

## **Senate Council Meeting Minutes**

**Via Zoom**

**Thursday, October 14, 2021**

### **I. Call to Order**

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm and 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 September 9, 2021 were approved as written.

### **III. Items of New Business**

No items of new business were raised.

### **IV. Report of the Chancellor**

Chancellor Gallagher skipped the COVID report since the cases are low and steady and asked Mark Harding who had no chance to speak last month to give a brief update on admissions. Harding said that we welcomed the largest class in the history – 4927 students, which represents 14.6% increase over the last year. The number of transfer students 626 was also greater by 9%. He emphasized also the following key points: Pell recipients – increase of 21.4%, Pell eligible recipients enrolling in three year since program initiated is up nearly 60% (these students represent 18% of our classes), 17.2% increase in the number of new first year minorities students, 17% increase in resident first year students.

He said we were expecting 4315 students but 428 more residents enrolled than we expected. What happened this year might happen the next year, too. This is something that we are going to watch and adjust. He reported also on the numbers of non-resident students, African American and Hispanic students, for each group all numbers were up by respectively 10.8%, 11.5% and 9.3%. Our University did not experience dramatic drops in enrollment that many other universities did.

Chancellor Gallagher reiterated that admission process is based on assumptions, on what we know about demand and our historical data, but almost all of those assumptions this year were off. He said as surprising as it was, it was still a better situation than not having students. For regional campuses, the situation was not that rosy and they saw some decline in enrollment. A year ago when pandemic struck and we wondered how this would affect the demand, now we see it going in the direction nobody predicted.

He brought up the state budget as a related issue, though it is early in the budget cycle, there are signals that it may be a rough year for state related institutions. There is a lot of dynamics at play, not all budgetary, and we will have to work to assure that we would have state support. SVC Harry Sastry testified in Harrisburg on a wide range of issues related to the funding of higher education. They discussed ideas of replacing institutional funding (appropriation) with student based funding or voucher based programs. Chancellor thought it signaled an early start of budget season and that this year, it would be important for the lawmakers to hear from our alumni, staff, faculty or students or business stakeholders or regional leaders and to remind them that we are an essential part of what makes Commonwealth a great place to live and raise families.

Then, he talked about the vaccines. Our vaccination progress continues with busy vaccination clinics and high vaccination rates (overall 90%). Our current infection control program is robust and it combines vaccination, testing and masking. We continue to work on a different path of ensuring and enforcing safety on our campus, since the building access control is not optimal for the long term. If we are going to change this for the spring semester, time is of the essence, so we are working on the interim policy right now, which then would be augmented with full policy looking at long term approach.

Chancellor asked Washington to say few words about the vote for unionization of our faculty, which concluded this week. Washington said that counting of the votes would begin in Harrisburg on October 19. Representatives from the University and from the Union will be there to observe. Once the votes are certified, there will be 20-day period when the votes could be challenged. Chancellor added that the Administration took a neutral position, so it is up to the faculty. He will keep us updated but he does not find helpful to comment on something that did not happen yet.

Two major events in Pittsburgh:

1. First meeting between the US delegation and EU to discuss formation of the Trade and Technology Council. Some of the speakers, including Secretary of State visited our Center for Vaccine Research
2. Eradicate Hate Global Summit, which originated in Pittsburgh in response to the anti-Semitic attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue. Our community was deeply involved and I encourage you to look at their website <https://eradicatehatesummit.org/> and participate

Finally, he acknowledged also:

1. Homecoming which happened at the end of September
2. Unveiling of the Divine Nine Plot celebrating history of the black fraternities and sororities
3. Funeral for Freddie Fu, the remarkable orthopedic surgeon
4. United Way campaign kickoff lead by Mark Henderson

There were no questions for Chancellor Gallagher.

V. **Report of Senate President, Robin Kear** (submitted in written and shorten during the oral presentation)

*Grief and Loss*

- *The recent art installation on the Washington D.C. mall titled “In America: Remember” by Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg held more than 600,000 small flags to represent each American life lost in this pandemic. Visitors could send or write messages on the flags representing their lost loved ones. It was a powerful installation that reminds me of the many losses we are dealing with.*
- *We are now in the deadliest pandemic in modern times. There are over 2,000 deaths in Allegheny County, almost 30,000 in Pennsylvania, 700,000 American lives gone, and 4.5 million deaths worldwide.*
- *Pitt recently lost the great orthopedic surgeon, Freddie Fu, who touched so many lives.*
- *October brings us to the 3-year anniversary of the Tree of Life mass shooting that affected so many of us in the Pitt community.*

