

Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes
2700 Posvar Hall
Tuesday, December 3, 2019

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
<p><u>Call to Order</u></p> <p>The meeting was called to order by President Chris Bonneau.</p>	<p>The meeting commenced at 3:00 pm</p>
<p><u>Approval of the Minutes of the Past Faculty Assembly Meeting</u></p> <p>Minutes were approved as written.</p>	<p>Approved</p>
<p><u>Items of New Business</u></p> <p>No new items</p>	
<p>President’s Report, Chris Bonneau</p> <p>Today, I am pleased to welcome Provost Ann Cudd, Chief Legal Officer Geovette Washington, Vice Chancellor for Philanthropic and Alumni Engagement Kris Davitt, and Vice Chancellor for Sponsored Programs and Research Operations Jennifer Woodward. They are here to discuss the process Pitt uses to vet and screen potential grants and donations. Since this process occurs behind the scenes, there is a lot of room for misinformation to be circulated. I am hopeful today’s conversation will allow us to understand the current process as well as think about ways that can be improved.</p> <p>The interviews with the candidates for the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences have concluded and we are now awaiting the Chancellor’s selection. A group of faculty members representing all of the Health Sciences schools participated in the final interviews and provided the Chancellor with detailed feedback on the strengths of each candidates as well as any concerns they had.</p> <p>On the policy front, I have nothing new to report. I know the committee that formulated the draft Electronic Accessibility policy met and is working on revisions before it comes back before us.</p> <p>The current Plan for Pitt expires in 2020. Meetings are already underway for the new 5-year strategic plan. Some of you will likely serve on “goal committees.” This is an important step for us to both develop measurable indicators so we can assess our progress as well as directly link budget</p>	<p>Report</p>

<p>priorities to stated goals. We will be hearing much more about this in the coming months.</p> <p>A reminder that next semester, Faculty Assembly meetings are moving to Wednesday, and Senate Council meetings are moving to Thursday.</p> <p>As the semester ends, we should remember the words of Merle Haggard: If we make it through December Everything's gonna be all right, I know It's the coldest time of winter And I shiver when I see the falling snow If we make it through December Got plans to be in a warmer town come summertime Maybe even California If we make it through December, we'll be fine</p>	
<p><u>Reports by and Announcements of the Special and Standing Committees of the Senate</u></p>	<p>No Reports</p>
<p><u>Unfinished Business and/or New Business</u></p> <p>Contract and Gift Vetting <i>Ann Cudd</i>, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, <i>Kris Davitt</i>, Senior Vice Chancellor for Philanthropic and Alumni Engagement, <i>Geovette Washington</i>, Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Legal Officer <i>Jennifer Woodward</i>, Vice Chancellor for Sponsored Programs and Research Operations</p> <p>Provost <i>Ann Cudd</i> introduced briefly all presenters noting their different roles in accepting funding from the external source. Then she focused on her own role and responsibilities to safeguard integrity and reputation of the institution as well as academic freedom of faculty and students. As a matter of policy the University does not accept any grants, gifts, sponsored research agreements or contracts that negatively impact or restrict faculty's independence in their research and teaching. In pursuing gifts the initiating party (faculty or deans) are the first line of vetting. The provost role is to interpret the institution's mission and set priorities, especially in case where a gift stipulates investment of exceptional institutional resources. The funders cannot insert themselves into the process of hiring faculty or admitting students to the program. They cannot determine the outcome of the research nor they can decide whether the research will be published or</p>	<p>Discussion</p>

not. Not many cases rise to the scrutiny of the provost. In rare cases that there is a political or ethical controversy, Provost Cudd takes very seriously her role of balancing the academic freedom and reputation of the university. *Davitt* talked about her role as VC for Philanthropic and Alumni Engagement in covering all fundraising for Pitt and UPMC. Her group supports the mission of the faculty, deans or institution when they are pursuing charitable gifts from individuals, corporations or foundations. They serve as a broker of relationship with the foundation, help with nuances like payments schedule and budget presentation and work very closely with faculty, deans and the provost as vetting is concerned. In the case of Koch Foundation, the gift agreement is published on the Koch Foundation website so there is full transparency.

