

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
INNOVATION AND ONLINE COMMITTEE
August 31, 2021

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Kent Stermon convened the meeting at 4:38 p.m. on August 31, 2021, with the following members present: Timothy M. Cerio, Edward Haddock, Nastassia Janvier, Charles Lydecker 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 June 22, 2021. Governor Haddock 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 the Steering Committee, which has been assisting the Innovation and Online Committee in planning for the post-pandemic world in the State University System, will present its final report in January, rather than in November. Universities found that the Fall Term is presenting a new set of COVID challenges for them, and it seemed appropriate to incorporate into the report the lessons being learned and best practices being developed this term.

Provost Danilowicz said the Steering Committee's work on this effort has been driven by five guiding questions, which address if universities should return to the status quo; limitations and weaknesses; opportunities; lessons learned; and what the new normal may look like. The Committee has been following a planning framework, in which they have been meeting with different constituent groups to hear their perspectives on the impact of the pandemic on their activities, and what might be following in the post-pandemic world.

Over the June to August period, the Committee heard from Medical School Deans, Public Health Deans, the Council of Administrative and Financial Affairs, Athletics, Emergency Managers, Police Chiefs, Chief Information Officers, Human Resource Directors, and Financial Aid Directors and Continuing Education. He said it was a diverse group with a wide range of perspectives. He stated that the items being presented represent what the Committee heard from these specific groups; that does not mean these are all items that will show up in the final report.

Provost Danilowicz stated that challenges include:

- Maintaining IT staffing due to competition with the private sector;
- Campuses were not fully prepared to meet demands for nearly instant pandemic-related information;
- Supply chains were disrupted, leading to supply shortages;
- Contracts were difficult to adjust due to specified volume thresholds;
- The sense of community in remote settings was not as strong, particularly among patients; and
- Motivating and keeping employees is challenging in a fully remote environment.

Regarding lessons learned and best practices, Provost Danilowicz emphasized that universities learned how to work together to support state efforts in testing procedures, pandemic research, and COVID-19 patient care. Universities are now at greater risk of cybersecurity threats because they are more deeply invested in information technology across the System. He said that IT needs to be considered as a strategic investment in the core academic mission of the SUS. He stated that the way institutions recruit and retain employees must change because the workforce demands it, and that remote interviews for students, residents, and staff resulted in more diverse search pools.

Provost Danilowicz said that additional lessons learned included:

- A new appreciation for the value of telehealth for patient care and wellness;
- Arenas can be used for large-scale testing and vaccinations for campuses and surrounding communities;
- Mail services can be adapted to a PPE warehouse and delivery system;
- Large group meetings are often better attended when conducted remotely, particularly for off-campus clinical faculty; and
- Strategically offering free online professional development courses to faculty, staff, students, and community members is really effective. It is a free opportunity that engaged the community with universities; many institutions received new students as a result.

He said that recommendations mentioned by these groups included:

- Update statewide and university mutual aid agreements to bolster available support;
- Develop a standardized SUS platform for near real-time sharing of emergency information;
- Integrate SUS emergency managers into the state Emergency Operations Center;
- Create a mechanism whereby public health expertise could be utilized by the entire state;
- Continue to develop statewide shared service contracts;
- Expand 'best practice' IT collaborations;

- Establish authority to temporarily reassign staff or contract staff to emergency preparation, response, and recovery needs;
- Explore requiring every SUS student to have health insurance which would allow appropriate mental and physical health support;
- Better leverage relationships with contracted service providers into campus emergency response efforts through their networks, expertise, and buying power;
- Increase university flexibility in spending E&G reserves allowing a nimble response to emergencies;
- Develop plans to balance the needs for remote work with the cost of physical space use on campus;
- Explore if remote work options will increase the size and quality of the applicant pool for staff positions;
- Explore the development of micro-credentials and how they are recognized by their industry and how to use them across the demographics universities serve; and
- Continuing Education should partner with Career Services to assist displaced workers seeking to start new careers in different fields.

The Committee will hear from extension services at its next meeting, and will have a final report with actionable recommendations in January.

4. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Stermon adjourned the meeting at 4:49 p.m.

Kent Stermon, Chair

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