

Minutes of the SAAA Meeting, Friday, August 28, 2020, via Zoom

Call to Order: 3:03 pm

Attendance

Elected Members

Joanne Baird, SHRS, Department of Occupational Therapy
Nancy Glynn, Graduate School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology
Gosia Fort, Health Sciences Library System, senate Secretary Liaison
Marylou Gramm, Dietrich School, Department of English
Uma Satyavolu Rau, Dietrich School, Department of English
Susan Skledar, School of Pharmacy, Pharmacy and Therapeutics
Sybil Anne Streeter, Dietrich School, Department of Psychology
Susan Wesmiller, School of Nursing, Health Promotion & Development

Chancellor's Liaison

Kenyon Bonner, Vice Provost and Dean of Students
Marc Harding, Vice Provost for Enrollment

Staff Counsel

Tricia Connell, Staff Counsel Representative

Pro-Tem

Robin Kear, University Library System

Senate Liaison

Gosia Fort, Health Science Library System

Office of University Communications

Sharon Blake

Agenda:

1. Consent to record meetings
2. Introductions
3. Brief collection of immediate student affairs-related issues concerning flex@pitt
4. Review Senate directive and brainstorm action plan and task leaders

Streeter: Is everyone was okay with being recorded? ... [unanimous affirmation] Okay then!

Streeter: Tech is a learning curve for sure, but it's going well for me personally so far. There is some confusion from students, but they are willing to roll with everything. Anything we should discuss?

Baird: The whole model has been very well received. There is a piece that was not articulated well, though there may have been no way to have anticipated this, but we should consider in the future: the timing of faculty making their final decision about how they are going to deliver the course content, so students can make an informed decision about living arrangements. Some students

moved to campus hoping their classes would be offered in person, and then, after they had made their decisions, they found more of their professors were moving to online or remote-only posture for this term. They feel that if they'd known that earlier, they may have made a different decision about living on campus. And I think that's a fair assessment.

Streeter: I agree that there was some vague messaging about the flex@pitt model allowing for all three models.

Gramm: In some cases, instructors in Dietrich have no classrooms that allow for social distancing. I was also told that in the tech rooms, the camera only records the teacher in front of the room, so if the teacher does not come to the classroom, and students opt to, the teacher won't be able to see those in-person students.

Glynn: I think some of the rooms have voice activated cameras. I don't think it was totally clear to students that elevated mode meant totally remote. Ultimately, it was clarified. Otherwise, things have been handled really well. I don't have grad students that feel they are here for no reason. I think the fact that Pitt said we may be remote for the spring was clarifying.

Wesmiller: From the School of Nursing, I think whoever is the speaker may be on the screen. We will always have someone in the classroom: a doctoral student or nursing faculty. There will be someone there to make students feel there is someone in charge. Another thing, I agree about the unclear messaging about elevated risk. I had thought elevated meant I could keep 25 in the room. I thought my teaching plan was worked out, and I had to redo it.

Skledar: From the School of Pharmacy; we've been trying to do all kinds of things this week. 25 in one place; 25 in another place. I had more tech on that day than in my whole life. But it went okay. Our tech folks at Pharmacy have been unbelievable. Students really appreciated seeing the faculty. We have a large contingent of faculty not on site. We're being very deliberately synchronous. It's a lot to be running the class, monitoring the chat, and recording.

Streeter: Nancy—you've been told they have flex@pitt planned for spring for sure?

Glynn: I heard it on the faculty town hall. Maybe Marc can verify that.

Streeter: Can't find it on an official channel.

Glynn: I think Eleanor Feingold [Interim Chair and Professor Human Genetics, Pitt Public Health] put it in writing.

Bonner: I believe that's the case, but I will confirm. It made sense for students to know the whole year in making housing decisions. Joe McCarthy had made that decision, but I will find out if it is written anywhere.

Streeter: We need to have the spring term calendar and schedule set by early to mid-next month. I can't just imagine that we can anticipate social distancing to be lifted by January.

