

## Minutes Senate Educational Policies Committee 15 December 2023, 10-11:30 a.m.

Present: Falcione, Stoner, Torres, Godley, Cecchini, Fennimore, Lemmon, Shaver, Siddiqui, McCormick, Levine (UTimes), Kear

1. Call to order @ 10:02 a.m.
2. Approval of minutes from November 2023 meeting
  - a. Motion: **Fennimore** Second: **Ceccchini**
  - b. Minutes approved unanimously
3. New Business
  - a. Presentation by **Dr. Belkys Torres**, Associate Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence in Education
  - b. **Torres** mentioned prior meetings with SEPC co-chairs. Introduced herself, discussed various projects she supports to ensure all student populations are set up for success at UG level. Recent work includes changes on academic regulations, working with PACUP/UCGS. Looking at curricular reform. Provided definition of inclusive excellence with which Pitt is working. Briefly discussed Plan for Pitt refresh and noted value of looking at curricular reform in context of inclusive excellence and creating more opportunities for excellent teaching as well as research and other opportunities for Pitt students. Notes it has been 17 years since Pitt last looked at SLOs in any systematic way.
  - c. Need to update for both pragmatic (accreditation, transfer student partner agreements, students with delayed time to degree and additional financial burden) and aspirational (assisting students in becoming critical citizens and leaders). Peers are moving forward and benchmarking will be done with AAU peers. Notes increased scrutiny by policy makers on a variety of fronts. IN a positive place to do interesting and creative work together.
  - d. Starting in January 2024, will look at what is happening at Pitt as well as benchmarking with peers. More intentional pathways to majors and minors as well as research, creative, and scholarship opportunities. Need to have more flexible infrastructure to incentivize students to take risks and not be effectively punished for it (either in time or money terms).
  - e. Goals are to shorten time to degree, lessen financial burden. Leverage shared governance to define common SLOs across schools and campuses. Also goal to elevate advising to make students aware of and provide access to those opportunities.
  - f. Accreditation is not just Middle States but involves school and program-specific accreditation; hope to be able to use general education reform to demonstrate to all of them the strides made at the program, school, and University level. Seeking to be trendsetters.
  - g. “Essential skills development” will be a particular focus, being aware of “preparedness gap” that employers perceive they need and the skills which graduates are actually bringing.

- h. **Torres** is currently finalizing task force which will operate in three working groups: one on curricular design; one on operation and implementation; and one on Administration and Assessment. Process will unfold over three years (2024 launch, listening workshops, and benchmarking, 2025 review of models and getting feedback, 2026 plan and prep pilot year). There will be a more comprehensive and multi-channel communication plan.
  - i. Once more specific proposal is made, it will move through normal shared governance channels (Senate committees, Faculty Senate, OTP, etc.)
  - j. **Lemmon** asked about students transferring from regional campuses and expressed benefit of making process of potentially coming to Oakland campus more transparent and (ideally) easier. Also noted availability in the past of a document that listed ALL Pitt courses and what they might count for in terms of general education courses. **Torres** and **Godley** provided several links <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu> <https://admissions.pitt.edu/pitt-transfer-tool/> (course catalog, academic degree finder, transfer tool). **Torres** noted work being done.
  - k. **Stoner** asked about aspiration for one unitary program. **Torres** noted goal was one baseline set of general education requirements for all programs, schools, and campuses. **Kear** thanked Torres for the update. **Torres** solicited involvement from SEPC for the task force which will start to work in January.
4. Report from Vice Provost Amanda Godley
- a. **Godley** wanted to update on policies going through. Thanked SEPC for comments on posthumous degree policy and indicated it was helpful in making additional adjustments to the proposed final policy. Also referenced feedback to documents on grading policy. Godley noted that next month will likely bring to SEPC additional decommissioned University policies that were decommissioned last year and have already been replaced with academic regulations. Request to eliminate by University Registrar. Went to UCGS earlier this week. Seems that some should be modified but not entirely eliminated because they do have information about who has decision-making responsibility. Will work to maintain relevant information while ideally streamlining.
  - b. **Godley** noted other policies being reviewed by subcommittees of UCGS and PACUP. Issues included academic probation, G/I grades, academic program structure, and graduate faculty. Subcommittees shared or will share recommendations in December with UCGS and PACUP. Some may require additional clarification before those modifications come to SEPC.
  - c. **Falcione** asked about documents regarding grading and whether they were the same in both references. **Godley** said they were different; one was called grading options and the other called grading system. Said it was a very small modification of two overlapping documents regarding grading options and the Registrar has proposed combining them. **Godley** provided the following link: <https://www.provost.pitt.edu/policies-guidelines> Will discuss further in January/February.

