

Minutes - Senate Budget Policies Committee  
Friday, September 17, 2021  
2:00-4:00 pm via Zoom

**Members in attendance:** Tyler Bickford (chair), Panos Chrysanthis, Mackey Friedman, Gary Haulibaugh, Melinda Ciccocioppo, Emily Murphy, Douglas Reed, Gong Tang.

**Student reps in attendance:** Ryan Yeager (CGS), Autumn Greba (GPSG), Vaishali Aggarwal, Morgan Pierce.

**Staff Council in attendance:** Adriana Maguiña-Ugarte (SC), Brian Smith (SC)

**Pro-term in attendance:** Ruth Mostern, Frank Wilson.

**Chancellor's Liaisons in attendance:** Amanda Brodish, Richard Henderson, Thurman Wingrove, Stephen Wisniewski

**Senate appointment in attendance:** Robin Kear (Senate president)

**Guests:** Lorraine Denman (Faculty Affairs Committee), Irene Frieze (Faculty Affairs Committee), Sybil Streeter, Jana Iverson, Katie Cassidy (Pitt News), Sue Jones (UTimes).

**Absent**

Juan Taboas, Aboli Kesbhat.

Call to order shortly after 2:00 pm.

1. Approve May 2021 minutes  
Minutes were submitted prior to the meeting. Minutes were approved as submitted.
2. Matters arising  
None.
3. Updates on FY22 budget (Thurman Wingrove presenting)  
On May 10, 2021 the UPBC Parameters committee presented their budget recommendations to the UPBC, which approved them the same day. Summary highlights of the proposed budget: it assumed a flat PA appropriation (no changes to last year's); tuition increases were proposed to be on a scale where all students (Ugrads. and Grads) in the Main campus would see a 2.5% increase, except for out-of-state undergrads who would see a 4.5% increase (Engineering out-of-state only 2.5%). SCI students would see an additional premium: in-state ugrads = +4.5% and out-of-state ugrads = +6.5%. The tuition increase for students in regional campuses was proposed to be 1.5%.  
Salary compensation for employees was also proposed to be on a scale depending on current annual salary: if <\$48,470 then salary increase would be 1.5%; if >\$145,410 there would be no salary increase (= 0%); if between \$96,940 and \$145,410, then the increase is 1%; and everybody earning between \$48,470 and \$96,940 would see a salary increase of 1.4%. An additional 0.25% was allocated for Merit/Market/Equity (M/M/E).

Budget cut: it was proposed to implement a 1% cut at all levels; RCs will decide how to implement their internal budget cut.

Lorraine Denman, speaking on behalf of the Faculty Affairs committee, shared concerns about the inflation rates, high cost of living, the impact of the new budget model, etc., so she asks when might we see the budget stabilizing? What factors are we looking at?

TW: very difficult to answer, economy is testing everyone; current situation had not been thought of three months ago; and then the Delta variant came along. So, now, there are COVID-related costs that were not budgeted for. Another big unknown is whether more Federal relief funds would be available. What had been applied for last year, has already been received (in 3 installments). Pitt has applied to FEMA for some recovery of costs. It was a very bureaucratic process, and we have not heard back about it yet.

Steve Wisniewski mentioned that with Tom Wolf as governor, the state appropriation levels improved (in relation to previous PA governments), but actual dollars are still not so impactful (in a positive way).

Tyler Bickford asked about the enrolment numbers. Did Pitt fare as well as early summer trends were pointing to? Tyler recalled SVC and Chief Financial Officer Sastry saying that if enrolment stayed at good levels, then the revenues were going to be good. Tyler recalls that the target number is 4200 newly admitted freshmen.

Steve: enrolment was indeed high, as we have a freshmen class of 4900 students (little to no melt). But offsetting the high enrolments: the regional campuses came at 10% less enrolment (or about 200 fewer students than targeted). To accommodate the large class in the Main campus, he noted that Financial Aid has a higher cost; housing costs are higher (because some students are in local hotels which run a higher expense than in Pitt-owned dorms). Higher costs in these areas were not expected/budgeted. CBA needs help hiring new instructors because they need to teach more classes due to higher enrolment. The Tuition Incentive Program will cover this higher cost.

Steve adds that this is why we are switching budget models.

Mackey Friedman would like to see new budget model talks implemented, so that we can all learn more about it. Tyler seconded the idea.

Lorrain Denman asked about PTIs: are there more permanent? She asks because her department (French and Italian) asked faculty to take in more students.

Steve: more students is not easy; it is not something easy to insert them in a number of classes, services, financial aid. It creates a lot more work, more variables, and seemingly less revenue.

Tyler is unclear about the flow of funds. There is more revenue (not initially on the budget), and more expenses (also not in the budget), so he asks where is the money coming from and going to?

Thurman indicated that as more revenue and expenses are both higher, what is happening is that funds are being spent as we go.

Tyler clarifies that he is asking about how revenues are allocated in a 2021-2022 budget that was approved in the early part of summer, therefore closed to changes. He recalls the time when a higher PA appropriation was approved, but the amount *above* the budgeted (expected) appropriation was set aside for future use because the budget was closed to changes after it was approved.

Panos Chrysanthis mentions that faculty are now teaching more sections because it was impossible to hire so late this summer; he would have liked to see a stricter maximum number of students coming in this year, as higher numbers cause too much of a disruption. Other faculty agreed.

4. Timeline and plan for meeting faculty salary targets (from January 2021 resolution)

Tyler summarizes that this committee approved a resolution at the January 2021 meeting to help see measurable progress towards meeting faculty salary targets. Currently, based on our own reports, instructors and assistant professors are noticeably below the target figure, and associate professors are below target but not too off (professors are well on target).

