

Minutes - Senate Budget Policies Committee
Friday, May 15, 2020
2:00-4:00 pm via Zoom meeting

Members in attendance: Elia Beniash, Tyler Bickford (co-chair), Panos Chrysanthis, Mackey Friedman, Jennifer Lee, John Mendeloff, Emily Murphy (co-chair), Jennifer Elizabeth Jones (UPPDA), Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte (SC), Brian Smith (SC), Melanie Scott, Frank Wilson, Amanda Brodish, Richard Henderson, Thurman Wingrove, Stephen Wisniewski, Sue Jones (UTimes), Jon Moss (PittNews), Inmaculada Hernandez (Pharmacy), Juan Taboas (Dental Medicine), and Gary Hollibaugh Jr. (GSPIA)

Absent: Yolanda Covington-Ward, Wesley Rohrer, Beverly Ann Gaddy, Ashima Agarwal (SGB), Yashar Aucie (GPSG), John J. Baker, Phil Wion, David DeJong, Narahari Sastry.

Call to order shortly after 2:00 pm.

1. Approve March minutes.
Minutes were submitted prior to the meeting. Minutes were approved as submitted.
2. Matters arising
None.
3. Introduction of new members
Present at today's meeting were all new faculty-elected members for next year: Inmaculada Hernandez (Pharmacy), Juan Taboas (Dental Medicine), and Gary Hollibaugh Jr. (GSPIA)
4. Election of Officers for 2020-21
Running unopposed, Tyler Bickford was re-elected as Chair, and Jennifer Lee was elected as Secretary.
5. Scheduling additional meetings for June/summer
Because of the ongoing planning and the delay process in the UPBC budget recommendations, we will be having a meeting in June. Tyler Bickford will ask Lori Molinaro to run a Doodle request to match our availability.
6. Fall 2020 recruitment update (Steve Wisniewski)
The outlook is very positive today. We are experiencing an undergraduate retention rate of 94%, strong rate and comparable to previous years.
Pitt is over its targets in undergraduate numbers in the main campus. But as of today, we do not know what to expect in true numbers after the "summer melt" process.
Regional campuses are looking good on retention rates of students; they are "at level", but their "new admission" process has a built-in delay, a lag when compared to the main campus. With that in mind: Bradford is at 94%, and Greensburg at 88%; Johnstown needs reinforcement, rate is not good yet.
Graduate students, on the other hand, are not centrally tracked, so no numbers can be reported. That said, Wisniewski indicated that Engineering, and SCI are struggling at the moment.

In relation to the use of the Common App (new to Pitt leading to Fall 2019, pre-COVID-19 environment) Tyler Bickford asked about how it compares to this year. Wisniewski said that there is an increase in out-of-state application numbers, not actual admission numbers; he is working on gathering data still.

Mackey Friedman commented that he anticipates that students will postpone classes.

Wisniewski said that international students are also an issue (i.e., not being able to return or to get started). Can this be solved with multimodal teaching? Mackey added that internationals may be stuck here as well, not being able to return.

Elia Beniash stated that many students are not interested in remote learning.

Wisniewski indicated that Pitt is monitoring all that with surveys, looking at other universities. The Task Force will have a recommendation by the end of May.

7. General update on budget outlook/COVID-19 response (Thurman Wingrove)

While he is getting tired of repeating it, there is no other word yet to describe the situation than “unprecedented”. We have had financial disruptions before, and they were dealt with.

COVID-19 is different in that it is impacting every funding source Pitt has: tuition; state appropriation (there is a big question mark; maybe it will come in two parts, maybe we’ll receive all we asked - ??); endowment is taking a tumble; room and board (refunds were made in the Spring); parking (fees waived temporarily); programs canceled (Dental Clinic, Study Abroad, etc.; Athletics season was over so no losses there, but will be impacted next year).

Wisniewski added that maybe it is wiser to have a 6-month budget planning instead of a 12-month budget to minimize risk (budgets are locked in once approved).

Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte asked about early retirement offers for staff, as staff are asking. Wisniewski said that early retirement for faculty is one option being studied. He considered it unlikely to see an early retirement proposal for staff, as last time it was done it cost too much in institutional memory.

Adjournment at around 3:20 pm