

Meet & Confer – February 3rd, 2021 8AM

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Agenda

Late-breaking things from GSA that are not on the official agenda

Notes from the meeting

- I. Welcome
- II. Old Business
 - A. Request for update on the process of raising Gerontology stipends to the same level as the rest of the GPILS programs
 1. Dr. Lilly not present; no update
 - B. Meeting with the Writing Center this Friday 2/4 to discuss Grammarly
 - C. Met with Chief Leone and Robert Milner regarding using the Lyft program and/or Safe Rides to transport students to the State Center for testing/COVID boosters
 1. Expanding the Lyft program for this purpose was not an option
 2. Chief Leone was on-board with dedicating a Safe Ride van for this a day or two each week, but Patty Alvarez had safety concerns regarding possible spread to the drivers
 - a) Drs. Jarrell & Ward going to follow-up with Dr. Cloeren regarding adding precautions to mitigate these concerns
- III. New Business
 - A. Loan disbursement issues
 1. Student have had extreme difficulty contacting the appropriate people when they encounter issues receiving the loans they need to pay their bills
 2. Office number on the website is just a fax number, some students had to call IT to get routed to the correct person
 3. Request for relevant information to be put online
 4. The committee recommended that the GSA meet with Patricia Scott & Jordan Nixon to alert them of these issues. Sydney following-up before

next meeting; request that the student loan webpages be updated with appropriate contact information

5. We also discussed issues students are having accessing OB/GYN care at UMMC facilities (ie students will not be accepted for routine care anywhere other than UMIC; students with referrals for further care still being turned away). Hadley working on this through another committee

B. New quarantine guidelines for students

1. As of 1/27, students who have received a booster dose no longer need to quarantine if they've had a close contact exposure and can follow an extensive testing regime
 - a) What is the reasoning for this?
 - b) What is the policy for faculty/staff?

2. Ran out of time, did not discuss

C. Mask availability

1. Extended reuse not recommended by experts
 - a) The CDC recommends wearing N/KN95 masks no more than 5 times, and some physicians have recommended that KN95s only be used for one day if worn for a long period of time in close contact with others (ie classroom, small research lab, office space) or up to a week if worn for short periods where distancing can be maintained, eg. short errands like grocery shopping
2. Some students have received a total of two (one in the fall and one in January), while others have received multiple; some even have free access to more whenever they need them
 - a) Difference between programs confusing, frustrating and inequitable
3. Students expressed confusion about when or if they would be receiving additional masks from their programs in the future as this has not been communicated
 - a) This leads to students wearing old masks longer than necessary
 - b) Masks can be purchased, but this is an additional financial burden on students. Since they are required by the university, students expressed frustration they are not adequately provided
 - c) Request for a more transparent system going forward
 - (1) Did not discuss do to time constraints, but asked about this in a follow-up email after the meeting

D. Testing on and around campus

1. PCR tests
 - a) Confusion regarding getting tests on campus (ie from Immediate Care)
 - b) Students have waited in line for hours (even with appointments) at local locations for a test, and then often 4-8 days to get their tests back
 - (1) Not really feasible to test every 3-4 days for 17 days in the case of a household exposure
2. Rapid tests
 - a) Really difficult to find (and cost \$25-50+ if you can find them)
 - b) Not uncommon to test negative with rapid tests but positive with PCR

