

**Senate Council Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom**

Thursday, December 10th, 2020

1. Call to Order

President Chris Bonneau called the meeting to order at 3 pm. He included in his opening remarks a cheerful welcome to Geovette Washington attending the December meeting.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Past Senate Council Meeting

The distributed minutes from the November 12, 2020 were approved as written.

3. Items of New Business

No items of new business were raised.

4. Report of the Chancellor, Patrick Gallagher

Chancellor Gallagher opened his report with news on COVID: chilling statistics reported locally and nationally on the raise of infections and hopeful developments such as FDA potentially approving one of available vaccines. Then, he shared the floor with members of medical team to talk about different aspects of COVID related issues.

Dr. John Williams talked about lessons learned in the fall. Thanks to mitigation measures, random testing and our quick response to evolving data, we had better control of the situation than many of our peers and better than in surrounding counties. We consider the fall semester a success. The challenges for the spring semester are: traveling since situation is bad everywhere not only in hot spots, students coming back from winter holidays, which usually means congregating indoors and person to person spread. Transmission occurred in social settings not in educational or work setting.

Gallagher added that though we are not dealing with anything new, the intensity of outbreak nationally is a concern. We never wanted to manage the situation as an emergency, but we integrated our standards and practices into our activities. This gives us flexibility. Unlike during the normal year, the start of classes does not have to mean the start of food services or student arrival. We planned for staged arrival, but we may have to modify that, so those traveling will have to adjust travel arrangements. Our behavior was and still is the most important way of dealing with health risks. On a more hopeful note, we are not going to deal with it forever. The FDA is reviewing one of the commercial vaccines today.

Chancellor invited Paul Duprex (Center for Vaccine Research) to give us a rundown on vaccine race, what is available and where Pitt is sitting in this race. Duprex said that when he addressed the Council 300 days ago, the virus have not had a name yet. The first vaccine has some distribution challenges because

it required such low temperatures for storage. Moreover, we never had mRNA vaccine in US. It is important to have stakes in other vaccines too. We partnered with Merck using the animal models and we collaborated on our own vaccine using measles vector with Serum Institute in India, who manufactures the vaccines for 2/3 of world's children. We do not know how long the available vaccine will last and we will have to fight vaccine hesitancy among other challenges.

Next, SVC Anantha Shekhar gave a brief overview of what vaccination program might look like. Right now, there will be two vaccines released: Pfizer and Moderna vaccine. Logistics of their distribution are still in works. UPMC will get its allotment: 29 K doses of Pfizer will be for healthcare workers and the plan is to vaccinate them in the next 12 weeks. The Moderna vaccine will be directed to nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Of course, they have to be approved first. We will have to support mitigation (masking, social distancing) during the first phase.

Bonneau asked if college professors are included in the category of teachers mentioned in media.

Shekhar: My sense is they meant high school teachers.

Williams: State and local areas will make those determinations, but the teachers who are really at risk are kindergarten teachers.

Hirsh: Will the students in clinical training be considered front line healthcare workers?

Shekhar: We are discussing it with UPMC, but now students are not allowed in COVID units in hospitals.

Williams added that our hospital system is built to care for all the trainees and residents.

Gallagher concluded his report with congratulation to all 2020 graduates for finishing their degrees. He gave his shout out to awardees:

Madeline Fox – a winner of Marshall Scholar, most prestigious honor for undergraduates

Some students from Swanson School of Engineering and School of Pharmacy had their experiments launched into space. The projects, which study effects of microgravity, will be conducted aboard ISS. The projects were partly funded by the Pitt Seed Grant.

He mentioned by name other awardees: Eric Beckman (Swanson School of Engineering), Marta Lewicka (Dept. of Mathematics), Colin Allen (Dept. of History and Philosophy of Science), Mark Gladwin (Dept. of Medicine), Scott Bernotas (Facilities Management) and Aurora Sharrard (Office of Sustainability).

He closed wishing everyone safe holidays and good rest during the winter break.

