

**Minutes of the Senate Budget Policies Committee**  
**Friday, January 22, 2021**  
**2:00-4:00 p.m. via Zoom**

**Members in Attendance:** Tyler Bickford (Chair), Panos Chrysanthis, Yolanda Covington Ward, Gary Hollibaugh, Mackey Friedman, John Mendeloff, Juan Taboas, Ben King (SGB), Alex Sunderman (GPSG), Jennifer Jones, Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte, Brian Smith, Vice Provost Amanda Godley, Vice Provost Lu-in Wang, Jennifer Lee (Secretary), Emily Murphy, Frank Wilson, Amanda Brodish, Richard Henderson, Stephen Wisniewski, Chris Bonneau, Lorraine Denman, Susan Jones

**Absent:** Immaculada Hernandez, John Mendeloff, Wesley Rohrer, John Baker, Beverly Gaddy, Melanie Scott, Phil Wion, Thurman Wingrove, Dave DeJong

**Call to Order at 2:04p.m.**

**1. December Minutes: Approved.**

**2. Matters Arising: None.**

**3. Implications of Federal Coronavirus Relief Bills on Pitt FY21 budget - Steve Wisniewski**

SW: The CARES act relief package was \$21 million; the December package was \$31 million. We are still clarifying how this money is to be distributed. Primarily intended for student support, a third to a half will go directly to students; the rest of the money could go to students or to offset costs incurred by university during the pandemic.

TB: Asks about costs incurred this term as we push back in-person classes.

SW: More students have dropped out of residence hall contracts than in the past; at this time, fall to spring retention is down 1-2%. Joe McCarthy (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies) has been reaching out directly to students to find resources for those who have holds on their accounts, etc., Pitt also received \$3 million in federal money through PA counties, as well as \$1.1million from the governor's emergency relief, which is tied largely to defray to room and board refunds to students.

YCW: Any projections on how this will impact us going forward in terms of salary and hiring, and in particular, salary increase freezes?

SW: There were permanent cuts and temporary cuts: temporary cuts will be restored, hopefully in the coming year. A series of 25 meetings are being held over the next month and a half with unit heads to discuss budgets and plans. The biggest unknown is the state appropriation; we put in a request for a slight increase, but revenues are down this year, which makes us a bit nervous about what will happen. Early summer is when we typically know.

TB: With \$30 million, there's potentially \$15 million that can restore 25% of those cuts? At this stage in the budget, if we're topping the budget off by \$15 million, what does that look like? Travel becomes available again? An earlier end to the staff salary freeze? What does it actually mean to improve the current year's budget?

SW: Unknown—we don't know what we can use it for; it could all go to students.

TB: \$15 million is a drop in the bucket for salary increases; but perhaps this would mean ending hiring freezes earlier (especially given the early retirements in FERP). There's also much discussion among faculty of childcare expenses during the pandemic, so perhaps reimbursement for these expenses? Thinking about what it means for the current budget year, it would be great if the money didn't just filter in in an unstructured way and then disappear.

#### **4. Resolution on Salary Increase Policy targets—Tyler Bickford**

TB: Reads from resolution, then opens the floor to committee, particularly voting members (though other attendees are welcome) to provide input. (See Appendix A)

PC: Says he is in favor of the resolution, that it makes sense: a better collaboration between the SBPC and administration; clearer communication of what we want to see rather than just being passive "auditors." We participate more actively (with this resolution).

MF: Is in favor also. Looking at trends and data and not seeing substantial progress for the lower ranks of Pitt salary, he's hoping this resolution will prod progress.

JM: This is the lecturer provision?

TB: This resolution refers to affected ranks, and the preamble rank describes Instructor, Lecturer, and Assistant Professor not meeting targets.

JM: As I mentioned before, I'm a little concerned whether the meaning of "instructor" is similar across institutions. Are we comparing "apples with apples"? What goes by the name of instructor here doesn't necessarily go by that name elsewhere. He's looking for more information, though generally supportive of the resolution.

