

**Senate Council Meeting Minutes
(Hybrid format)
Thursday, March 24, 2022**

I. Call to Order

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 2:59 pm and asked those on zoom whose name does not appear on screen to use chat for the roll.

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

On a motion duly made and seconded the minutes from the Senate Council meeting on February 23, 2022, were approved as written.

III. Items of New Business

No items of new business were raised.

IV. Report of the Chancellor, Patrick Gallagher

Chancellor Gallagher congratulated the student representatives on concluding the elections and welcomed the incoming president of SGB, Danielle Floyd. Then, he talked about two issues: review of the new masking guidance and Pitt Day in Harrisburg.

The new optional masking policy will take effect on Monday March 28. With it, we are moving from the institution wide control to individual control, which follows the shift from infections control to endemic posture in dealing with health protection. Our policies were always tied to CDC guidelines and they recently changed theirs to reflect the low community rates. Masking decisions becomes individual, we will still respect individual decision to wear or not wear the mask keeping in mind that masking is still the best way to protect one's health. And in healthcare setting, labs, public transportation and on Pitt shuttles, nothing will change, masking is still required there. It also does not change any other aspects of our controls like testing or quarantine requirements. Then he asked Dr. Joe Suyama from CMRO to give a brief update.

Dr. Suyama run through all the data supported arguments, which justify our decision to relax masking requirement: constant testing, decline in test positivity, and therefore lower risks, detailed knowledge about different type of masking, being vaccinated, change of case count to tracking the severity of cases, availability of effective treatments if given early, and additional layer of prophylactic treatments for immunocompromised people. All of these make relaxing masking a reasonable step. CMRO recommends to adhere to CDC guidelines, relax masking and continue testing and monitoring, so we can react quickly if situation changes. We will promote boosting vaccination and recommendation to stay at home when sick.

De Vallejo: It would be helpful to know in what buildings masks are still required.

Washington: The signage is coming though in some buildings the policy is floor by floor.

Frieze: Can faculty ask students to wear masks, if they feel uncomfortable?

Washington: No, we ask people not to ask. We want to avoid creating any confrontational situations.

Gallagher: No, we are moving away from institutional requirement to individual one. The classroom were never the source of transmission and those feeling uncomfortable can protect themselves by wearing a well fitted mask.

Suyama supported Gallagher's explanations as perfectly sound from health perspective.

Rauktis wanted clarification that students also cannot ask others to wear masks. She asked: Are we going to continue swiping into the buildings?

Gallagher: Yes, that does not change at the moment because swiping is tied to our testing not masking policy.

Kear, in response to the chat, said that fully vaccinated meant having both vaccine and booster shot. Chancellor continued with his report and talked about the beginning of the state budget season. We continue to hear concerns that there might be some hurdles with the state appropriation for the state related universities, which have nothing to do with the purpose of appropriation, but are around issues like curriculums, masking and vaccination. The funding we receive has limits on what it can be spent. It goes towards providing in-state discount to tuition for Pennsylvanians. The lack of these funds will harm students and their families, therefore support from Pitt community to help pass the appropriation will be needed. You can become Pitt advocate. We have Pitt Day in Harrisburg on Tuesday.

Chancellor shared some news:

- Tom Richards and his wife gave 5 million gift to Pitt,
- We recognized another Pitt alumnus, Hebert Douglas, the longest living Olympic medalist (1948) and former BOT member
- I recognized 15 faculty with Chancellor Award
- CMRO received also with Special Chancellor's Distinguished Service Award

There were no more questions for Chancellor Gallagher.

V. Report of Senate President, Robin Kear (submitted in written)

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 24th 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/creees/publications/ukraine>

I have been in conversation with the Provost and the Chancellor regarding the Budget Policies Committee resolution. We are working together towards a response and I will have more to share next month as that develops.

I will reiterate 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, and I represent yours with intention and focus.

- *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.*
- *The 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 of 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 hard at work developing recommendations and guidance surrounding these two areas. The committee members 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 holds, 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 detail, background, and recommendations for the memo.*

Policy Updates

- *The Chancellor has approved two Policies and associated Procedures:*
 - [Policy AO 07, Campus Crime Awareness](#)
 - [Policy AO 46, Gifts that Support Projects](#)

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 1st. 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.*

No questions.

VI. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:

A. Student Government Board (SGB), Harshitha Ramanan

Ramanan reported that SGB's election season ended. They elected Danielle Floyd as the next President. The main focus of the board is the transition of power. SGB discussed the City Council's proposal of tax for students and medical patients in Pittsburgh area. SGB will participate in the Pitt Day in Harrisburg on March 29. Women in politics – virtual panel is scheduled for April 5. Organizing other events and programs in progress. She shared some statistics on supplemental requests. She ended on a personal note with thank you to the Senate Council, since this was her last report as the SGB President. Next, Daniele Floyd introduced herself and all the new Board members.

No questions.

B. College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG), Ryan Yeager

The College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG) is pleased to update you on some of the progress we are making this semester:

- Met with Dean Panzella to discuss CGS and CGSSG
- Recruitment for next year's CGSSG:
 - Bringing back and building on the success of the tabling events we did during Nontraditional Students Week.
 - CGS minors and certificates can apply.
 - Emailing CGS students list.
 - Currently compiling previous materials and putting together informative resources.
 - Currently talking to current board members about their interest in returning to the board next year.
 - I am officially not running for reelection.
- New Advisor Search
 - No new updates

As we reach the end of the spring semester, CGSSG is looking to ensure that future boards are well prepared to build off the progress we have made this year. Therefore our primary focus the rest of this semester will be making sure we are recruiting the best CGS students at Pitt and providing them with the tools they need to succeed.

