

**Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes  
Via Zoom**

**Wednesday, March 16, 2022**

**1. Call to Order**

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

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

Kear asked for a motion to approve the minutes. On a motion duly made and seconded the minutes of the February 16, 2022, Faculty Assembly Meeting were approved as written.

**3. Items of New Business.**

Kear Introduced Ally Bove who wanted to talk about naming of our various equity related committees which sometimes are archaic and do not reflect current language. There is no standard to guide our naming conventions, but EIADAC consulted with OEDI which recommends putting equity as the first word in the sequence. Bove provided a link to related definitions and asked to consider if the schools equity committees names reflect the current understanding of terms.

**4. Report of the Senate President, Robin Kear (submitted in written form)**

*Through the news media and our social media, we are again witnessing the atrocities of war in yet another part of the world. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian State began on February 24<sup>th</sup> and continues unabated. I applaud the visible and invisible efforts of our Pitt colleagues to assist their Ukrainian academic and professional colleagues, their Ukrainian family and friends, and their efforts to bring awareness to what is happening. Pitt has dedicated groups such as UCIS (University Center for International Studies), REES (Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies), Center for Governance and Markets, and CILE (Center for International Legal Education) working rapidly in these areas. I also applaud Pitt's efforts to assist our small numbers of Ukrainian and Russian students.*

*We are also witnessing political, economic, and institutional sanctions that isolate Russia. In my role as Senate President, my thoughts also turn to the consideration and responsibility of academic, scientific, and cultural isolation of Russia, sometimes termed a 'decoupling.' There is a significant difference between contexts for us to consider. There are formal institutional agreements and there are deeper, personal connections formed over years of collaboration and scholarship. The formal agreements are*

*extricated from more easily or can be paused, with longstanding policy and procedures in place that protect Pitt. The personal connections formed over decades continue, for example through Pitt's esteemed REES program, to offer personal support and deep knowledge of scholars in Ukraine and Russia.*

*If you have individual questions that relate to your own area, including guidance on other conflicts, you can reach out to REES or UCIS. They are also working with chairs of departments who may have deeper connections and Russian or Ukrainian scholars as part of their area. There is a webpage from REES that details academic events and scholar activity related to the war in Ukraine:*

*<https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/crees/publications/ukraine>*

### *Mask Guidance*

*We anticipate that the University will soon be lifting the indoor mask requirement in most settings. As with so many decisions that have been made in the past two years regarding the pandemic and Pitt, ones that have been in the spirit of shared governance, with Senate input, we believe that this decision will be based on medical advice from HCAG. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the CDC changed its criteria for COVID-19 community levels, placing Allegheny County in the low category. Therefore, masks are not recommended indoors in areas with low community levels. As a result, mask requirements have been lifted around the Allegheny County area including in many K-12 school districts. This decision will follow the protocol that has been in place. Masks will be optional; you can still wear a mask to protect yourself. Our current overall vaccination rate is 96% which also protects us. This will be another transition, but we are hopeful this transition will benefit the classroom.*

*I have three areas where I need your feedback and input, and the feedback and input of those you represent here. I treat each piece of feedback that I receive from faculty seriously, I consider all viewpoints presented to me, and I represent your interests as faithfully as I can to our Senior Administration. The more information I have, the better job I can do. I do not represent administration interests (although I sometimes communicate their views as I am aware of them), I do not represent my own interests, I represent yours with intention and focus.*

*We can certainly discuss these now, or you can email myself or any of the officers later.*

- *The **full policy review of FN28** (University Travel, Business Entertainment, Honoraria, and Miscellaneous Reimbursable Expenses) is moving forward. We have three faculty representatives (Patrick Loughlin, Anna Wang Erickson, and Chris Bonneau), and three Senate Committees will review the revisions before it makes it to Assembly and Council. (Faculty Affairs, Research, and Dependent Care Ad Hoc)*
  - *I need your views on and specific experiences with the temporary COVID-19 standards and guidelines, specifically the requirement on using Anthony Travel for airfare/car rental.*
  - *I will share information with the three faculty members serving on the policy revision group.*