TB: "Instructor" is the most challenging category, particularly in last two years, since AAUP changed its classifications. All visiting faculty, except lecturers, are reported as instructors. Which indeed makes these numbers harder to interpret. Instructors are a smaller group in general: 175 at Pitt, in the last report. What's important is that what we're asking the administration to do is acknowledge salary targets and the groups that are not meeting them; and we're asking the administration to make a plan to meet these salary targets in the future. This provides much flexibility in term of how the administration responds. The resolution includes a clause for all ranks, and the policy target itself is very clear: "at or above the median." What we're saying is that there's a long track record of not meeting these targets, and we're asking the administration to join us in addressing this problem.. The specifics of how the

budget has to change to meet these targets is not our domain—we just have oversight responsibility.

JM: A very reasonable answer.

AS: I support it; it's very data driven.

AM: Whole heartedly agrees with the resolution and with what others have said, and is looking forward to when the staff reclassification system is finalized; especially to see the university keeping track of and uplifting entry level staff, to see staff careers moving ahead.

LD: As co-chair of Faculty Affairs, my committee would be interested in reviewing and discussion of the resolution; and if you wanted a committee to sign on with you, I imagine our committee would. One thing I anticipate is a question about part-time instructors as well. I know the reasons for which they are not included, but I wonder about language acknowledging the part timer situation is of concern.

TB: The specific reason is that the salary increase policy doesn't include part-time faculty; and we're staying narrowly within the language of that policy. We don't often, on this committee, take formal actions (like this). One of the things this moment offers us is thinking about more formal actions as part of our work.

SW: We need to do it both ways. As the Lecturer rank transitions to Teaching Professor (we may need to report both ranks.

JT: After an email conversation with Tyler, I wonder if we should consider being more granular in how we look at faculty lines, as we are now with staff.

TB: Assistant Professor is the largest rank: including researchers, teaching assistant professors, etc.,

JT: Yes, breaking down this classification would be very useful.

TB: Calls for a vote by raise of hand.

Voting Members Yes: Tyler Bickford, Panos Chrysanthis, Yolanda Covington Ward, Gary Hollibaugh, Mackey Friedman, John Mendeloff, Juan Taboas, Ben King, Alex Sunderman, Jennifer Jones, Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte, Brian Smith.

Voting Members No: 0

## **5. Postdoc Salaries and Benchmarking: Vice Provosts Amanda Godley and Lu-in Wang**

TB: Help us understand the policies for salaries for postdocs: floors, targets, benchmarking, etc.,

AG: Two categories: Postdoc Associates and Postdoc Scholars. The first (associates) are employees of the university, while scholars are not. This is set by external funders; everything must be separated into these two groups. No two peer institutions seem to use the same language for these two categories, which makes it confusing for administration and postdocs alike, who often move between the two categories. T-32 grant, a training grant, for example, mandates they are PDS. Always on our mind: how do we lessen the confusion—in terms of salary, benefits, etc.,--of going back and forth between the two classifications.

(Academic Affairs Coordinator) Meghan Culpepper benchmarked postdoc salaries and benefits against approximately 60 institutions: In terms of salary, most institutions (48) set their minimum to the NIH minimum (\$53 thousand); 12 schools, including Pitt, have a minimum salary below this (\$47,500)—this number was set 6-7 years ago, and was then the NIH minimum. This is something being explored.

In terms of benefits:

Postdoc Associate – Pitt contributes the same or more as comparable institutions; we're the only institution with a retirement contribution; sick days/leave are above average; we rank average for parental leave; Postdoc Associates receive educational benefits (same as staff)—only about half of schools give this. We diverge on time limits—postdoc positions are not supposed to be permanent and our term limits are 2-4 years, whereas most places it is 5. Increasing these limits could have negative effects since the idea of a postdoc is training for a faculty job. Few universities have a policy about annual raises; leaving much up to the PI; she thinks we need to explore this as well.

Postdoc Scholar—Most institutions use NIH minimum here too. Our health insurance for non-employees is similar to most schools—they are eligible but have to pay for it; half of schools give postdoc scholars access to retirement, but no one offers matching contributions (only employers can match retirement contributions); we are average for paid sick leave and parental leave; Pitt is one of few institutions that provides educational benefits; here again, our 2-4 year limits are below most other institutions at 5 years.

TB: Thank you. This may be the first time we've received this report.

JT: Are you looking to increase these term limits? They were made shorter on purpose a few years ago.

AG: Says she needs to learn more about the rationale and will reach out for input (to Juan Taboas).