No questions.

C. Graduate and Professional Schools Student Government (GPSSG), Morgan Pierce

Pierce reported that GPSSG (Graduate and Professional Schools Student Government) is in the midst of elections awaiting the final results. Upcoming events:

Spring Formal – April 2

Graduate Student Appreciation Week – April 4 (link to full list in the chat)

Bowling at Arsenal Lanes – April 7

Laser Tag Night – April 9

Reception for Leadership and Service Award upcoming

On March meeting they discussed the City Council proposal of a new tax on tuition and medical expenses. They strongly oppose it and they encourage their student population to contact the district representatives to make sure student voice is heard. *Pierce* also highlighted events organized in different schools by grad students.

Kear asked when they will transition the power.

Pierce: Technically in May, but I will bring and introduce the next president to the Senate Council in April.

VII. Report of the President of the Postdoctoral Association, Dave Gau

Dave Gau is absent, so there is no report today.

VIII. Report of the President of the Staff Council, Angela Coldren (submitted in written)

The 2022 Staff Council Spring Assembly was held on March 9, 2022 from 9 a.m. to Noon. The keynote speaker was Felicia Savage Friedman, founder and CEO of Yoga Roots on Location ([YROL](#)). We had an

excellent turnout, and those who attended appreciated Felicia's approach to an unconditional love for humanity, her openness and her candidness.

*At the start of the SC Spring Assembly, we presented **3 Staff Council Endowed Book Fund Awards**. The award recipients are:*

Hanna Alamo, a junior at the Pittsburgh campus pursuing an Emergency Medicine Bachelor of Science degree in the School of Health and Rehabilitation and a certificate in Conceptual Foundations of Medicine. Hanna's father is a staff member in the Pitt IT Department.

Natalie Mittereder, a junior at the Pittsburgh campus double majoring in Spanish and Business. Natalie's mother is a staff member in the Department of Student Affairs.

Belqis Rahim, a Junior at the Pittsburgh campus pursuing an Economics major and Political Science minor. Belqis' father is a staff member in the Program Evaluation Research Unit (PERU) within the School of Pharmacy.

***Staff Council** hosted a table at the Spring Safety Assembly, Monday, February 28, 2022 at WPU Assembly Room. During the time I was there, the event was well-received, and I was impressed by the number of tables and options for those in attendance. And I got to pet one of the police dogs, so that was the icing on the cake!*

*We are kicking off our first **Staff Council Spotlight** on March 30th (Budget ReSTART Model). The Spotlights will be open to staff and we will have variety of monthly topics allowing each speaker to highlight a new initiative or a topic that staff want to understand better. Each Spotlight (presentation) will be 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. These sessions were developed from the desire of Staff Council members wanting more information than just a brief 10-minute overview by speakers during our monthly general meetings. Therefore, the officers felt that offering Spotlights would give members an opportunity to gather a more in-depth understanding of initiatives or topics. We hope that Staff Council members will share their new knowledge with their coworkers and departments. Attendance is optional, not mandatory, for Staff Council members.*

Our next (open) general meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at Noon. This meeting, and future meetings for at least 6-12 months, will be held virtually. If you would like to attend, feel free to reach out to Lola at sc@pitt.edu for a virtual invitation. This concludes my report. Happy Spring!

IX. Reports by and Announcements of Standing and Special Committees of the Senate
A. Proposed Resolution on Freedom from Curricular Interference -
Ms. Robin Kear, Senate President

Kear introduced the resolution with small edits introduced by the Faculty Assembly last week. She said that it is grounded in Pitt values, it refers directly to statements from University Bylaws, Provost's reaffirmation of academic freedom document, Plan for Pitt, and Pitt's values page.

Kanthak commented that this resolution makes clear that curricular interference is existential thread. She asked for friendly amendment to replace in two resolved statements the word "rejects" with the word "opposes"

Chancellor Gallagher added that our Bylaws were very clear that it is the responsibility of the leadership of the university, BOT, faculty of the university, especially tenured faculty of the university to uphold

and defend the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. He also appreciated the friendly amendment, because the term *rejects* was a bit concerning to administration because it is so open ended. The bylaws of the university require us to uphold the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. *Opposes* suitably captures what you are asking us to do.

The vote was via poll (for those on zoom) and by raising hand (for those in the room).

Results: YES – 27, NO - 0, ABSTAIN – 2

Resolution passed.

X. Unfinished Business and/or New Business:

None

XI. Announcements

None.

XII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 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:

Bonner, Brodt, Buchanich, Coldren, Conley, Cudd, Denman, DeJong, Doty, Floyd, Fort, Gallagher, Gregerson, Henker, Kanthak, Kear, Kieselyov, Kiesling, Kleebank, Klem, Kovacs, Molinaro, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paterson, Pierce, Ramanan, Rauktis, Roberts, Rutenbar, Sant, Sastry, Schuster, Scott, Tashbook, Washington, Wood, Yeager, Yearwood, Zack

Members not attending:

Almarza, Bench, Bungler, Cilli, Hall, Jeong, A. Jones, Judd, Kesbhat, Maier, McCormick, Mulcahy, Murphy, Murtazashvili, Newman, Oyler, Paljug, Potoski, Vento

*Excused attendance:

Bonneau, Gau, Labrinidis, Shekhar, Taboas

Others attending:

Anderson, Ayars, Brooks, Chou, Finder, Frieze, Golderg, Harding, Hitter, Houser, Jones, La Bar, Lancaster, Panzella, Pickett, Pope, Roadman, SantaCasa, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Suyama, Walker, Washo

*Notified Senate Office