CPUC Meeting
February 8, 2021 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM EDT

The following revised notes are not direct verbatims; the notes have been revised for clarity.

Christopher Eisgruber, President
Deborah Prentice, Provost
Christine Gage, Associate Secretary in the Office of the President
Rochelle Calhoun, Vice President for Campus Life
Jill Dolan, Dean of the College
Robin Izzo, Executive Director of Environmental Health and Safety
Treby Williams, Executive Vice President
Brent Colburn, Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs
Chad Klaus, Vice President for University Services

Agenda:
- Town hall meeting with the President, a chance for a discussion with President Eisgruber about current plans and projects.

President Eisgruber’s State of the University address:
Question and Answer:

Question, Sahil Jain (U-Councillor): I was wondering if President Eisgruber could offer us any information on what the plan for vaccination is. Do we anticipate getting vaccines by the end of the semester, and is there going to be distribution of vaccines to off-campus students? Will there be priority for Princeton as compared to other colleges in NJ?

Answer, Robin Izzo: The state has not provided a vaccine to us yet. We do expect to receive doses once the vaccine becomes more available. This is really hard to predict, I cannot say with certainty whether we would have this by the end of the semester or not. Right now, we are working with the town and health departments to make it more convenient to get the vaccine in our own community. I don’t expect that there will be a prioritization of our university as opposed to others, but since we are prepared to hold these vaccination clinics that may work in our favor. We must follow state guidelines, but we are ready to serve those both on and off campus.

Answer, Brent Colburn: This is an area where we won’t have a lot of flexibility in terms of prioritization.

Answer, President Eisgruber: Sign up through your state, sign up for the shot, that’s what I have done. What I care most about is making sure everyone is getting in those queues, observing those rules, and getting vaccinated. We’re going to need this community and surrounding communities to get vaccinated up to 70% plus. We need to sign up, we need to be patient, we need to get the shot. We want to be a society where we can get the shots.

Question, Riley Martinez (U-Councillor): I’ve been hearing a lot of concerns about students with certain dietary restrictions (specifically vegetarian/vegan needs). I’m inquiring about the ongoing efforts of campus dining to expand dining options. I know that there’s a petition going around with hundreds of signatures… are there any plans to improve/expand dining?

Answer, Treby Williams: First of all, I appreciate you raising the issue; obviously campus dining wants to be attentive of the restrictions of all students. My understanding is that there is a group of students that will meet with us to discuss this soon. I think you inferred in your question that things are not normal. We don’t have the same supplies as we did previously. We want to accommodate dietary needs to the best that we can.

Answer, Chad Klaus: We did start hearing from the end of last week from the student body. We want to engage and find ways to meet our students’ needs as best as possible. It is a complicated maneuver to feed so many students, especially since the eating clubs are closed. Producing the food at a healthy level is much more labor than previously; We do believe we can do better and we are committed to that, but we also have to be patient during this spring semester.
President Eisgruber: All of them are coming into the campus and working together in order to make that happen. From my standpoint, there are great benefits of coming to campus. I also realize that for our dining services folks, they don’t have the same options as other faculty. We do want to address needs, but there are differences between needs and expectations. We’re going to try to meet the needs of this group, but we need to understand that there are limits of the sorts. I appreciate the spirit of your question, Riley.

Answer, Rochelle Calhoun (Vice President for Campus Life): Smitha Haneef (Assistant VP) and I will be meeting with a group of students to address their concerns. I want to echo President Eisgruber’s appreciation for campus dining, especially during such a challenging time. Smitha has reached out to the students who have written to her, and we’ll be meeting with them.

Question, Juan Nova (U-Councillor): Are there any plans to expand in-person classes?

Answer, President Eisgruber: What we are trying to do with faculty is to give them a variety of ways to give them meaningful contact with their students. Meeting in-person right now are a relatively small number of classes. I’m teaching a class right now that has a capacity of 60 students but the law indicates that the maximum number of students is 12. There is no possibility of doing an in-person class for larger classes. Some of the more meaningful experiences may be in the nature of office hours or events or special sessions and some of them may expand in number as we do things outdoors.

Answer, Dean Jill Dolan: As the weather improves, there might be more opportunities for in-person office hours (where faculty could meet outside with students); we are still talking with faculty who might be interested in precepts that could be held outside. For the most part, we are going to keep things the same until we get better weather.