JJ: Postdoc Association would likely be in favor of matching other institutions at 5 years; 4 years puts a lot of pressure on postdocs. Thanks Amanda Godley for putting together this data and

wants to advocate for an annual raise for postdocs, 75% of whom are international. It's her impression they are uncomfortable advocating for themselves—she wants to be sure to do that.

TB: Asks Amanda if she produces a report that can be circulated, to provide to the committee.

PC: Echoes Jenny Jones' point about international post-docs and notes that 5 years corresponds to the length of (J-1) visas: they may want to take full advantage of this, and so go to a school that offers a 5-year limit instead.

AM: She's wondering where these 5-year post docs are—if 5 years is a long time in some places to transition to a faculty position.

AG: The maximum doesn't necessarily reflect the average but a cut-off point.

TB: Do we have information about career pathways for our postdocs? We hope we're launching their careers as PIs for example; do we know they are becoming TT faculty, transitioning into PIs, becoming research staff, going into industry, etc.?

AG: Defers to Amanda Brodish.

AB: Yes, we do have postdoc placement data; we're rolling this out to deans so they can see where their postdocs are placed; we'll be collecting this data for another year or two.

MF: NIH has funding requirements that include trainee success.

JT: Some of PDS don't make as much as PDA, even with prestigious fellowships; is there a guideline for what PIs should do, given this is unfair?

AG: Agrees that more specific guidelines are a good idea—salaries may be different in different fields, and this needs to be kept in mind—especially when postdocs switch between categories so we can mitigate the possibility that they are then being paid less. We probably need to put together a working group to include not just health sciences but, for example, engineering.

TB: Developing a policy that harmonizes Postdoc Associates and Postdoc Scholars?

AG: We just got the benchmarking data a couple of days ago, so concrete plans haven't been made yet. Input from units and post docs is the next step.

TB: Asks what the benchmarking is.

AG: AAU (Association of American Universities).

TB: 60 (comparable institutions) would include both public and private.

AG: Yes, though there's not much difference between public and private, though our benefits are better than most privates.

TB: Thanks Amanda Godley for the data, and Jenny Jones for her presence on the committee.

AG: Depending on the unit, as of January 1 2021, all post docs are hired through talent center, which means the process has changed for some schools and it's no longer simply word of mouth. This is in line with the university's diversity and inclusivity goals.

## **6. Salary Increase Policy Oversight—Vice Provost Lu-in Wang**

TB: Welcomes Vice Provost Lu-in Wang and reminds committee of documents provided in advance. (See Appendix B)

### a. Report on Faculty Annual Reviews Oversight and Audit

LW: 1999 memo from Provost Jim Maher asks each unit for a 10% representative sample of faculty review letters each year. Vice Provost Laurie Kirsch would then review letters and generate a report for each unit head with detailed feedback: how to be more detailed, provide better support to faculty, etc., The most recent set available is 2016-17; these letters were reviewed in 2017-18. Unfortunately, the data is in Laurie Kirsch's office and unavailable right now.

Where Provost's Office is going from here: revised guidelines—the Faculty Assembly approved new guidelines for evaluating faculty that look for more shared discussion of faculty performance and goals for the future, more specific attention to specific aspects of work, and more specific guidance. These revised guidelines refer to AS faculty, which is consistent with wanting to provide more support for this group. OMETs will be de-emphasized and an effort to come up with other ways to evaluate teaching.

There will be no audit of letters this year—a strange year, no raises; a better use of this year is to train deans and chairs on these changes, which will take effect this spring. We will resume auditing next year. Reviewing is a laborious process; we're thinking of doing it in a rotation, rather than as a yearly review.

PC: A suggestion about rotation: since chairs change every three years, this should be taken into account.

LW: Good point, but it may be hard to execute. For example, A&S has many departments, whereas the School of Law has none.

PC: Notes that sampling needs to account not just for rank, but gender, etc.,

BW: What is redacted from the letters? The word "share," for example.

LW: Faculty reviews are very sensitive, which is why they are so closely guarded. We wanted to show you what the Provost's Office does, without revealing whether a department has a particular kind of review.

TB: Appreciates these letters, says he had anticipated a quantitative report rather than qualitative, as these are.

LW: Hasn't seen a quantitative analysis—this is all she's aware of.

SW: There isn't a quantitative analysis.

