

**University of Connecticut
School of Fine Arts
Faculty/Staff Meeting Notes
Friday, April 17, 2020
12:00-1:00pm
WebEx**

Introduction to the Meeting (Anne D'Alleva)

The Dean welcomed everyone to the meeting, and noted that this is a broadcast format, not a participatory format. Therefore, the only people who can present are herself and the panelists. Questions were submitted in advance, and Jes Zurell will help moderate questions submitted live. This session is being recorded, and a link to the recording will be made available next week.

The Dean thanked everyone for their work. Faculty and staff have been absolutely amazing during an extraordinarily difficult time under great pressure. Everyone has worked really hard and with very good-will, and the Dean and the students and patrons have been grateful. It is truly much appreciated.

The Dean had a great conversation with our new Provost yesterday. Carl Lejuez will join us officially at the end of May, and will be joining meetings of SFA's Academic Affairs and VPAM committees before then. Typically, the Provost would be invited to our retreat in August; if that's possible, that will be true again, but if not, we will find other ways for the faculty and staff to get to know the new Provost.

Advising Updates (Eva Gorbants)

Eva joined the presentation. She noted that we have three weeks left of classes, and then we roll into the final exam period. She thanked everyone for assisting the undergraduate students with registering for Fall classes; there were very few hiccups and they were able to be addressed and resolved.

Regarding the Pass/Fail option for students, Eva shared that students have until midnight on May 1 (the last day of classes) to put a course on or take a course off of pass/fail. Currently, university-wide, 2,700 courses have been put on pass/fail. 57 of those courses were put on pass/fail by Fine Arts students, and 15 of those 57 courses were within the major. We anticipate that more courses will be put on pass/fail as we get closer to the end of the semester.

Students are also being allowed to drop courses through the last day of the semester. Faculty advisors do get involved in that process, so please check your email on Monday, May 4 – if you have students who have requested a drop by midnight on May 1, and you approve, please route that email to Eva, and she will get it to the Registrar.

A side effect of these two options is that the grading rosters have not been activated yet by the Registrar. It's been postponed because of the pass/fail deadline being extended. It was felt that students would have an unfair advantage in deciding whether to elect pass/fail if they received a grade early. Please be patient, the grading rosters will be coming.

Finally, summer orientation and registration will be virtual this summer. Eva will be working with your incoming students on a one-on-one basis via WebEx or Skype or similar. She will reach out to her

contacts in the academic areas regarding what your package schedules should look like, and she will also be reaching out to her transfer course evaluators to set things up.

Anne added that if you notice while you're working with your students that they are struggling, the Care Team is working remotely, as is Counseling Services. You can ask Eva or you can refer a student directly if needed.

Admissions Updates (Anne D'Alleva on behalf of Elizabeth Foody)

Elizabeth was unable to join us today, so Anne gave her update. This is a different recruiting season that we could have anticipated. We're leveraging social media and Elizabeth is calling all of our admitted students and making direct contact. We're innovating a lot of virtual events, and we're learning things that we will keep in the future. There was an Instagram Live Q&A for admitted students recently that was very successful. Some families find it hard to travel to campus for Admitted Students Day, so this is a great way to reach out. The Department Heads participated in a similar live Q&A event for #UConnBound, which drew 180 admitted students. Admissions is also hosting a variety of virtual events as a part of #UConnBound.

The most recent update on deposits is that we are way ahead of where we were at this time last year. We had 67 deposits at this time last year, and we have 82 now. Music has grown the most, but all four departments look good. Anne noted that nobody really knows how this admissions cycle will pan out, but she suspects we will be very strong in deposits. For a lot of families, the idea of sending their child across the country right now will not be so appealing. Additionally, for some families, given the economic situation, UConn is a more financially prudent choice than they may have made otherwise. That said, there may be a lot of volatility as well, as peoples' financial situations have changed rapidly. If anyone hears from a family that is struggling, feel free to refer them to Elizabeth or to Student Financial Services, as the university is willing to modify financial aid packages given the situation.

Elizabeth will continue to share updates of numbers as the admission cycle wraps up.