Steve indicated that a specific line item for special salary increases was discussed in Parameters (UPBC budget subcommittee), but then not added in the end due to the complex budgetary year. There are discussions for increasing salaries, in a 3-4 year span, to bring the salaries up in a more targeted way. His office will always into individual/specific people's cases.

Gong Tang indicates that he has been in the university for 20 years, that he receives commended to outstanding performance reviews, but the increase rates have been largely lower than inflation. When he joined Pitt, a senior faculty in the Department told him that if one wanted to get a "raise" at Pitt, he would have to leave Pitt. He pointed out that the Data Center he works at has a \$2 million surplus but could not fill needing positions. Pitt does not make itself attractive to hire. He adds that raises should at least reflect inflation, just like the University salary increase policy indicates it should be.

Lorraine Denman passes along the following two questions from her Faculty Affairs committee: has wage compression been looked at all? Has it been studied for faculty? Mackey Friedman volunteers that it has not been studied yet, but that is indeed badly needed study.

Tyler concurs, and adds that we also need to look into faculty promotion with the substantial increase.

Steve reminds us of the Annual Mean and Median Report, as a first step to look into the salary compression analysis. Warns that benchmarking against private university's salaries is not a fair comparison.

Tyler would like to learn how much we are short in the budget (how much is needed) to bring lower earners up to the targeted average.

Panos: would like to see the faculty cohort salary reports compared to the "maintenance" raises, not to the "merit" increases. This report should also take into consideration the 0% increase years, that affected faculty from decades ago.

For the sake of time today, Tyler closes this agenda topic by letting the committee know that faculty Affairs committee questions should be directed to Lorraine or Irene Frieze. Tyler also reminds us that Mark Burdsall is scheduled to present in the November meeting regarding staff salary and compensation modernization project. Tyler asks Steve if he could present the faculty salary benchmarking report in December. Mackey adds that a priority focus for him is solving the issue of losing faculty due to low income with no increases.

5. Subcommittee report on Outlier

Ahead of today's meeting, Tyler had shared a summary report that an ad hoc committee prepared regarding Outlier, a company that has partnered with Pitt to offer certain courses to undergraduates, where Pitt may have a need, and where Pitt would give the credits for courses Pitt students pass.

Tyler's committee found that faculty were not systematically consulted to develop courses; that Psychology does not accept their credits; and that there seems to be a disconnect between the services engages with Outlier and Pitt credits. The committee has been told by

Pitt's administration that "Outlier is just a collection of courses", that it "does not need accreditation".

There is no precedent of credit bearing courses existing outside "academic Programs". It is creating a loophole that in turn is creating issues for students who are promised Pitt credits.

They also found that early-stage users of Outlier services were not satisfied.

Tyler shared the resolution the committee reached which requests Pitt to conform to the proper procedures.

Discussion ensued as to whether this report should be discussed on this committee or with McCarthy and Johnstown leadership. Tyler advised that he had extended many opportunities to do that with them and had not had a response yet. This is the report to this committee.

Sybil Streeter, representing Psychology, praised the report as excellent, and was very thankful for the work. She is in favor of pursuing the resolution. When Psychology presented concerns, they were initially heard, but then passed onto others with no response.

Lorraine indicated that Faculty Affairs was also very concerned; they are to get this report at their meeting later. She is very thankful for this report. She would like to hear a reaction from SGB. For example, are students liking the deep discount? Other comments?

Ryan Yaeger: had not personally heard about it before the report. Great for the price but he wants to make sure the courses are up to standards. There are non-traditional students who would love cheaper options.

Melinda Ciccocioppo is worried about students not knowing the difference between the Outlier and Pitt courses.

Morgan Pierce is concerned, on behalf of grad students, about courses not being taught by Pitt faculty.

Jana Iverson considers Pitt's pre-COVID relationship to Outlier as ironic (since Pitt does not want to portray itself as an online university). But Jana believes that now, when we know better about delivering courses digitally, Pitt can do better in-house to cover the course needs.

Ryan added that affordability and access are great, but they can't come at the expense of the academic quality of instruction.

Gong expressed concern as well about the lack of planning and communications, but would like to see McCarthy and Johnstown address this.

Autumn Greba said that Ryan brought a good point about affordability, but she is concerned about students taking courses that won't count for credit. Are students told with precision?

Tyler commented that students are in a bad position; it could put undue pressure on departments that won't accept the credit.

Panos ponders if the budget, costs pros/cons were analyzed/planned.

Tyler answered that it was a good question. It was asked, but has received no answer on that regard.

Sybil: Psychology proposed that Pitt charged the \$400 and kept it. They have concerns about having to tell students that they need to take the course "again".

Morgan: pondered if Steve could invite McCarthy to answer these concerns. Tyler agreed that maybe Steve can coordinate such next meeting.

Irene Frieze commented that in introductory classes, students have questions that go unanswered.

Lorraine believes that there should be more discussion in general; more communication. Faculty expected to be in the know, but it has not happened yet. The impacts of poor or no communication can have great consequences. She thinks that it is time for all interested parties to meet.

Steve proposed that the Committee withhold voting on the report before McCarthy has a chance to address issues raised in the report. Tyler counter that he had already extended several opportunities to review the report concurrently and meet to discuss; but Tyler has yet to hear from McCarthy's office.

Tyler proposes that after this report is adopted by the committee, it should go to Assembly. A lot of work has already gone into it, but the subcommittee can be asked to initiate the conversations. He is very much in favor of communicating/talking.

Panos added that he would like to make sure this is an open invitation.

Report was voted on, and it was adopted. There were no objections raised.

Adjournment at around 4:00 pm