Baird: I'm wondering if there's a way perhaps faculty needs to have a deadline where they make a decision about how they are planning to administer their courses. Some faculty members will not be

present [in the classroom], and students should know about that before their housing deposits are due. It's not fair for a student to come thinking they are going to have a course held live with a faculty in person only to find out that the faculty member has switched to an all-remote platform.

Glynn: Just to dovetail on that, Public Health is also going to have someone in the classroom for remote faculty. In addition, when it's time for students to start registering, students might want to make a decision whether they want to take the class in spring '21 remotely or wait to take it in the fall of '21 when we might be in person. So putting our nickels down early will help with students decisions about housing and course work. Some things are really hard to translate to remote learning.

Fort: This number, up to 25, for the Falk Library, means 25 people in the library. To run a class in person, we have to less faculty present during that time. In elevated risk, we are only serving Pitt students and faculty. But this is a cooperative project serving Duquesne and CMU.

Streeter: You'd like some system university-wide to have a record of which instructors plan to be in classrooms and have this information available to students.

Baird: Everything is coming down to timing. But instructors are changing their mind. Students need to know because they need to plan. We need instructors to have a deadline; pick a model of instruction and then stick to it to be respectful of the student.

Satyavolu Rau: That whole timing thing is important for us. I did not know anything about a Zoom room before classes began. I understood that there had to be a synchronous and asynchronous component. Now my students complain that there is only one synchronous class meeting. A lot of this is communication. Difficult to interpret all of these vaguely worded things.

Streeter: My colleagues and I are having Teams meetings going like mad. We are at the point where we are making interpretations of synchronous and asynchronous. There is no way for this to be a one-size fits all. What I'm hearing mostly is the need for definite and clear-cut guidance from administration about what some of these terms really mean.

Glynn: The other thing that threw students for a loop is when class times moved. It was late in the game. Some people have some really late classes in the day. The other thing that became mandatory in the summer was trying to figure Canvas out. The university provided a ton of support to learn Canvas. Students seem happy. But I got a lot of people reporting a lot of parties. A lot of active bystanders.

Bonner: Tell them to keep reporting. I hope that would be the case in the school of Public Health.

Glynn: I keep hearing of a row of town houses across from the Mad Mex that is particularly problematic. Wink wink.

Bonner: Okay, we have some attention on that.

Streeter: We'll move forward with that and try to get some information. I'd like to turn now to our directive from the governing body Senate to all standing committees about how we plan to address issues of systemic racism, injustice and inequality. I have some thoughts that are not my own, but I

think we need to take this very seriously. This is not let's just chat about this and feel good about ourselves. This is an action plan that we are committing ourselves to. We'll need some leaders and an outline, due to the Senate by October 1, which seems frighteningly close. In the context of Student Admissions, Aid, and Affairs, we are well positioned to make some meaningful change. I will email you a document that the student leaders in the Psych department sent in the summer – a 21-page doc with references and footnotes with recommendations and demands to move forward and address these kinds of issues. They have some very tangible requests. Not easy to solve. I'll send that. But I don't want to centralize the discussion to my department.

Gramm: On the SAAA, it seems that recruitment and retainment of Black students on campus is going to be among our key issues, and the low and declining number of Black first-year students at Pitt was, the day before yesterday, [a lead story in the Pitt News](#) though I know Marc has some qualifications about that article's numbers. Marc do you want to address this?

Harding: We have a mandate to raise the numbers of African American/Black students. It's a matter of how we get there. We have recruitment strategies and tactics. We met with African American Alumni Counsel and Steve Wisniewski [Vice Provost for Budget and Analytics]. The reaction was, "I didn't know we were doing that." Usually I'm hyperbolic, but I'll bet you there are 9 to 12 new initiatives that we're implementing right now. And there's not been a chance for that to make a difference in the data. A lot of the data you see are cohorts from 2012 and 2013 – that would have been my first class. I have a lot of this information to put together. I will need some time to present to the committee the things we're doing. I'm happy to present at a future meeting.

Streeter: Are there other standing committees for us to partner with such as educational policies? Somebody we should be collaborating with?

