

Senate Council Meeting Minutes

Via Zoom

Thursday, September 9, 2021

I. Call to Order

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3 pm. She explained the hybrid model of the meeting, reminded everyone of keeping video on in order to be seen on monitors by members attending the meeting in person. She asked those attending remotely to use the chat feature for communicating with the room. Vice President Kanthak would be monitoring the chat box. Then, President Kear proceeded to the next agenda item – approval of the minutes.

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

The distributed minutes from the May 20, 2021 were approved as written.

III. Items of New Business

No items of new business were raised.

IV. Report of the Chancellor

Chancellor Gallagher noted the return to the campus and said how special it is to see students in Oakland. He expressed his wishes for a good year to all. He started the report with issues related to pandemic. The good news is that we have vaccines now and are only dealing with vaccines resistance. The bad news is that the new virus is more infectious and people feel unsettled. However, we would be much worse without any vaccines. Once again we will learn and adjust on the fly in order to have safe campus. We will have to be agile. It is hard for the university, because we like to have a calendar and know exactly what is going to happen through the year. We can give you some predictability in sharing our principles, but we will have to be agile in specifics. How will we manage safety on campus? We have a very aggressive infection control program, and on top of that we take mitigation steps (masking) too, so despite the new virus variants, our campus environment will continue to be low risk. Our program depends on your vaccination status and this is condition for access to our facilities. People, who are vaccinated, are at lower risk for infection, so the focus is on the unvaccinated, who pose a higher risk and therefore they have to provide negative test each week. As a result, we already have fairly high vaccination rates on campus which are comparable to the institutions with vaccination mandates: 79% overall, 81% staff, 89% graduates, 86% undergraduates. If we look at the student population: 89% overall, 96% on campus undergrads, 86% of campus undergrads. Faculty is lagging behind with 85%, but the faculty in teaching roles rate is at 94%. So classroom environment is safe. However, testing is a new element and very important in the unvaccinated population, because it is tied to the facilities access. We are concerned at the lower rate of returns for those mail-in tests (only 10%), and there will be a large number of people with access cut off. The requirement for weekly testing is based on health safety considerations. Our goal is to keep people safe, so you will also see the ramp up of our testing efforts.

You saw the message that federal government is requiring vaccination from federal employees. We have the requirement that you cannot enter the building unless you are vaccinated or have a negative COVID test. What we did – using ID to access a building – is effective from a health perspective, but not ideal for a university and disruptive to our mission. Tests are free to individuals, but not free to university. The estimates of costs for operating such large testing program are between \$20 and \$50 million. I asked Senate leadership to work with us to figure it out how to attach this infection control requirement from access to other criteria (like eligibility of enrollment or employment). We are talking about people's jobs and education, so we have responsibility to get all the details right. It will not be eminent. The fall will unfold as we already planned it, but we will discuss how can we modify mechanisms we use to enforce our safety for the spring.

Just a reminder, we have a vaccination center in Oakland. Walk ins are welcome.

The other news is that the two-week flexibility period announced by the Provost is ending this week and we begin to run this semester as anticipated. I have couple of other non COVID related announcements, so before I move on, I'll take any questions.

Taboas: I am interested in the rationale for the testing. With the breakthrough infections, we are testing only the unvaccinated to catch infections, while the vaccinated, though they could be infected, are not being tested.

Gallagher: Yes, that has been discussed, but the consensus among our health team is that it is a risk adjusted approach and testing the unvaccinated, where the risk of infection is high and transmission period is longer, coupled with random and symptomatic testing, should be effective.

Shekhar supported Gallagher's explanation and added that mitigation, wearing masks, in the most effective way to prevent infection whether vaccinated or not.

Taboas: How do we convince people to vaccinate and implement positive peer pressure? Could you use the cost spent on testing and "translate" these dollars that could be spent on Pell matching grants or faculty and staff raises. These could be motivating factors.

Gallagher: Our approach is what is protective of health, not what is coercive to get vaccinated. For people who are hesitant about vaccines, the requirement to get vaccine will not answer their questions. We still have obligation to educate them. The good news is that universities are good at vaccines acceptance and vaccination rates among other employing institutions.

Ramanan: If we are going to have conversations about faculty needing to get vaccinated, will there be the same conversation about students?