- **COVID-19 health related measures** of building swipes, guest registration, and building concierge stations.
  - What are your views on retaining or removing these measures? Some of our faculty have expressed serious security concerns that argue in favor of keeping some or all these measures.
  - The newly named CUPS committee will be examining this, you can email me or the co-chairs of CUPS David Salcido and Debbie Miller.
- I am exploring the creation of an **Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Union Relations**. This would be a two-year Committee comprised of only faculty, ideally the members would be those who are active in shared governance and want to examine the relationship of the Senate and the Faculty Union. An Ad Hoc Committee is the only formal mechanism available to me in the Senate Bylaws.
  - This Ad Hoc Committee could function as a council or advisory body, with representatives from the most affected committees.
  - What are your views on this? Please also indicate your interest.

*Update on Provost's Committee on DEI and Community Engaged Scholarship in Promotion and Tenure*

- Under the leadership of Vice Provost John Wallace, this provost's committee has been working hard at developing recommendations and guidance surrounding these two areas. The committee members are self-selected into one of the areas. Vice President Kris Kanthak and I are working on the Community Engaged Scholarship group and EIADAC Co-Chair Ally Bove and Faculty Affairs member Yolanda Covington-Ward are working in the DEI group.
- There is a short timeline. If it is held, Senate Committees will review the recommendations and the recommendations will come to Faculty Assembly in May.
- My understanding is that what will likely happen is that the provost would issue a directive (in the form of a memo) to the deans to include DEI and CES in their respective T&P policies. Our committee is providing the details, background, and recommendations for the memo.

*Senate Elections*

- Thanks to chair Chris Bonneau and the Committee for Elections.
- Officer and Faculty Assembly elections are going to run April 5-20. The slates are set. We are still looking for at least one person from the School of Education. If you know of anyone who would be interested in serving on Faculty Assembly from Education, please reach out to Lori with a suggestion and she will reach out to the faculty member.
  - The only Senate Officer position that we are holding an election for is Senate Secretary, the Bylaws were changed last year for officer positions to be for two years. Secretary runs on the off year of President and Vice President. (Penny Morel, SOM is running unopposed for Senate Secretary.)
- Senate Committee elections are going to be held April 27-May 9th. There are three openings on each of the fifteen committees. We are still looking for candidates for ALL committees. We hope that you will nominate yourself or a colleague to run for any of the committees. If you are interested or have a suggestion, please contact Lori by March 25.

*Spring Plenary*

- *Thank you to our Vice President Kris Kanthak for leading our Senate involvement in the Spring Plenary that was held on March 1<sup>st</sup>. She introduced our topic and ran the Q&A for the keynote. We had robust attendance, the keynote was inspiring, and the roundtable of Pitt projects was exciting. Thanks also to the Chancellor and the Provost for their participation in setting the topic.*
- *Thank you to Jamie Ducar in the Office of Community & Governmental Relations, Julia Spears in the Office of the Provost, Gena Kovalcik of the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation, Vice Chancellor Lina Dostilio, and all the other forum organizers.*

Denman asked (via chat) about the timing of the new mask guidance.

Kear: I think it will be released when the official announcement is sent out later this week.

Jones asked (via chat) about the feasibility of swiping into buildings with multiple classrooms.

Kear said that there are serious considerations on both sides of the issue, and she is looking forward to hearing more.

Roberts commented on swiping to access buildings, which caused the loss of teaching time for large classes.

McCormick: Some faculty are concerned about the lack of faculty input into the change of mask wearing policy. Can you comment on shared governance input on this?

Kear: The decision was made by taking medical advice as we have done in the past. If health-wise it is appropriate to relax masking policy, we should do it. There were several points for the input (the committees I am part of also have student and staff representation), but if any consultation with the union took place, I am not part of it.

