Dear Colleagues –

This is a special summer edition of the Faculty Senate Chair’s Report, focused solely on the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic resurging in Norman. A full Chair’s Report, including the information here, will be presented to the Faculty Senate at our first meeting in September.

Best regards,

Keri Kornelson
Chair, OU Norman Campus Faculty Senate

Announcements:
Due to the rapid acceleration of SARS-CoV-2 cases in Cleveland County, and particularly in Norman, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has made the decision to move the State of the University Address by President Harroz to a Zoom webinar. The address will occur on September 1, 2021 from 3-4:30 pm. The request for questions and the links to the webinar will be sent soon to the faculty.

We have also decided to hold the Orientation for new Faculty Senate members and the first Faculty Senate meeting over Zoom rather than in person. Decisions about later meetings will be made as we see how the surge of cases plays out in Norman.

Weekly SARS-CoV-2 New Case Count for Norman; data from Oklahoma State Department of Health (https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Cases</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
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<td>July 7</td>
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<td>July 21</td>
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<td>136</td>
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Summer Faculty Senate Chair’s Report – SARS-CoV-2-related activity May 11 – August 6, 2021.

On June 14, Interim Provost Irvine and I discussed the low numbers of cases in Norman. She informed me that the administration is still meeting weekly with Dr. Dale Bratzler to watch for potential spread.

On June 30, the FSEC met with President Harroz. We discussed the development of new COVID guidelines for campus with full-density classrooms and classes taught primarily in person. We asked questions and shared faculty concerns about the likelihood of classroom transmission, given what we have heard about the increased transmissibility of the Delta variant. President Harroz acknowledged these concerns and offered to set up a briefing in July with Provost Wright and Dr. Bratzler.
On July 12, I met with Provost Wright. We discussed policies for instruction in the fall. He said that his office was working on those plans and would seek input from FSEC. He also agreed to apprise us of any new developments arising from the weekly COVID-related meetings with Dr. Bratzler.

On July 12, the FSEC met with Provost Wright. We were briefed on the twice-weekly meetings between OU administration, Dr. Bratzler, and others at OUHSC to track COVID in Oklahoma and develop policy in response. Provost Wright emphasized that he will be very transparent with the faculty about these conversations. The FSEC encouraged frequent communication with the instructors at OU with clear language and policies about how to manage COVID-related issues in the classroom and what they are expected to do for ill/quarantined students who miss a lot of class. Provost Wright agreed with this idea.

On July 22, the FSEC received a briefing from Dr. Dale Bratzler about the delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 and the likely implications on the fall semester. Provost Wright and VP Burrage were also present on the call. Dr. Bratzler presented data for Oklahoma, Cleveland County, and Norman representing the daily number of cases and also a map of where the most cases are happening (that presentation is also on Dr. Bratzler’s Facebook page). Cleveland County had just moved into the CDC’s Orange zone, but case counts in Norman were quite low so far (although they were nearly 3-fold higher than two weeks previously). We discussed likely policies for the fall, including masking recommendations, classroom expectations, and managing student absences. The emphasis was on encouraging and incentivizing vaccinations for all members able to get them.

On July 23 – 27, the FSEC was asked for feedback on the draft of Instructional Continuity and Guidelines and the FAQs about instruction for the fall semester. The FSEC suggested some clarifications to the policies around student absences and coverage for instructors who miss class due to illness. We suggested additional FAQs and modifications to make some FAQ answers consistent with stated guidelines. These edits were sent to Vice Provost Morvant and largely incorporated in the final document.

On July 28, I met with Provost Wright. The main topic of conversation was the heightened concerns about the Delta Variant of SARS-CoV-2, in light of recent increases in cases in Norman and the plans to return to fully in-person classes at full capacity in the fall. I recommended using strong language in the masking policy at OU and encouraged the plans to have easy access and incentives for vaccines during Move-In and Camp Crimson and early in the semester. I also suggested OU survey the students, faculty, and staff anonymously to get an estimate of vaccination status. It would be useful to have that estimate. Provost Wright seemed receptive to these suggestions and promised to keep us updated.

On August 2, Provost Wright attended the FSEC meeting. We discussed COVID plans for the fall, now that cases in Norman were increasing rapidly. We asked that the instructional policies and guidelines be advertised broadly to faculty and that if new questions come in, they be added to the FAQ page. We also asked about procedures for faculty feeling the need to teach online due to their own or a family members’ medical status. Provost Wright encouraged faculty in those cases to contact HR for information about ADA and FMLA accommodations. We asked about travel policies as well; the current travel policy will remain in force for the time being. We also asked what the plans were for testing students when they come back to campus. Provost Wright said that a negative COVID test may be required for students traveling from outside Oklahoma, particularly from hot spots, but also said that this is an ongoing discussion. We asked about making COVID tests free in order to encourage regular
testing. We also asked about incentives for students to vaccinate. OSU has some great publicity around their incentive plans, and we would like to help share OU’s plans. The Provost will let us know when he has more information about these items. He did say that there are plans to have mobile vaccination stations available during Move-In and the first week or two of classes, and that Goddard would remain a place where anyone can get vaccinated for free. (*The OU community has since received information with details of these vaccination opportunities.*)

On August 4, the FSEC met with President Harroz. We began by asking whether there was any chance the Governor or the legislature would reconsider SB658 and the Executive Order related to mask mandates. President Harroz said that his sense is that this won’t happen. They are focusing on encouraging vaccination and masking. We expressed our approval for the OU Masking Policy using “strong encouragement” for masking and vaccinations, while also acknowledging that most of us would prefer a mask requirement if that were available to us. President Harroz also said that the plans for testing students when they come back to campus are evolving as the situation changes. We discussed at length some recommendations to help faculty effectively encourage vaccination and masking in class. We also shared some ideas for ways to incentivize OU community members to vaccinate. The President was very receptive to our suggestions and asked us to continue to share ideas. He also said they would keep us apprised as they enact the plans in place already. We encouraged him to reach out to the OU community with a message before the semester starts. We discussed the role of testing and emphasized collecting and sharing data such as vaccination rates on campus. We also suggested other alternatives if the surge in cases continues.

**A statement from the Chair:**

1. I fully support the current position of the CDC that *vaccinations remain the single-most important tool we have to stop the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and to minimize the chances of illness requiring hospitalization and death.* I strongly encourage ALL OU students, faculty, and staff to vaccinate – if they are eligible and able to do so – and I strongly encourage that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people wear masks while indoors in public areas such as classrooms.
2. I encourage the administration to take bold action to make vaccines readily available and creatively incentivized at OU, in order to maximize the vaccination rate on the Norman campus.