

**Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom**

Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020

1. Call to Order

President Chris Bonneau called the meeting to order at 3 pm.

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

The distributed minutes from the November 4, 2020 were approved as written.

3. Items of New Business

There were no new business items.

4. Report of the Senate President, Chris Bonneau (submitted in written)

I am told that 2020 has the same number of days as every other year, but I don't believe it. Anyway, as we enter the 9th month of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope you all are staying safe and able to take some time to rest and relax. Our agenda is light today, though I do have some important updates.

I want to begin with some sad news for those who have not yet heard. Martin Staniland, Professor Emeritus from GSPIA as well as the husband of former Vice Provost for Graduate Studies (and my departmental colleague) Alberta Sbragia, passed away on Thanksgiving Day due to COVID-19. He taught at Pitt from 1984 until his retirement in 2018. GSPIA has set up a tribute page to Martin at: <https://www.gspia.pitt.edu/news/gspia-remembers-professor-emeritus-dr-martin-staniland>. Please keep Alberta and her family in your thoughts.

The budgeting process for next year has begun. There are two significant concerns I have regarding next year's budget. First, we don't yet know the full amount of the COVID costs. Thus far, costs have been aligned with expectations, but that could always change at a moment's notice. Second, the Commonwealth is projecting a significant loss of revenue due to the pandemic. We had finally made it almost all the way back to our funding level before the Corbett cuts in 2010, but it is far from clear how next year will shape up. Obviously, it is way too early to know what all this means for tuition, increases in the salary pool, etc. As always, we will continue to oppose cuts to the academic mission of the university, and this includes furloughs, layoffs, etc.

I have received a lot of questions recently about a recent story on Outlier and Pitt's involvement. So, here is a chronology of events and where we currently stand.

- *In the Fall of 2019, faculty in Psychology and Math approached the Senate Officers with concerns about courses that were being offered by Outlier, a for-profit enterprise. Pitt had*

entered into an arrangement with Outlier that allowed students completing Outlier courses to receive Pitt credits.

- *The goal of this was to increase access for nontraditional students, but faculty rightly objected to these courses potentially competing with Pitt courses and the fact that these courses did not involve Pitt faculty in their design and assessment*
- *In response, I met with the department chairs and directors of undergraduate studies in departments that had been contacted by Outlier. In addition to Psychology and Math, this also involved Physics & Astronomy, Philosophy, and Statistics. From that meeting, it was clear that no one was interested in pursuing this relationship further.*
- *This information was communicated to Associate Dean Twynning and Dean Blee and Vice Provost McCarthy and Provost Cudd. The Provost's Office then reached to the regional campuses to see if any of them were interested in partnering with Outlier, and Johnstown said they were. I am not sure what process was followed there with the Johnstown faculty.*
- *Thus, these courses, which have a separate course number and designation and are not open to Pitt students, are currently being developed with the consultation of Johnstown faculty.*
- *To date, we have not received any complaints or concerns raised by the Johnstown faculty. Of course, the regional campuses have the ability to structure their curriculum as they see fit. For example, taking a class at Johnstown might not have the same content, means of assessment, etc., as a class on the Oakland campus. That's true regardless of the presence of Outlier.*
- *As anyone involved in this process knows, I am not a supporter of either Outlier or this partnership. I consider having it removed from the Oakland campus to be a victory for our shared governance process. And if there are concerns among the Johnstown faculty, the Senate will assist them as we have done with the faculty at the Oakland campus.*
- *It is true that there is a financial incentive for departments and schools to enter into this partnership, but that was true for the departments on the Oakland campus. In meetings with the Dean and Provost, we were explicitly told that declining to participate in this arrangement with Outlier would not have adverse budgetary implications. That is, departments would not be penalized financially if they declined to participate.*
- *So, that's where we are. I continue to think Pitt's affiliation with Outlier risks our reputation while not providing us any tangible benefits. But regional campuses make their own curricular decisions all the time. For example, the political science courses offered at the regional campuses are not controlled by my department in any way—content, assessment, etc. Likewise, Greensburg is offering Winter Term courses this semester, something that has not been done before and is not being done on other campuses. So, even without Outlier, the delivery and content of courses varies across campuses. (I have thoughts on why this is problematic, but that's a different issue.) So, if the Johnstown faculty wish to be involved, that is their choice (though it is not the choice I would make). If they develop objections to this arrangement, then the Senate should definitely become involved.*

As of now, the Spring semester is schedule to begin on January 19th. As you work on your syllabi, please make note of the two "self-care" days. These are not optional; there are no classes on those days. I shouldn't have to say this, but...well, you should see my inbox. Also, please do not have exams or major projects due immediately after the self-care days. It defeats the purpose of them if students need to spend their self-care day studying for an exam or writing a paper.