Harding: A really good and interesting question. I'm going to pull Kenyon into this. It's a chicken and egg question I have. We have X number of African American/Black students here and we have X number of African American/Black faculty. Do we need more faculty to increase Black student enrollment? If we grow more student enrollment without Black faculty, do we exacerbate the problem we have? Because one of the things we hear from students is, there is not someone here like me. It's a resource issue. It's cultural. It's a city of Pittsburgh issue. Are there other things, Kenyon, getting back to Sybil's question in terms of the whole ecosystem to look at?

Bonner: I think you're right, Marc. The numerical representation is important. We need to increase the number of Black faculty staff and students. That is important. Curriculum is important. Students say when they're taking courses they rarely learn about Black people's contribution or info is presented without a context about systemic racism. For example, they learn about diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure in the Black community without learning why – how there are contributing factors that lead to such health outcomes in these communities.

Harding: Without any disrespect or offense, look at the composition of this meeting right now. How do we have a conversation about this without greater representation?

Gramm: I think that's a great point and makes me want to list as one of our top or at least one of our key action goals to recruit more diverse members on the SAAA.

Satyavolu Rau: That leads to the problem of the same few people being asked to do more of the service on committees. You are asked: do you want to do this? But there are only X number of hours. We need to think about how we go about doing this—recruiting of SAAA.

Baird: I had to go back to the web page that listed our mission. One of the things that it reminded me is that this committee plays a vital role in connecting undergrad and grad programs. A lot of things happening on campus now are compartmentalized. What Marc does is really focused on undergrad admissions and aid. Kenyon in his role really focuses on undergrad. What I was struck with when I read the senate directive: Part of our action plan to do work connecting undergrad and grad programs by collecting some information. For those on this committee before, we have discussed the paucity of info. And one time we wanted to collect how things were running in diff grad schools, we were not able to do so.

Harding: You just stated something important. We are an amazing university but amazingly decentralized. All pieces don't come together. Amanda Godley (the new Vice Provost for Graduate Studies, replacing Nathan Urban) has met with my team. We are looking at ways to collaborate we have never done before, to your point.

Streeter: If we think about partnering with other committees, that person or those people would be getting the message out to a larger group instead of these silos.

Harding: Maybe that's part of the framework: that this requires a community effort, whatever recs are made, adjacencies, partnerships, collaboration would be helpful to see as part of whatever report we submit. It can't be done in a silo.

Kear: I'm hoping whatever the different senate committees come up, senate leadership is looking for things that mesh together. I like Kenyon's suggestion for diversifying the curriculum. Thinking about white privilege in the curriculum might be a way for our committee to put forward that theme. We can't impact every single syllabus, but we can suggest things that are ways to diversity the curriculum for our students.

Streeter -- shows us via screenshare the table of contents of Psychology students demands [see email attachment]. Highlights community.

Glynn: Don't we need to stay in our lane? Admissions, Aid, Affairs. Affairs is broad. And I agree with the curriculum stuff. But maybe our recommendation should be centered around those areas Admissions, Aid, Affairs.

Harding: Admissions piece: goal in 5 years is to increase our African American/Black student enrollment to 10% We can do it. There's a financial cost to it. But we can do it. What we need to do is support 500 more black students on this campus. There's a financial piece, academic piece, cultural support. There are pieces of that which are very much in our lane. That part of growing shouldn't be a goal. It should be how to support those students. We have a new position created: Dr. John Wallace, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development. He was intimately involved with the engagement center. He's done a ton of community work. Works in social work. He's going to be leading this effort to boost the number of Black and Latinx faculty. At some point you'll want him to present. He'll be a very important resource for this committee.

Satyavolu Rau: I did not want to come across as opposing recruitment of diverse members of the SAAA. It is just the concern of asking the same few diverse individuals to take up the work.

Gramm: I thought you made a very important point.

Streeter: Can we even recruit members to this committee?

Kear: You can nominate Pro-Tem members.

Streeter: So we will be meeting in a week—Friday, September 4, at 3pm—to continue this work.

Gramm: Let's all try to think about it this week, so we can arrive at the meeting [or if you cannot attend, send this information to Sybil and me by email] with an action idea for addressing systemic racism, injustice and inequality that is in our committee's lane.

Meeting adjourned: 4:07 pm.