

Charge for Franklin College ad hoc committee on telemeeting crimes

Presented for a vote to constitute a new ad hoc committee at Franklin College Senate special session, Tuesday December 8, 2020

Background

On October 27, 2020, during a Franklin College-sponsored Zoom lecture organized by UGA faculty, a crime occurred. A group of anonymous intruders posted hate speech and made terroristic threats against the invited attendees. The attackers suggested the death of some UGA faculty members by posting verbal threats, listing faculty home addresses, and displaying a video clip of a murder. This is, to date, the most threatening in a series of ongoing hate crimes that have occurred in UGA-sponsored Zoom meetings, including some involving UGA [student organizations](#), and have most often targeted faculty and students from historically underrepresented groups.

At a Franklin College Senate meeting on Tuesday November 17, 2020, a group of Franklin faculty members briefly presented six discussion items created in response to the 10/27/20 attack, and with an awareness that the attacks are likely to continue. These items are also on the agenda for the 12/8/20 special Faculty Senate meeting. Each of these items was conceived in light of the attack, but their focus and scope varies.

The Franklin Senate has determined to form an ad hoc committee to consider these discussion items and make recommendations concerning them. This document articulates the ad hoc committee's charge and provides details of the process by which it will be fulfilled. Committee volunteers should note that the task is distinct for each item, and that each task has been designed for a relatively short timeline. To form the committee properly, there should be at least one Senator from each of the five divisions of Franklin. Given the wide array of academic venues in Franklin that have thus far been targeted, including a [Chemistry class](#) and a meeting of the Phi Kappa Literary Society, it is hoped that many Senators will see the value of this committee and that volunteers will readily come forward.

Note: in some cases, the charges below differ in their wording from the discussion items first presented at the 11/17/20 Senate meeting. These alterations have been made with input from the writers of the items and are presented as friendly amendmendments.

Charge for item I

*[“Whereas recent hate crime incident(s) at UGA have placed supervisors in roles that require some specialized knowledge of how to competently interact with traumatized individuals, we resolve that: Franklin College require yearly **“trauma-informed” training** for all college and department Heads and supervisors when it comes to the reporting and handling of hate crimes and the victims of hate crime. Faculty of UGA’s School of Social Work at UGA have offered their expertise to help design such training.”]*

One or more committee members will converse with faculty in the School of Social Work regarding the nature and scope of the training in question. Assuming this conversation proves satisfactory, committee members will then draft language for a Senate vote on this item. If approved by vote, this item will be presented to the Dean and to offices in upper administration as appropriate. The voting item’s language may be similar or identical to the item as first stated, if the committee sees no need to make revisions. Committee members should be prepared to lead discussion among Senators as to the feasibility and effectiveness of this new training for heads and supervisors.

Charge for item II

*[“Whereas knowledge of recent hate crime incident(s) at UGA has been sporadic, partial, or nonexistent amongst UGA community members, we resolve that: Franklin College institute a mechanism for publicly reporting and documenting the incidents of hate crimes at the university or against any members of the university. This **mechanism’s primary functions would be to promote awareness and safety and undertake data collection and analysis of hate crimes and terrorism. We all have a right and responsibility to know.**”]*

The committee will first confirm the lack of any official mechanism for publicizing hate crimes and terroristic threats at the University of Georgia (aside from [UGA’s annual crime statistics](#), which include terroristic threats), and will likewise confirm lack of coverage of such crimes in UGA Today and *Columns*. The committee will research relevant examples of hate crime reporting mechanisms at other colleges and universities, and will consult with the UGA Police Department to learn how gathering and reporting of terroristic threats currently works on campus. The committee will consider whether it is feasible for a more robust reporting mechanism based in Franklin College to cover hate crimes and terroristic threats University-wide. The committee will submit a brief written report on its findings at a Senate meeting in early 2021 and make recommendations, either for one or more voting items or for further inquiry and planning.

Charge for item III

*[“Whereas to prevent zoom-bombing to the extent possible a protocol must be established and followed, we resolve that: Franklin College release faculty, students, or organizers of public events – particularly those that receive funding from Franklin College or any of Franklin College units – from the responsibility to operate Zoom in those events and create a **technical position in charge of operating Zoom special events**. This technician would also be in charge of securing any links from all non-UGA affiliated social media accounts to give an extra layer of protection to organizers and participants.”]*

After briefly inquiring about possible barriers to creating a technical position that can operate Zoom events outside regular work hours, and about possible other ways to supply such technical expertise, the committee will bring a voting item to a Senate meeting in early 2021. If approved by Senate vote, this item will be presented to the Dean and to offices in upper administration as appropriate.

Charge for item IV

*[“Whereas two faculty members’ lives were explicitly threatened; whereas the rise of telemeeting crimes is as yet not fully addressed in UGA policies and protocols; whereas hate crimes and terroristic threats likewise must be more fully addressed; and in light of the rise of white nationalist terrorism in the US and the many populations at risk (including but not limited to our Black, Latinx, indigenous, Muslim, women, and/or LGBTQ+ university members), we resolve that: Franklin College take **new steps to address these gaps in policy** on behalf of faculty and the College as a whole.”]*

The committee will consult with appropriate administrators, staff, and faculty to determine how to address telemeeting crimes, hate crimes, and terroristic threats, through an expansion of current protocols and procedures. This expansion should address both immediate response to such crimes and ways to aid faculty and students after they have occurred. This consultation should begin with the Office of Emergency Preparedness. The committee will submit a brief report on its findings by the March 2021 meeting of the Franklin Senate, identifying any gaps in current policy and protocol and, where possible, suggesting possible changes to improve the University’s response to these crimes. If committee members deem it appropriate, a voting item can be brought to the Senate along with the recommendations. Since this voting item would concern University-wide protocols, it should be addressed to the Provost and the President.

Charge for item V

*[“Whereas the recent hate crime incident exposes the troubling and persistent existence of misogyny and homophobia in our culture (and on our college campuses), and whereas women continue to be underrepresented in positions of executive, legislative, judicial, economic, and intellectual power, we resolve that: Franklin College institute a **“Gender and Sexuality Studies” requirement** for all its majors. This requirement would be modeled after the “multicultural” requirement and in the spirit of its mission to promote greater understanding, appreciation, and equity amongst our educated citizens and our republic. Please note that the recent hate crime and death threats targeted a talk on violence against women of color, given by an Afro-Latina scholar, organized by women faculty at UGA, and attended mostly by women faculty and students. This is a long overdue reform to our curriculum.”]*

Committee members will begin by seeking guidance from the Institute for Women’s Studies regarding best practice for considering this item. Committee members will then craft a voting item--presented at the first or second Senate meeting of 2021--that commits Franklin Senators to conducting inquiries in their own departments. If Senators vote in favor of this item, they will conduct their inquiries in a timely fashion, and will submit brief written reports by the final Senate meeting of spring 2021. Senators’ inquiries will assess the level of interest in this new curricular requirement in their departments and, as appropriate, will seek to identify current and future curricular offerings that could be part of the requirement. Senators’ findings will be submitted to the Senate’s Executive Committee for further consideration and, if deemed feasible, for further Senate work, and/or further inquiry outside Franklin College, in fall 2021.

Charge for item VI

*[“Whereas university members beyond Franklin College are at risk, we resolve that: Franklin College pass a **Resolution** that calls on the President, Provost, and Deans across campus to pursue similar reforms as university-wide policy.”]*

This item being dependent on the outcome of inquiries concerning, and potential votes on, the previous items, the committee will pass any appropriate recommendations and/or voting items concerning it to the Senate’s Executive Committee at the end of spring 2021.