

SENATE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 7, 2023

3:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm

II. Approval of the Minutes

On a motion duly made (Adams) and seconded (Washington) the minutes from the Senate Council meeting on November 9, were approved as written.

III. Introduction of Items of New Business

None

IV. Report of the Chancellor, Joe McCarthy (interim provost) for Joan Gabel

Chancellor Gabel cannot attend this meeting today as she is attending the UN Climate conference in Dubai. She has participated in a discussion panel on innovating for sustainability, and while she regrets not being here she is honored to be representing the University at this important conference.

Before I deliver the bulk of the Chancellor's report I want to hand off for a minute to SVC DeJong
DeJong: Thank you. As SVC of Business Affairs I provide oversight of public safety. I wanted to take this opportunity to say a few words concerning the tragic loss of Emily Watson last week. We mourn that loss and the Pitt Community's hearts go out to her family, her friends and her colleagues at UPMC. Please know that the safety and wellbeing of the University community is our top priority. We have been and we continue to work with our partners in the City, UPMC, CMU, our neighborhoods and everyone who is part of the Pitt community to support a safe campus. This takes all of us and I want to thank our student, staff and faculty for their feedback on pedestrian safety. We have ample channels for this initiative including the Senate CUPS committee, our student groups and the pedestrian and traffic safety committee that meets regularly. Thank you for your support in working to keep our campus safe. We are stronger and safer as we work together to keep the campus secure.

McCarthy: We are excited to remind everyone that on December 17th we will be celebrating the Winter Commencement for undergraduate and graduate students. This is the first time we will be having a second University-wide Commencement ceremony. We anticipate 700 students plus their guests will be participating so this will be a great celebration. Related to that I want to mention that the Institute for Citizens and Scholars that led the call for campus free expression, which we have joined thanks to Chancellor Gabel. We have asked Rajiv Vinnakota, the president of the Institute to be our commencement speaker, and this choice fits well in this year of Discourse and Dialogue.

We have a number of searches going on:

Swanson Dean of Engineering search is in the pool building phase so if you have any suggestions for candidates, please pass them along.

The search committee has been formed for the School of Education Dean search and a listening session will be held tomorrow for this search.

The School of Law search is a little behind the other two. We will engage with stakeholders early in the Spring term.

The Provost search is ongoing

The search for the Vice Provost for Student affairs will be ramping up in the coming days.

In other news

The PA general assembly approved Pitt's funding as well as other state related university. Pitt will receive flat funding from last year and we are grateful that we can keep the tuition for PA students as low as possible. In combination with the money from the State Pitt can give a discount to in state students of more than the \$16K, which over the course of their education amounts to \$64K. There are 16,000 students that are impacted by that change.

LifeX, a life sciences capital growth company established by Pitt, has been chosen as the recipient of a \$2 million grant from the Department of Commerce, as part of the Build to Scale program.

Honors:

At the APLU conference Pitt was honored to receive the 2023 C. Peter McGrath Community Engagement Scholarship Award for the Pittsburgh Study. It focuses on asking what factors best help children to thrive. It is co-led by Elizabeth Miller in Pediatrics and there are multiple community partners. The McGrath award signifies that this is one of the best examples of community engaged scholarship in the nation and congratulations to them.

Two Pitt BioEngineering PhD students and a recent CBA graduate are on a team that won the Forbes 30 under 30 health care innovation list for 2024. These three are co-founders of a Pitt start-up called Heart IO and they are working on an algorithm to help identify heart abnormalities.

Finally, on behalf of Chancellor Gabel, I want to wish everyone a successful end to the Semester and good luck on finals, and a safe and happy break.

V. Report of the President of the Senate, Robin Kear

I hope that you are heading toward an easy end of term. I was privileged to hear the Heinz Chapel Choir sing the Chancellor's concert this week. It was a luxurious hour with nothing to do but listen to the beautiful music. It reminded me that we all need to make the space for what sustains us, especially at this busy time of year. Another event that sustained me this week was the Community United for Compassion dialogue, held by Jen Murtazashvili (murtazashili) and Abdesalam Soudi. I was able to attend for only a portion, but it continues to be a very powerful message for the participants, that I hope we will see more of in the spring term.

Provost Search Committee

- The provost search is moving into a confidential phase. Thank you to those that have contributed feedback via the survey or in the listening sessions or put names forward for consideration.