- c) New tests from the government are helpful, but only provide 4 per residential address. Most students live with multiple roommates or a partner
 - d) With the new student quarantine guidelines, students would need **eight** rapid tests for a single household exposure
 - e) Does the University plan to provide additional rapid tests to students soon?
 - 3. Request for communication to be shared regarding the extended shelf-life of the tests provided by the University (printed February 2022, but extended by the FDA to May 2022)
 - a) Dr. Golembewski said her understanding is that an email with this information will be going out shortly
 - 4. Note: we are aware of and excited about the new testing location near campus that opened last week! We have not yet had time to hear from students what that experience is like, but are hopeful it will be fast and easy
 - 5. Dr. Ward described his extremely pleasant experience (no lines, quick results) at nearby test centers, in contrast to the many reports to the contrary we've heard from students & our own experiences
 - 6. Dr. Rhodes pointed out that the employee health insurance plan allows for 8 tests per month to be purchased with no upfront cost. We looked verified this is true for the student plan & emailed students. Dr. Rhodes is also putting the subject of tests and testing on the next CMAG (Crisis Management Advisory Group) agenda
- E. On-campus activities
- 1. Students have expressed that they feel unsafe on campus outside of just the classroom, which is the focus of most of the guidelines. For example attending hours-long meetings in their large lab, program/department seminars and journal clubs for which no virtual option is available
 - a) We appreciate that faculty were encouraged to hold meetings virtually, but this still ultimately leaves the decision up to faculty
 - (1) At least one PI is ignoring this recommendation because they thought the person who sent it did not have the authority to tell them they can't meet in person
 - b) Seminars and journal clubs are still occurring on campus with no virtual option in some programs
 - c) Request for official policies regarding what activities must have a virtual option, including the maximum number of people in a given meeting/activity
 - 2. In the classroom, students have expressed confusion regarding whether or not their classes are still expected to occur in person
 - a) As of our January GSA meeting, some programs had moved virtual while others hadn't communicated anything
 - b) Students expressed frustration with inadequate technology to allow their professors to offer successful hybrid or virtual classes
 - 3. Students also stated that they are being penalized for not attending mandatory in-person classes (ie they are the caretaker of children who cannot be in school/daycare for a variety of reasons; they have tested positive for COVID; they have a close positive contact and no access to tests). Some students (especially international students where the power

dynamic is further shifted) are attending in-person when they should be isolating for fear of penalty from the professor

a) Request for an anonymous system for students to report this without fear of retaliation

4. Overall, students expressed frustration and confusion that there were no testing or isolation requirements or recommendations upon the return to campus after the holiday, especially knowing that many people had traveled and in light of the extremely high positivity rate in Maryland
5. Dr.s Ward & Jarrel said that an anonymous report system already exists and is well-utilized; GSA will communicate the EthicsPoint Hotline to students
6. Much discussion regarding power, influence and fear of retaliation. Drs. Ward and Jarrell of the opinion that UMB cannot and should not micromanage its faculty and students need to report if something is wrong
 - a) Dr. Jarrell further added that there are already rules regarding safe conduct of research and there are disciplinary actions that are taken when these are found to be violated
7. We advocated for clear/transparent policies; discussed that students feel their voices are not being heard effectively by this Meet & Confer format

F. UMB COVID Hotline/Report Form

1. The dashboard reporting the number of positive students/faculty that called the Hotline was removed without notification on January 7th. This was concerning when there were 273 cases reported in December 2021 compared to 39 in November and 29 in October
 - a) Will this be returned to the website soon?
 - b) Ran out of time, asked about this in follow-up email
2. Does UMB report case numbers received by the Hotline & Report Form to the Health Department? With many people now relying on home tests, students fear that the “official” numbers are far underreported
 - a) Request for this information to be included on the COVID Hotline webpage either way
 - b) Ran out of time, asked about this in follow-up email
3. Concern regarding the number of cases: while we appreciate the transparency in hearing that the Hotline is overwhelmed and the campus community should only call if necessary, this fact was very alarming to students
 - a) Are there plans to add additional support to the Hotline in light of this peak, or are there any signs that case volume is returning to manageable levels soon?
 - b) Ran out of time, was not discussed

IV. Updates (to be read ahead of time by all)

- A. The GSA held a very successful outdoor winter social in January! So many students came by that we quickly ran out of the grab-and-go snacks and drinks
- B. We are currently planning for an in-person GRC on Friday, March 4th