- d. **McCormick** asked whether SEPC would be considering decommissioning of domestic partner benefits. **Kear** responded, saying it had been sent to EIADAC and Benefits & Welfare and that public comments were still open for three more days. **Kear** asked University to inform Benefits & Welfare committee if they intended any changes to the domestic partner benefits. **McCormick** said it was no longer posted for comment on web page.

## 5. Old Business

- a. New members of SEPC
  - i. Sarah **Siddiqui** VP of Operations for SGB standing in for Mayer
- b. Student wellness/religious observances (**Falcione**)
  - i. Falcione, Kanthak, and Young (SGB) met with Interim Provost McCarthy. Discussion centered around separating issues that had been consolidated in last few memos. McCarthy asked for input about what should go in those memos that would go out at the end of this semester/beginning of next semester. Broader wellbeing, access to resources, building new resources were all referenced. They also discussed best practices about encouraging students to discussing challenges proactively, setting goal of more proactive communication and strategies so that when things happen, there is more consistent and supportive response. Specific documents weren't discussed but draft will be shared (with group that met).
- c. Decommissioning of University Policies (Godley)
  - i. **Godley** noted Kear had raised question at prior SEPC meeting about broader mass decommissioning of policies in the past. Fourteen had been posted, but five policies did not appear through an administrative oversight. **Godley** wanted to explain what happened and discuss what changed. **Godley** put link into chat and pasted the names of the five policies. Will push discussion of those policies to January meeting. <https://www.provost.pitt.edu/policies-guidelines> AC 11 - Course Meeting Time, AC 15 - Credit Hour, AC 18 - Cross Registration from Regional Campuses to the Oakland Campus, AC 38 (also includes a procedure) - GSA/TA/TF/GSR scholarship procedure (the one we discussed in September), AC 71 - University Cumulative Quality Point Average (QPA) and GPA
- d. Committee on generative AI (Wert/Falcione)
  - i. **Stoner** described drafting of report and submission to OTP and SVC Research. Discussed both logistical and intellectual/aspirational elements related to use of generative AI. **Falcione** noted dynamism of system with new things popping up every day. Also noted risk assessment that some had raised as a concern; what considerations for risk should be taken into account?
- e. OTP exploration of University-wide general education requirements
- f. FERPA draft policy (January meeting with Registrar and other stakeholders)

- g. ELI closure/discussion (McCormick)
  - i. **McCormick**—conversations continue about services for matriculated and non-matriculated students. OTP has provided recommendations and information that would allow for decision making. **Godley** noted appreciation of productive nature of conversation with McCormick.
- h. OMET questions on inclusive learning environments (Falcione)\
  - i. **Falcione** noted that conversation with collective bargaining group about whether and how SEPC (and faculty more broadly) can discuss OMET questions on inclusive learning environments. Falcione communicated with Melinda Cicocioppo (one of the members of the bargaining committee for the faculty union) who said they are considered a mandatory subject for bargaining. Nothing to prevent faculty from discussing issue with administrators present. Any proposals would need to be negotiated by the union negotiators before they could be used to evaluate performance of faculty. Similarly, if administration proposed a change, that would go to negotiation. We will probably have to temporarily suspend collaborative efforts with UCTL in this regard.
- i. Outlier.org
- j. LMS feedback
- k. SEPC Spring meeting schedule
  - i. **Stoner** asked committee to respond about meeting Fridays at 9 a.m. in the Spring.
- 6. Meeting Updates
  - a. Faculty Assembly
    - i. Dependent care ad hoc report and recommendations (**Kear**). **Kear** provided the link (insert link) to the report.
  - b. Senate Council
  - c. ACIE—Falcione
    - i. **Falcione** encouraged folks to apply once the call is out. Reminded colleagues that UCTL is willing to work with faculty to improve quality of submissions. Rest of meeting focused on master teacher certification. There is a subcommittee working on draft preliminary report for consideration by ACIE. Need to listen to recording. Future meetings are scheduled in January for ACIE. Zsuzsa Horvath (pro tem SEPC) is also on ACIE and on subcommittee.
  - d. UCGS/PACUP—Schein/Cecchini
    - i. Nothing that hasn't already been discussed.
- 7. Adjournment
- 8. Next Meeting – January 2024