

Senate Council Meeting Minutes

Via Zoom

Thursday, November 11, 2021

I. Call to Order

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3 pm and explained the new rules for discussion in the hybrid model. She asked to use the Raise Hand under reactions to contribute to the discussion (Kris Kanthak will be monitoring and alerting her who needs to be recognized next from the raised hand to speak). Since there is no way for all of those in the room to see the chat and participate in it, it creates side conversations that are not part of the formal minutes but are part of some people's understanding. This change invites participation via speech.

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

Kear asked for motion to approve the minutes. Labrinidis made a motion and Chancellor Gallagher seconded it. In-person participants would vote by raising their hands, while virtual participants will utilize the green check mark. Before the approval of the minutes, there were some communication troubles, which had to be addressed first. Kear had to repeat the new rules for the meeting format. Once established that everyone hears what is happening the meeting room, the distributed minutes from the October 14, 2021 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 opened by recognizing members of the arm forces celebrated on Veterans Day on our campus. He highlighted also the work of the Veterans Office and its services. Pitt is perennially ranked among the most military friendly universities in US. We are #1 university for veterans in Pennsylvania and #29 in nation for the support of veterans. We had Mental Health Awareness Month last month, but he reminded everyone that support for mental health is available all year around. Use it. Chancellor skipped the COVID report since the cases are low and steady, but mentioned the Testing and COVAX centers on campus and that vaccine requirement is on its way. He briefly commented on unionization vote. He thanked those who participated. He said he is not sure what will change, but he assured the audience that the commitment to work together stays the same. Only the details how it will work may be affected.

He noted the passing of Tom Richards, Chairperson of our Board of Trustees. He was also Pitt alumnus with a long business career. According to University Bylaws, Mary Ellen Callahan, as the one with more

years of service, assumes the duties of the interim chair. Next, Chancellor focused on some rankings, which put Pitt in favorable light, topped it with an impressive list of awardees among Pitt faculty, and finished his report with two more achievements:

- SDM organized free dental clinic, which provided services to 1300 patients in need
- Pitt was recognized as "Organization of the Year" by BikePGH (local bike advocacy organization)

There were no questions for Chancellor Gallagher.

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

Veterans

- *I thank all those staff, students, and faculty who have served in the US Military and made many personal sacrifices for our mutual benefit.*

Uncertainty and our Response

- *In my report last week to Faculty Assembly, I talked about the effect of the affirmative union vote for a large portion of Pitt's faculty. I will not repeat myself here, but I spoke of the bargaining unit, legalities, as I understand them, the collective bargaining agreement, and especially what this interim period might mean for the Senate Council, Faculty Assembly, and Senate Committees. You can see these slides under the Faculty Assembly documents on the Senate website and it was covered in the University Times.*
- *Since last week, I have been told that my tone was somewhat pessimistic and conveyed uncertainty. Should I not be honest with you about the uncertainty that I am seeing, hearing, and experiencing? When I have and receive questions that do not have answers, that is uncertainty.*
- *As I am elected to represent all faculty, I believe it is my responsibility to examine and present my fairest interpretation of what will be affecting our work here.*
- *Since last week, I have been called dismissive, and we the officers, have been called a disgrace. Now, to be sure, many people live through and have lived through much worse than some name calling, but of course it still stings. I make mistakes, and my anger also sometimes gets the better of me, so I try to have compassion, as others have had compassion for me.*
- *I am reminded that in civil discourse and in a pluralistic society, there are multiple perspectives on the truth, and we need to work through them. I think we should all consistently remind ourselves of that, especially in these immediate years to come.*
- *When there is elected union leadership in place and an elected union bargaining committee in place, this formal entity (Council and Assembly) will be able to formalize relations and identify common interest.*
- *After a legal collective bargaining agreement is in place, there will be more certainty.*
- *After we get there, hindsight will be 20/20. We will move forward, we will reach mutual understanding, and I say this with some realistic hope, that it will be beneficial for the university in the long term.*