TB: Is there a process for making sure feedback actually gets to the chairs? And doesn't simply stay with deans.

LW: Says she doesn't know, though she expects there is. She will certainly make sure this feedback gets to department chairs.

TB: Do you know if Laurie Kirsch's impression was that, broadly speaking, the letters were meeting her expectations? Or if there was variation, were there concerns about some schools?

LW: Says she doesn't know if some schools are better than others, or if schools met or exceeded Laurie Kirsch's expectations.

AM: Asks for clarification on what these letters are.

TB: Annual reviews of faculty written by a chair or dean.

CB: Says he noticed change in his own letters, which he attributes to this very kind of feedback. Especially last 10 years, these letters have been taken more seriously; he's received more constructive feedback.

AM: When you have faculty who are receptive; faculty who haven't published or done research for many years—I'm wondering how such cases are dealt with.

CB: There's a provision for an increased teaching load in these cases.

TB: Must put on the record that intellectual production takes many forms and notes that there weren't a lot of examples of how faculty who are having a lot of challenges are dealt with, supported, etc.,. Would you be open to looking at more of these?

LW: There may be under-sharing with faculty who are under-performing, which isn't in anyone's interest. This is something we're addressing in the training, being straightforward about performance deficits. Perhaps, rather than depending on a randomized sample, we could solicit such reviews in some way. Asks Steve Wisniewski if she has leeway to do this.

SW: Yes.

b. Review of Unit-Level Procedures for Consideration of Salary Decisions

LW: Dietrich has this on its website; other schools share this in their salary letters. Though there is some variation, appeals usually begin with the next level up—the chair or dean—and then move upward from there in a regularized, multiple-step process.

TB: Says he is less clear about how these documents were redacted.

LW: Here too, the purpose is to get a general sense of procedures. We're sensitive to how units feel about having their information shared broadly. If we have comments about particular policies and would like her to convey these to the unit, she can do so.

TB: Notices a significant difference in the length of time to appeal. As a faculty member, the basic structure doesn't feel reassuring: appealing by going to the same people who made the decision in the first place—a faculty member's chair or dean. The chair made the decision and the dean approved. Some have language about documentation, but absent "explicit written criteria," it's hard to imagine on what basis faculty would appeal. Thus, what you're asking for is a new interpretation of the facts—a difference in that interpretation is about all the faculty member can argue.

LW: Part of the problem is that there isn't much language around appeals. Reading back through old Provost's memos, the approach is to give flexibility to the units. Policy ER-14 is an old policy (1994)—we don't have "explicit written criteria," and it seems it isn't widely known this language is in the policy. Parts of the policy are in effect, while others are not. This is on the list of policies (among many others) that need to be reviewed. The policy committee needs to address this. So much leeway is given to units with no required standardization.

TB: We get reports each year (salary benchmarking) in which this paragraph of the policy is very much active. That is, if you have criteria to which you can actually appeal. If the policy were revised, I would worry this language will disappear—since it has been sort of "dropped." It seems a matter of bringing practice up to the policy rather than reducing policy to reflect practices.

LW: Her sense of the review process is that it is extensive, that pieces of it are beneficial, even if not followed, and that these wouldn't simply be dropped.

AM: Looking at the Policy on Salary Reconsideration—it would be good to quantify who has been through the process, who has been successful, what issues have come up. Her sense is that few staff have gone through the process, perhaps because they have little confidence in it, or it's not clear.

LW: Asks Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte if she's asking to have numbers shared.



AM: Says she's under the impression these numbers exist.

LW: Doesn't know if that information exists, but registers that Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte thinks it would be good to have this.

TB: Adriana has important point—these are already audited, so gathering this information seems plausible, even within the current structure, if the Provost's Office were closely watching these appeals, doing exit interviews, etc., to make the policy more effective.

PC: This could be part of the unit's report, part of gathering other statistics: for example, how many appeals? How many were successful, etc., Noting a unit where there are many appeals.

TB: Returning to "explicit written criteria," the policy is up for review, and that's great, but is there any reason to ask units to get in line with the policy now?

SW: We need to figure out where we are in the timeline, so we don't make people do a lot of work then change the policy.

TB: Can Steve, Lorraine, and Lu-in Wang stay in touch about this?

(SW, LW, LD all say yes.)

TB: Thanks Lu-in Wang for her work, and Laurie Kirsch for hers.

