

RECORD OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS

Tuesday, June 18, 2020
3:30 p.m.

By Webex Teleconference

1820 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, Wisconsin

-President Petersen presiding-

PRESENT: Regents Robert Atwell, Amy Bogost, Scott Beightol (by phone), Héctor Colón (by phone), José Delgado, Michael Grebe, Eve Hall (by phone), Mike Jones (by phone), Tracey Klein, Becky Levzow, Edmund Manydeeds, Andrew Petersen, Cris Peterson, Corey Saffold, Carolyn Stanford Taylor (by phone), Karen Walsh, Kyle Weatherly, and Olivia Woodmansee (by phone).

UNABLE TO ATTEND: None.

President Petersen called upon Vice President Grebe to read the motion to move into closed session. The motion was seconded by Regent Atwell and adopted on a roll-call vote, with Regents Atwell, Bogost, Beightol, Colón, Delgado, Grebe, Hall, Jones, Klein, Levzow, Manydeeds, Petersen, Peterson, Saffold, Stanford Taylor, Walsh, Weatherly, and Woodmansee. There were no dissenting votes and no abstentions.

Closed Session Resolution

Resolution 11459 That the Board of Regents move into closed session to consider employment, promotion, compensation and performance evaluation data and personal histories of candidates for the position of interim UW System President, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(c) and (f), Wis. Stats.

The Board reconvened in open session at 5:30 p.m. to discuss recommendations from the UW System Emergency Operations Center's Plan Ahead Team regarding campus operations for the Fall 2020 semester.

Vice President for Administration Rob Cramer briefly summarized the Plan Ahead Team's preliminary framework of recommendations related to academic instruction and support services; the health and safety of students, faculty and staff; athletics; housing and dining operations; information technology; international students and study abroad programs; research; and student services.

Regent Walsh noted that the guidelines do not specifically address plans for testing. Vice President Cramer said testing for COVID-19 continues to be a challenge and that UW institutions are still determining the best strategies for administering tests on campus.

Regent Beightol noted that creating guidelines like these is a difficult exercise which requires administrators to balance many interests on the different campuses. He applauded the inclusion of checklists, a challenge statement, and recommendations that provide flexibility for UW institutions to make the right decisions for their campuses.

Regent Klein questioned why only some campuses will require masks. Vice President Cramer said the UW System's focus has been on how to educate students and employees about the importance of wearing masks, rather than accomplishing it by fiat.

Chancellor Shields said UW-Platteville's intention is to require masks but will not have staff walking around campus to enforce the requirement. He indicated that the institution will focus on messaging about the importance of wearing masks, and will seek to utilize peer pressure to encourage students to help each other stay healthy by wearing masks voluntarily.

Chancellor Patterson said UW-Stevens Point will also rely primarily on peer pressure for voluntary compliance with its mask requirement, leaving it to faculty to enforce mask-wearing in the classroom if they feel comfortable doing so.

Regent Woodmansee said it was "shocking" that masks will not be mandatory on all campuses. She predicted that many of her peers will not wear masks without a requirement, and that parents with children at different UW campuses may find the differing requirements very confusing.

Noting that funding for PPE supplies and testing will be a challenge for the UW institutions, Regent Woodmansee asked how the UW System support will those measures. Vice President Cramer stated that the System is still working with institutions to determine the costs of PPE and testing. He noted that some new funding was announced by Governor Evers earlier that day, and that UW staff are working with the state and federal delegations

to request additional support. He also noted that President Cross recently made a request to the Governor and legislators to allow the UW System to borrow funds to cover the costs of the COVID-19 response and general cash flow issues.

President Cross said he planned to send a formal request to the Governor the next day for funds to cover estimated PPE and testing costs in excess \$50 million, although the UW System is working hard to find ways to reduce those costs. He noted that the efficacy of testing is not as useful as previously thought, so the UW System's focus will instead be on tracking symptoms, closely managing areas like athletics, and working with public health departments on contact tracing.

Noting that thermal scanning has emerged as an industry substitute for testing, Regent Klein asked if similar measures have been considered for larger university facilities like lecture halls or student unions. President Cross said the university will make efforts to determine whether and how to utilize those measures.

President Cross said if there is a requirement to wear masks on campus, the next questions will be how to enforce that requirement, and what the punishment will be for non-compliance.

Regent Atwell said the UW institutions should not make wearing masks a requirement if they are not willing to enforce it.

Observing that there are many things students are required to do without explicitly laying out punishments, Regent Bogost said reliance on peer pressure does not seem sufficient. She noted that some experts say 100% compliance with wearing masks could help prevent second wave of COVID-19, and that spotty compliance could increase long-term costs due to growing hotspots.

Regent Levzow stated that as someone who works in healthcare and is required to wear masks, she agreed that requiring masks is a good idea but will be challenging to enforce unless there is a penalty for noncompliance.

Expressing her support for a mask requirement, Regent Hall stated that the matter of punishment and enforcement should be discussed, but concluded that the UW System has to set a standard of safety: "With the disproportionate number of African Americans and Hispanics being affected, we have to be responsible."

Stating that he had discussed this issue at length with the Chancellors, President Cross said he had no objection to updating the Plan Ahead guidelines to say masks are required.

Chancellor Watson shared that UW-Whitewater will require and enforce mask-wearing as part of the student code of conduct.

Chancellor Schmidt said UW-Eau Claire intends to require masks in buildings, with faculty enforcing wearing masks in classrooms, and will “highly recommend” using masks outdoors. He indicated that UW-Eau Claire will provide all students, faculty and staff with two face coverings each; will provide students with thermometers; and is working with the Mayo Clinic on an app to track everyone’s symptoms daily.

Chancellor Patterson said it would be helpful if the Regents took a position on requiring masks. He added that there should be some flexibility for chancellors to allow exceptions to that requirement, such as for music classes.

President Petersen asked Vice President Cramer to provide an overview of how self-quarantining and self-isolation will play out on the campuses. Vice President Cramer said the residence hall inventory is different on each campus, so the UW institutions are working on plans for where to house students in isolation and how to provide them with dining services.

President Cross indicated that other universities are considering batch testing strategies that will greatly reduce the cost of testing students for COVID-19.

President Petersen said the Board will meet again to act on these recommendations prior to reopening for the fall semester. He expressed appreciation for the tremendous work being done on the campuses to reopen safely in the fall.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/ Jess Lathrop

Jess Lathrop
Executive Director & Corporate Secretary
Office of the Board of Regents
University of Wisconsin System