FACULTY ASSEMBLY MEEING
Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 3 p.m.
VIA ZOOM

1. **Call to Order**

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

2. **Approval of Faculty Assembly Minutes of January 10, 2024**

On a motion duly made (Stoner) and seconded (Songer) the minutes of the January 10, 2024 Faculty Assembly Meeting were approved as written.

3. **Introduction of Items of New Business**

None

4. **Report of the President, Robin Kear**

Hello all and welcome back, I hope you are all doing well and enjoying the atypical sunshine.

Senate Plenary

- Thursday March 7th, 2024, in the William Pitt Union Assembly room from 12 noon to 2 pm. Doors open at 12 noon and the program will start at 12:15.
- The topic will be, Bringing Disciplines Together to Solve Big Problems, focused on how this can and does happen here at Pitt and in the Pittsburgh education community.
- Interdisciplinary research and teaching are key to working on society's most thorny issues and to educating our students for a changing and complex future. When we can speak and work across disciplines to find shared goals and understanding, we are working towards the fundamental mission of higher education, to make a positive impact on our students and our communities. Join us for the Senate Plenary to learn how Pitt does interdisciplinary work well, discuss how Pitt can improve, examine why we are poised to make greater strides, and understand how interdisciplinary work benefits our entire academic ecosystem and communities.
- Speakers:
  - Melissa Bilec, Engineering and co-director of the Mascaro Center for Innovation
  - Shelome Gooden, Linguistics and Assistant VC for Research in the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Related Fields
  - Nicola Foote, Dean of Honors College and professor in GSPIA
  - Lisa Parker, public health, Director of the Center for Bioethics & Health Law, and leader of RESI (Research, Ethics, and Society Initiative)
  - Dave Sanchez, Engineering and Associate Director for the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation
  - Abdesalam Soudi, Linguistics and leader of the Humanities @ Work project, as well as the Creator of Humanities in Health (HinH)
- Immediately adjoining the Plenary, from 2-3 pm in the same space, we are partnering with the Year of Discourse and Dialogue Research Committee to hold a tabling workshop titled: 'How to Interdisciplinary'. Join us for an interactive workshop to discuss how we can co-create programs

and infrastructure to support communication across the disciplines at Pitt. The workshop is meant for researchers currently engaged in interdisciplinary work and for those who seek interdisciplinary teams, but don't yet know where to look. The workshop is meant as a kickoff event for a future working group focused on cultivating opportunities to cross disciplinary silos and to communicate across the disciplines. Faculty, staff, and students are welcome to attend. Thanks to Kris Kanthak for leading this effort.

Provost's memo on DEI and CES in Tenure & Promotion
- As you know, last month we were excited to announce the memo from the Provost's office detailing guidance related to Community Engaged Scholarship and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in promotion & tenure processes.
- I hope that you were able to share the information with your respective areas and your school's shared governance leadership.
- Now begins the work of supporting this guidance in its implementation, from the administration and from us. I will be approaching the Faculty Affairs Committee with some ideas on how the Senate can assist.

Testing Accommodations Issues
- At last month's Faculty Assembly, I described pressures on the DRS (Disability and Resource Services) Testing Center. They have frequently been at capacity, especially during peak testing times and are looking for ways to mitigate that pressure. Suggestions and options emailed to high-use classes were not mandatory and were meant to help find any flexibility.
- Since then, I have talked with Interim Provost McCarthy to discuss the issue and the next steps. There are various short and long term solutions being discussed, including more resources for the Testing Center in the short term.
- Discussion of this issue will continue in the Senate Educational Policies Committee at their next meeting on February 23rd at 9 am.

Provost Search Committee
- The provost search is ongoing and in a confidential phase, coming closer to its conclusion.

University Policy Open for Comment
- There are 2 Policies open for comment until the end of today, one of which we are reviewing today, FERPA.
- **Assistance Animals, Therapy Animals, and Pets** - Available for comments from January 9, 2024 to February 7, 2024.
  - [Policy](#)
  - This policy will move through EIADAC before coming here.
- **FERPA: Access to and Disclosure of Education Records** - Available for comment from January 9, 2024 to February 7, 2024
  - [Policy](#)
  - [Procedure](#)
  - This policy has moved through Educational Policies and we will hear more shortly.

Decommissioning Policy
- In late December, I shared Senate feedback on a proposal to decommission [Policy ER 04, Domestic Partner Benefits](#), which I detailed last week.
- In case you missed it, in consideration of all feedback received, Pitt administration has decided not to decommission this Policy, but to revise it with current practice.

Thank you all for your service and dedication to shared governance.

Any questions or comments on my report?

