Minutes of the December 10, 2021 FCSM College Council Meeting

The FCSM College Council met in the Science Complex, Room 4230 at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Pamela Lottero-Perdue, Chairperson, presiding. An option to Zoom into the meeting was made available; one participant attended via Zoom.

Member Attendees: FCSM: David Vanko, Vonnie Shields; Biological Sciences: Angela Cox, Anne Estes; Chemistry: Stephen Hancock, Henderika van Huizen; Computer and Information Sciences: Joyram Chakraborty, Yeong-Tae Song; Mathematics: Min Ji, Melike Kara, Jing Tian; Physics, Astronomy & Geosciences: Raj Kolagani; At Large: Faith Weeks (Biology), Pamela Lottero-Perdue (PAGS); Students: Kyle Hurley (Graduate), Alexandra Reifer (Undergraduate).
Absent: Michelle Casey (PAGS)

Chairperson Pamela Lottero-Perdue called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. The Council welcomes Jing Tian from the Department of Mathematics who will serve on the FCSM Council in place of Melike Kara (family leave).
2. Minutes from the November 12, 2021 FCSM Council meeting were approved unanimously.
3. Announcements and remarks from Dean Vanko
   3.1. FCSM Fall Forum on Friday, December 3, was well attended.
   3.2. The Dean’s R2 Strategic Action Plan has been presented to President Schatzel.
      3.2.1. President Schatzel informally supports most initiatives.
      3.2.2. The Deans will now work to prioritize and identify near and longer-term initiatives related to the University’s 25-year strategic plan.
   3.3. The FCSM Strategic Action Plan 2020-2030 was submitted to the Provost’s Office.
   3.4. The Provost announced the launch of the Cyber4All: TU Center for Innovative and Interdisciplinary Cybersecurity. Prof. Sid Kaza will direct the Cyber4All Center and will serve as the inaugural TU Maryland E-Nnovation Endowed Professor.
      3.4.1. The one-million-dollar endowment is funded with $500,000 from the TU Foundation and $500,000 from the Maryland Department of Commerce.
      3.4.2. The Cyber4All Center will receive operating support from the Provost, the FCSM, and the endowment earnings.
   3.5. Faculty searches are underway for nine positions previously unfrozen.
      3.5.1. Provost Perreault has announced that the additional faculty positions previously frozen may now be filled.
      3.5.2. The Council discussed the timing of various searches as they relate to departmental logistics and the quality of the applicant pools.
3.6. Provost Perreault has authorized using a SAP to search for a new “Pre-Professoriate postdoctoral fellow in Biology.” Candidates capable of bringing diverse perspectives to the TU faculty will be recruited and will join the NSF-sponsored USM AGEP Promise Academy Alliance (APAA) project. The expectation is that after two years the candidates will convert to a tenure-track position.

3.6.1. The Council discussed the unique procedural differences relating to this position including the logistics of the transition from pre-professoriate to TT, the promotion and tenure timeline, pre-TT research support, and physical space requirements and concerns.

3.6.2. Dean Vanko noted that other UM institutions have already taken part in the program. In addition to the NSF guidelines, there is a model for procedures and policy.

3.6.3. Dean Vanko notes that expanding this program to other departments is a goal of the College.

4. TU Chief of Police and Director of Public Safety, Joe Herring, addressed the FCSM council to discuss various topics.

4.1. Active Shooter / Avoid-Deny-Defend - Training and Drills

4.1.1. Are there any plans to update the videos at TU that are used to educate students, faculty, and staff about active shooters and how to avoid, deny, and if necessary, defend?

Chief Herring discussed plans to update training videos and to promote engagement with the videos. The Chief notes that training is designed to increase the community’s environmental awareness and preparedness in case of active shooter events.

4.1.2. Who is required to watch these videos and do the associated training and how often should it be taken?

Chief Herring notes that new and incoming students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to watch the video and take additional training, but the video is always available and additional training is offered twice a month and by request. Training should be taken as often as the individual, department, or college deems necessary.

4.1.3. Do you recommend conducting active shooter / ADD drills (e.g., in the new building) -like fire drills? This could be for just faculty or faculty and students.

4.1.3.1. Chief Herring suggests that there will not be building wide training events, but his team could facilitate real life exercises wherein different scenarios are presented and faculty or staff will have to react accordingly.
4.1.3.2. Chief Herring and the council discussed the logistics of scheduling such training events and role of the “Emergency preparedness manager,” a position that is currently vacant, in orchestrating more campus wide training.

