

**Senate Council Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom**

Thursday, January 21st, 2021

1. Call to Order

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

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

The distributed minutes from the December 10, 2020 were approved as written.

3. Items of New Business

No items of new business were raised.

4. Report of the Chancellor, Patrick Gallagher

As pattern goes **Chancellor Gallagher's** report focused on COVID issues with a mix of familiar and new. Last time he talked, we saw spikes in cases after Halloween and social spread, and similar patterns were expected after Thanksgiving, Christmas and winter break considering social nature of holidays and travel. Our natural response should be to mitigate better, including social distancing, masking and more restrictions. While the numbers of cases in the county are high, they stabilized locally, and we see some relief in hospitals. Since he expected many questions about repopulation of the campus and new guidelines for non-symptomatic people, he turned the floor to experts: Drs. John Williams and Melissa McGivney.

Dr. Williams gave the update on the plans for the spring semester, which would include surveillance and symptomatic testing like in the past. Students will come back in four staggered cohorts. The testing will followed. According to Williams, what we are doing differently now is that our focus is on prevention of importing the virus to campus. Students living in university housing have to have negative COVID testing before they are admitted back to campus. We do not have much control of students living off campus. Through the semester, we will continue to rely on four types of testing: symptomatic, random surveillance, close contact testing and focus testing (when clustered infections happen). We all suffer from the pandemic fatigue. All students understand that they must continue to obey social distancing and wear masks for a little bit longer.

Gallagher: Let's pause for questions. One I will pose, because I want to hear John's reaction on the virus mutations. With the new information about the new variants of virus, how this will affect what we do in mitigation?

Williams: For B117 variant only one study suggests that it is more contagious, but there is no evidence

so far that would force us to change what we do in mitigation.

Bratman asked for clarification of the criteria based on which one qualifies to get a free test, which implies that one can be tested before arriving to campus.

Williams: The state guidelines requires negative test before coming back to state or quarantine. Our guideline is slightly different. The negative PCR test out of town does not spare you from the quarantine after travel and getting the test here.

Almarza [from chat]: It is true that students can go to in-person class during the quarantine period.

Washington and Cudd [from chat]: Yes, students are permitted to attend in-person classes during the shelter-in-place period.

Gallagher commented on the issue of classes in person vs remote by saying that in our Flex@Pitt model it is both all the time. Student can choose to participate remotely, but our model allows in-person classes.

Then, Chancellor Gallagher invited Melissa **Mc Givney** from the School of Pharmacy to talk about the vaccine supply. The supply of vaccines is in the hands of the State and they are allocated on a weekly basis. University of Pittsburgh will be a provider of vaccines, but we have not received the vaccines yet. Together with the Allegheny County Department of Health, we have plans for the first event in Peterson Center to vaccinate students working in clinical setting. To be clear, these vaccines are coming from ACDH, so we will be following state guidelines. The students will be identified and contacted beforehand, and only those students will receive the vaccine.

Scott [from chat]: Do we know where we are in the queue for vaccine?

Mc Givney: We are in contact with state every day. Once we know, we will share.

Williams: Distribution is controlled by the state of Pennsylvania. The health workers are priority. We do not know when the state will relegate vaccines to non-healthcare workers. It is complicated. The state recently put in 1A category everyone above 65 and those with highest risk conditions. In addition, the distribution is through different entities (separate for UPMC and UP). Pitt clinical students are considered UPMC affiliates, so they will get vaccines from the 10 % allocated to UPMC affiliates. It is a bit messy, it could be better, but I want to remind you that nobody have done anything like this yet. In normal circumstances, we vaccinate 4 million kids born in a year and about 70 million American with a flu shot a year, but this is unprecedented situation and effort. We need to protect the most vulnerable. It is a huge lift and we need to be patient.

De Vallejo: Wouldn't it be good to put on the web what Pitts's plans for vaccination are?

Williams: We have a special golden box just for vaccines planning efforts on the coronavirus.pitt.edu page. Of course, we could do better, but communication is difficult because the information changes so quickly. However, I get your point; we will try to update it more frequently.