Gallagher: Yes, I did not mean to exclude students. It's just that when universities make announcement about requirements, they are usually about students (and they can tie this to enrollment), but they do not talk about the employee side. Mostly, because it is more complicated. The requirement depend on what kind of employee you are and what your responsibilities are. So I want to talk about these details. We will talk with students too, but I know there is some urgency to look at some faculty and staff position and see what lack of access to the building does to their jobs.

Denman [in chat]: Do we know how many students tested positive and how many are currently in quarantine?

Hitter: Since the beginning of semester 56 students tested positive (10-day period) and faculty & staff – 22.

Gallagher: The numbers are relatively low. We saw some peaks last year, which were much higher. Contact tracing shows off campus infections, there is no evidence of classroom or residence halls transmissions. Hopefully, thanks to their high vaccination rates, they will see less disruptions this year, but this is something we will continue to work on and watch what is happening in communities around us. I will take one more question.

Labrinidis: Is there something specific the instructors need to do if one of their students in the classroom test positive? Is there a protocol that needs to be implemented?

Gallagher: Like last year, it would be the medical team that decides the need for contact tracing and initiate it. We will not turn faculty into contact tracers.

Let me touch on other issues:

Homecoming event is scheduled with some modifications due to the delta variant.

The makeup Commencement for Class 2020 was supposed to be a super event, but with the mitigation and masking, it would not be the same experience, so we moved it to Spring 2022, which gives us more options with nicer weather and outdoor venues.

Gallagher welcomed Carla Panzella as the new Dean of Students.

John Wallace was named Director for the Center for Race and Social Problems.

Scott Bernotas is now our VC for Facilities Management.

Coffee drinkers noticed new locations on Saxbys on campus. These are café places run by students from the School of Business.

The largest gift in the history of Pitt Athletics of \$20 million given by Chris Bickell to the Panthers football program happened last weekend.

I was happy to announce 9 winners to the Chancellor Staff Award. This is the highest honor and I congratulate all the winners.

Black Lives in Focus – public art exhibit set up on the lawn between Heinz Memorial Chapel and the Cathedral of Learning – opening is scheduled for tonight and the Remembering 9/11 event for tomorrow in Posvar patio amphitheater.

There were no additional questions for Chancellor Gallagher.

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

Hello and Welcome back to another exciting year! I will open my report here for you as I opened for Faculty Assembly.

- *I want to thank so many of you for warmly welcoming me into this role. I appreciate your encouragement and confidence.*
- *I want to thank all of you for being committed to our students, teaching, and research during extraordinary times. I know you have been called on to do more, on short notice, and I appreciate your dedication. These extraordinary times create personal and societal upheaval that is difficult but necessary, and, hopefully, gives us the opportunity to do things better and focus on what is most important.*

To the assembly, I offered a bit about my personal and educational background. I will not repeat that, but I will compare becoming Senate President to a personal story.

Twenty years ago, I learned how to scuba dive at a beach in Monterey, California, in the frigid waters of the Pacific Ocean.

- *When you learn how to do this, much time is spent preparing, learning the equipment, reading manuals, and understanding the tanks. My previous Senate work was like this preparation, being Vice President, a Faculty Assembly member, and my Senate Committee work. Bonneau even gave me a manual. However, in scuba diving and the Senate, nothing truly prepares you for*

walking into the very cold, very murky water. They tell you; you will get used to it, but I wonder if you ever really do.

- *In diving, you always have at least one buddy. In the Senate, I am happy to have four. I am happy to be working with Kris Kanthak as Vice President, Gosia Fort as Secretary, Chris Bonneau as Past President, and Lori Molinaro as Director of the Senate Office.*
- *Diving on the Monterey Coast is different. There are large kelp forests that grow from the seabed to the top of the water, growing about 1 foot per day. It is easy to get lost and tangled. I spent my first dive terrified that my equipment would get tangled in the kelp. Our important Senate issues feel like this, we must keep gliding, keep a buddy, and not get stuck.*
- *In Senate work as in diving there are moments of joy. When you catch a glimpse of a curious seal or an otter or the sea stars on the ocean bed, it's wondrous. When you make a difference in Senate work, it is no small miracle.*

On to the issues:

In-person Start

- *Faculty are relieved to see the vaccination rates for many groups meet and exceed 80%. At the faculty assembly last week, there was still a consensus for moving towards a vaccine requirement. I think we would all like to see numbers above 90% as it is at universities that have requirements. There was questions and discussion on the specifics of facilities and physical classrooms.*
- *Faculty are having the slowest response rate to the vaccination disclosure request; I encourage all faculty to take a moment and upload your card.*
- *I know that many faculty are eager to return to in person learning in the safest way possible, and I encourage all to read the CMRO weekly email and keep informed at the coronavirus.pitt.edu website. I am hearing many questions and stories and there will be more as move into this new phase.*
- *I am part of and pleased that the Resilience Steering Committee has begun meeting again. This group of various administrators, student, staff, and faculty perspectives from all campuses is very much needed for discussion and question raising as the pandemic evolves.*

Unionization Vote

- *There is a very important vote on union representation going on right now for approximately 3,000 faculty members (a large portion of our 5,200 faculty.) If you are part of this voting, please do so. It is very important that everyone votes.*
- *As we are elected to represent all faculty, I want the Faculty Assembly and Senate Council to take a neutral position on whether those eligible should vote yes or no. We will not be an obstacle nor an advocate for either position.*
- *I am continuing to examine interaction between faculty unions and faculty governance at other institutions and in the research.*
- *As many of you have been doing, I encourage all of you to share your opinion and perspective on the union effort, if you are comfortable doing so.*
- *There was concern discussed at the last week's Faculty Assembly that the medical school faculty are not included in the vote.*

Dependent Care Ad Hoc Committee

- *Next month, I plan to bring the creation of an ad hoc committee to both assembly and council. This ad hoc committee would be looking at the many aspects of dependent care, including childcare and elder care. I have found that there are varied issues that can be examined and unified under one group, that belong under more than one existing committee's purview. I feel that focusing a committee with the purpose to act, benchmark, and recommend will be beneficial for this issue.*
- *While I will be thinking about who is best to serve on this committee, if you think of someone I should consider, including yourself, please let me know within the next two weeks. I cannot promise to include all who might be suggested, but I would appreciate your recommendations.*

One more note on the scuba diving: My reward for that extremely cold scuba diving training was a dive on the Great Barrier Reef. It was a magnificent experience in the end, seeing the reef, swimming next to a 10-foot-wide manta ray and seeing a 6-foot reef shark below me. I have a feeling that for me, being Senate President will be a mix of that same joy and terror and I am enjoying the challenge.

To close my report, I would like to take a moment and reflect on a 20-year anniversary happening in two days. 9/11 profoundly changed American life, culture, politics, and foreign policy. I was living out in California on that day, 3 hours behind New York, and when I arrived at work, I heard the news. The worst had already occurred, and it was all-consuming. Life simply stopped. I remember weeping that day for all that was lost. The day was so monumental and so utterly changed us that there was a pre and a post to that tragic event. I will remind us that our undergraduates have only known an America that is post-9/11. Perfect early September days, 75 degrees, blue skies, and sunny with a few clouds, always cause me to take a moment and remember. This weekend, I hope that we can all take a moment to remember.

VI. Reports of Student Members of Senate Council:

A. Student Government Board (SGB), Harshitha Ramanan (submitted in written)

Hello Everyone! I hope you have had a good start to the school year.

The update today is on the longer side. Student Government Board has completed their transition and we are all well into working on our initiatives this year.

Our first updates will be regarding some events coming up soon.

- *I Love Pitt Day will be taking place this month on the 22nd from 11:30-1:30 p.m. We hope all of you can join us this year for I Love Pitt Day and spread the word to the student body.*
- *Fall Safety Fair, which will take place September 28th from 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. We will be joined by Pitt Police, Pittsburgh Bureau of the Police, Student Health Services, Business and Axillary Services, Active Minds, Healthy Ride, Venture Outdoors, Environmental Health, and Safety Nursing Student Association, Office of Engagement and Community Affairs. The event's goal is to teach students how to be safe while performing their day-to-day activities, promote getting vaccinated, and social activities that are safe to enjoy. I would like to take a second and congratulate our FTT chair, Isabel Lam for putting this event together.*
- *Mental Health Awareness Month (also commonly referred to as MHAM) in October, but we are getting kick-started at the end of this month with events. We have around 14*

student organizations taking part in MHAM this year along with partners within the university such as the Student Counseling Center. Planned events include:

- Intersectionality Round Table series with various faculty members to discuss what mental health stigmas, how to address them, and how to open up healthy conversations/daily practices. (October 7th and 14th in the WPU and October 21st, and 22nd virtually).*
- Pitfalls of Parental Pressure*
- The Golden Hour Story: Meditation, Stress Relief, and Lifestyle.*

We all are aware that students mental health deteriorated a lot over the pandemic. We would appreciate if you could spread the word and participate in these events. Students need to know now more than ever that you stand with them, you understand what they are going through, and you are there for them. I would once again like to take a moment to say a big thank you to our VPI, Danielle Floyd, Wellness chair Lily Schneider and D&I Chair Julia Le, who managed to make this the biggest MHAM which SGB has ever put together.

Other updates:

- SGB has been working with Provost Cudd and VP McCarthy to ensure that they are aware of the concerns students have about returning to in-person classes.*
- The Civic Engagement Hub Fellowship application is due at the end of the week and soon there will be interviews conducted to see which student will work with SGB & Pitt Serves to connect students of all backgrounds with civic engagement opportunities on campus and in the community.*
- Outside Financial Accounts Pilot program - SGB is working on this initiative so student organizations will be able to keep their own bank account and independently manage their finances in order to improve efficiency and flexibility and reduce the workload on both club business managers and SORCE Employees.*

Although we are working on much more, I will end my report here and SGB hopes to see you at some of our upcoming events. Thank you all.

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

(submitted in written)

The College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG) is already off to a quick start to this year.

Events:

- College of General Studies New Student Orientation where we spoke to interested students about being a part of CGSSG this academic year.*
- First board meeting to discuss the upcoming year and our goals. During this meeting, our board voted to appoint our committee chairpersons:
Allocations: Righteous Caldwell
Judicial Affairs: Carly Swartz
Event Planning & Outreach: Sefakor Agbemadzo*

Our board also voted unanimously on a resolution to support the efforts to unionize Pitt Faculty.

Looking Ahead:

- *Planning to collaborate with SGB on Mental Health Awareness Month*
- *Early stage of planning for Non-traditional Student week*
- *Looking forward to Homecoming event. I recently met with Katy Wallander from the alumni office and our CGSSG advisor, Pat McGrane, to discuss the Homecoming event for this year as well as the potential for future events between CGSSG and CGS alumni. While the logistics of these events are still to be determined due to public health concerns, we are excited to be a part of these events and to continue to build up our reputation and presence on campus as we begin to return to some semblance of normalcy.*

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

Pierce expressed excitement to start a new year and talked about some very successful engagement efforts for graduate students:

- great turnout at the Orientation Picnic and at the Welcome Back Happy Hour (sold out event)
- Wellness Coffee hour with therapy dogs, yoga and brunch for students scheduled for tomorrow
- Mental health is important and we want to be mindful how to engage students

She concluded her report with announcement about first GPSSG assembly meeting scheduled for September 21.

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

Good afternoon Senate Council members, the University of Pittsburgh Postdoc Association is excited to be back and to work with everyone here this academic year. We've had a very productive summer semester and have continued and will continue to be hosting our programming virtually for this Fall. I am unsure what % of postdocs have reported their vaccine status, however, we have been promoting the Vaccine Clinic to current and new postdocs and will continue to do so. National Postdoc Appreciation Week starts on 9/20. We are excited to be collaborating with our peers on the Philly side of PA, Temple University, CHOP, and UPenn, to coordinate virtual programming for postdocs during appreciation week ranging from career development to networking themed. We look forward to hosting our 3rd annual postdoc welcome orientation, virtually again like last year, and want to thank Dr. Godley in advance for joining us at this event to welcome our new postdocs to campus.

Good to see everyone again and look forward to the rest of our meetings! That concludes my report.

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

I am Amy Kleebank, Staff Council's Vice President of Public Relations. It's an honor to be here to provide the report for Staff Council. Angie and Kenny send their apologies for being unable to attend.