Songer: I wanted to add additional information concerning the DRS. The testing center sent a new memo to a large number of faculty which outlined how they would like to see the testing center used and it puts a lot more weight on the teaching faculty. I just wanted you to be aware of that memo.
Kear: I have not seen the memo but please send it on to me. I understand that this targeted a wider group of faculty that are teaching smaller classes.
Epitropoulos: I want to add to that. I did get that memo. In my larger classes I have seen a n explosion of students requiring accommodations. Even with TAs it is getting to do that and the pressures are increasing.
Kear: Please let know how these affect your area, and this will help me.

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

   FERPA: Access to and Disclosure of Education Records
       Professors Bonnie Falcione & John Stoner, SEPC Co-Chairs

Stoner: We may be familiar with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) which is the most important government regulation concerning how universities handle student information. Senate educations committee was the only committee that looked at this policy. This has not been updated for for about 15 years. The times have changed in view of the many phishing attempts that we are aware of and personal information is at an all time premium. The committee that revised this policy was co-convened by University Registrar Jonathan Helm and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for compliance investigation, Laurel Gift. The committee included a wide range of stakeholders from across the university, including athletics, legal counsel and members of the EPC committee. The committee started meeting in Feb 2023. We did comprehensive benchmarking on other peer universities who have also recently updated their policies. We worked on the draft policy and procedure documents which you have received. Issues that we covered included what items may be excluded from the directory, for example date of birth. We also considered the procedure and training that people in the university would need to comply with FERPA. We developed a two-tiered training requirement. Everyone who may come in contact with student information should get basic training. More intensive training would be needed for those who regularly work with this information.

SEPC voted to approve the draft policy and procedure in their January meeting.

Questions?
Wood: How widely available is the directory information going to be? Will it be available to other students?

Helm: They would not be widely available on an ongoing basis. By placing then on this list we could make them available, but they can be requested by individuals. There was specific language added concerning the date of birth.

Wood: I was concerned about the address and wondered if this would put the student at risk to be stalked. Is it necessary to make it available?

Helm: There are practical reasons to have the information on the list so that it is available if needed. Students have the right, through FERPA, to restrict the dissemination of that information and some do take advantage of this.

Wood: I saw that there will be announcement that informs students of that right, but that is only happening once a year.

Helm: That announcement is what we are required to do, but the information is available. We will look into making this more available.

Gift: Directory information is a category of information that FERPA has defined in that it does not require consent before sharing. The information is not public facing information, but the information can be requested from the office and it has to be approved that is needed for a legitimate educational purpose. We are working to improve communication with students and are planning to increase this to happening every semester.

Stoner: I had the same misconception when I first worked on the committee and did not realize that it was not a public facing directory. We had a long conversation about whether we should include "hometown" in the list as this did not seem necessary.

Helm: I would add two things: One is that we considered sensitivities related to age discrimination when looking at date of birth. The other is that we are not subject to State Freedom of Information requests which gives the University the discretion as to whether to release any information.

Wood: I also wanted to comment on the definition of School Official, which includes volunteer. Is that wise?

Helm: FERPA does allow the use of volunteers in this definition. If we did not include it we would be required to get written permission from student each time the information is requested, which is very cumbersome. We can include these responsibilities in any contracts that we make with outside contractors and volunteers.

Wood also queried the use of the terms "forcible" versus "non forcible" sexual harassment or harm and asked why this was included. Gift and Helm responded that this is the statutory language required by FERPA and that it represents a floor that is used to determine whether requests for information can be granted.

Songer: Is the training for FERPA changing?

Gift: We will be working to implement the training. We are looking to create consistency in training around campus. We will introduce new modules and will track the training.

Vote: Yes 39; No 1; Abstain 4.
The policy and procedure were approved.

6. **Unfinished Business and/or New Business**

Plan for Pitt Update
Joan Gabel, Chancellor

We are working toward creating action items to implement the values that we have articulated thus far in the strategic planning process. When a strategic plan is functional and helpful it does three things: a) it gives us an ability to synthesize all of the work that we do in order to answer the simple question of what is your plan as an institution; b) it gives us some inspiration, we are proud of it and: c) it gives some architecture to measure our success and find solutions.

Now we have gone from the high level values that were created earlier and we are articulating what we would measure and what the values mean. The Board wants a dashboard or a progress card to assess the progress. We would like for this to help us work better as a community.
We took the list of five pillars that were identified from these value and have developed actaions that we will take.