Gallagher: We take criticism on communication all the time, but vaccination program is especially tricky and there is a lot confusion. It is happening on all levels (state, national and global). PA has special allotment for Philadelphia separate from the rest of the state. Situation changes constantly. There is not much we can do to create information, which does not exist, but we will share what we know as best as we can. In addition, the character of this will shift over the course of this year. Now, we have to deal with high demand and not enough supply. The gap is huge. However, at some point in the future, we will have more vaccines and we will have to focus on convincing people to take it.

Then, the Chancellor addressed the issue of childcare raised at the last Faculty Assembly. It is not only our local problem; there is an ongoing effort to open schools to alleviate the issue. He invited Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and Interim Senior Vice Chancellor for Business and Operations Dave DeJong to talk about the University's work related to this issue.

DeJong gave an update on currently available resources, which offer child caring services. Among them Care.com, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs and temporary Proctoring Center at CMU, which is open to Pitt families. They offer matching services, they have openings and they are available to Pitt community. According to DeJong, there is more supply than demand. He encouraged the interested parties to check the HR website for more information. The information he presented will be distributed specifically to faculty, though it is available on HR website to all Pitt employees.

Gallagher concluded his report by saying few words about Dick Thornburgh, the remarkable Pitt alumnus who recently passed away.

5. Report of Senate President, Chris Bonneau

President Bonneau said that most of the issues he wanted to talk about were covered by previous report, namely vaccines, COVID and childcare. He added that the Senate elections for Faculty Assembly and the Senate Officers positions are coming up (April 1-16). They will be followed by elections for the Senate Committees (April 23-May 5).

De Vallejo commented on childcare information and suggested communication it directly to faculty. He also brought again the existing concern of using OMET surveys in faculty evaluations.

Provost Cudd responded that she, like her predecessor, maintains the view that teaching should not be evaluated based on OMET scores alone. OMETs are useful to understand student's satisfaction. I asked deans to prepare plans for evaluating teaching based on more than just OMETs. In addition, I asked them to balance the understanding for competent teaching with the new pedagogical hardships. It is an unusual year; let us be gentle to one another.

6. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:

- a. **Student Government Board (SGB), Tyler Viljaste**(submitted in written)

Hi everyone, and happy New Year! My name is Tyler Viljaste, and I am the vice president and chief of cabinet of the Student Government Board, filling in for Eric Macadangang. It is great to be back for the spring. I with the rest of the Student Government Board are looking forward to a safe and productive semester.

What we have going on for the semester:

Community Check-In Event: Occurred this past Tuesday

- *Guests Dean Bonner and CMRO rep Dr. Joe Suyama*
- *Discussed questions regarding vaccination distribution, grading policy for the spring semester, and university COVID response plans for the spring. We were grateful to have them join us and were thankful for their responses to important student questions.*

SGB Election (<http://sgb.pitt.edu/joinus/2021-elections-info/>)

- *Tuesday, January 19th: Online Forms Available*
- *Tuesday, February 9th: CAMPAIGNING BEGINS*
- *Tuesday, March 2nd: ELECTION DAY! Polls open 8:00AM-8:00PM*

Lots of interest this year, and we're looking forward to the campaign season!

Gathering student employee feedback with Pitt HR

- *Working with Dave DeJong on a student feedback survey and feedback sessions with regard to student employment satisfaction. We hope to use this information to help guide a series of recommendations moving forward.*

Mental Health Liaison program for student organizations

- *Our wellness committee is working to establish a program for positions within student organizations for mental health liaisons to ensure that each student organization has formal structures in place to ensure that organizations have easy access to mental health resources for their members.*
- *looking forward to continue working on this initiative into the spring*

Tenants Rights programming with CGR

- *Student Tenant Workshops are held in the fall and the spring in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Student Government Board and the Office of Off-Campus Living. A panel of campus, city, and community experts answer student questions about their rights and responsibilities as a tenant living in the community.*
- *Fall 2020 video was published on the office of CGR website, and we're looking forward to continuing to address student housing concerns as they arise throughout the spring*