Winter Commencement

- The December 17th Winter commencement is new this year and there has been some concern expressed by students. Due to these concerns, Interim Provost McCarthy has communicated directly with those students affected. Because this is the first year, there is flexibility for students to walk in April if they would prefer it.

- You can find the communication to students from McCarthy on the winter commencement website. <https://www.commencement.pitt.edu/winter-commencement>

Inclement Weather

- If the University closes, there are numerous communication plans activated, including the emergency notification service, websites, and social media.
- If there is inclement weather and the university is not closing, a friendly reminder to be aware of and discuss inclement weather procedures with your respective school or department before they happen.

Dependent Care Ad Hoc Committee Report

- Anna Wang-Erickson, Chair, presented the concluding report of the two-year Dependent Care Ad Hoc Committee at last week's Faculty Assembly.
- There were 4 main recommendations from the report that I am following up on with HR and Financial Operations.
 - Change FN28 to allow dependent care expenses from all available funding sources (internal and external)
 - Establish a new Dependent Care Voucher fringe benefit
 - Establish a Dependent Care Professional Development Grant
 - Add 1 FTE to Human Resources to administer these new Dependent Care programs. Many other universities have multiple staff dedicated to managing dependent care or work/life programs.
- Thank you to Anna and the entire committee for their work over the past two years.
- The final report will be posted on the Senate website under Ad Hoc Committees.

University Policy Open for Comment

- There are no policies currently open for comment.
 - [CS 29 - Vaccine Immunization](#) – comments closed on 12/4/23
 - This drafts will be making its way through shared governance for recommendation, first through the Faculty Affairs Committee and Benefits and Welfare Committee.

Decommissioning Policy

- Interim Policy CS 29, COVID-19 Vaccination has been decommissioned.
- The Policy Office is soliciting feedback on a proposal to decommission [Policy ER 04, Domestic Partner Benefits](#). The reasoning for decommissioning is that the substance of this Policy is more appropriately covered in OHR and Provost Office materials. Specifically, HR provides information regarding benefit eligibility for faculty and staff's family members, student health plans, and rules regarding bereavement leave for staff. Additionally, the Office of the Provost provides information for Faculty medical leave.
 - You can provide feedback on this proposal through December 18.
 - I have shared this information directly with EIADAC and Benefits & Welfare for consideration.

LRDC (Learning Research and Development Center) Director Search

- The Senate is assisting with the voting to elect four members of the search committee for the next LRDC Director.
- Only those identified in this unit will be self-nominating, running for and voting on these spots.

LGBTQIA+ Steering Committee

- The Senate will have representation on the new University of Pittsburgh LGBTQIA+ Steering Committee through EIADAC and a Senate member-at-large. Todd Reeser, faculty member in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, and Angie Bedford-Jack, senior staff member in the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, were appointed as co-chairs.
- The committee will be comprised of direct appointments, shared governance representatives, as well as representatives from existing LGBTQIA+ organizations.
- Todd and Angie will be at the January 10th Faculty Assembly to gather comments and feedback on this steering committee.

Lastly, I am saddened by the untimely death of a UPMC employee on November 29th on Terrace Street, Emily Watson was killed in a pedestrian accident. We must be mindful as pedestrians and drivers in Oakland, to keep ourselves and others safe. I am expecting the Dave DeJong will provide us with more information.

Thank you all for your service and dedication to shared governance. Have a great end of term and wonderful winter break, I hope that it is peaceful and sustaining.

Any questions or comments on my report?

VI. Report of Student Members of Senate Council

a. SGB _ Ryan Young

- Over the last month we continued our work with the Pennsylvania Association of State-Related Schools and completed a joint statement demanding the passage of the state appropriation, which we are extremely happy to echo Interim Provost McCarthy in acknowledging now passed the Pennsylvania General Assembly. This appropriation is essential to all students at state related schools and we are happy to have had the opportunity to coordinate our advocacy efforts with the student governments at Temple and Penn State.
- SGB has also begun planning our annual ACC Advocacy Days, which provide an opportunity for our Board to meet with members of Congress as part of a weekend of advocacy coordinated between all the ACC school student governments.
- We have advanced a number of Sexual Misconduct Prevention initiatives through our Support, Advocacy, and Prevention committee over the last month, including the creation of a Prevention Coalition led by SGB that coordinates student prevention work between student organizations, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and outside groups. We also are currently surveying students on their experience with the Title IX process, working to create a survivor support network with Prevention@Pitt, and just completed the display of our Teal Galley, an exhibit of art from student survivors.
- As part of a task force of student leaders from around Pitt, we have submitted a proposal to restructure parts of our student leader remunerations system which currently provide stipends for positions of high student leadership on campus. We look forward to working to implement parts of this proposal with Student Affairs in the coming weeks.