*I hear you.*

- *All of us, students, faculty, and staff, are all carrying our different experiences with the pandemic. We have different levels of comfort, anxiety, and loss. We have different ideas and expectations of our new normal.*
- *I acknowledge how difficult it is to be transitioning back to in person events, classes, and meetings. It is exhausting I hear you say in a common refrain.*
- *If you are experiencing mental health strain, burnout, or are feeling overwhelmed, please take a moment and reach out. Know that you are not alone and that there are others that care. Reach out to someone you feel safe with, another student, a family member, a friend, a counselor, or even your friendly librarian (that’s me).*

*Committees*

- *I have been away from the detailed mechanisms of the Senate for two years. Some aspects of my return have been very familiar, working with the officers and administrators, the schedules of meetings, the rhythm of the academic year.*
- *I have attended all the Senate Committee meetings scheduled this month, the first ones of the academic year. I find the different cultures of the committees that are cultivated by the chairs fascinating. The committee chairs and the officers will be meeting tomorrow Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup> for an Expanded Executive Committee meeting where we will discuss their priorities. Thank you to all committee chairs and members for their service to the Senate.*
- *Some aspects of my return have surprised me, beyond our normal operating mechanisms, we are dealing with a return to classrooms after a mostly remote teaching year, the Delta surge (which may be abating), and a new general level of anxiety.*

*Vaccine Requirement*

- *As the Chancellor mentioned at our last Senate Council meeting, there are distinct groups being formed to examine and recommend the consequences related to a COVID-19 vaccine requirement. I was part of a group organized by the Provost to examine the possible consequences for faculty of noncompliance*
- *I am glad of this movement towards a requirement.*

*Budget Model ReSTART*

- *The new proposed Budget Model has been approved by the members of the Steering Committee. The chairs are drafting a letter, summary, and presentation for the Chancellor. Assuming approval, the new budget model is to be run parallel to the current budget later this year.*
- *There was a discussion of the Steering Committee on shared governance in the budget decision making process. Myself, Chris Bonneau, and the Budget Policies Committee member representative Gary Hollibaugh, were present. I believe there will be more budget transparency for various groups under the new model, more roles for faculty representation including senate committee representation, it keeps faculty and staff involvement the same in the UPBC, with new involvement in space management.*
- *The Budget Policies Committee will be discussing the budget model governance structures, including the PBS (Planning and Budget System), that will need to be updated at their 10/22 meeting.*

#### *Resilience Steering Committee*

- *This group is meeting biweekly. This committee is mostly information sharing on the status of each campus in regard to COVID-19 cases, noncompliance of mandatory testing and related matters but can take feedback and comments to the Healthcare Advisory Group and the CMRO.*
- *This meeting brings it home to me how much work we are all doing to keep our Pitt community safe and healthy, and how many committed people it takes to make things happen in an institution our size.*

#### *Policy Work*

- *A Policy initiative to draft a new University Policy on Institutional Conflict of Interest ("ICOI"). Research Committee Co-chair Shilpa Sant will serve on this policy charter committee. After the draft is completed, the Senate Research Committee is the one that will review this policy before it comes to Assembly and Council.*
- *Faculty Affairs examined and gave feedback for the new Protection of Children policy and procedure. This will now move to Benefits and Welfare for feedback.*

#### *Academic Searches*

- *The Provost's office is running a search for the next Director of UCSUR. The Senate Office is running an election for two candidates from those faculty affiliated with UCSUR. UCSUR search that the Senate is running has 5 candidates.*
- *Elections will run Oct. 15-21. The voters are those same faculty affiliated with UCSUR.*

#### *Other*

- *Kris Kanthak and I have been meeting with the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of our state related cousins.*
- *Take a moment to check out the recognition of the Divine 9 near the union. This is a monument to Pitt's alumni and students who are part of the nine historically black or African-American fraternities and sororities.*
- *Pitt's 2022 Middle States accreditation process is under way, and the steering committee leading the process seeks input from the Pitt community about who we are and where we're headed. Share your thoughts by Oct. 15. [https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9RfjVv0IZAkAfz0](https://pitt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9RfjVv0IZAkAfz0)*

- *Born out of the grief of the Tree of Life massacre is the inaugural Eradicate Hate Global Summit 2021. The summit is being held here in Pittsburgh from October 18-20. You can attend in person at the convention center or view live streaming of some of the programming.*

