

## Minutes

January 31, 2023 11:30 AM-12:30 PM  
Hybrid Meeting (CL 1817 and <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/92498486823>)

1. Attendees: Natasha Tokowicz, Bridget Keown, Ellen Smith, Paula Davis, Clyde Pickett, Stephen Gabrielson, Lorie Johnson-Osho, Kris Kanthak, Robin Kear, Kelly Tatone, Lu-in Wang, Kenyon Bonner, Marty Levine. Regrets: Zuzana Swigonova, Susan Graff
2. Faculty Assembly Update – January 18, 2023 (Bridget and Natasha)
  - a. Faculty Assembly opened with a reminder to fill out the Climate Survey, noting that everyone had received an email that provided the link to participate. Participation in the study is anonymous; login credentials are checked only to make sure the user is verified. The information is sent to a data-processing firm to ensure that identities are separated from their data. This is the first inclusive survey of the whole Pitt community (faculty, staff, and students), and therefore is especially significant.
  - b. Robin Kear provided a report that addressed unfair labor practice charges. Several bargaining committee members have been removed from faculty senate committees without clear explanations as to why, except for a concern over issues of ‘direct dealing,’ and a desire to evolve the definition of “managerial” positions in the wake of meetings with the bargaining committee. This has been covered by the Pitt News (see the 1/6 issue). A Provost’s memo to Deans stated that all members of the bargaining unit should be excluded from seeing the content of the memo. This raises concerns about the unit-level impacts this kind of behavior would have; additionally such actions (both preventing bargaining unit members from discussions in which they are institutionally involved, and not providing clear explanations for such processes) threaten the future of shared governance on campus. There is also a question as to whether the budget committee can provide oversight, esp. if members who are in the bargaining committee are prevented from voting. Statement concluded with the observation that until there is a clear agreement on shared governance, these policies will only stagnate or get worse.
    - i. Discussion of this report: Members who have been removed from committees noted that they had not been provided with sufficient explanation from Dean Blee. There was no mention of ‘direct dealing’. The administration continues to state they are interested in developing a more stringent definition of ‘managerial’.
    - ii. This kind of behavior (removing people from committee, esp. on short notice) will have negative impacts on committees. Increasing the specificity of definitions (like ‘managerial’) can do more harm than good because they can be used to exclude people from spaces of shared governance.
    - iii. A point was made that since administrators cannot comment in committee meetings, they can’t be accused of ‘direct dealing’. It was noted that emphasis needs to be placed on “shared and elected governance,” especially since these actions (removing people from committees) may become precedent even after a union agreement is reached.
    - iv. Some concern was expressed that 15 months after the vote to unionize, faculty are in a worse position than before, in terms of faculty committees like

the budget oversight committee is effectively 'dead in the water'. If we cannot hold the administration accountable, we are significantly weakened.

- v. There was discussion about whether to invite union and bargaining committee representatives to the faculty senate to discuss the ongoing contract negotiations in order to get a clearer understanding of the process, where the faculty (as represented by the bargaining committee) stand.
  - vi. Some expressed concern that faculty was being harmed by unintended consequences from choices made by the bargaining committee, and that the administration has out-strategized the union, and the faculty senate needs to remedy that by tapping into the concerns held by the faculty, who voted overwhelmingly for the union.
  - vii. A suggestion was made to arrange a meeting with the bargaining committee and see how we can move forward together.
- c. Statement from Education Policies regarding the Extreme Weather Memo: Please remind your constituencies that weather affects everyone. Please use transparency with students about plans and encourage students to be open and proactive, as well.
- d. Reminder about Senate elections for Spring 2023: Nominations will run from April 5-20
- e. Representatives from ELI: Provided a history of the ELI, what brought about the justification for closure, and what Senate Faculty can do to support the institute, as well as the 8 faculty members who will be out-of-work as a result of the closure. ELI experienced the same drop in enrollment as other institutions across campus and the country during the 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 academic years, and rebounds take time. This was demonstrated following the down-turn in enrollments following 9/11. ELI started a savings account after 9/11 in order to prepare for such contingencies. However, when the University moved ELI out of the Cathedral, it cost about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of that savings account to fund needed construction and rent (about \$3 million over 12 years). The University does not accept a change in rent from monthly to overhead, which increases expenditures. Scott Keisling held a meeting with the Provost in the hope of keeping ELI open after June 30, arguing that if, at Pitt 'reinvention never stops,' then we cannot stop with the ELI and the work it does. Although securing more time for the ELI would be a good first step, it doesn't actually solve the curriculum gaps that will be left after the ELI is gone.
- i. The Senate believes that ELI is critical to all schools, and we should advocate for it for more than 1 year.
  - ii. Concern was raised that the university was violating its own policies about closures and transparency with this action (this should be a shared governance decision to make a closure on this scale)
  - iii. What does this mean for students, especially those who need support and who need to secure proof of language competency? Testing work is being done by a faculty members who isn't 1 of the 8 being fired, but that work is sponsored by ELI. The ELI isn't privy to any plans for how the gap that this will cause for students and TA will be addressed
  - iv. Are there legal issues here, especially is Pitt opening itself up to litigation for not upholding policies or for not fulfilling its requirements to the state regarding language testing? Can that be leveraged to keep ELI open?
  - v. A comment was made that there may be ways to fulfill these obligations, but the burden will fall on the DSAS, who will need to hire people to do the work that ELI was doing, facilitate tests, etc., and will also need office space for those employees. This led to the point that the University wasn't saving money by closing ELI, just shifting the costs.
  - vi. A note was made that because this will effect teaching in a serious way that this is indeed a shared governance issue, and should be seen as a move that will seriously affect faculty members

- vii. Resolution: to support ELI to continue its work and to support the reconsideration of the closure decision. Request that these comments be sent to the administration, as well.

