THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

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July 29, 2021

Members present: Raymond Hall (Chair), Tinneke Van Camp (Vice Chair), Kathleen Dyer (Universitywide), Xuanning Fu (Interim Provost), Thomas Holyoke (former chair), D’Aungillique Jackson (ASI Executive President), Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval (President), Jennifer Miele (At-Large), Rebecca Raya-Fernandez (At-Large), Susan Schlievert (Statewide)

Members excused: (N/A)

Guests: Venita Baker (Academic Senate), Marsha Baum (AVP Academic Affairs), Keith Clement (Chair Undergraduate Curriculum Committee), Carolyn Coon (Dean of Students), Chadley James (Chair GE Committee), David Low (Chair Personnel Committee), James Mullooly (Chair AP&P Committee), Bernadette Muscat (Dean of Undergraduate Studies)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hall at 9:30 am on Zoom.

1. Approval of the Agenda.

MSC

1. Approval of the Minutes 6.4.21

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1. Communications and Announcements.

None

1. Issues Concerning Campus Repopulation.

President **Jiménez-Sandoval** explained that the campus is working on a plan for safe repopulation in the fall in light of recent communications from the Chancellor’s office about the COVID-19 vaccine requirement (*i.e.*, COVID-19 vaccine will be required unless someone has a medical or religious exemption, in which case they undergo weekly testing; a medical exemption will have to be documented) and CDC guidelines (mask wearing is recommended indoors, also for people who are fully vaccinated). At least one dose of a vaccination will be required by the start of the semester. It was also highlighted that particular attention will be paid to incoming freshmen students as well as to this year’s sophomore students, who had to start their journey as freshmen students on a digital campus last year and have never been on campus, to facilitate student success.

Provost **Fu** added that an FAQ sheet for the reopening of the campus is being prepared [note: a draft of the FAQ sheet was shared with the members of this committee following this meeting].

**Holyoke** wanted to know whether proof will be required for religious exemptions, like it is for medical exemptions.

President **Jiménez-Sandoval** explained that, following legal counsel on the matter, no proof will have to be submitted. Students with a religious or medical exemption will be required to undergo weekly testing and everyone will have to wear a mask, however.

**Low** asked whether the required documentation for medical exemptions needs to come from a medical doctor or whether documentation provided by other types of health professionals will be allowed?

President **Jiménez-Sandoval** responded that this has not been clarified yet.

**Jackson** asked whether students will be dropped from classes if they do not comply with the documentation of vaccination or testing requirement if unvaccinated.

President **Jiménez-Sandoval** explained that there could be a progressive system of disciplinary action in response to non-compliance, starting with a letter to encourage compliance and progressing towards disciplinary action.

**Coon** added that we want to start with education and conversation on the use of vaccination if students who do not claim exemptions are not vaccinated, and only escalate to disciplinary action if needed.

**Hall** wanted to know whether faculty will be alerted about unvaccinated students in their courses who do not comply with weekly testing.

**Coon** responded that this information is protected and confidential, and can, therefore, not be shared with faculty.

**Dyer** expressed concern about lecturing to a large group while wearing a mask. Can we provide exception for lecturers if six feet distance can be maintained, or give faculty a chance to change an in-person class to a virtual teaching modality?

Provost **Fu** responded that this is a reasonable option, along with the option of wearing a face-shield with drape instead. [Note: Dr. Fu later changed his position on this, and now says that instructors must wear a mask even while lecturing.] **Muscatt** added that continuing to change course modalities from in-person to digital in the next few weeks will have practical implications (for advisers, enrollment fees, scheduling etc).

**Dyer** mentioned that some students have been demanding that classes are offered online if it means that coming to campus requires them to be vaccinated. Chairs and faculty will need direct guidance on how to respond to these demands.

**Fu** responded that they are working on guidance – also the FAQ sheet that is being prepared will address this and other issues. He emphasized that it is not practical and feasible to ask faculty to teach a course in two modalities at once, unless they are in one of the 50 HyFlex rooms.

**Jackson** mentioned that ASI too is working with President **Jiménez-Sandoval** on a list of FAQs from students. ASI will also be holding a townhall on Aug 12. There could potentially be a second townhall during welcome week and ASI is hoping to organize mini-townhalls per college as well. ASI wants to push the message that getting vaccinated helps protect others.

**Jackson** called attention to one particular issue that emerged last semester: students in dorms were being tested weekly and were fined if they missed a test. Fining students should not be a default disciplinary response due to the financial strain many of our students already face.

**Holyoke** wondered whether it is expected that faculty and staff will also be required to certify that they are vaccinated when union negotiations are finalized?

President **Jiménez-Sandoval** responded that negotiations are underway with the twelve unions on our campus and as long as those are not concluded, we cannot require certification.

**Hall** asked whether having more than the usual number of online classes will impact WASC accreditation.

Provost **Fu** explained that this is not the case since we still have more than 50 per cent of our classes in person (in Fall 2021 75% of classes are scheduled to be in-person). He highlighted that we need face-to-face classes not only because of accreditation requirements, but also because it enhances success, because certain learning outcomes require face-to-face modality, because it has an impact on student engagement, and because it is needed for graduate student research. In recent weeks we see that some faculty want to move some of their in-person classes back to digital, for instance due to personal health concerns. HR has worked with faculty to accommodate their concerns.

Provost **Fu** referred to completed and ongoing surveys on our campus to have an idea of vaccination rates on our campus. So far, this survey has revealed that 72 per cent of the incoming transfer students are vaccinated or intend to get vaccinated before the start of the fall semester. This rate is higher among freshmen students. A similar survey was launched for faculty and staff recently and a survey will be distributed to continuing students too.

**Jackson** suggested that SSD should be involved in the conversation about encouraging vaccinations in order to emphasize the message that we need to protect members of our campus community who are immunocompromised.

1. Senate Meeting Modality for Fall 2021.

**Hall** explained that the regular Academic Senate meeting room has been reserved for fall meetings but he anticipates that there might be some discomfort to return to in-person meetings.

**Holyoke** suggested that the first few meetings could be done online and then see how the semester unfolds to eventually go back to in-person meetings.

**Dyer** added that there are good reasons to allow people to call into meetings, regardless of the pandemic (family reasons, having a cold etc). We could use the experience gained during the COVID-19 crisis to allow more flexible senate meetings post-pandemic.

**Hall** and **Van Camp** mentioned that they will look into an app or other online tool to allow for voting both in person and online.

**Holyoke** advised that the Chair and Vice Chair would be on double duty to monitor a live room and zoom audience in case of hybrid meetings, and anticipated that there could be a concern among senators attending online while others are in the meeting room, because it is more challenging to be as involved online as it is in person.

**Raya-Fernandez** suggested that we will get more faculty endorsement if we continue online for now given the concerning evolution of COVID-19 variants.

**Hall** agreed that the first meetings could be done online.

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The Senate Executive Committee adjourned at 10:55 am.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held over the summer as needed via Zoom.

Submitted by: Approved by:

Tinneke Van Camp Raymond Hall

Vice Chair Chair

Academic Senate Academic Senate