Question, Allen Liu (U-Councillor) [asking for Ayush Alag]: How will the new strain of COVID will impact spring semester planning, especially considering surface contact spread?

Answer, Robin Izzo: We’re certainly keeping a close eye on this, and we do have cleaning protocols in-place with the idea of preventing surface-level spread. We’re also looking for any other additional public health guidelines.

Answer, President Eisgruber: What my colleagues have told me is that the variants just make it all the more important to be scrupulous regardless of whether we’re dealing with variants. We did consult our epidemiologist when the news came in to make sure that our system is robust, and we think it is. We’re all in a position where we’re tired of this; we’ve got to keep it up and be scrupulous about it. The warmer weather should give us a boost, but we need to proceed as if the variants are among us and be careful about that.
**Question: Christian Potter (USG President):** (To President Eisgruber) In your address, you write that the university is planning on resuming fully in-person residential instruction, can you comment on how this decision is being made and the timeline for that decision? What kinds of considerations are being taken into account?

**Answer, President Eisgruber:** My bet is that we’ll be much more normal. Very bad things could happen around mutations and variations, we don’t know. The things that are least likely to come back are anything that looks like a conference, people flying in for a short time, eating at tables. You just described the highest-spread possibility events. Maybe we’ll be back where we’re all vaccinated. With the conscious activities, think about our research enterprise, in-person teaching, the activities of our student groups, I think we should want that to be back in place if we could find a way in the fall. We’re already learning how to use non-pharma ways. We should be asking ourselves, alright, how do we make our key activities and Princeton experience. I don’t know if exceptions should be necessary. One thing I will stress is I cannot offer you guarantees on any of that. We have no way to predict what will happen. I think that we need to be leaning into planning that recognised We will have more tools than we did a year ago. Christian, I can’t give you specific timelines, it’s way too early for that. That's the direction we’re planning for right now.

**Question, Julia Garaffa (U-Councillor):** Because for many students lab facilities are so important for hands-on experience, and in planning for summer experiences, what is the timeline for finding out when those opportunities will be available?

**Answer, Provost Prentice:** I know that the Office of the Dean of the College and the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Research are working through this right now. We know how important this is to students and we will get that out if and when we can.

**Question, Ashwin Mahadevan (USG Vice President):** I’m wondering how you and the cabinet are thinking of prioritizing the longer term institutional goals and the shorter term COVID goals.

**Answer, President Eisgruber:** I’m very grateful to all of the people from my cabinet who have spoken during this meeting. I appreciate the heroic responsibility taken on. We can’t say that the COVID pandemic is something in the moment and systemic racism is a problem for later. They’re both for right now. As you probably know the Provost has been updating the CPUC of their initiatives about hiring initiatives and the community on diversity to provide guidance and accountability over those issues. Searches are eggs before they hatch, so I don’t want to get excited, but we have searches and recruitments for new faculty. We will have an annual compendium about our diversity initiatives this spring. We are really trying to push ahead with both of these, we believe it's important.
Supplier contracting and professional diversity on campus; we will report on all of this in what will become an annual compendium on diversity initiatives this spring. As we try to focus on multiple crises at the same time. We are really trying to push ahead. As I said in my letter and I said before, there is opportunity as well as challenge in the confrontation of racism that we all going through as a nation and a world

We need to seize that opportunity; there are people on this campus who have been less engaged with diversity issues, and now they feel it really matters and diversity is core to our mission and we need to keep that energy over time. It’s another place where we need to move ahead; there’s no vaccine or injection that ends that particular crisis; it’s not a 1-year or a 2-year initiative; this needs to be work that is sustained and sustains us.

**Question, Evelyn Doskoch ’23:** I’d like to relay another question from a student who I’ve been speaking to. How is room draw going to work for next year; are we looking forward to a more-normal room draw or is it going to be something similar to what we have now?

**Answer, Chad Klaus:** Room draw will not happen on the normal schedule. We’re hoping to get more time between now and when we begin the process. We will be running a room draw; it’s just that we will not do that in the early part of the Spring, in hopes that we will be able to plan with more certainty in terms of what the Fall will look like. It might be that we do more than one room draw depending on the circumstances.

