



TO: Felix Ngassa, Chair ECS/UAS

FROM: Philomena V. Mantella, President

DATE: July 21, 2020

RE: UAS Memo of 7/18/20

C: Maria Cimitile, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs  
Shawn Bultsma, Vice Chair, University Academic Senate

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Thank you for your letter of July 17, 2020. I continue to be both impressed and appreciative of the University Academic Senate leadership throughout this challenging period of a global pandemic and ever-changing State conditions - assuring our full commitment to public health for our faculty, staff, students and community, addressing threats to our institutional mission and continuity, and responding to economic challenges from all sides.

Our usual processes do not meet the needs of this unprecedented time and I very much appreciate your willingness to meet over the summer months to remain engaged with our situation. I maintain my commitment to shared governance and am always happy to explore ways for earlier inclusion of Senate representation that allows us to work apace with the need to make these critical path decisions. I hope this is evident by the preponderance of my actions over the first year.

For shared context let me review the promulgation of the face mask policy. The policy proposals were advanced to the Senior Leadership Team, obviously including full participation of the Provost, by the Technical Advising Group and Incident Management Team with leadership from Tina Barnikow and AVP Ed Aboufadel. The SLT requested focus group insight from faculty, students and staff, insight on statewide requirements and Michigan Universities, and clarity around education and compliance approaches before approving the draft policy. The notion behind the policy was to assure we were consistent with the best of public health guidance, allow faculty decision making flexibility in an appropriately socially distant classroom and assure it was enforceable. As we received feedback that the policy was too nuanced from you and that the faculty would in fact support full compliance beyond public health requirements, we simplified the requirement with an across the board requirement to all indoor space. The Governor's order followed suit.

In response to your call for my thoughts on earlier participation in decision making, I would suggest the following. I will increase the frequency of Presidents' Cabinet meetings, where you and Shawn sit, from monthly to weekly for the remainder of the summer as a point of review for the many public health safeguard decisions that are coming to us in the days ahead. We have a number of teams working to provide input on our approaches assuring we are ready. This includes a plan for real-time availability of infectious disease and occupational health expertise, scaling campus health support, testing, contact tracing, and triggers for action as we monitor the virus. Within the next two weeks we will formally move virus related work out of the IMT (who did an excellent job but is structured around a more incident focused approach) to one that can help us respond both in a preventative and responsive way over this

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President

prolonged COVID period. I would welcome additional faculty voices on these teams. The Provost will follow up to discuss representation with you this week. Lastly, I will request the Provost create a specific liaison on her team for health matters, as she has for other academic experience issues during COVID, to publish weekly updates on her secured website for the full faculty.

Please know we are working feverishly and with all positive intentions for inclusion in this highly complex and dynamic situation. I welcome your continued input and I hope these adjustments are meaningful.

**Philomena V. Mantella**  
**President**