

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
November 4, 2021

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and its committees are accessible at <http://www.flbog.edu/>.*

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Alan Levine convened the meeting on November 4, 2021, at 11:15 a.m., with the following members present: Governors Edge, Jones, Lydecker, and Stermon (11:25 a.m.). A quorum was established.

2. Minutes of the September 1, 2021, Committee Meeting

Chair Levine asked for a motion to approve the September 1, 2021, committee meeting minutes. Governor Jones moved to approve, Governor Edge seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Update on Implementation of House Bill 7017, Foreign Influence

Chair Levine provided an update on the implementation of House Bill 7017, Foreign Influence, which was passed during the 2021 legislative session and went into effect July 1. He reported this legislation made several changes as to how state universities address foreign influence. Chair Levine noted that the bill requires the establishment of a Research Integrity Office. He stated a second requirement is to screen foreign researchers associated with countries of concern. Chair Levine said the third requirement is to establish an international travel approval program, and the university audit executives will have responsibility for screening researchers and international travel requirements. He reported the new legislation prohibits international cultural agreements that constrain the freedom of contract of a public entity, allow control of curriculum or values, and promote an agenda that is detrimental or compromises the security of the U.S. or its citizens. Chair Levine shared that he chaired a panel at the Trustee Summit on November 3 that discussed how universities were addressing these issues on campus.

4. COVID-19 Research Update

- A. Dr. Elizabeth Klonoff, Vice President for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at the University of Central Florida, was recognized by Chair Levine to present an overview of the development of rapid-acting disinfectant spray for slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Dr. Klonoff reported that the research team included Professor Sudipta Seal,

Professor Griffith Parks, and Christina Drake, Ph.D. She described the journey leading the University of Central Florida researchers to develop a nanoparticle-based disinfectant that can continuously kill viruses on surfaces for up to seven days. Dr. Klonoff reported that this was shown to be effective against COVID-19 and effective against other pathogenic viruses.

Chair Levine thanked Dr. Klonoff for her presentation. He noted that this is the research we need, and it is important to look for commercialization opportunities.

- B. Chair Levine then introduced Dr. David Norton, Vice President for Research at the University of Florida, to present an overview of the University of Florida research on the Delta variant and the vaccine breakthrough cases in Florida.

Dr. Norton recognized the research team of Marco Salemi, Ph.D. and Michael Lauzardo, M.D. Dr. Norton reported the University of Florida researchers within the COVID-19 Genomic Epidemiology Network collected and sequenced SARS-CoV-2 positive samples and identified which variants of SARS-CoV-2 were present and the relationship of the variants to vaccine breakthrough cases. He provided a summary of findings and concluded that while current vaccines effectively reduce morbidity and mortality, they do not prevent a viral load capable of transmission. Dr. Norton commented that further research is needed, and efforts to characterize the immune response in vaccinated individuals with breakthrough infections are underway at the University of Florida.

Chair Levine thanked Dr. Norton for his presentation. He stated the federal vaccine mandate is having a cascading effect across the country, and misinformation is continuing to undermine credibility. Chair Levine said science is needed to support decisions and policies.

- C. Next, Chair Levine recognized Dr. Andres Gil, Senior Vice President for Research and Economic Development and Dean of the University Graduate School at Florida. Dr. Gil reported one implication was that substance users appeared to be more likely to be COVID-19 positive and unvaccinated. He stated that a second implication was that individuals in lower socio-economic strata represented by food insecurity were less likely to be vaccinated. Dr. Gil reported the final implication was that individuals with health vulnerabilities were more likely to be vaccinated.

Chair Levine thanked Dr. Gil for his presentation.

Chair Levine stated that these research projects exemplify the importance of research in the State University System. Research can lead to the commercialization of solutions, a better understanding of how the virus works so good decisions can be made and policies implemented, and information that can be used to break down health disparities and inequities. Chair Levine noted there has been great progress throughout the System in the area of research and thanked Board Chair Kitson for his support.

5. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Having no further business, Chair Levine adjourned the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

Alan Levine, Chair

Lynn H. Nelson
Director, Student Affairs