Marketing and Social Media Updates (Jes Zurell)

Jes reiterated that we've run several live Q&A events, both as a school and by individual departments, which have been very successful. We are seeing a lot of new followers on our social media accounts from the Class of '24; they are very engaged.

Jes asked for volunteers to share stories, either live or pre-recorded, to talk about what they do, what they love about UConn, a story from your career from a time when you overcame an obstacle, or a highlight in your career so far. We would love to celebrate all of these stories on social media – it's a good time. Send Jes an email if you want to explore the possibility. She is thinking of these as mini-TED talks.

We will start using #artsatuconn to help build up awareness of all of the different things that happen with respect to the arts on campus. It will help show the diversity of opportunities to engage with the arts on campus. We will also start using #voicesofthevenues to showcase what the arts venues do.

Regarding the MFA shows, Jes has been working on a website. This show will go live on the Benton's website on Saturday, April 18, at 4pm. (N.B. Check out <https://benton.uconn.edu/mfa-2020>)

Jes will be reaching out to the department heads regarding the number of social media accounts, which have become too diffuse and fractioned. The messaging isn't always consistent, and specifically isn't always consistent with respect to the messaging about COVID-19 from the main university. It's important to unify our presence on social media.

COVID-19 Q&A (Anne D'Alleva with Alain Frogley, Colleen Bridgeman, and Eva Gorbants)

Anne shared a few updates first. The University has announced that the May term and Summer Session 1 will be held only online. Summer Session 2 will most likely also be held only online, but that decision has not been finalized at this time - the Provost's Office is trying to determine if there is a way to hold any components of Summer 2 in person, but it's indeterminate at this time. Additionally, we have decided not to hold the Nutmeg Summer Series this year, as there's just no way to know if we'll be able to house the cast and work on shows soon enough to make that possible, so it was decided to cancel it for the year.

A number of questions have come in regarding Commencement. We are not having in-person commencement this May. We will have a virtual commencement. There are some things the university is doing, and some things SFA is doing to celebrate. The university has announced they would like to host some sort of in-person event in October, but there are no details available yet. For May Commencement, there will be a combined taped/live event online on May 9. Students wanted some sort of live component, so there will be some brief components hosted live from the Jorgensen. At SFA, we are continuing with a number of the elements of our commencement: the class print is still being created and will be distributed digitally, and our national anthem singer will record a video of his performance to be shared. We are working engaging with other student and alumni components. We are also soliciting congratulatory remarks from various members of our community (faculty, staff, alumni, and SFA Advisory Board members). This is something that we may make more permanent, especially in terms of reaching out to members of our community beyond faculty/staff. Anne will also write a personal note to each graduating student and send it to them. If we learn more about any of these issues, we will communicate that.

Regarding the budget and the hiring/spending freeze that was just announced, Anne noted that the guidance is very similar to what happened in 2009. We will be able to hire faculty with approval from the Provost's Office - we need to be able to teach our classes. Any positions that were already approved in our budget, those positions are already approved. Any new positions or replacements will need approval. There is a freeze on staff hiring, and staff will only be hired by exception, with a justification for the position and why alternatives won't work. Similarly, we have to be very careful with spending - only essential expenditures at this point. There was a question submitted in advance regarding furloughs or layoffs of faculty and staff, and that has not been discussed at this point. That would have to be negotiated with the state.

There has been a lot of discussion, but no decisions made, about the shape of the Fall semester. There are a few scenarios being looked at, and it's not too soon to start planning. Unfortunately, what is not going to happen is a return to normalcy. What's more likely is that we shift to what is being called a

“low-density university.” What this will look like has not been decided, and until we get that framework in place, it’s hard to make any concrete plans. Some possible scenarios (which all have pros and cons) include: everything is full-time distance learning; start the semester later in the Fall (perhaps early October) and continue on into January; a hybrid semester where some classes take place completely online and others that can’t take place any other way take place in person; begin all classes online, but bring students back to campus mid-semester to finish courses in person. There are a number of considerations that are being discussed, such as lowering class sizes to maintain social distancing, require students to wear masks, etc. One model that has been considered, but does not have support, is to bring only some students onto campus (such as first year students and seniors) – Anne mentions this only because it has been suggested and you may have heard of it, but it’s unpopular and thus unlikely to occur. Anne also noted that we need to be mindful of our Stamford program. She reiterated that nothing has been decided and nothing can be decided at this time, because we don’t know what the public health situation will be.

