

**Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes  
Via Zoom**

**Wednesday, April 13, 2022**

**1. Call to Order**

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the Past Faculty Assembly Meeting**

Kear asked for a motion to approve the minutes. On a motion duly made and seconded the minutes of the March 16, 2022, Faculty Assembly Meeting were approved as written.

**3. Items of New Business.**

No new business

**4. Report of the Senate President, Robin Kear (submitted in written form)**

*Chancellor Transition*

*Last month, I called for input on three items. I have updates on two of those items.*

- *Regarding the COVID-19 health related measures of building swipes, guest registration, and building concierge stations.*
  - *CUPS ran a one question survey, and the feedback was mixed. I did not receive further direct feedback on this issue. General summary:*
    - *Card swipe provides an extra layer of security / safety*
    - *Card swipe is a threat to academic freedom*
    - *Card swipe would be very useful, but it does not actually work*
    - *Card swipe alienates visitors / the public from a public institution*
    - *Card swipe lines for big lectures create a covid transmission risk*
    - *Card swipe, as implemented, is fine but should be limited to the pandemic*
  - *They are moving forward with general security discussions in their committee based on the likely reality that these health-related measures will not last forever.*
  - *If any unit or person has building security concerns, they can always reach out to Ted Fritz and Pitt Police to ask questions or even meet for a security consultation.*
  - *Pitt will have an independent third-party conduct a comprehensive security review this summer.*

- *Regarding the temporary COVID-19 standards and guidelines for travel management, I have heard you loud and clear. You do not like them, and it impedes productivity. The faculty who will be on the full policy review of FN28 (University Travel, Business Entertainment, Honoraria, and Miscellaneous Reimbursable Expenses) (Patrick Loughlin, Anna Wang Erickson, and Chris Bonneau) also received a fair share of their own feedback.*
  - *General frustration with the Anthony Travel/Concur travel systems*
    - *Flight cancellations or other mid-travel rearrangements are difficult through the vendor*
    - *Forgetting to link domestic and international flights*
    - *Poor customer service*
    - *Not enough agents dedicated to Pitt travel*
    - *Length of time to book via Anthony*
    - *Missing information on final itinerary*
    - *No notification from Anthony Travel when significant flight changes have been made by the airline*
    - *"...stranded due to delays and when I tried to get their help to rebook (it was a weekend) they were Missing in Action. No response. My husband's law firm then helped me via their travel agent."*
  - *Wasted faculty and staff time*
    - *"hurt[s] our ability to conduct high-quality research efficiently"*
    - *Example of booking a flight that took two days, instead of a likely 15 minutes if they could have used the airline's website*
  - *Wasteful spending*
    - *Do not show 'basic economy' for flights. Burden should not be on the user to show cheapest alternative.*
    - *Foreign transaction fee of 3% on Pitt travel card. This could be avoided by faculty using cards that have no foreign transaction fee.*
    - *Mandatory travel service fee of \$10 to \$25 to use Anthony Travel*
      - *Travel fee is not disclosed when booking online*
    - *Personal airline credit cards often have a free checked baggage perk. Since this can't be used, it adds \$50 (or more) per flight.*
    - *"Routinely have to enlist the assistance of an Anthony Travel rep due to discrepancies that can't be resolved on our own, which results in a \$25 fee."*
  - *Not receiving individual funding back from airline ticket cancellations*
  - *Hesitancy to seek exceptions from purchasing rules due to bureaucratic burden*
  - *Purchasing restrictions bring hidden burdens, unfunded mandate*
    - *Departments are now rectifying travel charges, a function that used to be done in the Financial Office*
  - *Any claims to savings are not passed back to schools, units, or faculty*
    - *No reduction in indirect rates charged to grants*

Kear paused her report for a discussion on travel policy. Bonneau explained the origins of the temporary policy and said it was abused in the post-pandemic era.

De Vallejo called for scrapping the whole policy and going back to previous procedures.

Lively discussion on the chat provided more examples of dissatisfaction with the policy and problems with using university card.

Morel asked if it was possible to stop this policy.

Kear explained that it was her wish, but she got push back when she suggested. She is still waiting for a good argument why we should keep it.

Songer remarked that it was urgent since May-June period is usually heavy traveling for conferences.

De Vallejo stated that being forced to use one travel agency is the infringement of our freedom.

Scott provided her personal example of successful rebooking of the cancelled flight even before the Anthony Travel notified her that the flight was cancelled.

Kear continued with her report.

#### *Response to the Budget Policies Committee Resolution from March*

- *Chris Bonneau and I met with Provost Cudd and CFO Hari Sastry to discuss the resolution point by point. The Provost and CFO will be issuing a memo to the Deans in response to the call for strengthening the unit-level Planning and Budget Committees. The goal of the memo is to strengthen the existing PBC structure and hold deans accountable for the functioning of PBCs in their units. Functioning, healthier unit level PBCs with elected and appointed membership are integral to the success of this new budget model.*
  - *PBCs should be more transparent and meet regularly in the budget cycle. They should see budgetary information, including in the form of the that unit's previous year RCRP (Responsibility Center Resource Proposal). RCRP guidance will require evidence that PBCs have been consulted.*
  - *There will be larger, informational meetings for PBC members and orientation materials. The BPC should also convene and liaise with the PBCs.*

Morel asked if this applied to SOM and Oyer asked (in chat) if this applied to UCIS.