- Our Future Planning Task Force has also finalized its proposal to restructure parts of SGB. The Task Force is recommending a complete overhaul of our Vice Presidential system, replacing it with a single Vice President position elected on a ticket with the President, and is also recommending strengthening our student leader Assembly to increase representation from students outside of SGB on many important questions impacting the student body. This restructuring proposal will be on the ballot in the upcoming SGB election.
- Also on the ballot—we are working on a proposal to slightly increase the student activities fee to meet both the increased cost and increased demand we have seen since COVID. This change will be put to a vote of the student body and we look forward to working with the Board of Trustees Student Affairs Committee on this possible increase.
- SGB is currently undergoing some staffing changes as we hire a new administrative assistant. We hope to take this opportunity to better integrate our work with the Student Organization Resource Center and the Office of Involvement and Student Unions as we develop new processes between our groups.
- Moving on, we have continued our traveling office hours and have had the opportunity to speak directly with an increasing number of groups on campus, including most recently the club sports council.
- The Student Government Board elections are fast approaching! Our election is set for February 27th and we have begun our preparations for another election season including the passage of amendments to our Elections Code to better qualify restrictions for campaign spending and restrictions on current SGB members preventing certain endorsements to work to guarantee a fair and equitable election.
- As seems to have become regular, I'd like to end the report with some updates on our Allocations Process.
 - A few weeks ago, we heard our Fall Budgets requests, which allow organizations to request all of their money upfront so they can better plan their events for the semester. As we've talked about a couple times over the last couple months, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of requests to the Allocations committee, so the ability of the activities fee to bear the weight of each request played an important part in committee decision making. To allow for an equitable distribution of funds, no budget was awarded more than \$30,000 for uncapped expenses.
 - Our Allocations process is moving to ExperiencePitt, the new club management platform being implemented by the Office of Involvement and Student Unions! Our current process is very manual and we hope this new platform will provide a centralized location for the entire process that allows student organizations to better track their requests and funds. We will begin using this new system in the upcoming semester and will be holding workshops for club business managers to learn the new process.
 - We recently authorized the creation of an Allocations Policy and Procedure Task Force to provide one space to reconcile proposed changes to our Allocations Manual. Both our Board and the Allocations Committee have been collating a list of concerns we have with our current policies and we look forward to improving Allocations.
- Before we finish, I want to give a really huge thank you to Vice Provost Bonner. He has done so much to support SGB and we will miss him so much!

With that, I will end my report, and I am happy to take any questions.

Kenyon Bonner – I want to thank you, Ryan, and the folks at SGB. It has been a pleasure over 20 years at Pitt. My fondest memories are working with students. I used to sit over there as SGB advisor and was sometimes intimidated looking at the other side of the table. But it has just been a pleasure, the students have been amazing. It has just been a great ride for me. The University Senate, faculty staff are a great community here. I have done a lot, I have learned a lot and I have gained a lot and I wish you all the best of luck. My heart is still here as my daughter is a first-year student here. She plays basketball and I will be cheering Pitt on. When UVA plays Pitt!. I just want to thank everyone who's been a part of this community over the years and I have great appreciation for the entire Pitt community and, most importantly, our students.

b. CGSSG - Skylar Cheevers

Hi everyone, good afternoon! I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and is getting excited for the upcoming holidays (as a senior in the midst of finals, I know I am)!

I wanted to start by apologizing for the absence of a CGS SG report at the last meeting, we had an event at the same time, so all of our members without conflicts were present at the event.

That said, since I was last here, CGS SG has been extremely busy! At the end of October, we collaborated with Pitt faculty member Sean O'Connell to host a "College: Expectations vs. Reality" event for Mental Health Awareness Month. It was a super informative and successful event that we are proud to have put on for MHAM.

Last month, we collaborated with Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society (ASL) for its 50th anniversary and hosted a digital exhibit on the third floor of Hillman Library! It was truly amazing to speak to the members of ASL, as they were so passionate about the work they have done and were grateful to see the lasting impact that they have left on the University. Three of the members of ASL who were at the event actually founded CGS SG, so it was amazing to meet the people who paved the pathway for me to be here today. At the event, I had the opportunity to honor the members of ASL and hand out special awards that we had made, which was super special to me and something I will always remember.