Anne opened the floor to questions.

Are there discussions about finding ways to manage the workload if we go online for the Fall as well?

Anne noted that everyone is aware and mindful of how difficult it is to manage the workload as we go virtual. Everything takes longer and is more difficult. Everyone recognizes that this is a very challenging way for us to work. Again, nothing has been decided, but these are real concerns, especially for those who are managing family situations, whether that means taking care of sick family members or childcare. What’s helpful is for people to be honest about what difficulties they are running into – we can’t help solve problems if we don’t know what the problems are. Please share difficulties with supervisors/department heads/directors, or come to Anne directly, or feel free to go to your union if that’s what’s comfortable.

Should we be preparing to be teaching academic arts courses online?

This is another area where we need more feedback. It is one thing to take all of our classes that were mid-stream and shift them online. Planning for an entirely online semester looks different, and it’s important to consider what is and is not possible. The way we teach our students is essentially lab-based and relies on interpersonal engagement. Each department has different pedagogy and a different way of working. Anne and the department heads will discuss on Monday, and these discussions need to be going on at the department level as well.

Do you know how the venues will be affected in the Fall, for example, do we know when the Ballard may be able to re-open?

One of the aspects of this situation that is really painful is having the venues closed. Anne has heard from many patrons and supporters about how much they miss attending productions and exhibits and shows. The challenge is that we don’t know yet how we might be able to modify what we do. Do we only let a certain number of patrons into museums at a time? Do we give people masks? Do we space out seats for audiences? How can we make it safe for people to come together? We are brainstorming and trying to come up with solutions and watching what other arts organizations are doing and announcing. Part of it is up to the state – if the governor says arts organizations have to stay closed, we don’t have a choice. Anne has found the online programming to be heartening. The Ballard has been doing some great online workshops. We also may need to find ways to keep the virtual experiences alive for those who can’t risk coming to live arts events, even if we are allowed to hold them.

How are SETs to be addressed? How is teaching to be assessed now that, as per contract, SETs are not the only instrument to assess teaching?

The Provost's Office has announced that SETs will not be used by administrators to evaluate teaching for this semester. It is understood that under these difficult circumstances, SETs can't accurately reflect what's going on in the classroom. That doesn't mean that faculty can't elect to have their SETs included if they wish, but it is at the faculty member's discretion.

Leading large music ensembles won't work online, and having everyone in a room together would be dangerous. If we were to suspend these classes, could students still graduate on time?

This is the sort of question every department needs to confront. Anne is looking to our accrediting bodies for guidance. There are some things that just aren't workable, so the department needs to decide if we make a substitution, do we change the requirement?

If business is opened as normal next semester, are there any precautions that have been discussed to protect faculty and students? Also, with the federal government scheduled to start to reopen on May 1, how will that affect UConn if Ned Lamont decides to do the same?

Right now, the restrictions in Connecticut run through May 20. It's a fluid landscape. Even if the state starts to open up, there will be restrictions and it won't be back to business as usual. As other states and countries start to re-open, Connecticut will look to their experiences to see what kinds of best practices we can put into place. Already, the University has made the decision that May Term and Summer 1 will be completely online, so we don't expect to be back in person in any substantial way until after the early summer. Regarding the availability of PPE, access to hand-washing, sanitizing stations, etc., there has not been any discussion of that, but Anne will advocate for it.

Do you know if there will be any extensions for submitting grades?

Anne will look into this – it has not come up anywhere, but she will ask.

Any rules or thoughts on guests coming to classes?

Classes with master artists are an important part of education in the arts. Some this already goes on online via video-conferencing with guests that can't make it to campus. A lot of this will depend on the University's travel restrictions and how long they continue. Likewise, CRT will need to think about what their season might look like – how do we get equity actors engaged and involved? If you are reaching out to guest artists or scholars now to visit with your classes, the safest assumption right now is that it will take place via an online format. We don't know about travel restrictions at this point.

Will there be a graduate commencement event?