Woodward talked about Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Operations' involvement: working on agreement, defining the project, deliverables and timeframe, the intellectual property, ownership and fate of the data. Negotiating the terms of agreement includes making sure that the legal agreement protects academic freedom and mission of the University.

Weinberg asked whether restrictions such as requirement to publish in open access journals would raise concern.

Woodward: No, because it does not prevent us from publishing the results.

Chirimuuta read the following statement on behalf of concerned students:

Members of the Faculty Senate,

Thank you in advance for providing an opportunity for students to voice their opinions on the importance of contract vetting at the university. As many in the audience may already know, we represent the interests of students, alumni, and community members concerned with a recently created center within the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, funded entirely by the Charles Koch Foundation. At this point, we assume the majority of this audience has at least some familiarity with the reputation of this funder, its political influence, and its ideological agenda to influence academia. If not, we advise you to do some independent research before you make any kind of opinion or conclusion on the issue, as there is no shortage of information available.

However, you are all here today, among other reasons, to address an even larger issue to which these concerns apply - contract vetting. We engage you to open your minds for a moment to the importance of contract vetting through the lens of our experience with the university's contract vetting policy as-is. In doing so, we hope to illustrate three main points. First, stakeholders concerned with the impact of certain donations can be easily shut out if higher administration do not choose to proactively intervene. Second, the university seems to have little understanding or acknowledgement of corporate academic lobbying. And third, higher administration's reliance on current policies to quiet concerns over funder influence on academic integrity are ill-founded at best.

On the value of stakeholder engagement in contract vetting, this group has seen almost no university-led commitment. The creation of any center at GSPIA is important on many levels. It impacts the reputation of the department, the university, and their students. An academic center is also a statement of a university's values and commitment to the public good. Despite this importance, students and alumni had almost no mode of engagement in its creation. During months of closed door planning, students were left completely in the dark. Moreover, concerns raised to the Provost and the Dean were by and large dismissed. Only after students began to force a dialogue with what limited information they had did any limited interchange happen, and that was quickly dismissed as alarmist.

On the note of corporate academic lobbying, the university appears to be completely asleep at the wheel. While philanthropic donations from questionable donors has historically been a norm, the use of that financial power to influence ideology at universities is a recent phenomenon. Fortunately, universities are catching on. This very week, policy schools at the University of Chicago, Columbia, and Harvard are having a conference on this very topic. Universities are acknowledging the issue, talking about it, and taking it very seriously. However, when we raised these concerns, they were met with an alarming level of disinterest and inattention.

Finally, on the note of current university policies, we challenge this group to consider these concerns for a moment and ask what if anything the university can do better. We have spent a great deal of time trying to understand what constraints the university has over Koch's influence at our university. And thus far, we have been astounded at the lack thereof. Look for the exact language in our policies on donor influence - you won't find it. Look what the university agreed to in the proposal to the Charles Koch Foundation (which likely contains the bulk of the contractual responsibilities of the new center, not the grant agreement) - you won't find it. Look for guidelines to make sure the center operates as an arm of the university rather than the Koch network, you won't find those either. Academic freedom and academic integrity can and must work together. But allowing corporate influence to stomp over our contract vetting process under the guise of protecting individual careerist ambitions protects neither.

But there is a positive note in all this. This is not one of those nebulous problems without a solution. GSPIA's new center is remarkably similar to new centers around the country, and stakeholders are raising the same concerns. And fortunately - we can learn from their mistakes. We've provided an example of a report put together at Wake Forest University assessing exactly the same issues we're discussing today. They put forth thoughtful, fair, and feasible proposed solutions. We encourage you to read them over, consider what we've said today, and help the university be a leader in this growingly important chapter in protecting academia.

The example report from [Wake Forest University](#) mentioned above

This prompted a vivid discussion. Provost *Cudd* disagreed with being called un-attentive to the issues raised by the students, because she met with them on several occasions, and made herself available during office hours, she read and grilled the program director about the issues with CKF and spent a fair amount of time considering them.

Ash questioned why the proposal has not been published.

Bonneau added that research proposals are confidential.

Washington explained that a proposal is not a binding document, but the grant agreement is a legal document.

Ash asked for more information on difference between funding the Center versus funding individual research. Do we have rules for vetting the Center's funding?

