised contact tracing and return to campus protocols; adopted new isolation and quarantine guidelines based on CDC recommendations; and a staggered move to mask-optional status. Looking forward to the future, Emory is revising operational plans based on lessons learned and new information. For example, the current color-coded 4-state operational status might change to a 2-state model (normal vs. surge response). Emory is also assessing the very large COVID-19 response infrastructure, to see to what degree do those need to continue and in what form, and how to map them into normal operations if needed for long-term sustainability.

Questions from the floor:
1) Do you foresee that we might implement modified contact tracing measures should another spike or outbreak occur on campus?
   a. Contact tracing is an imperfect process by itself, its ability to interrupt transmission relies heavily on information received from an index case, which may or may not be accurate, how quickly the virus is transmitting, and how receptive people are to following protocols. There is still value in identifying clusters or high-spread locations in a community, so we might reapply temporary measures to control a surge through select contact tracing protocols.
2) Given the unavailability of rapid home tests for a period of time, I wonder how accurate the prevalence data is, since there might be some percentage of positive tests that are not being reported.
   a. We ascertain from CDC and Georgia DPH data the gap between the number of tests being administered vs. the number of positive tests being reported. Also, there are guidelines in place for disclosing test results to Emory, regardless of where you got the test.
3) Why can't individual faculty require masks in their classroom?
   a. When we move to a mask-optional state, nobody can require others to wear a mask, but everyone should feel empowered to continue masking themselves if they so choose. Masking as a measure does not exist in a vacuum, we made this decision to move to mask-optional with other factors in mind (e.g., high vaccination and booster rates, better airflow and ventilation, low community transmission, etc.). You can also request special accommodations if you have circumstances that require it.

IV.   Policy Review Committee Report, *David Howard, Committee Chair*

Dr. Howard presented on the mission and membership of the committee. This past year, the committee reviewed two policies: 1) Policy on Conflict and Commitment, being implemented in response to NIH directives; 2) Religious Accommodations Policy. Looking forward, we may look into shifting the committee practice from reactive to proactive review of university policies.

V.   Wellness and Wellbeing Programming, *Aaronnette McFarlin, Emory Work Life Team*

Ms. McFarlin presented on the WorkLife Resource Center and the services they offer. The Center staff focus on four main areas: Family Caregiving, Workplace Flexibility, Financial Wellness, and Connect employees with resources. Please see their website for more details on all their resources and services, or contact the office at worklife@emory.edu or 404-727-7613.

VI.   Executive Session

VII.   Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.