PittCivics Student Fellows

- *excited to announce that, in partnership with pittserves, taken on 4 student fellows to work on the implementation of the civic engagement hub, as well as building capacity for our civic advising program and looking into ways to expand our reach to freshman students*

LGBTQIA+ resources and center task force

- *hard at work on aggregating a proposal for a LGBTQIA+ center, along with series of recommendations to better the experience of LGBTQIA+ students, faculty, and staff, to be released later this Spring*

Student Subcommittee on Public Safety

- *Worked in the fall to establish as an official subcommittee of the long-standing [Chancellor's Public Safety Advisory Council](#)*
- *The panel — made up of SGB and Black Senate leaders — [will discuss](#) accountability and transparency-related items with the Pitt police.*
- *Continuing to provide allocations to student organizations and free legal services and access to the New York Times for all undergraduate students*

I just wanted to remind everyone that SGB is here to continue to advocate on undergraduate students' behalf. Join the conversation at our Public Meeting, visiting a member's office hours, emailing us, or fill out an anonymous fix it Pitt form online.

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

No report

**c. Graduate and Professional Schools Student Government (GPSSG), Malena Hirsch
(submitted in written)**

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

- **Mental Health**
 - *As you may remember from my December report, the Graduate Response Survey highlighted an issue with the fall mental health days, where many graduate and professional programs chose different days to observe or chose not to observe the mental health days at all, which led to G&P students having to teach on what was supposed-to-be their mental health day or be prohibited from having one all-together.*
 - *In direct response to these challenges, GPSSG's Vice President of Committees, Morgan Pierce, authored a Resolution titled Resolution-1: Self-Care for All. The resolution details the additional stress that the current state of our domestic politics as well as the Covid-19 global pandemic are placing on students and encourages that the spring self-care days be designated as formal academic Holidays on the University calendar. This would ensure that all students could take these days off and focus on self-care.*
 - *GPSSG discussed this resolution with the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, Dr. Amanda Godley, who was fully supportive of this charge. We will be presenting*

this resolution to our assembly board at our first spring assembly board meeting on January 27.

- *Comment on GPSG statement re: Capitol insurrection*
 - *GPSG co-authored a statement reflecting on and responding to recent events that have taken place in our country, specifically the January 6th Capitol insurrection. The statement was sent out to all graduate and professional students the morning of inauguration day, January 20. It included resources of support that students could utilize.*
- *Student engagement*
 - *As with the fall term, we're trying to think of creative ideas to engage students and are trying to think of what events will be the most value-add because we didn't get great engagement with our virtual events in the fall. Some things we're currently looking into include developing a mini professional development seminar, programming for Graduate Appreciation Week [first full week of April], and collaborative programming for Black History Month [February].*
 - *We've been talking with Carnegie Museums to see if we could do some kind of in-person event for students located in the surrounding community, while obviously upholding public health & safety guidelines and distancing. Continuing our charge to incorporate diversity equity and inclusion into our student engagement efforts, we're collaborating with the Carnegie Museums team for events that could highlight minoritized artist communities or different social efforts.*
 - *Finally, for engagement, we're beginning to brainstorm ways to celebrate our graduating students either through partnering with the Provost Office or doing something solely from GPSG. While we aren't sure yet what the guidance will be for graduation regarding if there will be in-person or virtual options, we want to make sure our graduating students feel valued and appreciated. Many students, who will be graduating, for example Master's degree students, will have completed a large portion or even majority of their program entirely virtually. This can lend to the feeling that the effort and the accomplishment are minimized, so we want to do something to make these students feel special and that acknowledges their hard work and the incredible accomplishment of graduating.*
- *GPSG Election*
 - *GPSG opened our call for Executive Board candidates. Timeline:*
 - *Call for Candidates - January 13th - February 19th*
 - *Candidate Campaigning - February 22nd - 28th*
 - *Elections - March 1st - 7th*
 - *Transition - March 24th - 27th*