I'll stop here for questions and comments.

Loughlin: Is it clear when you go to Outlier website that it is Johnstown campus or it seems that it is association the University of Pittsburgh?

Bonneau: I know there were two stories in press (one mentioned that courses were through Johnstown), but I do not know what is the designation on the website.

Aziz: Are there any discussions how to approach similar distance education opportunities in future?

Bonneau: Good question, I know that some departments have such distance education courses (Psychology Department). Education Policies Committee should look into it.

Guterman: Do you know what Bradford and Greensburg campuses stand on Outlier issue is?

Bonneau, Wisniewski and Wilson agreed that Outlier courses were rejected there.

Frieze: I have just looked at their website and it says University of Pittsburgh, without any reference to Johnstown.

Newman [in chat]: Their front page says credits from University Pittsburgh (not Johnstown)

Bonneau: I will follow on this.

Streeter: There's a restriction, that Pitt students cannot take these courses. The Outlier courses have different course numbers. How should we deal with the incoming students, who took the Outlier class and have expectations now? Should we accept them as prerequisite for all our additional courses?

Bonneau: My understanding is that with the transfer credits, the departments look at those courses and decide whether they count. So, I think it would be the same. If it were not a course that fulfils your prerequisites, you would not accept it.

Streeter: Yes, that is our current position, but we have concerns we may have some push back from students, who paid \$400 and have a course that says Introduction to Psychology from University of Pittsburgh, but we make them retake the course.

Bonneau: I will get clarification from the Office of Provost.

Loughlin: I want to reiterate Sybil's and Jeff comments. The Provost office should make it clear to Outlier what is a policy regarding the advertising these courses. It should be clear whether it is Pitt credit or Pitt Johnstown credit. If any other credit from Johnstown is accepted but not Outlier course, then it is false advertisement to call it a Pitt credit.

Newman [in chat]: How is it not false advertising to say students get Pitt credit when it isn't actually accepted by Pitt?

Stoner: I want to clarify Pat's comment. Pitt credit is Pitt credit, whether it is taken at Oakland or at Johnstown campus. It is a different question if there are courses taken at regional campuses that are not acceptable at Oakland campus.

Bonneau: As I hear people's concern the credits from regional campuses count towards graduation, but whether they fulfil prerequisites for majors and minors (different course numbers) is different. It is something we need to clarify.

Aziz: There are some restrictions on transfer credits from regionals.

Streeter: How the schools apart from Dietrich treat these courses. How will health sciences schools treat the Outlier psychiatry course? There is no clear differentiation between Pitt course and Outlier course except the number, which is not obvious enough.

Bonneau: Thank you for your comments. I will get back to you.

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

None.

6. Unfinished Business and/or New Business

None.

7. Announcements

Wilson, as the Chair of the Senate Election Committee, reminded everyone about elections upcoming in the spring. He said that we needed a new Senate President. This job is not a piece of cake, but it is important times and I really want to encourage you to consider running for the position. The official communication from the Senate office asking for nominations would be coming shortly.

Bonneau repeated assurance from last meeting that he or Frank Wilson were willing to answer any questions one may have regarding the job involved.

Tashbook on behalf of Benefits and Welfare Committee reminded everyone, that though TIAA gave up offices, its services and consultations are still available. They are offered online.

Bonneau thanked everyone for the service and engagement this semester.

8. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 3:27 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:

Almarza, Aziz, Berenbrok, Bircher, Bonneau, Bove, Bratman, Brodt, Buchanich, Bunger, Conley, Cousins, Denman, Donovan, Fort, Frieze, Goundappa, Gramm, Guterman, Hall, Jeong, Judd, Kanthak, Kiesling, Kiselyov, Klem, Kohanbash, Kucan, Labrinidis, Loughlin, Maier, Molinaro, Morel, Mostern, Mulvaney, Nelson, Newman, Oyler, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paljug, Paterson, Poljak, Potoski, Rauptis, Roberts, Salcido, Sant, Schuster, Scott, Spiess, Spring, Stoner, Streeter, Tashbook, Vento, Wilson, Wood, Yearwood, Zack

Members not attending:

Adams, Allison, Bench, Henker, Jeffrey, Jones, Kory, Kovacs, Kregg-Byers, Mulcahy, Munro, Murtazashvili, Popovich, Swigonova, Taboas, Triplette

*Excused attendance:

Anderson, Beck, Bickford, Darnell, de Vallejo, Landsittel

Others attending:

Aiyangar, Harrell, Jones, Manges, Mauk, O'Donnell, Parker, Pil, SantaCasa, Suppok, Tannery, Wisniewski, Yates, Zwick

*Notified Senate Office