

MINUTES  
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
INNOVATION AND ONLINE COMMITTEE  
June 22, 2021

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Kent Stermon convened the meeting at 3:28 p.m. on June 22, 2021, with the following members present: Kent Stermon, Timothy M. Cerio, Edward Haddock, H. Wayne Huizenga, Jr., Charles Lydecker, Nastassia Janvier, and Dr. William Self. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes

Governor Lydecker moved that the committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 23, 2021. Governor Self seconded the motion, and the members concurred.

3. SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World

Chair Stermon stated that in February the Innovation and Online Committee had appointed the Steering Committee to assist in planning for the post-pandemic world in the State University System. He said that the provosts and Dr. McKee had been meeting with, and will continue to meet with, the chairs of various system-wide groups to hear their challenges, lessons learned, best practices, innovations, opportunities, and recommendations. The Innovation and Online Committee will hear the highlights after each of those meetings. He said that at the end of the year, at the November meeting, the Steering Committee will present its report and recommendations. He stated that the Innovation and Online Committee is expecting to receive a few key, actionable recommendations for preparing for the post-pandemic world in the State University System.

Provost Wilcox said that the Steering Committee has been asking questions of each stakeholder group regarding:

- The need to adapt to change and build greater resilience for the future;
- Identifying challenges, lessons learning, and best practices;
- Exploring COVID-related innovations and which ones are most likely to sustain over time; and
- How we can work more closely together to leverage the intellectual capital and resources in the State University System to advance SUS institutions.

He said that last month, the Steering Committee met with stakeholders focused on the student experience and that a number of challenges were identified, including:

- Communication,
- The adverse impact of the COVID experience on particular identified groups, such as those students who had to manage childcare and elder care responsibilities; students with disabilities; students of color; limited income students; and first-generation students.
- Those challenges that students had to navigate, which ranged from access to digital support services to housing and food insecurities to other disadvantages that students had to face throughout the past year.
- A set of financial challenges, including an emerging dependency on student financial aid grants and federal assistance for institutions and concerns about what happens when those federal supplements go away. Other financial challenges included those related to reduced occupancy and lost revenue in student housing.

Provost Wilcox indicated there has been tremendous value in closer collaborations across the State University System, as well as in leveraging digital platforms used by student support units for enhanced student success.

He said lessons learned and best practices also included the need for agile and evidence-based decision-making in response to continuing uncertainty and sometimes rapidly changing conditions; the need to sustain institutional investments in online platforms for student support services; seamless collaboration with Information Technology units; and recognition that online platforms will remain central to remote work and professional development for student support staff.

He stated recommendations included:

- Establish clear expectations and policies for employees working remotely;
- Strengthen partnerships with local public health authorities beyond COVID;
- Consider the feasibility of establishing a statewide pool of telecounselors for deployment in times of crisis;
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the benefits and feasibility of requiring student health insurance across the twelve institutions; and
- Examine the adverse impact of events like COVID on differentiated groups of students.

Provost Wilcox said the Steering Committee will next meet with a group of business and finance offices from across the State University System, along with deans of medical schools and colleges of Public Health, and will report those discussions to the Innovation and Online Committee toward the end of August. The final report and recommendations will be presented in November.

## 2020 Annual Report for Online Education

Dr. Nancy McKee said Florida ranked third behind Texas and California, in terms of the number of students enrolled in online courses, and second in the percentage enrolled in online courses.

She said that in 2019-20, 78% of undergraduates took at least one distance learning course. There was a slight increase in the percentage of students taking only online courses, going from 10% in 2016 to 12% in 2020, but the majority of the growth has been in those students who were taking a mix of distance learning courses and classroom or hybrid courses.

Dr. McKee stated that on average, students who enrolled in only distance learning courses were older than other students, and the majority were female. She said that of students who were enrolled in only distance learning courses, 94% were Florida residents, while 91% of students who took no distance learning courses were Florida residents.

She said that the race and ethnicity of distance learning students are similar to those who take no distance learning courses. She said there are 476 online programs in the System, and that online programs are defined as online majors. The majority of online programs in the System are at the Master's level, and 302 of the 476 programs (63%) are in programs of strategic emphasis. Of the 302 programs, 130 are in STEM programs, with the next highest number being in Health programs.

Dr. McKee mentioned that the report also includes narrative that reflects the status of distance learning in the System, as well as how well institutions are implementing the Strategic Plan for Online Education. Throughout the report, there are starred text boxes that show the SUS programs ranked in the top 20 in the country by U.S. News & World Report.

Governor Self moved to approve the 2020 Annual Report for Online Education. Governor Lydecker seconded the motion, and the members concurred.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Stermon adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

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Kent Stermon, Chair

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