5. Report of Senate President, Chris Bonneau

President Bonneau said that the past year was a very difficult year. The last meeting of the FA was

devoted to discussions circling around Outlier's arrangement with the Johnstown campus. There were some questions raised. Bonneau will meet with the Provost next week and discuss the issues raised. He will report back to FA. Another issue focused on plans for the spring. The communication sent about the timing of spring semester is helpful to plan for the classes. We are going to work on extending surveillance testing to all faculty and staff on campus.

6. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:

a. Student Government Board (SGB), Cedric Humphrey

My name Cedric Humphrey and I serve as the Executive Vice President for the undergraduate Student Government Board. Eric couldn't be here today so I will be giving the SGB report for this month.

First, I'd like to start by sharing some of the highlights of the fall semester and what SGB has been able to accomplish in light of the challenging and difficult circumstances that we are all facing.

We co-authored the Pitt Community Compact, which outlined our guiding principles for the year and took part in weekly Safety Walks in Oakland with Dean Bonner and other University leaders to check in on our neighbors and promote safe behaviors.

We created and supported a number of task forces to carry out new SGB initiatives such as: remunerations for student leaders, the establishment of an LGBTQIA+ center, the founding of a civic engagement hub, and proposed revisions to the SGB Constitution.

Several members began piloting a Civic Advising program and continued supporting Pitt's Year of Engagement. We established the Student Leader Database to better fit student leaders to shared governance opportunities and facilitated the creation of a Student Advisory Subcommittee to the Pitt Police, in partnership with the Black Senate, located within the Chancellor's Public Safety Advisory Council.

Several of our committee chairs adapted and oversaw our signature annual programs, such as Mental Health Awareness Month, the Fall Safety Fair, and Civic Engagement Week, in an all virtual environment. And we continued our work with the Pitt Votes Task Force to better engage students with local, state, and nationwide elections.

Looking forward to the Spring semester, we are preparing to hold our elections for President and Board positions. We have already passed a bill altering our election guidelines to be more flexible and accessible for all students and to prepare for conducting campaigning virtually.

We are using student feedback from the Fall semester to help us reevaluate our operations and initiatives as well as to better advocate on behalf of the undergraduate student body moving forward. While these last several months have been extremely difficult I think we can all agree it is our duty to ease the burden off of our students as well as all of our Pitt community where and when it is possible.

Thank you, if you need anything at all please do not hesitate to reach out to us via sgb@pitt.edu.

Chancellor Gallagher thanked all the student leaders for working with administration and for their role in promoting the healthy behavior among students.

b. College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG), Nourlan Abubaker

No report

c. Graduate and Professional Schools Student Government (GPSSG), Malena Hirsch

Hirsch updated the Senate Council on the most recent GPSG activities:

GPSG officially supported the SGB stand for the PA ACT 111

Fall Town Hall with the Provost was very fruitful. The main focus was COVID-19 and its effects on student mental health. We are planning to have Spring Town Hall too.

She shared two results of concern from the graduate student survey:

- 50% do not feel connected, so we plan to put our efforts to address this and help them be more engaged
- Mental health day did not have an impact on vast majority of graduates (they did not spend it on themselves as intended)

We will have graduate student appreciation week in April, so the planning work is starting soon for this and for the transition to help the future board succeed.

7. Report of the President of the Postdoctoral Association, Dave Gau (submitted in written)

Good afternoon Senate Council members, hope everyone is well. This past month, UPPDA has continued to host virtual programming promoting career and professional development for postdocs. We hosted Dr. Danielle Minter, who like myself was a Pitt undergraduate and graduate in Bioengineering before going into biotech industry. Danielle discussed how to transform a CV into an effective resume and will also be back next week to continue the discussion on transitioning into biotech industry. Along this line, UPPDA has hosted Angela Barrus as a coach for how to convert a research talk into a 5-minute talk for general audiences, something like a TED talk. We are collecting video submissions for postdocs 5-minute talk and are hoping to showcase the top presentations next month.