Kear: Yes. Budget is administrative matter. It will apply to every unit and every unit should strive to have healthier PBC in its area.

Kear finished delivery of her report.

#### *Update on Provost's Committee on DEI and Community Engaged Scholarship in Promotion and Tenure*

- *Under the leadership of Vice Provost John Wallace, this provost's committee has been hard at work developing recommendations and guidance surrounding these two areas.*
- *The deadline for the groups to have their document was April 11. Senate Committees will review the recommendations and the recommendations will come to Faculty Assembly in May.*
- *My understanding is that what will likely happen is that the Provost would issue a directive (in the form of a memo) to the deans to include DEI and CES in their respective T&P policies. Our Committee is providing the detail, background, and recommendations for the memo.*

#### *Senate Elections*

- *Thanks to chair Chris Bonneau and the Committee for Elections.*
- *Officer and Faculty Assembly elections are running right now April 5-20. Penny Morel, SOM is running unopposed for Senate Secretary.*
- *Senate Committee elections are going to be held April 27-May 9th. There are three openings on each of the fifteen committees.*

### *Diversity Forum Submissions*

- *The 2022 Diversity Forum, Rewiring Our Systems: Transforming the Intersections of Inequity, will take place July 25-28 and focus on engaging the intersections of social identities impacted by systemic oppression. If you'd like to participate, the Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion invites you to submit your proposal by April 22. Our Vice President Kris Kanthak has been part of the planning.*

### *Pitt Advocates*

- *It is state budget season, and we need to communicate the value of Pitt to our state government representatives. As the Chancellor indicated in a campus-wide email, consider joining the Pitt Advocates network from the Office of Government Relations.*

*Any questions or comments on my report?*

There were no more questions.

## **5. Reports by and Announcements of the Special and Standing Committees of the Senate**

### **A. Provost Academic Freedom Re-Affirmation Statement - Professor Abbe De Vallejo, Co-Chair of TAFC**

De Vallejo introduced the statement on behalf of TAFC. He said that this was reaffirmation of the previous statement by Provost Maher from 2002, which was reviewed by TAFC in 2014 as still valid and not requiring any changes. The current document was discussed at TAFC and approved. De Vallejo asked Faculty Assembly for endorsement of the Provost Statement.

Morel asked if there were any changes.

De Vallejo remarked that TAFC discussed how could we strengthen it considering that academic freedom is under attack. This remark pushed the discussion on a sidetrack. Instead of focusing on the document in question, the participants talked about how academic freedom is challenged, how the faculty centric view of academic freedom misses other perspectives, how could we address academic freedom in the context of what happened in 2022.

Kear, Kanthak and Bonneau pointed out that the document is not a policy but a general statement that affirms academic freedom as a core principle. Approving it in this form does not preclude us from discussing it further or bringing forward other issues related to academic freedom. Bonneau responded to Frieze suggestion of including an additional statement with short conclusion that the perfect cannot be the enemy of the good.

Kear asked for the vote.

Vote: YES – 36, NO – 1, ABSTAIN - 2

## **6. Unfinished Business and /or New Business**

None

## **7. Announcements**

None

## **8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.

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

<http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/faculty-assembly>

Respectfully submitted,

Małgorzata (Gosia) Fort  
Secretary, University Senate

Members attending:

Archibald, Bircher, Bonneau, Bove, Brodt, Buchanich, Burton, Conley, Damiani, Denman, De Vallejo, Falcione, Fort, Frieze, Glynn, Guterman, Henker, Judd, Kanthak, Kear, Kiesling, Kiselyov, Klem, Kregg-Byers, Labrinidis, Maier, Massanelli, McCormick, Melnick, Molinaro, Morel, Nguyen, Oyler, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paljug, Paterson, Potoski, Roberts, Sant, Schuster, Scott, Shafiq, Songer, Stoner, Streeter, Swigonova, Taboas, Tashbook, Tokowicz, Tudorascu, Wiggins, Zack

Members not attending:

Almarza, Anderson, Bench, Bickford, Bungler, Collister, Covington-Ward, Hall, Jeffrey, Jeong, Jones A, Jones R, Kohanbash, Kory, Lewin, Mahboobin, Mulcahy, Murtazashvili I, Murtazashvili J, Newman, Rautkis, Salcido, Triplette, Vento, Wood, Yates

\*Excused attendance:

Darnell, Kovacs, Reed, Yearwood

Others attending:

Armory, Jones, Manges, Mucklo, O'Neill, SantaCasa, Slevin, Tuttle, Wilson

\*Notified Senate Office