What do we mean by cultivating student success?
- Develop upstream enrollment plan
- Improve accessibility and affordability
- Improve retention, not only for first-to-second year retention but also we want to think of our graduate and professional students
- Enhance support services, to ensure student wellbeing. Housing came up a lot in our conversations, both on and off campus. We are also wondering if we are providing the right kind of academic support for our students
- Ensure excellence in preparation and academic programming, to ensure that students are prepared for their first job and entire career.
- Increased distinguished student awards, including Fulbright, Gilman, Goldwater and Truman scholarships, and maybe a Rhodes Scholar
- Improve graduation rates
- Strengthen post-graduate success

Having these lists helps us then start to landscape to see what is happening on campus in these areas. We find that there are many great things already happening in these areas. It helps to see what we are doing, what we need to do and how best to achieve these goals. A lot of this is acknowledging what we are already doing.

What do we do to propel scholarship, creativity and innovation?
- Increase research
- Elevate multi-interdisciplinary discovery and collaboration
- Promote innovation and tech transfer/commercialization
- Expand corporate engagement
- Amplify the arts, humanities, social sciences and professions
- Increase distinguished faculty awards.

What does it mean to be welcoming and engaged?
- Represent the communities we serve and expand opportunities.
- Cultivate belonging and a welcoming culture, which can also mean supplier diversity and working with minority owned businesses with intentionality.
- Be an employer of choice and think about the wellbeing of the many people who work here, so that they can progress the way they want.
- Increase engagement across the communities we serve

- Expand global engagement

What does it mean to hold ourselves accountable and promote trust?
- Enhance fiscal transparency and operations. We put the master plan of the university in here.
- Optimize physical and digital infrastructure
- Elevate enterprise risk management
- Ensure safety
- Amplify our story, including rankings, philanthropy and athletics
- Promote the free exchange of ideas

What do we mean that "It's Possible at Pitt?"
These are things that we think we can do uniquely well, play to our strengths, play to our location, play to what we hope to be able to accomplish including as examples:
- Lead the Life Sciences Century (BioForge)
- Champion sustainability and deepen understanding of health impacts
- Transform Assistive Technologies
- TBD?

I went through this quickly and we wanted to talk to our community and stakeholders about what we would be measuring, so that we can get feedback.

Are they any questions or feedback?

Kear: thank you for this update. This is very useful.
Maier: One the exciting things that has happened is the emergence of machine learning and artificial intelligence and thinking carefully about how we integrate that in the people we are forming and in our community is going to be important. It's not just about skills but how so help them to be humans. How do we help in creating humans in our educational system? I will be contacting you on this topic.]
Gabel: thank you this is an important topic that we will be looking at.

Kear: how can we help you achieve these things?
Gabel: Two things come to mind. Letting us know what is happening in your areas that address some of these questions. The second thing is that we will be sending out an email containing a survey and you, as you spread work in your areas, you could become a conduit for broader feedback.

7. **Announcements**

Tashbook: This is an announcement about an upcoming webinar – details are below.
Managing Trauma from World Events
Zoom Webinar - Wednesday February 14 from Noon- 1:00 p.m.
From wars to climate change, the news can be overwhelming. In this free webinar, Dr. Diana Hortsch, who has worked for two decades in reproductive and human rights advocacy and is a licensed therapist as well as a lawyer, will discuss the different types of trauma we may be experiencing from world events and how to manage trauma's effects on our mental and physical health. This program is being presented by Mental Wellness Task Force of the University Senate Benefits and Welfare Committee. Register for this free webinar here.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

Penelope (Penny) Morel
Secretary, University Senate

<u>Members attending</u>: Adams, Balaban, Bonneau, Burton, Caldwell, Cutsumbis, Damiani, DiCesaro, Epitropoulos, Flick, Fort, Glynn, Good, Guterman, Heffernan, Holding, Jenkins, Jones, Kanthak, Kear, Keown, Khader, Kovacs, Lemery, Maier, Mattern, Mauk, McCormick, Melnick, Molinaro, Morel, Morris, Nguyen, Paljug, Parker, Pitetti, Reed, Schuster, Scott, Shephard, Songer, Stoner, Swigonova, Tashbook, Wiggins, Wood, Zack

<u>Members not attending</u>: Almarza, Archibald, Bell, Boulder, Bove, Dallal, Dietz, Falcione, Ferdinand, Glass, Hall, Jacobs, Kohanbash, Lewin, Mahboobin, Massanelli, Murtazashvili, Potoski, Salcido, Schmidt, Shafiq, Skledar, Taboas, Tudorascu, Wert, Williams, Yates

*<u>Excused attendance</u>: Bircher, Cousins, Tudorascu

<u>Others attending</u>: Ayars, Conner, DeVallejo, France, Gabel, Gift, Godley, Halderman, Helm, Houser, Jones S., Kelley, McClain, SantaCasa, Tananis, Tuttle, Wells

*Notified Senate Office