4.2. Science Complex specific concerns

4.2.1. There are many windows in SC classrooms/labs -both facing the interior and exterior of the building. What are your recommendations for how to handle windows during an active shooter situation?

Chief Herring emphasized the importance of being aware of one’s surroundings and having a plan in case of various emergencies aligned with each individual’s risk tolerance. Specific guidance on dealing with windows included turning off lights, lowering blinds, and turning tables on their side to act as barriers.

4.2.2. Could TUPD - or some other group of experts - help departments analyze the rooms under their purview and determine room-specific plans for what to do in the case of an active shooter? (Where to go, what to use to deny/defend, door locking protocols/systems, etc.) We do not feel that we are expert enough in this area to make such plans.

Chief Herring and the council discussed procedures to obtain situation or room specific guidance following comprehensive review of the building by TUPD and the office of public safety, which may include informational supplements to the buildings emergency plan and tailored/iterative training from TUPD.

4.2.3. There is a large commons area in the SC. What are your recommendations about how to ADD in this location? For example, how can "avoid" be done in a safe and orderly way? How would we communicate that to the many people who use it?

4.2.3.1. Chief Herring reiterated the importance of situational planning aligned with an individual’s risk tolerance and the need to enjoy the benefits of the SC common areas despite the possibility of an active shooter event. Chief Herring also detailed the various preemptive efforts that are being taken to prevent an active shooter event. These include frequently monitoring high traffic areas for suspicious behaviors, using AI to detect un-holstered weapons, monitoring social media, maintaining a highly visible presence of public safety stewards (e.g., uniformed officers), maintaining and fostering a good relationship between the public safety team and the community, and strategic door locking.
4.2.4. What safety considerations are there given the proximity of the SC and 7800 to the heavily trafficked access road?

Chief Herring reiterated the use of analytical tools to improve safety as discussed above.

4.3. Alert system and informing the public

4.3.1. Is it possible to change the emergency alert sign up policy to Opt‐out (instead of opt‐in) and increase the cycle before notifications cease?

Yes. The alert system registration is transitioning to opt-out and the term will be for four years instead of two.

4.3.2. What mechanisms are in place to disseminate emergency information and how are location‐specific instructions communicated?

4.3.2.1. Chief Herring and the council discussed the variety of mechanisms for disseminating emergency communications including phones, fire alarm audio, networked workstations, and campus signage. Chief Herring discussed efforts to unify these systems while maintaining the option for modularity.

4.3.2.2. Chief Herring noted a lack of support for facial recognition software by the university administration. Chief Herring also reiterated the use of AI to detect weapons and frequent monitoring of closed‐circuit cameras as measures to provide “early warning” of a credible active shooter event. Chief Herring noted that such software does have some probability of providing “false positives” and is unable to distinguish toy/prop guns from real ones.

4.4. Syllabus language and talking with students

4.4.1. To what degree should faculty describe active shooter/shelter in place procedures in their syllabi and what recommendations are there for specifically discussing these procedures with students without triggering students in a negative way?

Chief Herring supports using the syllabus to direct students to training resources and opportunities. In addition, faculty may choose to have a brief discussion regarding shelter in place and active shooter procedures at the beginning of each semester. Starting the conversation is a good way to foster environmental awareness in students.

4.5. Weather related issues

4.5.1. What are the specific recommendations for severe weather emergencies (such as a tornado), and can we label various rooms as “weather evacuation rooms?”
4.5.1.1. Chief Herring suggested that it is best to stay as far away from windows as possible and that if an individual is in a common room with many outward facing windows, then they should seek a weather-approved room.

4.5.1.2. Chief Herring discussed the high-resolution weather tracking system employed by TU that can identify events that are unique to campus vs. the surrounding areas.

4.5.1.3. Designating “weather evacuation rooms” is possible and can proceed at the discretion of the College/University.

4.5.2. How will future communication distinguish “shelter in place” for weather related events from those in response to an active shooter?

4.5.2.1. Chief Herring discussed improvements to the emergency messaging system that will allow for increased specificity regarding each event. If a shelter in place order is issued, the event will be identified and the “shelter in place” order will be given. Chief Herring also discussed the “safer mobility” app, which will allow the user to interface with dispatch in the case of an emergency!

4.5.2.2. Chief Herring discussed that unauthorized communications are unlikely but possible and stated that any non-authorized communication would be followed by a correction. All alternative communications routes could and will be used.

4.6. General discussion

The council discussed that it is likely that the space committee will take up room specific weather evacuation designations.