The Graduate School is working on something as a component of the May 9 online event. SFA is looking at having our alumni speaker record some remarks for our graduate students. There will be some component addressing our graduate students. The Benton is hosting an online version of the MFA exhibition. The actors' showcase for Drama has been put off until the Fall, but there are hopes that it will be able to take place then. We are still working on it.

Has there been anything said about the remapping process set to begin on July 1 by the HR department?

Anne and Colleen are meeting with HR next week on this topic. Council of Deans and similar bodies are currently completely consumed with handling the COVID-19 situation, but Anne and Colleen will continue to advocate for SFA with HR. She noted that there was a broad misunderstanding of what

positions in the arts look like, as these positions are not standard. Hopefully there will be an update after the meeting to share.

We know that essential custodial staff and possibly service folks are not wearing face masks, etc. While in our studios. Will a policy be put into place to change this?

Colleen has had conversations with facilities in regards to our custodial staff and ways in which the school can obtain PPE for those who do frequent the buildings from time to time. We are making good strides in providing that PPE, and have had gloves dropped off at the main vestibules of the building just this morning. Colleen will continue to have conversations with the relevant groups, and will provide more information as it comes along to her.

Regarding current visiting artists in residence, are they being kept informed on all the goings on of COVID-19 and how will their participation be handled?

Anne noted that anyone who is a part of SFA on faculty or staff is being kept informed. We have one international visiting artist who is on our own listservs and receiving information that way, and is also receiving information from Global Affairs.

Is there any budget for faculty purchase of laptops to teach academic courses online? Some need updated equipment.

We really had to scramble when we moved classes quickly to the online format. Trying to get workable equipment into everyone's hands has been one of our greatest challenges. This is the feedback that we need – if faculty can't manage with the equipment they have, we need to know that so we can share that feedback with the Provost's Office. SFA and ITS have given out loaner laptops, but we can evaluate over the summer break. If it turns out that we are continuing online in the Fall, we can address that. Please share feedback if you do not have the equipment you need so it can be addressed.

Does the frozen budget affect expenses related to awarded SFA research grants? Can we proceed in spending awarded funds?

Spending awarded funds is absolutely fine – please proceed. Some people are finding aspects of their plans have had to change, such as delaying travel. Things like that can be accommodated.

Education Abroad is still planning on Fall classes abroad. Have there been any new discussions you are aware of regarding study abroad?

This has not been discussed at any of the groups Anne is a part of. People seem to be taking a wait-and-see approach, but a decision should come soon. It's hard to imagine we'd be able to host study abroad programs this Fall, but we'll see. Anne will reach out to see if there's more.

Related to the spending of internal research money, how can we have materials shipped to the art building or ease limits on having materials shipped directly to a grantees home or studio?

Colleen noted that purchasing has been easing or relaxing their guidelines regarding materials being shipped to homes. Some items can be shipped directly to faculty homes – if you have specific questions, please contact Colleen and she can assist based on your situation. The other option is to have packages shipped to the Central Warehouse. Mail Services is still in operation and is still receiving and distributing mail, arrangements would simply have to be made to go to campus to collect those items.

How will art and design students access Adobe products now that the Adobe Suite is no longer provided to them outside the labs?

Anne did not have an answer to this question. This is an issue departments need to bring forward, especially as we look to what's needed to proceed with teaching online in the Fall.

[N.B. - UConn is currently offering the suite for free to all faculty/staff/students through May 31: <https://software.uconn.edu/2020/03/19/free-adobe-cc-user-licenses-faculty-staff-and-students/#more-6920> It's unknown if that May 31 deadline might be extended, but it's enough to get students through the end of this semester.]

In looking at the Fall semester and the possibility of entertaining multi-pronged preps per course, is there any possibility of slightly reduced teaching loads to account for the additional prep time as well as the additional time it takes to implement online?

This is not an issue Anne has seen discussed yet at this point, but she can discuss further with department heads about what the possibilities may be.

At this point, it was time to wrap up. Questions still in the queue will be answered by a follow-up email.

Again, if there are challenges you are experiencing, please do share them with your director, department head, Dean's Office staff, or the Dean so we can address them.

Anne thanked everyone for their time and appreciates the high level of participation in the event. She hopes all are taking good care and staying well, along with their families.