#### **Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Dependent Care**

- *The Executive Committee and I bring the creation of an ad hoc committee for dependent care for a vote. This ad hoc committee will be looking at different aspects of dependent care, including childcare and elder care, in relation to existing Pitt policies and potential benefits. I believe that policy change can promote retention, scholarly productivity, diversity, and inclusion.*
- *I think that focusing a committee with the purpose to act, benchmark, review, and recommend will be beneficial for these issues.*
- *I have identified a chair for this work, Anna Wang-Erickson. Anna is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Associate Director, Institute for Infection, Inflammation, and Immunity in Children (i4Kids), a joint research effort between Pitt and UPMC. Besides her many other accomplishments, she received a 2020-23 Pitt Seed Grant related to dependent care support.*
- *We are still formalizing the other members of the committee to include faculty, staff, administrators, and postdocs.*

#### **Related:**

- *There is continued work on these issues from our HR and Business and Operations areas, which I am thankful for. Care.com is a new emergency care benefit available to full-time faculty, staff, and postdocs. This benefit brings a total of 10 available backup care days for child and adult care per program year to be used for work-related purposes, and tuition discounts on tutoring and local and national childcare centers. <https://www.hr.pitt.edu/current-employees/work-life-balance/caring-family/carecom>*

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

### **A. Student Government Board (SGB), Harshitha Ramanan**

SGB is working on:

- Establishing more gender neutral bathrooms in Hillman Library which consistently brought up concern;
- Coming up police town hall meeting (work with Dean Panzella, VP Bonner and Black Senate);
- SGB government code and funds to see they support student philanthropy groups;
- Student Task Force is offering ambassador training before 2022 primary;
- World tour initiative in progress;
- Multiple events for the Mental Health Awareness Month.

**B. College of General Studies Student Government (CGSSG), Ryan Yeager**  
(submitted in written)

Yeager's report was short so he could make to class in time:

- Negotiated first pay increase for the CGS board since a very long time, so CGS student government board can have comparable pay to the other student government boards
- We received our budget and working on how to utilize it the best
- Organized events for the nontraditional student week
- Participate in the Mental Health Awareness Month and looking at the impact on the nontraditional students mental health
- Met with Harshitha to discuss collaboration on many things, on which he would be updating us in the coming month; New York Times subscription for students was among many issues discussed

Chancellor Gallagher was pleased to see the collaboration between the two student boards.

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

Pierce opened her report with the information that the Assembly Board meeting passed the yearly budget. Then provided the following updates"

- Heard from Dr. Dar about some resources offered to graduate student at the counseling center
- Issued statement supporting the unionization efforts in collaboration with CGSSG
- Events for graduate students (Pirates game, wellness coffee hour, panel discussion for the queer History Month together with PAN-Af , Drag Show and Bingo Night in collaboration with other organizations, Kennywood Fright Night (Oct 29), Gradsgiving (Nov 19 - Thanksgiving meal for students staying on campus during Thanksgiving holiday), Holiday Happy Hour on Dec 9)

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

*Good afternoon Senate Council members, hope everyone is well. I am pleased to report that we had once again a successful postdoc appreciation week and successful virtual version of annual postdoc retreat where we welcomed new postdocs to campus. Thank you to Dr. Amanda Godley for her support with this event and for welcoming postdocs to the University and also providing a gift card for coffee to the roughly 800 postdocs on campus. For postdoc appreciation week this year, we co-hosted programming with postdoc associations from the eastern side of PA (Temple, Jefferson, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and Fox Chase Cancer Center).*

*I'd also like to highlight that we are hosting a webinar on Oct 25 which will cover applications for permanent residence, national interest waivers and extraordinary ability petitions, H-1B visas after graduation, and recent changes in US immigration. We are happy to have anyone interested in any of these topics join us.*

*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. I am happy to be here with you today and apologize for missing the September meeting. As hard as I tried to make it, outside forces were working against me. I had a scheduling conflict, but that commitment finished early. Good news, I thought? But at 2:52, my cell phone rang, and I needed to pick my youngest son up from school for the first of multiple quarantines in September. I'm really hoping we've turned the page...fingers crossed.*

*At the September meeting, Amy Kleebank, our Vice President of Public Relations, presented our report. Thank you, Amy! A little about me, I am the Director of Administrative Support in the Office of Research Protections. I have been at the University 25 years (starting work when I was 10). I have been a part of Staff Council for about 21 years and was an officer for multiple years with Rich Colwell, Babs Mowery, and Gwen Watkins. So, some of you who have served on Senate Council for a while may recognize my face.*

*Although repetitive, Staff Council wants to thank everyone for their continued hard work and resiliency through the daily challenges we face. We appreciate having an open dialogue with senior leadership about staff concerns and investigating ways we can improve the Pitt experience. We continue to meet with Dr. DeJong, Mark Burdsall and Yvonne Powers about human resources matters. We recently met with Chancellor Gallagher and his Chief of Staff, Kevin Washo. And I continue to develop a working relationship with Senate Council President Robin Kear. During the interview process for the new Vice Chancellor of Human Resources, we were invited to a meet and greet with the final candidate. For us, this is an important example of shared governance, and we look forward to future opportunities. Wink wink, Dave.*