As we inch towards the new year, one challenge that we are working to address is the isolation that many of our postdocs, especially international postdocs, are faced with. Over 50% of the postdocs on campus are international and many have endured challenges this year unlike any other years. Uncertainty with visa renewal, isolation from friends and family miles away, and difficulty connecting and meeting new people here. Borrowing a concept from the First Year Mentors program here at Pitt, UPPDA's international postdoc chair, Camille Jaqueline, is launching the American Friendship Program in January. This program will aim to connect international postdocs with senior postdocs on campus. Our hope is that senior postdocs will be able to help aid in the new postdoc transition to campus and help build social networks within our community. We are also working with other postdoc associations in the state to explore joint programming that we can collaborate in to help postdocs connect.

I wish you all happy and safe holidays and see you next year!

8. Report of the President of the Staff Council, Andy Stephany (submitted in written)

President Bonneau, Chancellor Gallagher, members of Senate Council:

- The application portal for the Staff Professional Development Award in honor of Ron W. Frisch is open through January 31. This award provides monetary resources to staff members to pursue professional enrichment opportunities. Please recommend to staff colleagues to apply for the award.

-Staff Council Endowed Book Fund Award was made possible through the generous donations of our University community. These awards are used toward the purchase of books or supplies for qualified undergraduate students enrolled at any of the University of Pittsburgh campuses and whose parent or guardian is a dedicated staff member. The application deadline is January 25.

-The Staff Council Mentor Award has been put together to acknowledge staff members within our community whose impacts in their daily work and interactions reaches further than what might be seen on paper. We hope to shine a light on the scope and depth of what it truly means to “be a mentor”, whether it is your coworker who helps you with professional development, providing opportunities, networking, or just an ally. Please consider nominating a staff colleague for the award when the portal opens up in early 2021.

-Information, applications, and previous winners are available on our website at <https://staffcouncil.pitt.edu/awards>

-I’d like to thank Dr. Aurora Sharrard for presenting to our general meeting in November and sharing sustainability initiatives with us.

-Dr. Clyde Wilson Pickett will be addressing Staff Council next week for our December closed meeting and we’re looking forward to hearing from him.

- Our next public meeting is next Wednesday, January 18 at noon. It is open to the entire University community. Register to attend through calendar.pitt.edu and we'll share the password.

-Staff Council is always available for questions, comments, and concerns from staff and the University community. Please email staffcouncil@pitt.edu. We want to hear from you.

-I want to wish everyone a happy, quiet, peaceful winter recess and holiday break.

This concludes my report.

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

There were no other reports.

10. Unfinished Business and/or New Business

None

11. Announcements

Bonneau expressed his gratitude to all faculty, staff and students for their support this past 10 months.

12. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm.

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

<https://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/senate-council>

Respectfully submitted,

Małgorzata (Gosia) Fort
Secretary, University Senate

Members attending:

Almarza, Aziz, Bonneau, Bonner, Brodt, Cousins, Cudd, de Vallejo, Doty, Fort, Gallagher, Gau, Goundappa, Gregerson, Hirsch, Henker, C. Humphrey, K. Humphrey, Judd, Kanthak, Kiesling, King, Kleebank, Klem, Kohanbash, Kucan, Landsittel, Loughlin, Molinaro, Mulvaney, Murtazashvili, Poljak, Roberts, Rutenbar, Salcido, Sastry, Shekhar, Stephany, Vento, Vilijaste, Washington, Wilson, Wood

Members not attending:

Abubaker, Bratman, Bunger, Cilli, Hall, Jeong, Khan, Kieselyov, Kory, Mostern, Mulcahy, Munro, Nelson, Popovich, Potoski, Rauptis, Sukits, Swigonova

*Excused attendance:

Macadangdang, Scott

Others attending:

Ayers, Buchanich, De Jong, Duprex, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, Johnson, Jones, Labrinidis, Leifson, McMahon, Miga, Moran, Pelt, Pickett, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Tannis, Turner, Walker, Williams, Zwick

*Notified Senate Office