



Trustees Approve COVID-19 Response Items, Including Plans to Reopen Campuses for Fall 2020 Semester

LITTLE ROCK (Monday, May 4, 2020) — The Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas today held a special, mostly COVID-19-centered special videoconference meeting and unanimously passed several resolutions related to the UA System's response to the ongoing pandemic.

The Board passed a resolution directing UA System President Donald R. Bobbitt, chancellors and chief executives of all UA System campuses, divisions and units to prepare to reopen their institutions to students, faculty and staff for the fall semester. Trustees acknowledged the need to continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and to ensure fall semester reopening plans are aligned with state and federal health directives. The appointment of a UA System task force including campus leadership and representatives from the system administration was directed to investigate and recommend steps to reopen institutions, including determining what measures will be needed to protect campus constituencies from the spread of COVID-19.

Trustees also voted to give UA System institutions flexibility in addressing student needs during the upcoming summer terms, which includes giving Bobbitt the authority to waive certain student fees for that time period in coordination with chancellors at various campuses.

The Board also approved resolutions to honor the leadership of Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson during the Covid-19 response and another acknowledging and thanking the employees across the system who have served as frontline and essential workers during the pandemic, ranging from the doctors and nurses at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), to the custodial staff at every campus of the system who have worked to clean and disinfect campus buildings in the weeks since the outbreak of the virus.

The Board also held a discussion with three UA System athletic directors — which included Hunter Yurachek at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Chris Peterson at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Padraic McMeel at the University of Arkansas at Monticello — about the prospect of playing football this fall, how athletic programs are planning to prepare for having student athletes back on campus, and how the pandemic has affected the athletic budgeting process and finances. This was not an action item.

The full resolutions are listed below:

RESOLUTION: Plans to Reopen Campuses for Fall 2020

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas recognizes the need to continue monitoring the impact of COVID-19 in Arkansas and to adhere to the public health guidelines and directives from the state and federal governments; and

WHEREAS, the state and federal governments have outlined steps for removing some physical distancing directives to facilitate a phased-in reopening of communities across Arkansas where UA System institutions are located; and

WHEREAS, President Donald R. Bobbitt has appointed a UA System task force including campus leadership and representatives from the system administration to identify the necessary steps to reopen institutions to students, faculty and staff for the fall 2020 semester; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the need for and encourages the task force and institutional leadership to create plans that include measures to protect the various campus constituencies from the spread and mitigate the impact of COVID-19;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS THAT the Board directs the President to work with the Chancellors and other chief executives across the UA System to prepare the various campuses, divisions and units of the system to reopen to students, faculty and staff for the fall 2020 semester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board directs such plans be consistent with the health policy directives of the state and federal governments regarding the COVID-19 virus.

RESOLUTION: Waiving Certain Fees for Summer 2020

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas recognizes the unique circumstance facing each system campus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Board voted on April 8, 2020 to continue social distancing measures and utilize online-only instruction for coursework during summer terms at institutions across the system; and

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to give the System and its institutions flexibility in addressing student needs during the summer terms;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS THAT the Board authorizes the President to waive certain fees for the summer 2020 terms in coordination with the Chancellors of the various campuses.

RESOLUTION: Acknowledgement of Pandemic Response of UAMS and other Institutions

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has called to action frontline and essential workers across the University of Arkansas System to respond to the needs of patients, students and others who have been directly impacted by the crisis; and

WHEREAS, the faculty and staff of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, from the emergency room physicians, nurses and other clinicians to the support staff and custodial team at the medical center have demonstrated outstanding courage and bold perseverance in their daily work fighting the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Cam Patterson and his administrative team have worked tirelessly since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Arkansas in early March to not only prepare UAMS to serve as an essential healthcare provider to virus patients, but also to assist Governor Asa Hutchinson and the Arkansas Department of Health in developing and implementing a statewide plan to identify the disease through increased testing capacity and to mitigate the spread of the virus through health policy directives; and

WHEREAS, other workers across the UA System have also responded admirably to this crisis, from the custodial staffs who have worked to clean campus facilities to the faculty members and support staff who have spent extra hours preparing for and executing the move to online instruction; and

WHEREAS, each UA System institution and its administration has identified unique ways to help their communities and others across the state, including through donating excess supplies of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, utilizing available technology to make face masks and shields, and offering the opportunity for displaced employees to temporarily fill personnel needs at UAMS; and

WHEREAS, all of the aforementioned individuals have brought honor and distinction to the University of Arkansas System through their selfless work;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS THAT the Board expresses its heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the employees across the UA System, including those at UAMS, who have led the effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board directs that this resolution shall be spread upon the minutes of this meeting, posted on the UA System website, and shared to the extent practicable with system personnel across the state.

RESOLUTION: Honoring Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson

WHEREAS, Governor Asa Hutchinson announced the first known case of COVID-19 in Arkansas on March 11, 2020 and subsequently declared a public health emergency to facilitate and coordinate the state's multi-agency response to the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, even before the first case was confirmed, the Governor and his administration, including the Arkansas Department of Health under the leadership of Secretary Nate Smith, took important steps to prepare for the arrival of the virus in the state; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hutchinson called a special session of the Arkansas General Assembly to convene on March 26, 2020 to set aside critical funding for the state to respond to the health care needs that have stemmed from the pandemic across the state; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hutchinson and Secretary Smith have provided daily briefings to the citizens of Arkansas regarding the social distancing measures needed to mitigate the impact of the virus across the state and the government's efforts to coordinate the procurement of the necessary supplies to treat those patients who have contracted COVID-19 and to identify the spread of the virus through increased testing; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hutchinson has called on Dr. Cam Patterson and the capable team at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to play an active role in the state's coordinated response to the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hutchinson has demonstrated calm and capable leadership in charting a course for the state's response to the pandemic that protects public health and provides support to Arkansans who have been impacted by the crisis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS THAT the Board expresses its heartfelt appreciation and admiration for Governor Asa Hutchinson for his leadership during this critical time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board directs that this resolution shall be spread upon the minutes of this meeting, posted on the UA System website, and that a copy be transmitted to the Governor.