5. Announcements from the Council Chairperson

5.1. Department Chairperson transitions – Council Chairperson Lotterio-Perdue and the council discussed the fact that many faculty don’t know what the department chairs do or how the transition to R2 will alter the department chair duties. Strategies for disseminating the duties and benefits associated with being chair were discussed and included:

5.1.1. Leadership training within the department and college.
5.1.2. Panel discussion with current chairs.
5.1.3. Professional institution lead workshops for new chairs.
6. Highlights from FCSM Departments

6.1. Biological Sciences

6.1.1. Barry Margulies retirement celebration: Friday 12/17/2021 at 1:30 p.m.

6.1.2. Approved to hire FCSM Pre-professoriate fellow with expertise in CMB area as part of the AGEP grant.

6.1.3. Research Symposium today! First one in SCI!

6.1.4. New Biology Faculty:

6.1.4.1. Recommendations have been sent forward for last month’s search!

6.1.4.2. Integrative Biology Position: phone interviews next week; campus interviews in February.

6.1.4.3. CMB CAP interviews in March.

6.1.4.4. Temporary lecturer in CMB (for Barry’s position).

6.1.4.5. AGEP postdoc interviews in April/May.

6.1.4.6. Fall 2022: search for two CMB positions.

6.1.4.7. Daniel Caetano, the new tenure track bioinformatician hired Fall 2018 will be here in the Spring!

6.1.5. Will be voting for a new Biology Department Chair will take place in April to replace Laura Gough in the fall of 2023.

6.1.6. The designation of the new (proposed) integrative concentration will be a General Biology concentration (acronym = GBIO). This concentration has open upper-level electives, including the possibility of non-biology courses.

6.2. Chemistry

6.2.1. The department of Chemistry has finalized and approved our chair transition procedure and will initiate the chair transition proceedings beginning with self-nominations, which are due by Monday, February 14, 2022. A new chair is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2023.

6.2.2. The Department of Chemistry has been approved to initiate a search for a tenure track faculty in forensic analytical chemistry. The search will be conducted spring 2022 with a Fall 2022 start date.

6.2.3. The Department of Chemistry is still accepting applications for the tenure track position in inorganic chemistry. Application review will begin December 31, 2021 and continue until the position is filled.

6.2.4. The Department of Chemistry will hold its department retreat on January 11, 2022 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. to discuss such topics as major recruitment and retention, diversity equity and inclusion, and impacts of the R2 transition among other topics.
6.2.5. The department of Chemistry will be finalizing plans for specialty instrument moves and lab moves to SC and are targeting the week January 16, 2022 to be completely moved out of Smith Hall – except for the UEBL (Urban Environmental Biogeochemistry Lab).

6.3. Computer and Information Sciences

6.3.1. Sidd Kaza is stepping down as department chair by the end of this year. New chair election will be done before that.

6.3.2. Search process for two cyber security and two software engineering tenure track faculty positions has begun.

6.4. Mathematics

6.4.1. The Department of Mathematics has moved from using an O-Drive to using a SharePoint site.

6.4.2. B.S. in Computer and Mathematical Sciences has been approved by MHEC. The secondary education track is being prepared for evaluation by MSDE.

6.4.3. Seven-year review status update. Five names & CVs were given to the Dean as potential external evaluators.

6.4.4. During the next department meeting (that will be held on 12/10/2021), there will be a discussion on the chair election procedures and a few changes will be proposed. Some of the proposed changes include the time of the election (fall semester instead of spring), definition of majority in the votes. Especially, moving the elections to fall will allow adequate time for transition and scheduling issues for the upcoming academic year.

6.5. Physics, Astronomy, and Geosciences

6.5.1. PAGS is working on revising the policies for electing department chairs. A major change from previous policies is the change in electorate. Lecturers and staff will now be part of the electorate. Details of the election process are being worked out.

6.5.2. PAGS DEI committee will be holding a department wide “kick-off” meeting on 12/14/2021 for formulating DEI strategies for the department.

7. Old Business:

7.1. Concerns/Questions about Active Shooter and Shelter in Place – see discussion above.
8. **New Business:**

8.1. The Council unanimously voted to elect Joyram Chakraborty as interim vice-chairperson to complete Melike Kara’s term ending in May 2022.

8.2. Brainstorming: Interest in Professional Learning related to DEI. Due to time constraints, Council members will provide suggestions from their departments to a shared document for discussion at the Feb. 2022 meeting of the FCSM council.

9. A motion to adjourn was seconded. All were in favor of adjournment and the meeting concluded at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen P. Hancock  
Recording Secretary