Tonight, we are hosting a little holiday/finals-week decompression event at the Willam Pitt Union! Open to all CGS students, we will be showing the movie Elf, have a cookie decorating station, and a hot chocolate bar, as well as will be handing out finals-week care packages to everyone who attends! We are really looking forward to it!

On a more formal note, CGS SG is currently in the process of revamping our Constitution, which includes coming up with our definition of what makes a nontraditional student. We are working also with the Pitt Pathfinders to develop a transcript that they can share on their tours regarding what CGS is at Pitt, as they reached out to us about not having much right now. It means a lot to us to share with incoming students what CGS means to us!

As always, CGS SG has placed a heavy emphasis throughout the semester on hosting fun, leisure-style events for students. We recognize how stressful these times are for everyone, and are hoping we can provide students with a little relief during this time of the year!

Thank you everyone, and of course, Dr. Bonner for all your help throughout the semester!

c. GPSG – Claire Dunning

Hello everyone, I am Claire Dunning, the Executive Administrator for the GPSG. I am stepping in for our President Rithika Behera today as the GPSG representative.

As the semester comes to an end, we are looking at what we can do to help ease the stress of finals. Tomorrow, we will be having an end of the year celebration for our Assembly Board Representatives at Nordy's Place for some light food and beverages. We are still running our Graduate Student Life Survey, which helps to understand the emotional and financial climate of our graduate student community. Over ten students have won our giveaway raffle. We are grateful to all of the students who have provided their input. Many of those students mentioned more available and specifically catered mental health resources and we hope that we can work with UCC to provide more events and workshops next semester.

We are also looking into improving the Graduate Student Lounge in the William Pitt Union with the addition of more appliances so that students could stay and chill (or warm up) during the breaks. For our upcoming events:

- At the end of the semester, we are hosting a Holiday Happy Hour with an Ugly sweater contest as a way to unwind from finals and allow everyone to have fun before the break.
- We have already started looking forward to the next semester. We are currently working with PPG Arena to book a section for a Penguins Game just for graduate students with unlimited food options similar to the Pirates Game event we held back in September. This will be very exciting and a great way to get students engaged with Pittsburgh life.
- Our coffee hours have been very successful, so we plan to continue hosting them as a regular event in the next semester.

We will also be starting up the election process at the beginning of next semester with the creation of an Elections Committee, which I will chair. During that time, we will also begin the hiring process for my own position as I will be graduating in the Spring and cannot continue the 2024-2025 school year. Thank you for your time.

VII. Report of the President of the Postdoctoral Association, Rachael Rush

Last month we held a well-attended "Cookies and Coffee" session where postdocs from around the campus came together to get to know the UPPDA and chat about any issues or concerns. We got a lot of great feedback and are working in our capacity along with the OACD and provost office to help postdocs with these various issues moving forward. We are excited to continue this series with our upcoming winter "fun"derland boardgame night on January 17th to provide a chance for socialization and comradery across our community.

We have started working with the OACD to plan the 17th annual University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Research Symposium (formally known as the Data & Dine event) that will take place on April 15th of next year. We are also working on fundraising to be able to provide travel awards to winners of the poster session. We were able to give out 10 travel awards to postdocs this past year and hope to continue that trend this coming year.

We are continuing to make progress on our ongoing projects including the postdoc handbook, "Leading People in Organizations Microcredential" tip sheet, and guides to help postdocs transition from associates to scholars given the unique tax and employee status of the postdoctoral scholar position.

We look forward to some upcoming events in the new year including:

- Career Conversation series with postdoc alumni from Pitt
- Non-health science postdoc orientation with Dr. Godley's office

- World Culture Diversity Day potluck
- UPPDA attendance and representation at the National postdoc association annual conference next March

Lastly, we are still recruiting for various committees within our organization, specifically our international and career development committees.

We wish everyone a happy end of the year and break, and as always please reach out to us with any feedback regarding Pitt postdocs. This concludes our short report and I'm happy to take any questions.

VIII. Report of the President of the Staff Council, Caitlin McCollough

1. I'm Caitlin McCullough, Staff Council Parliamentarian, giving our report today.
2. **At our last meeting, Lindsay spoke about Pitt's Employee Emergency Fund that launched for applications on October 18.** While our hope is always an ideal world where no one would need to use this benefit, there have been applications over these seven weeks. As such, I want to encourage our community members to consider donating to the fund to help our fellow employees that are in need. Staff Council will once again raise money for this fund during Pitt Day of Giving on February 27, 2024.