*The Staff Council Endowed Book Fund committee is being convened and the search for this year's chair has started. The Book Fund award is eligible to Pitt students who are children and dependents of University of Pittsburgh staff members at all campuses.*

*Our Staff Relations Committee continues to 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. Staff Relations continues ongoing discussions with HR especially in the Benefits area.*

*The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee continues to work with Dr. Clyde Pickett's office and will assist with a future campus climate survey. Members of this committee have played a significant part in the Job Creep survey and have prepared follow-up questions for initial survey participants. Their work with survey participants continues to be honest and mindful which is appreciated.*

*The Staff Life Committee has been actively discussing the parking struggles on the Oakland campus and Port Authority bussing problems with Assistant Vice Chancellor Kevin Sheehy. We are anticipating new options that could make the overall parking situation better and we are happy to partner with Kevin in getting the message of any changes out to the staff.*

*External Relations began discussing the revival of the Council of Campuses meeting. We have a virtual meeting with regional campus Staff Council officers in November 2021. This is a start, and we are hoping it will evolve into a more interactive meeting including more than just the officers in the Spring or Summer of 2022.*

*Staff Council continues to discuss ways of improving staff messaging either through the Staff Council Newsletter or a regular piece in the University Times, and working with senior leaders regarding communication platforms such as town halls. We have been inundated with information over the past 18 – 20 months, but some staff do not receive messages, do not fully understand processes, or simply ignore messaging. If we can close the gaps and be more transparent with upcoming changes and revisions, we can begin to eliminate the “rumors” and misconceptions that are leading to diminished employee morale.*

*Thank you to all who participated in the Pitt Day of Caring on October 8, 2021. The weather could not have been better, especially for outdoor projects. The Staff Council project site was located at Shiloh Baptist Church in South Park, PA. We beautified the exterior and interior by landscaping, building storage shelves and organizing supplies. Everyone’s hard work makes a significant impact for our communities and our neighbors allowing them to tackle what may seem like overwhelming tasks. Next year’s SC site will be at my house, organizing!*

*Our next general meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, 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](mailto:sc@pitt.edu) for a virtual invitation. This concludes our report. Thank you for your attention and patience!*

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

The last piece of business comes from the Senate President Robin Kear. It is a vote to form Ad Hoc Committee on Dependent Care, which passed last week at the Faculty Assembly. Therefore the Executive Committee is bringing this issue today for your vote. This ad hoc committee will be looking at different aspects of dependent care, including childcare and elderly care in relation to existing Pitt policies and potential benefits. Kear believes that the change in policy can help us promote retention, productivity, diversity and inclusion efforts. She identified Anna Wang-Erickson as the chair of this committee.

Kear invited comments and questions.

Labrinidis said that this is a great initiative, essential to what Gallagher said earlier, that pandemic is accelerating things and this area is important so people know they have the support.

Kear announced that Lori opened the poll to vote and that we would take both digital and physical vote.

Result: Yes – 35 , No – 0 ,Abstain 0 – passed unanimously

Concluding her presentation, Kear mentioned was that there was a continued work on these issues from Human Resources and Management and Operations. Care.com was added as our new emergency care



benefit for all full time faculty, staff and postdocs. There is also 10 available back up days per year for child and adult care for work related purposes.

**X. Unfinished Business and/or New Business**

None

**XI. Announcements**

None

**XI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4 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:

Bonneau, Bonner, Brodt, Buchanich, Bungler, Coldren, Conley, Cudd, Denman, DeJong, De Vallejo, Floyd, Fort, Gallagher, Gau, Gregerson, Henker, Kanthak, Kear, Kleebank, Klem, Labrinidis, Maier, McCormick, Molinaro, Newman, Pacella-LaBarbara, Paljug, Pierce, Ramanan, Rauktis, Roberts, Rutenbar, Sastry, Schuster, Scott, Shekhar, Tashbook, Washington, Wood, Yeager, Zack

Members not attending:

Almarza, Bench, Cilli, Doty, Hall, Jeong, A. Jones Judd, Kesbhat, Khan, Kieselyov, Kiesling, Kory, Kovacs, Mulcahy, Murphy, Murtazashvili, Oyler, Potoski, Sant, Taboas, Vento, Yearwood

\*Excused attendance:

Paterson

Others attending:

Ayars, Dostilio, Harding, Harrell, Hitter, McGrane, Moran, Murren, Pelt, SantaCasa, Seldin, Staresinic, Supowitz, Suresh, Turner, Watt, Yates-Binder, Ying-Tung

\*Notified Senate Office