### 3. New business

- a. Updates from Chancellor's appointees to EIADAC

- i. Clyde Pickett

Campus climate assessment has been released--If you haven't taken be sure to do so

Ongoing efforts to support work related to title IX on campus

Will fortify staff in that space; have strategic/programmatic endeavors (Carrie Benson)

More info to come

Hiring: permanent director civil rights and title IX

Assistant Vice Chancellor of Diversity and inclusion (to replace Randi Congleton) has robust pool;

Have begun screening applicants for that role

New working committee to look at impact of neurodiversity-how provide resources and support

Another working group on academic equity to measure progress of success/efforts to retain students surrounding persistence. Need to measure academic support across schools and units; support academic progress; share best practices across university

Inclusion network retreat-save the date coming soon

Discussion with colleagues across campus/community-building day for Staff and faculty

End of semester activity for BIPOC and underrepresented faculty and staff community/celebration. As that gets planned would welcome support to get the word out

- i. Lu-in Wang—no updates

- ii. John Wallace (Lorie Johnson-Osho)

Race &... Initiative 2022 UPSIDE award winner

Currently undergoing race at work summer retreat planning

Early career faculty/new faculty on campus race at work summer retreat last week of May

Research collaborations/collaboratories

- iii. Kenyon Bonner -no updates

- b. Update from Student Admissions, Aid, and Affairs Committee Meeting

- i. Bridget Keown—Leigh Culley provided an overview of the work of DRS, especially following the return to face-to-face teaching. This included the shifting demographics in terms of diagnosis of incoming students and/or request for accommodations at Pitt, and the breakdown of the types of disabilities present on Pitt's campus. Leigh noted that the number of students requesting accommodations and assistance with diagnoses had increased exponentially since the return to face-to-face, placing strain on DRS and on the physical spaces on campus designated for quiet testing sites or for single-room housing. In the Q+A, faculty noted the rise in accommodations among their students, asked about whether students who needed quiet or uncrowded testing facilities were finding those needs met in crowded "quiet testing" sites, and requested clarification on what was expected in terms of accepting late work/providing extensions/excusing absences.

### 4. Ongoing Business

- a. Updates on university policy review processes

- i. Nondiscrimination policy (Ally and Natasha; no update)
  - ii. Service Animal policy (Ellen Smith; waiting for more info)
  - iii. Supplier Diversity policy (no update)

- b. Fall Semester Work Groups

- i. Disability Advocacy

- ii. Faculty Gender Gaps (will get update from Susan Graff in February meeting)
- iii. Transcript Withholding

Paula Davis and Natasha Tokowicz met with Vice Provosts Bonner, Godley and McCarthy about the withholding of transcripts from students who have/have not completed degree requirements but owe money to the university and registration holds. This is an important issue because students cannot transfer to another school, get an advanced degree, or get a job because they are not able to secure an official transcript, and this issue disproportionately affects individuals from historically excluded groups and lower socio-economic backgrounds. This practice has been called coercive and abusive by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (see [https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb\\_student-loan-servicing-supervisory-highlights-special-edition\\_report\\_2022-09.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_student-loan-servicing-supervisory-highlights-special-edition_report_2022-09.pdf)). Registration holds are placed on students who have not fully paid their bill for the upcoming semester even if they are on a payment plan. This affects students' ability to register for classes needed to complete the major and can increase time to degree. There has been a lot of good progress in this space made by Vice Provost McCarthy and his team. However, the new practices were more effective for white students, so he will work with Vice Provost Bonner to try to make them more universally effective. Paula and Natasha will meet with the registrar's office to try to determine impact at Pitt of these practices as a next step and will interface with Vice Provost McCarthy moving forward.

c. Spring Semester Work Groups

- i. LGBTQIA+ Advocacy (Bridget and Kelly Tatone)—Discussed the need to support students, especially in light of the rising tide of anti-trans legislation, as well as need to establish a space on campus for LGBTQIA group meetings. Bridget will follow up to group volunteers to arrange a meeting.
- ii. Graduate Student Medical Leave (Paula and Natasha)-Graduate students are able to take leaves of absence but it is unclear if any unit other than the Medical School offers official medical leave. Our goal is to determine what practices are across the university and do benchmarking of our peer institutions. Contact Natasha if you'd like to join this working group.
- iii. Fall carryover?

5. Announcements/Events

- a. <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/inventory>
  - i. Please submit your events and include school-specific and department-specific events.

6. Next meeting: February 28, 2023 in CL 1817 or <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/92498486823>