Budget Policies / Outlier Report

- *The Budget Policies Committee brought a report on the Outlier third-party course offering to the Faculty Assembly last Wednesday. There was ultimately no action taken by the assembly on the report.*

Vaccine Requirement Interim Policy

- *The interim policy for a vaccine requirement has been sent to all Pitt faculty, staff, and students and is in force immediately.*

Travel Policy

- *I have received various comments on the continuation of the temporary COVID-19 guidelines for travel.*
- *The Senate Officers have asked about this on behalf of faculty, and there is movement to fully revise the existing travel policy through Pitt's office of general counsel policy office and shared governance. Tom Hitter is working on a proposal to start the process, the charter. He should have a draft charter for me in the next couple of weeks that can define the committee that will work on that policy. When the process is finished, this fully revised travel policy will take the place of the existing, temporary COVID-19 guidelines for travel and the existing travel policy.*

Policy Work

- *Benefits and Welfare will give feedback for the new Protection of Children policy and procedure on 11/9. Faculty Affairs has already weighed in.*
- *PUP and SAAA are reviewing the Campus Crime Awareness policy and procedure.*
- *Research and TAFC are reviewing the Gifts That Support Projects policy and procedure.*

Academic Searches

- *The Provost's office is running a search for the next Director of UCSUR. The Senate Office ran an election for two candidates from those faculty affiliated with UCSUR. The two elected are:*
 - *Annette Dabbs – Nursing*
 - *Michael Glass – Urban Studies*

Tashbook said that Kear certainly was not dismissive and thanked her for fair presentation and helpful explanation to the Benefits and Welfare Committee when had questions what might happen when there is a bargaining unit in place.

Kovacs asked if there are any plans of other faculty being involved in future interactions with union organizers.

Kear responded that it was a good idea, but not possible yet since we do not know the organization committee members.

VI. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:

A. Student Government Board (SGB), Harshitha Ramanan

Ramanan commented on the most recent police statement referring to the "blanket" incident on campus and followed with emotional plea to listen to the students who are afraid for their safety on campus and afraid that their reports will be ignored. She brought up the Lauren's Promise and asked for faculty support to promote this simple pledge "I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you". She said they need support to keep students safe before something tragic happens.

Chancellor Gallagher assured her that this is an active police matter and that it is being addressed and that he wanted to work with her offline to address the communication to our community is not falling short in some specific way.

Raukits supported Ramanan's plea saying that we can do better for our students, particularly women who feel unsafe.

Sant added that she heard concerns from some students that communication reaches only some of them but not all them, those who learn from social media are confused whether information is true. We need more consistent message for our students.

B. College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG), Ryan Yeager
(submitted in written, but not presented in person during the meeting)

The College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG) is pleased to update you on a few of our recent events.

I. Updates

- *This past week, CGS and CGSSG celebrated Nontraditional Students Week.*
- *CGSSG hosted two tabling events in Posvar Hall and gave out food to roughly 100 students.*
- *We were able to appoint two CGS students to the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center Student Advisory Board.*
- *Congratulations and many thanks to Madison Mascari and Jessica Rolke for taking on this opportunity.*
- *On this Veteran's Day, all of us at CGSSG would like to extend a thank you to all our students who served and all veterans of the United States military for their service.*

II. Looking Ahead

As we prepare for the spring semester, CGSSG is looking to make changes to our constitution and organizational structure as a whole to ensure that future boards are well prepared to build off the progress we have made this year. As public health conditions improve, we look forward to continuing to offer more programming for CGS students.

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

- No report

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

Good afternoon Senate Council members, hope everyone is well. The UPPDA board met with our Faculty Advisory Board yesterday and had a great discussion on some of the challenges our organization and postdocs face. Topics we discussed focused on postdoc employee benefits and salary, communication, and postdoc guideline uniformity. We have been working closely with Dr. Godley on these issues as well. We will continue our discussions with her on these challenges.

