

**Senate Council Meeting Minutes  
Via Zoom**

**Thursday, November 12th, 2020**

**1. Call to Order**

President Chris Bonneau called the meeting to order at 3 pm. During the opening remarks, he mentioned Geovette Washington, the member of the Senate Council, who is currently on leave working on the Biden's transition team.

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

The distributed minutes from the October 15, 2020 were approved as written.

**3. Items of New Business**

No items of new business were raised.

**4. Report of the Chancellor, Patrick Gallagher**

Chancellor Gallagher began his report with the end of semester updates and the rising rate of COVID-19 cases updates. Though the good news about a vaccine has just been announced, our plan is still the management of the pandemic based on two elements we successfully introduced this year: enhanced safety features and medical program responsible for monitoring COVID, testing, surveillance and gathering medical data, which we can use to adjust our risk postures. Medical experts dictate the standards, which we follow. All university activities, related to teaching, working, research, student housing, food services have to modify their operations to conform to medical experts advice. This allows us to be flexible and carry on the university mission. Up until now, we had relatively stable rates in cases and our prevalence of the illness was low. The spike around Halloween was expected, but we are concerned about the rate of cases in our community now. However, we are within our capacity to respond and we plan to send students home safely. He asked SVC Anantha Shekhar to comment.

Shekhar said that what was happening was not a surprise nor it was unexpected. We are prepared. All the spread happens in social setting, not at work. It is not related to the classroom, lab or clinical setting. We need to up social distancing. We will see the cases come down with the tightened social mitigation.

Dr. Williams (CMRO) expanded his predecessor's remarks. He said that the plan was and had always been to detect clusters of infections and respond rapidly. We have four detection streams: random testing, symptomatic student testing, closed contact testing and focus testing. We have many isolation beds available. We engage with students and do not stop at just sending communications to them. We were concerned about Halloween, and we had plans for a quarantine before sending students home, so the timing was not bad. We just started shelter in place a bit earlier.

Bonner reinforced the points made earlier and said that students were responsible and the success of this semester depended on their behavior.

Gallagher invited any questions for Williams before continuing his report.

Bonneau: Is there anything we could do better to prevent the uptake in cases?

Williams: Each of the surges occurred in clusters, it was not widespread, so we learned to be more vigilant and pay attention to populations who interact within bigger pods (off campus housing).

Macadangdang: When we return, the weather will keep us inside. So how to promote the positive peer reinforcement we have been doing in the fall?

Williams: If people have nothing to do, they do unsafe things. We need to give them alternative activities.

Bonner: It will be more challenging. We are discussing possible options how to engage people cooped inside now.

Hirsch: Have there been any discussions about the full commencement for graduate students?

Gallagher: We may come up with a mix model, something between a virtual and traditional celebration. We are open to any good ideas.

Chancellor Gallagher finished his report by thanking CMRO team and asking students to be health ambassadors to their families. He gave a rundown of some most recent news:

- A. Announcement of a new GSPH Dean, Maureen Lichtveld
- B. Acquisition of August Wilson archives by ULS
- C. Two awards for Pitt: Innovation & Economic Prosperity Award and Gold Level Award for Global Engagement by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
- D. Pitt presence in the recent elections. Our community made history with its engagement, participation and being visible in the national news.
- E. Veteran Day yesterday, a day of reflection. Pitt is recognized for its veteran services and excellent programs for veterans

## **5. Report of Senate President, Chris Bonneau**

Bonneau reported on the last Faculty Assembly meeting, which included a presentation from SVC Anantha Shekhar on his vision for the SOM and other HS schools. He talked about his goals and focus for the next 5 years.

Next week, Shekhar will be meeting with the health sciences faculty who are members of FA

Last week, FA endorsed the recommendations from the ACIE on assessment and evaluation of faculty.

Bonneau reminded everyone that a Town Hall with Provost for faculty to discuss the spring semester and other academic issues is scheduled for November 19.

Elections for University Senate are approaching. All positions are open, so more information would be coming from Frank Wilson, the Chair of Senate Elections Committee soon.

Senate officers visited (virtually) Greensburg and Bradford campuses to hear all the concerns and issues the faculty there might have.

He ended his report with advertisement of the Best Buddies program and asked for support for it, since Lori Molinaro's daughter participates in it.

## **6. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:**

### **a. Student Government Board (SGB), Eric Macadangdang**

Macadangdang started by thanking everyone for participating in general elections and for all the support. Then, he focused on SGB activities:

Two pieces of legislation prepared for vote:

- A. Bill Updating 2020-2021 Election Code to allow running SGB elections in the spring (March 2) under new conditions
- B. Resolution Supporting the Amendment of Pennsylvania Act 111 (Read our Bill and Resolution: <http://sgb.pitt.edu/government/governing-documents-2/>)

SGB allocated part of their budget to support different student groups (\$215,000). It is lower than in previous year due to limited possibilities to hold different student events and programs this year.

SGB is looking forward to the upcoming meeting with the Chancellor. They are happy with the opportunity to be able to voice and discuss their concerns with the Senior Administration. There was a lot that went very well this semester, but there are things we could do even better to support students and promote their success.

Gallagher: Do we know what the voting participation among students was?

Macadangdang: We are still working on it. Once I know, I will share this information.