Bonneau added that it was a good moment to change it now.

Bircher: Single rule for all is not accurate from the health point view; people with medical conditions should have an option to teach remotely.

Kear: It is not a uniform approach, because public transportation and health settings will still require masking. UPMC will have their own rules. She added that it will be discussed at SC meeting. Dr. Williams will attend.

Songer: We should not compel students to take off or wear masks.

Bonneau: Most places are moving away from masking. We are vaccinated. We have hospital capacity. Therefore, it is fine to change the masking rule. As far as swiping is concerned, we agreed from the start that it is not sustainable long term and moving away from it does not have to be one fits all approach.

Ogler: Swiping cuts us off from our community. It would be good to be in public space again.

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

### **A. Budget Policies Update on Budget Model Revision - Professor Tyler Bickford, SBPC Chair**

Bickford discussed in details the reasons for creating the RCM document distributed to members ahead of this meeting being as follow: (1) FY22 will be a pilot year for implementation of the new Pitt Budget Model (RCM); (2) Faculty Assembly and Senate Council approved the resolution last May asking for the new model be transparent, taking advantage of existing committee structures and for cooperative process before implementation; (3) administration resisted to engage in the cooperative process. Therefore, the RCM document evaluates the

meeting of the goals of the University Senate resolution from May 2021 on strengthening shared governance as part of the University of Pittsburgh's budget model revision.

Kear asked the Assembly for input and said she would bring this document to the administration's attention.

Taboas commented that this document is counter intuitive to decentralization which is the new model's goal.

Sant added that bringing transparency is important, because there is a lot of planning but not much budgeting in the unit BPCs.

After a short exchange of opinions on the best way of adopting this document, asking for consent of the room was chosen. Kear asked for any objections, and since there were none, the document was accepted with unanimous consent of the room.

**B. Proposed Resolution on Freedom from Curricular Interference - Ms. Robin Kear, Senate President**

Kear brought a resolution from the Senate Officers on Freedom from Curricular Interference. She said that it was rare for the resolution to come from the President, but importance of the matter justifies it. She said that this resolution is grounded in University principles and ..., in the statements from Provost document on reaffirming our stand on freedom currently under discussion in TAFC and in the statements included under People in our current Plan for Pitt and on Pitt's values website. The resolution asks that the Senate rejects all attempts to interfere in curriculum and the current and future leaders of the University commit to the same.

After the brief discussion about the language, which strayed a little of course to touch on internal interference, small edits were made to the texts: "bodies external to the faculty" phrase was replaced by "external entities."

Kear shared the revised text and asked for the vote.

Vote: YES – 27, NO – 0, ABSTAIN - 1

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

None

**7. Announcements**

None

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37 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, Archibald, Bickford, Bircher, Bonneau, Bove, Brodt, Bunger, Damiani, Denman, DeVallejo, Falcione, Fort, Frieze, Guterman, R. Jones, Judd, Kanthak, Kear, Kiesling, Klem, Kohanbash, McCormick, Melnick, Molinaro, Newman, Nguyen, Oyler, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paterson, Potoski, Rauktis, Reed, Roberts, Salcido, Sant, Shafiq, Songer, Streeter, Taboas, Tashbook, Tokowicz, Tudorascu, Wiggins, Zack

Members not attending:

Anderson, Bench, Buchanich, Burton, Collister, Conley, Covington-Ward, Hall, Henker, Jeffrey, Jeong, A. Jones, Kiselyov, Kory, Kregg-Byers, Lewin, Mahboobin, Maier, Morel, Mulcahy, I. Murtazashvili, J. Murtazashvili, Paljug, Schuster, Stoner, Swigonova, Triplette, Vento, Wood, Yates

\*Excused attendance:

Darnell, Glynn, Kovacs, Labrinidis, Massanelli, Scott, Yearwood

Others attending:

Brooks, Jones, Manges, SantaCasa, Tuttle, Wang, Wilson

\*Notified Senate Office