On the programming front, we held a successful webinar on US immigration recently. We will be hosting a follow-up Q&A session to the webinar with OIS next month. We are also hosting a career development program focusing on working in startups vs large companies. We will also be joining the Office of Academic Career Development in the upcoming Career Symposium. Lastly, we will be starting a writing accountability groups for postdocs to help generate achievable writing goals.

That concludes my report.

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

Good afternoon, President Kear, Chancellor Gallagher, Senate Council officers and members of Senate Council.

*Staff Council would like to recognize **Veteran's Day** and to thank those who have served and continue to serve our nation. Celebrating Veteran's Day gives us an opportunity to teach civilians about the sacrifice service members and their families make year-round. Again, thank you for your past, present and future service to protect our nation.*

*Our first virtual **Council of Campuses** meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 15, 2021. There will be representation from all regional campus Staff Council leaders. I look forward to this discussion as in past years, information shared at these meetings raised awareness about concerns at other campuses (one example...years ago, dental coverage at the Bradford campus/UPMC doctors-things we take for granted because we live, work and play in the city of Pittsburgh, the hub of UPMC). We shared ideas about holiday projects or more social-type of events.*

*The ad hoc **Staff Council Endowed Book Fund Committee** has been created. Two SC members will co-chair the committee.*

*Our **Staff Relations Committee** continues work on establishing a Staff Emergency Fund. This fund would provide limited financial assistance to staff members of the Pitt community (all regionals included), who are experiencing a temporary financial hardship due to a significant life event. There are discussions about creating subcommittees out of this group (Staff Relations) to address concerns with salaries and benefits.*

*The **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee** continues to work with Dr. Clyde Pickett and his office regarding a Juneteeth paid holiday resolution.*

*The **Staff Life Committee** continues to monitor parking concerns on the Oakland campus. There are discussions about a possible holiday project to assist a food pantry.*

*Our **External Relations Committee** put together a Staff Council tailgate for the Pitt football game on 11/20/21.*

Staff Council members are serving on various committees to discuss policy changes and updates. As I've mentioned in the past, we welcome these invitations. Serving on these committees is a demonstration of shared governance here at the University.

We continue to meet with University leaders on current topics and to discuss ways of improving messaging and communication platforms such as town halls and how Staff Council can assist.

Our next general meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 12pm. 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 our report. Thank you for your attention and patience!

Chancellor Gallagher returned to the safety problem and updated on the progress of police who has video and is in process of identifying and locating that individual. They also monitor social media and are aware of reports of similar incidents, but none of them were reported to the police. They urge all community members to report any suspicious activity to Pitt Police. There is a difference between information from social media and any actionable information. Police escalated their presence on campus and they encourage students to use safe ride program and to download Rave Guardian app, which allows to contact police immediately and allows geolocation to find you immediately.

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

None

X. Unfinished Business and/or New Business

None

XI. Announcements

None

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 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:

Bench, Bonneau, Bonner, Brodt, Buchanich, Coldren, Conley, Cudd, Denman, DeJong, De Vallejo, Doty, Floyd, Fort, Gallagher, Gau, Gregerson, Henker, Kanthak, Kear, Kieselyov, Klem, Kovacs, Labrinidis, Maier, McCormick, Molinaro, Newman, Oyler, Paljug, Pierce, Potoski, Ramanan, Rauptis, Rutenbar, Sant, Sastry, Schuster, Shekhar, Taboas, Tashbook, Washington, Wood, Yearwood, Zack

Members not attending:

Almarza, Bunger, Cilli, Hall, Jeong, A. Jones, Kesbhat, Khan, Kiesling, Kory, Mulcahy, Murphy, Murtazashvili, Roberts, Scott, Vento,

*Excused attendance:

Kleebank, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paterson, Yeager

Others attending:

Ayars, Chou, Congleton, Dostilio, Fike, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, Jeffrey, Jones, McGrane, Moran, Panzella, Pelt, Pickett, Radziwon, Roadman, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Washo, Wilson

*Notified Senate Office