Good afternoon President Kear, Chancellor Gallagher, Senate Council officers and members of Senate Council, both those returning and those joining us for the first time. Staff Council is excited for the new academic year and the opportunities it presents to partner with many of the groups represented at this table to advance the University's mission. We thank you for your continued hard work and support as we navigate constantly changing times and fallout from a pandemic we could not have predicted. Just 2 years ago, seemed like "the good old days". For some, consistency felt like monotony. For others, consistency was comfort. We have all learned to remain flexible, be resilient and to persevere.

In June, our Operations Committee and ad-hoc Elections Committee stayed very busy coordinating the Staff Council elections for officer positions. The 2021-2023 officers are Angela Coldren - President, Kenny Doty – Executive Vice President, Yvonne Brewster – VP of Finance, Amy Kleebank – VP of Public Relations, and Christine Jackson – Parliamentarian. We would like to thank the previous officers, Tammeka Banks and Debbie Whitfield. Andy Stephany, previous President, is now our President Emeritus, and we will pick his brain for knowledge and advice.

We want to congratulate Andy on receiving the Chancellor's Award for University Engagement, and Tiwanda Taylor for receiving the Chancellor's Award for Student Impact.

In August, Staff Council elected Chairs and Vice Chairs to our standing committees, and we welcomed 18 new members, increasing our voting membership to 90. We continue to seek a more representative and diverse staff voice within Staff Council.

Our standing committees are off to a strong start. Our Staff Relations Committee is working on establishing a Staff Emergency Fund, continuing the ongoing work with HR especially in the Benefits area, and working more closely with Staff Council's newest standing committee, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The two committees are discussing mentorship opportunities and recruitment practices.

The EDI Committee continues to work on with the Job Creep survey sent to staff earlier this year. The response rate was higher than we could have expected, and many staff have asked to have individual discussions with Staff Council members regarding the survey and their personal experiences. We plan to present information about the survey to Dr. DeJong and Mark Burdsall. The EDI Committee had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Clyde Pickett and his staff and look forward to continuing these meetings on a regular basis.

The Staff Life Committee is working with the Pitt Police to set up another Campus Safety Crawl. The City of Pittsburgh is interested to hear about previous Safety Crawls and possibly be involved in future ones. They continue to get the word out to departments about active killer training and address on-campus parking issues/questions as parking seems to be one of the most frequent concerns we are hearing about.

External Relations is discussing the revival of the Council of Campuses meeting with a possible “reunion” in the Spring. For those of you unfamiliar with the Council of Campuses, each spring a different campus hosts the meeting and Staff Council members from all campuses meet to discuss concerns specific to their campus or just show off a new construction or renovations. It is an opportunity to network and a time to show specific campus pride. With virtual technology, this may be simpler than we could have imagined a decade ago. Staff Life is also working on improving staff messaging either through the Staff Council Newsletter or a regular piece in the University Times.

Staff Council encourages all staff, students, and faculty to participate in the annual Pitt Day of Caring on October 8, 2021. We ask the University to continue to emphasize that participation in the Pitt Day of Caring, an institutional day of volunteerism, is considered a paid, approved absence, based on office needs, and encourage their staff to participate.

Our next general meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 12pm. This meeting, and future meetings for at least 6-12 months, will be held virtually. We have had increased attendance at virtual meetings. 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. Thank you for your attention.

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 4:03 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, Bench, Bonneau, Bonner, Brodt, Buchanich, Bunger, Cilli, Conley, Cudd, Denman, De Vallejo, Doty, Fort, Gallagher, Gau, Gregerson, Henker, Jeong, Kanthak, Kear, Kiselyov, Kleebank, Klem, Kovacs, Labrinidis, Maier, McCormick, Molinaro, Murtazashvili, Newman, Pacella-LaBarbara, Pierce, Potoski, Ramanan, Rauktis, Roberts, Rutenbar, Sant, Sastry, Schuster, Scott, Shekhar, Taboas, Tashbook, Wood, Yeager, Yearwood, Zack

Members not attending:

Floyd, Hall, A. Jones, Kesbhat, Khan, Kory, Mulcahy, Murphy, Oyler, Vento

*Excused attendance:

Coldren, DeJong, Judd, Kiesling, Paterson, Washington

Others attending:

Ayers, Chou, Dostilio, Fike, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, Jeffrey, Jones, McGrane, Moran, Panzella, Pelt, Pickett, Pope, Roadman, SantaCasa, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Walker, Washo, Watt, Zwick

*Notified Senate Office