Davitt pointed out that it is incorrect statement that the new Center is founded entirely by CKF. The Koch Foundation is a sole donor at the moment but we can seek other sources to finance the Center.

Cudd admitted that we do not have a clear definition of center or institutes, but we do have a process for vetting proposals. Out of many centers only 5 are university wide. The GSPIA center is within the school and since only school resources are involved, the vetting is up to the dean, it did not raise to the University level scrutiny "We do not want one faculty group looking over the shoulder of the other."

Washington stressed that there is no separate agreement on creating the center, and if there was a need for one it would be an agreement with the School not the Koch Foundation.

On *Ash's* insistence to do more on safeguarding funder's influence, *Cudd* took his comments as a personal attack on her.

Bonneau pointed out that we need to differentiate the agreement from the research that would be done at the Center under the direction of the PI. We cannot tell what the faculty can or cannot research in a center for which they secured the funding that has met University legal criteria.

Davitt added that we do not have all needed policies, the new policy on gift acceptance is being worked on. The example of Epstein gift shows that we need a process under which the gift could be returned or suspended, a process to do due diligence on donors.

Salcido asked whether we have any process of dealing with new influence from donor who gave in the past.

Munro commented on the political influence that is more objectionable than research influence.

Bickford wanted more details on vetting process and making judgement calls.

Weinberg was curious what funders can insist on if not hiring or influencing curriculum. *Cudd*, *Davitt* and *Bonneau* were in agreement that a funder cannot insist on anything but they could withdraw the money.

<p><i>Bircher</i> asked if this is a one-time gift or continued support. <i>Davitt</i> said it is a gift paid over the course of several years.</p> <p><i>Bickford</i> spoke for the need of developing policies which could guide the vetting process better, remove the parts done ad hoc out of it, maybe add peer review. He questioned whether academic freedom should not outweigh the concerns of reputation.</p> <p><i>Cudd</i> stated that academic integrity is an absolute requirement and reputation is a balancing part.</p> <p><i>Stoner</i> asked whether the value judgement of a project would be a part of equation in evaluating the gift in general if everyone believed that the gift distorts or corrupts. The projects, even if hugely unpopular, as long as they do not violate University procedures or mission would be considered.</p> <p><i>Munro</i> wanted to know if the CKF's mission was looked upon, because to him it has some troubling statements.</p> <p><i>Bonneau</i> closed the QA with thanks for lively discussion.</p>	
<p><u>Announcements</u></p> <p><i>Bonneau</i> reminded about the meeting day change for the next semester and announced that election information would be forthcoming soon.</p> <p><i>Stoner</i> announced the Annual Open House of the Nationality Rooms on December 8, 12-4 pm.</p>	No questions
<p><u>Adjournment</u></p>	Moved and accepted at 4:03 pm

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

<http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/faculty-assembly>

Respectfully Submitted,

Małgorzata (Gosia) Fort

Members attending:

Almarza, Aziz, Beck, Becker, Berenbrok, Bickford, Bircher, Bonneau, Bove, Brodt, Bungler, Chirimuuta, Conley, Cousins, Dahm, Fort, Frieze, Goundappa, Gramm, Haley, Hall, Henker, Jeong, Judd, Klem, Labrinidis, Landsittel, Molinaro, Munro, Murphy, Popovich, Potoski, Rauktis, Roberts, Salcido, Stoner, Triplette, Vento, Weinberg, Wilson

Members not attending:

Adams, Bachman, Bratman, Buchanich, Danford, Darnell, Infanti, Irrgang, Jeffery, Jones, Kanthak, Kaufman, Kaynar, Kiesling, Kiselyov, Kohanbash, Kregg-Byers, Long, Martin, McGreevy, Miller, Morel, Murtazashvili, Nelson, Poljak, Sant, Smolinski, Spring, Sukits, Swigonova, Taboas, Wood, Yates

*Excused attendance:

Anderson, Denman, DeVallejo, Kovacs, Kucan, Loughlin, Mostern, Mulvaney, Scott

Others attending:

Ash, Bedford-Jack, Cudd, Davitt, Hoenig, Jones, Lalo, Manges, Paterson, Pil, Pope, Ringler, M. Rosenblum, S. Rosenblum, Tannery, Washington, Wildberg, Woodward

*Notified Senate Office