### **b. College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG), Nourlan Abubaker**

No report

### **c. Graduate and Professional Schools Student Government (GPSSG), Malena Hirsch**

Hirsch said that GPSSG echoes the support for the SGB resolution regarding PA Act 111, which was shared with them. The Board had already discussed it but they need more time before making a formal

stand on it.

Next, she talked about the upcoming Town Hall with Provost for the graduate students and their efforts to prepare questions for the event. She reported on some events focused on engaging students (Paint and Sip, Virtual Trivia Night, Walk-a-thon). Participation in the events is lower this year, students are not aware that such events are happening. To enhance the reach through social media, they have been working with the Office of the Provost. As a result, they will have their own newsletter to engage the students better. Hirsch mentioned the issue of burnout and difficulty of collecting feedback from graduate students.

Hall: What platform will you use?

Hirsch: Our engagement via social media is low, so we will have biweekly email to push events and other information.

#### **7. Report of the President of the Postdoctoral Association, Dave Gau**

No report

#### **8. Report of the President of the Staff Council, Andy Stephany (submitted in written)**

*President Bonneau, Chancellor Gallagher, members of Senate Council:*

*-We hosted Dr. Dave Lebel for a presentation of his surveys of Pitt staff during the pandemic. His study "Adapting in Times of Uncertainty" was an IRB approved study specific to Pitt staff and how we're adapting to work from home. A couple of quick highlights on Dave's presentation from my perspective:*

- *Over 30% of respondents handling children of high school age or younger.*
- *Over 50% reported high levels of work stress*
- *Almost 50% having difficulty maintaining work and home boundaries*
- *And almost 1/3 reporting high levels of burnout*

*I want to thank Dave for coming and sharing his results and resources. The presentation was recorded and will be on our website at <https://sac.pitt.edu/about-us/meetings>.*

*We want to take active steps to manage stress and burnout, particularly as the pandemic draws on. We're in the process of generating resources, guidance, and internal support. If you have resource or practice that's been successful for you, please share it. Likewise, the impacts of the pandemic have been mitigated by great leaders and supervisors at the local level who managed teams remotely successfully. If you know of anyone who has been particularly successful in providing support for their staff, please send me their name. I'd like to pick their brain and encourage modeling of that behavior.*

*-Along these lines, Staff Council also hosted a Staff Council Talk: Life Solutions Assistance and Health Coaching: Valuable Resources During Difficult Times last Friday. Thank you to UPMC LifeSolutions for talking and sharing their resources with us. These resources are available to all Pitt faculty and staff and I encourage you all to take advantage of their wide variety of resources.*

- *Call 1-866-647-3432 - available 24/7 for crisis assistance.*
- *Visit [hr.pitt.edu/lifesolutions](http://hr.pitt.edu/lifesolutions)*
- *Email [lifesolutions@upmc.edu](mailto:lifesolutions@upmc.edu)*

*-Moving on to a new topic: We support the ambition of Pitt staff members who seek to supplement their professional and personal engagement at the University through professional development opportunities. This award in honor of Ronald W. Frisch provides monetary resources to selected University of Pittsburgh staff members to pursue professional enrichment opportunities. The application portal is open through January. Please recommend to staff colleagues to apply for the award.*

*-Please also look out for announcements of our Endowed Book Fund Awards and Staff Mentor Award.*

*- Our next public meeting is next Wednesday, November 18 at noon. It is open to the entire University community. Register to attend through [calendar.pitt.edu](https://calendar.pitt.edu) and we'll share the password.*

*-Staff Council is always available for questions, comments, and concerns from staff and the University community. Please email [staffcouncil@pitt.edu](mailto:staffcouncil@pitt.edu). We want to hear from you.*

*This concludes my report.*

Chancellor Gallagher commented on the mental toll this crisis has on everyone. When private and professional life mixes in the remote mode, we need to be forgiving when life is intruding during zoom calls, studying or working. We also need to set up some boundaries, so the professional life does not force people to be available 24/7.

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

There were no other reports.

#### **10. Unfinished Business and/or New Business**

None

#### **11. Announcements**

No announcements.

#### **12. Adjournment**

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:

Almarza, Aziz, Bonneau, Bonner, Bratman, Brodt, Cilli, Cousins, Cudd, Doty, Fort, Gallagher, Gregerson, Hall, Hirsch, Henker, K. Humphrey, Jeong, Judd, Kieselyov, Kiesling, King, Kleebank, Klem, Kohanbash,

Landsittel, Macadangdang, Molinaro, Mulvaney, Murtazashvili, Poljak, Roberts, Rutenbar, Salcido, Sastry, Shekhar, Stephany, Swigonova, Vilijaste, Wilson, Wood

Members not attending:

Abubaker, Bunger, de Vallejo, Goundappa, C. Humphrey, Jones, Kanthak, Khan, Kory, Kucan, Mostern, Mulcahy, Munro, Nelson, Popovich, Potoski, Rauktis, Scott, Spiess, Sukits,

\*Excused attendance:

Gau, Loughlin, Vento, Washington

Others attending:

Ayars, Buchanich, DeJong, Dostilio, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, Johnson, Jones, Lalo, Leifson, Miga, Moran, O'Donnell, Pelt, Pickett, Ringler, SantaCasa, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Walker, Williams, Zwick

\*Notified Senate Office