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

Good afternoon Senate Council members, this past week we concluded our Postdoc Spotlight

competition. The goal of this competition was to encourage postdocs to develop skills to talk, share, and present their research findings and results to a much broader audience. We borrowed a concept from the University of Queensland three-minute thesis competition, which has been adopted by hundreds of universities across the world (including Pitt). We would like to congratulate Ram Srinath as the winner of the competition (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uf89yfxiTFk>) and also thank you to our judges Kornelia Tancheva, Hillman University Librarian and Director of University Library Systems, Ryan Gent, Membership Director at Pittsburgh Technology Council, Annia Aleman, Innovated Director at Ascender business incubator, and Kristen Wishon, Director of Communication at Greater Pittsburgh Art Council.

From February 5 – 8, UPPDA will be hosting a virtual viewing of *Picture a Scientist*, a documentary that chronicles the journey of biologist Nancy Hopkins, chemist Rachelle Burks, and geologist Jane Willenbring through their experiences in sciences ranging from harassment to years of subtle slights. The documentary provides new perspectives on how to make science itself more diverse, equitable and open to all. The viewing is [available](#) to all members of the University for those 72 hours and we will also be hosting a [discussion](#) on the film on Feb 10.

In February as well, we will be kick starting our American Friendship Program. The aim of this program is to pair international postdocs with US citizen postdocs to create a sense of belonging in our local community. We will assist in facilitating monthly activities for the matched pair for the academic year.

That concludes my report for the month!

8. Report of the President of the Staff Council, Andy Stephany

SC general meeting has been cancelled this month. Since it coincided with the Presidential Inauguration, it was postponed until next month (February 17).

I am thankful for the new opportunities presented to the parents, to have childcare opportunities through CMU. Staff are eager to get children out of their home office.

I have also a brief update on three awards, for which we are accepting applications: SC Endowed Book Fund Award, Staff Professional Development Award, and Staff Council Mentor Award.

This concludes my report.

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

There were no other reports.

Unfinished Business and/or New Business

None

10. Announcements

Salcido expressed his gratitude to Pitt IT personnel for helping solving networking problems in his department. During the pandemic, it is so clear how much we depend of the expertise and work of these folks. I have many example how they go way beyond to help students, staff and faculty so they

can perform their jobs. The next time you have opportunity, please thank them.

Last summer Senate Officers issued a Directive on Systemic Racism and Justice. We are proud of the work the committees had done. We plan to incorporate their findings into our Spring Plenary, so we can disseminate the information into our community and stimulate discussion. If anybody has suggestions for content, including speakers, resources or event please contact the Senate Officers.

Bonneau the Senate Officers' participation in the upcoming Trivia Bowl.

11. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:12 pm.

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, Bratman, Brodt, Cilli, Cousins, Cudd, de Vallejo, Doty, Fort, Gallagher, Gau, Goundappa, Gregerson, Hirsch, Henker, K. Humphrey, Kieselyov, Kleebank, Klem, Kucan, Landsittel, Loughlin, Molinaro, Munro, Murtazashvili, Poljak, Potoski, Roberts, Rutenbar, Salcido, Sastry, Scott, Shekhar, Stephany, Swigonova, Vento, Vilijaste, Washington, Wilson Wood

Members not attending:

Abubaker, Bungler, Hall, C. Humphrey, Jeong, Jones, Kanthak, Khan, Kiesling, King, Kohanbash, Kory, Mostern, Mulcahy, Nelson, Popovich, Rauptis, Spiess, Sukits,

*Excused attendance:

Judd, Macadangdang, Mulvaney

Others attending:

Ayars, DeJong, Fike, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, Hoogendoorn, Johnson, Jones, Kregg-Byers, Labrinidis, Lalo, Leifson, McClain, McGivney, McGrane, McMahan, Miga, Moran, O'Donnell, Pelt, Pickett, Pierce, Sant, SantaCasa, Seldin, Spring, Staresinic, Supowitz, Tananis, Williams, Zwick

*Notified Senate Office