

Chair's Report
May 2020
Submitted by John Smith

Well this is different. I just looked back on my Chair's Report from May of last year. Man I wish we were dealing with those types of things instead of what we are right now. That also seems like a decade ago and not just last May. Yes, that is exactly how I started last month's chair's report with. Only the month has been changed. I'm starting to feel like Bill Murray in Groundhog Day.

Two things have driven a majority of my meetings since our last senate meeting. Furloughs, pay reductions and RIFs and plans for an August "re-start" of on campus classes, activities and residents.

We gathered around 30 questions and concerns regarding the proposed "re-start" of on campus functions in August. There are many discussions taking place by a number of groups. Some are university wide committees and some are taking place at the school, unit and departmental levels. Here is the main thing at this point. Most of the questions we've raised do not have answers available right now. This planning of a re-start is contingent upon the overall covid scenario when we get closer to August. We are looking at research that projects the covid scenario to be in a much better place than it is right now. The University is conducting "scenario planning" and are hopeful we are able to re-start with a "new normal," as it is commonly being referred to. We have to plan for that option and then if need be, we've already learned how to flip the switch to remote work and online learning. There are still way too many variables to make a definitive statement about anything other than, safety is something we will always continue to advocate for on our behalf.

I still say the biggest thing that I find hard to deal with is the fact that we don't know when this is going to be over. It would be so much easier to say "just stick it out until the end of June, July or whatever and everything will be OK" but we just don't know that. The un-certainty of the entire Covid-19 scenario is hard to deal with mentally.

19 staff in Athletics were informed they would not have their contracts renewed at the end of June. In a Board of Trustees meeting I heard UofL Hospital President Tom Miller report on the number of new staff that would be needed when we take over our own billing and collecting operation and the many other jobs that were open at the hospital. I reached out to Tom and talked to him about the people from Athletics who would be looking for jobs soon and asked if we could make priorities of those when hiring for new positions. He put the VP of Human Resources, Tiffany Nugent, for the hospital in touch with me. Tiffany was happy to do that. I have communicated with the people from Athletics who will be looking for new jobs about the possibilities at the hospital. Tiffany has instructed the recruiters to look for people with UofL Athletics on their resumes. It was very encouraging to experience the level of cooperation I did from Tom and Tiffany.

Andrew, Rhonda and I had a long string of meetings with Parking about permits and possible refunds/stopping of deductions for people working remotely and not coming to campus. A campus wide email about refunds went out over a week ago giving people the option to receive a refund and not have deductions taken from their paychecks. We appreciate the cooperation from Gary Becker and Mark Watkins on that.

I am serving on the university's free speech policy group that is working on new language and policies in that realm. We are close to giving our recommendations to the Provost. We meet just prior to our senate meeting today.

Now, more than ever, what you do makes a real difference in the lives of people. Thank you for all you are doing. I am proud of our group and the individuals that comprise it.