**Question, Vian Wagatsuma (U-Councillor):** Are there any plans to expand student employment opportunities?

**Answer, Dean Jill Dolan:** I can say that on behalf of the student employment office, we’re not thinking about that; as the semester progresses and if things change, we’ll certainly let students know.

**Question, Nari Baughman (Alumni):** There was an announcement that reunions will be virtual. Will they be similar to the reunions this past year virtually, or do you have any new information to provide on what reunions will look like this year?

**Answer, President Eisgruber:** Obviously we’re communicating with our alumni; I personally greatly miss reunions and frankly I think our staff did a remarkable job of putting things like the P-Rade online. As I think you understand, we’re in a situation where it’s our expectation that it wouldn’t be legal or responsible to have in-person reunions. We’re looking forward to hopefully having in-person reunions next year. I think the reunions staff is probably in early planning, as
we were waiting if some of the miraculous predictions about the vaccines (being inoculated by April) were going to happen. As we now see, that isn’t going to be the case.

**Question, Sarah Lee (U-Councillor):** Would contract workers be included in the vaccine distribution on-campus?

**Answer, Robin Izzo:** Could you describe what you mean by contract worker?

**Sarah Lee:** For example, the people associated with Restaurant Associates.

**Robin Izzo:** Yes, they are included in our vaccination program.

**President Eisgruber:** Right now, we have no vaccine. Whatever vaccine we have will be distributed based on state control and guidelines; we will have very little control over who is able to get the vaccine.

**Robin Izzo:** In anticipation of the number of vaccines that we might be able to provide and who would be interested in having a vaccine on our campus if and when we are able to do so, we are including our affiliates and those working alongside our campus.

**Question, Evelyn Doskoch ‘23:** I’ve been taking a look at the COVID Dashboard and heartened to see that we’ve had a low number of cases. I’ve been hearing about students who have come in contact with COVID-positive students having had to stay in quarantine; how many students are being asked to stay in quarantine due to contact tracing?

**Answer, Robin Izzo:** When it comes to contact tracing when a person tests positive, people from UHS will get in touch with them and will do contact tracing. Anyone who has been within 6 feet away for 15 minutes cumulative over a 24 hour period, and whether or not they are wearing masks or indoors or outdoors, are considered to be in contact. In many cases, it would be from walking outdoors. They’re not maintaining the 6 feet social distancing. I believe that last week, there were 43 undergraduates who were in quarantine who were identified as close contacts and 26 students in isolation in that same week. That’s what we were seeing.

**Answer, President Eisgruber:** I’m glad that you asked that question. This is a reminder that it’s important to keep up these things that may seem crazy (walking 6 feet apart when you’re outside). It connects back to Allen’s questions earlier about the variants and to keep our campus staff safe. If there’s contact and you’re less than 6 feet apart for more than 15 minutes apart, that’s close contact.
Question, Vian Wagatsuma (U-Councillor) [asking for Sarah Elkordy]: In your annual letter you emphasize the fact that Princeton is dedicated to fighting against racial inequity and discrimination. However, over this past year many students have expressed their deep discomfort and feelings of unsafety due to the sharing and expression of racist rhetoric and even racial slurs both on our local email listserver and social media. Can you please elaborate on how Princeton can be dedicated to fighting racial inequity and producing leaders to fight racial inequity when it constantly turns its face from racial inequity on its own campus in favor of free speech? How can all Princeton students truly feel safe and inclusive to Princeton’s community when Princeton refuses to protect Black, Indigenous, People of Color from violent hate speech stemming from their own peers?

Answer, President Eisgruber: I appreciate the question although I disagree with some of the things that were said in the question. One of the key themes of what I say in the letter is that there are questions about ways to confront speech. Our student body and staff do a good job of speaking of ways in ways that are respectful. I think the important thing to say about that is that we have to educate one another around the importance of inclusive norms and mutual respect. We have to speak up on behalf of equality and that’s what it means to be a part of a campus that simultaneously respects free speech and equality. I believe both of those things are consistent and it's important to recognize that the “how” matters.

Closing
President Eisgruber: I appreciate the way in which each and every member of this community, students, faculty, and staff, has enabled us to pursue our mission in times that are more difficult than every Princetonian can remember. Stay healthy, engaged, and well.