Learn more about the Employee Emergency Fund on the HR website: [Employee Emergency Fund](#)

Donate on the PAE website: [University of Pittsburgh Philanthropic & Alumni Engagement - Give Now – Gift Information \(imodules.com\)](#)

3. **Pedestrian Concerns** – We were saddened to hear of the passing of Emily Watson at the intersection of Terrace Street and Sutherland Drive. We must do better to protect our community members on the streets of Oakland and Staff Council looks forward to continued discussions about traffic and pedestrian safety on and around campus.
<https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/news/woman-dies-after-being>

4. Congrats/Accolades –

- **Chad Jurica** - Congratulations to Chad Jurica, Staff Council member, on being elected to a four-year term with the IUP Alumni Association Board of Directors! This position is a testament to Chad's demonstrated involvement, support, and commitment to IUP and the Alumni Association. We wish Chad much success in this new role, contributing to the growth and success of the Alumni Association and the broader IUP community.

5. Highlights from Last Month:

- a. Thanks to everyone who joined us for Men's Basketball and Women's Volleyball Faculty/Staff Appreciations Days! We will do something similar for an upcoming Women's Basketball game – and we look forward to scheduling and sharing a date for that collaboration.

6. Great Upcoming SC Events:

- a. One event left in December: **Take a break and get creative with a** fun drop-in activity at the Center for Creativity at their location at the University Store on 5th.

Staff Council at the Center for Creativity

Tuesday, December 19th

Noon - 2pm

Take a break from the end of the year tasks and tap into your creative side over lunch. Staff are encouraged to stop into the Center for Creativity space in the lower level of the University Store on Fifth from 12pm-2pm for drop in activities.

Feel free to bring your lunch, your colleagues, and your creative self!

Registration is not required, but is requested.

https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cZIAOQCyszFeayO

- Save the Date for our January events!

Spotlight Session: Laurel Gift and the Pitt Concern Connection

January 9, 2024

Noon - 1:00 p.m.

On Zoom.

Coffee and Conversations: Dr. Andrea Hergenroeder, Director, Pre-Health Resource Center

January 22 at 10:30am

Alumni Hall, Connely Ballroom

Coffee and Conversations are booked until July 2024! All are encouraged to attend and bring along a colleague.

If you missed this morning's conversation with Dr. Clyde Pickett, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, the recording will be available on our website.

Our next **OPEN SC General Meeting** will be Wednesday, December 20, 2023 12:00 - 1:00 pm via Zoom.

Our January meeting will be a closed session for membership to engage in strategic planning.

If you have any questions, please email sc@pitt.edu

Register Here: https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_82jGwkUwae37XUi

All are welcome to any of our events and you can register through the Pitt Events Calendar.

This concludes our report. Thank you.

IX. Reports by and Announcements of Standing and Special Committees of the Senate

None

X. Unfinished Business and/or New Business

XI. Announcements

None

XII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 PM

Documents from the meeting are available at the University Senate website:

<https://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/senate-council>

Respectfully submitted,

Penelope (Penny) Morel

Secretary, University Senate

Members attending: Adams, Almarza, Bell, Bonneau, Bonner, Boulder, Burton, Cheevers, Cousins, Cutsumbis, Dallal, Damiani, DeJong, Fitzpatrick, Fort, Gregerson, Kanthak, Kear, Mahboobin, Massanelli, Mauk, Mayer, McCarthy, McCormick, McCullough, Molinaro, Morel, Parker, Kelley, Reed, Rush, Rutenbar, Sastry, Shafiq, Shekhar, Siddiqui, Songer, Stoner, Szypulski, Washington, Young

Members not attending: Archibald, Behera, Jacobs, Kohanbash, Lemery, Lewin, Melnick, Morris, Murtazashvili, Nguyen, Pitetti, Potoski, Rodziewicz, Schmidt, Swigonova

*Excused absence: Bratman, Gabel, Jenkins, Jones, Scott, Tudorascu

Others attending: Ayars, Bernotas, Brown, Caldwell, Dandoy, Dostilio, Ducar, Dunning, Fike, Frieze, Gallaher, Harding, Hitter, Issermeyer, Jones S., Khushi, LaBar, Lancaster, McCullogh, Pelt, Pickett, Richelieu, Roadman, SantaCasa, Staresinic, Stonesifer, Supowitz, Thomas, Wells

*Notified Senate Office