LW: Thanks Laurie Kirsch.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:50p.m.**

## Appendix A

### Senate Budget Policies Resolution on meeting salary targets for Lecturers, Instructors, and Assistant Professors

Whereas, The University of Pittsburgh's Salary Increase Policy ([ER 14, formerly 07-09-01](#)), which governs salaries for full-time faculty outside the School of Medicine, establishes specific targets for faculty salaries at the Pittsburgh campus, namely, "average faculty salaries at the Pittsburgh campus are at or above the median (for each rank) of AAU [Association of American Universities] universities," and in practice the target is set at the median of public AAU universities;

Whereas, The Salary Increase Policy requires the Senate Budget Policies Committee to

monitor and report on its implementation annually to the University Senate;

Whereas, As part of that oversight role the SBPC annually receives a peer-group analysis of average faculty salaries at each rank in comparison to average salaries of faculty at the same rank at other AAU universities, based on data reported to the American Association of University Professors;

Whereas, Starting with the 2012-13 fiscal year those reports have included faculty with Lecturer and Instructor titles in addition to Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors;

Whereas, Since 2012-13 salaries for Lecturers have fallen short of the target, averaging 28th out of an average of 29 public AAU institutions that report salaries for Lecturers each year;

Whereas, Since 2012-13 salaries for Instructors have fallen short of the target, averaging 18th out of an average of 20 public AAU institutions that report salaries for Instructors each year;

Whereas, Since 2012-13 salaries for Assistant Professors have fallen short of the target, averaging 27th of an average of 34 public AAU peers since 2012-13;

Whereas, When adjusted for regional cost of living, salaries for these faculty ranks remain below the median of the peer groups; and

Whereas, Since 2012-13 salaries for Full and Associate Professors have met or come close to the target, averaging 17th of 34 for Full Professors and 20th of 34 for Associate Professors;

Whereas, Starting in the 2021-22 academic year scheduled changes to faculty titles, replacing Lecturer titles with Teaching Professor titles, will create uncertainty about the appropriate benchmarking group for those faculty; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Provost and Chancellor are urged to take action as part of the 2021-22 budget to achieve measurable progress toward compliance with the goals in the Salary Increase Policy for affected ranks, and that the administration present a timeline and plan for achieving

full compliance with the salary targets to the Senate Budget Policies Committee by September 2021;

*Resolved*, That the Salary Increase Policy be interpreted so that faculty currently holding Lecturer titles who are converted to Teaching Professor titles will continue to have their salaries benchmarked to the Lecturer peer group, at least until they meet the target for that peer group; and

*Resolved*, That the Faculty Assembly be invited to join us in adopting the first two resolutions.

## Appendix B

Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Lu-in Wang has helpfully shared the following materials, available in our shared Box folder, here:

<https://pitt.box.com/s/3y2j6xmgyxii9516h0ptj71p3ytfkfg>

These are related to our oversight of the Salary Increase Policy (ER 14, <https://www.policy.pitt.edu/er-14-salary-increase-formerly-07-09-01>)

The materials shared include:

- Four examples of the procedures "through which individual faculty and staff members can request reconsideration of decisions related to aspects of their salaries" (section V of ER 14). The examples are redacted to remove the names of the units (with the exception of the first one, which appears on the website of the Dietrich School), though these procedures have been shared with each unit's faculty. They represent one example each from:
  - Arts & Sciences;
  - a professional school;
  - a health sciences school; and
  - a regional campus.
- Three representative examples of letters sent by former VP Laurie Kirsch as part of previous efforts to audit faculty annual review letters. The letters are redacted to remove the names of units, departments, and individuals, and they represent units of varying sizes and structures. The letters reviewed cover 2016-2017 and were evaluated by VP Kirsch in 2017-2018. This is the most recent set for which we have electronic records. Laurie Kirsch maintained all of the documents for 2017-2018 (which would have been reviewed in 2018-2019) in hard copy or on her own office computer, and we have not had access to the offices since March 2020. The audit was not conducted last year (covering 2018-2019) due to the disruptions caused by Covid-19, and I will not conduct one this year for both that reason and because the guidelines for annual faculty reviews were recently revised. I can, however, share with the BPC my plans in connection with annual faculty reviews and the audit process moving forward.

