

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
INNOVATION AND ONLINE COMMITTEE
March 23, 2021

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Kent Stermon convened the meeting at 1:59 p.m. on March 23, 2021, with the following members present: Kent Stermon, Richard Corcoran (joined at 2:04 p.m.), Timothy M. Cerio, Edward Haddock, H. Wayne Huizenga, Jr., Charles Lydecker, Ally Schneider, and Dr. William Self. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes

Governor Schneider moved that the committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 24, 2021. Governor Lydecker seconded the motion, and the members concurred.

3. SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World: Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Future Considerations

Chair Stermon stated that throughout the next few months, provosts and Dr. McKee will be meeting with the chairs of various system-wide groups to hear their challenges, lessons learned, best practices, innovations, opportunities, and recommendations. Then, the Steering Committee will report the outcomes of those discussions to the Innovation and Online Committee. He said the Innovation and Online Committee will vote on recommendations at the end of the year. He said the Steering Committee, joined by other provosts, recently met with academic and academic support leaders throughout the system, and he recognized Provost Ralph Wilcox, Chair of the Steering Committee, to summarize that discussion.

Provost Wilcox stated that work is being guided by five key questions that will lead to a slate of big ideas and bold actions later this year to further support the State University System's progress. He said that last month, the Steering Committee met with representatives from the Universities' Chief Academic Officers, Librarians, Vice Presidents for Research, Academic Coordination Group, Implementation Committee, and Advisory Council of Faculty Senates.

Provost Wilcox indicated the challenges identified by these groups emanated from the student and employee experience over the past 12 months. These included the faculty's and students' readiness to optimize performance in a remote environment; the need to amend current regulations, policies, and procedures and to enhance communication; additional support to address

students' and employees' mental health needs brought on by isolation, loneliness, and stress; challenges associated with student assessment; and the impact on faculty research. He said these issues were all identified as matters of high priority.

He stated that participants shared lessons learned and best practices evident across the State University System in response to COVID-19, from the need for timely local and evidence-based decision-making and enhanced communication to continuing investment in high-value State of the Art digital platforms in libraries and classrooms, along with education for enhanced digital literacy targeted at students, faculty, and professional staff.

Provost Wilcox stated that while students have shown remarkable dedication and resilience over the past year, so have the faculty and staff, particularly with regard to academic continuity. He said that all of this underscores the critical importance of prior and continuing investments in instructional innovation and digital learning. He stated that given the strategic importance of research and innovations to universities and to the State of Florida, it would be incumbent on us to consider lessons learned and best practices in supporting the scholarly practice and productivity of faculty and students.

Provost Wilcox stated that trends are emerging related to optimizing business operations, intentional shared and/or aligned investments in digital hardware, software, tools, platforms, and skills development, and exploring new pedagogies, including continuing research across the State University System to gauge different instructional modalities for student success. He said that a common thread throughout the ongoing dialogue is the need to systematically review and amend a number of statewide and institutional regulations, policies, and procedures that present challenges and are barriers to progress, given the uncertainty universities have had to navigate.

He said that the Steering Committee will be focusing next on student access, progression and learning, as they hear in the coming weeks from the Council of Student Affairs, Deans of Students, Career Center Directors, Counseling Center Directors, Council of Diversity and Inclusion, Admissions Directors, Student Health Center Directors, and Student Government leaders.

Planning for a Post-Pandemic World: 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education

Dr. Nancy McKee began her presentation by stating that in addition to the goals and strategies, the Board's Strategic Plan for Online Education has 49 tactics centered around the elements of Quality, Access, and Affordability. The Steering Committee, which Provost Wilcox chairs, and the Distance Learning Leaders reviewed all 49 tactics, as well as the STEM Labs Initiative, to determine if work should be continued on each one in the post-COVID world. Of the 50 tactics, 40

were recommended for continuation as is, at this point, and the remaining 10 had modifications that she presented.

Dr. McKee said that the intent of the first tactic, Access 2.1.3, was to seed innovative projects that would impact quality, cost, and access and have the ability to scale throughout the system. The Board approved including this issue in its Legislative Budget Request for 2018-19. She said that while the Legislature did not provide funding for the request, the System has moved forward with sharing innovative approaches through the annual SUS Innovation Summit that is hosted by the University of Central Florida. She said that the recommendation is to not seek funding again for this tactic. Innovations will continue to be shared at the Summit.

For the next two tactics, she stated that a technology scorecard was developed and administered system-wide, with the results evaluated and presented to this committee. She said the results showed that all institutions were performing well in operations, support, security, and disaster recovery. The workgroup recommended to this Committee in January 2018 that the scorecard be administered annually. Based on the experience with the scorecard, the Steering Committee recommended that, instead, it be administered periodically by individual universities for internal management purposes.

For Access tactic 2.1.2, Dr. McKee said that marketing is done by individual universities and by FloridaShines, the hub hosted by the Florida Virtual Campus, so there is no need to seek legislative funding for marketing in the post-COVID world.

She said that Quality tactic 2.3.1 was to ensure that online students have access to services equivalent to those used by campus-based students. Results from the the Student Services Scorecard, which was developed and administered in 2018, showed that universities are providing equivalent services to their distance learning students. This is a tactic that the Steering Committee agreed should be continued, but there should be a modification to the original implementation plan, which was to administer it again in two years. She said that based on their experience with the scorecard, it would be the most beneficial as an internal management tool, to be administered periodically by individual universities as a way to monitor the delivery of their services.

Dr. McKee presented three tactics that dealt with Board of Governor regulations. Board Regulation 6.016 requires all students entering a university with fewer than 60 credit hours to earn at least 9 credit hours prior to graduation by attendance at one or more summer sessions. There had been a question of whether the requirement could be met with online courses. She said the Board's General Counsel reviewed this regulation and said that clarification is not necessary because modality is not mentioned in the regulation. The Steering Committee recommends no additional work on this tactic.

Dr. McKee said that online enrollments had not caused the system to exceed the 10% system-wide cap on nonresident enrollments in Board Regulation 7.006. The Steering Committee recommends that when this regulation is reviewed, it should be done so by a broader group, not the Steering Committee for Online Education.

She stated that Access tactic 2.2.3 was to provide flexibility for universities to eliminate the non-resident fee for online students who live out of state. The Steering Committee recommends that no changes be made in Board Regulation 7.001, Tuition and Fees.

She said that Access tactic 2.2.4 called for the review and modification of the Board regulations related to instructional materials fees in order to allow universities to adopt new approaches to providing digital educational materials. Last year, the Legislature passed statutory language to allow the opt-out provision for textbook and instructional materials, and the Board revised its regulation accordingly. She said that no additional modifications are recommended.

Dr. McKee stated that the last tactic, Access 2.2.4, was to ensure that universities are using need and demand data when considering programs for online delivery. She said that universities are currently using need and demand data to drive online offerings; online courses and programs without sufficient need and demand are either not developed or are discontinued. The Steering Committee recommended no additional work for this tactic.

4. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Stermon adjourned the meeting at 2:16 p.m.

Kent Stermon, Chair

Nancy C. McKee, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor