

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**  
**Senate Educational Policies Committee**  
**October 17, 2016**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** David Beck, Leslie Poljack, Bonnie Falcione, A. Murat Kaynar, Douglas Landsittel, Helen Petracchi, John Stoner, Pamela Rikstad, Zsuzsa Horvath, Juan Manfredi, Alberta Sbragia  
**Excused:** Amy E. Aggelou, Michael Beach, Jacqueline Gross, Sarah Najjar, M. Mario Browne, Boryana Dobрева-Schalk, Kathleen Kelly, Laurel Roberts  
**Not Present:** Joseph Kannarkat, Barbara Kucinski, Arash Mahboobin, Frank Wilson, Susan Skledar, Lori A. Molinaro

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Doug Landsittel (Chair) at ~3pm.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the September, 2016 meeting were approved pending an additional note on the process for holding closed/executive sessions; the Chair will add this and distribute the minutes again for approval.

**New Business**

- New Business was captured under the Vice Provost Updates below.

**Old Business**

- Work group updates
  - Working Group on Issues Related to Student Opinions of Teaching Online Surveys
    - Committee member Beach was not present for an update.
  - Working Group on Digital Ethics
    - Co-Chair Falcione discussed 3 issues being considered for addressing digital ethics, including 1) making training tools available, 2) common repositories for information, and 3) procedures for revisiting ethics training.

**Vice Provost updates**

**Undergraduate**

- Vice Provost Juan Manfredi provided his report:
  - The Periodic Review Report is moving forward.
  - Two guidelines were discussed, including transcript annotations, which have to be approved and linked to a specific activity that is not covered by a minor or certificate. The University Honors College has requested that a note be created for UHC scholars. Guidelines were also discussed for research internships, which may involve students outside of the University. These arrangements must cover possible risk and should give priority to our students.
    - Web site for guidelines for undergraduate visitors:  
<http://www.provost.pitt.edu/documents/Students%20Research%20Experience%20GuidelineFINAL.pdf>
  - Vice Provost Manfredi also discussed the ROTC-related advising issues. Pittsburgh is recognized as a military friendly institution, which includes a very regulated process. Advisors have to sign a plan, which has concerned some faculty, but we are not obligated to anything if the student does not pass our requirements. It was also noted that we are not a service-oriented school, and thus do not give credit for military science courses.

## Graduate

- Vice Provost Alberta Sbragia provided her report:
  - There was some discussion on the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) process and associated concerns from students. Vice Provost Sbragia has been in contact with concerned faculty and the University Library System (ULS), and will attempt to have ULS representatives discuss the related issues at a coming SEPC meeting.
  - There was also some further discussion (from both Vice Provosts) on OMETs and making teaching evaluations public in some selected settings. For instance, the College of Arts and Sciences was having meetings with the Dean to discuss the possibility of making OMETs publicly available. Concerns were expressed from some members of the SEPC regarding whether, on one hand, this would be inconsistent with the purpose of OMETs, but, on the other hand, whether students will otherwise simply look to other less reliable sources of information (e.g. Rate My Professor). Dr. Manfredi noted that individual schools dictate how they operate with OMETs or other evaluation systems, and some schools do maintain an inventory of teaching evaluations.

## Faculty Assembly update

- Chair Doug Landsittel provided an update from the Faculty Assembly held on October 11<sup>th</sup> and the Expanded Executive Committee Meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - The Faculty Assembly meeting on October 11<sup>th</sup> began with some opening notes from President Wilson on the Year of Diversity events and actions being undertaken by the Plenary Planning Committee.
  - The main item for discussion was consideration of the final policy from the Provost's special committee on consensual relationships.
    - The latest revision of the "Consensual Relationships Policy" was shared on via email with the Faculty Assembly members for early review prior to the meeting.
    - Vice-Provost Kirsch stated the purpose of Faculty Assembly today was to talk about the policy on consensual relationships, to hear input, and to answer questions. She then gave some background on the previous ad hoc committee specific to sexual harassment and reiterated the importance of that policy, and then summarized the committee's work and the main points of the resulting consensual relationships policy.
    - A number of questions were then taken from the Faculty Assembly and discussed at length. Faculty Assembly Member Bircher seemed to best summarize the concerns with his comment that "The generic concern was that many phrases in the policy are not adequately defined. Perceived actions are to be reported and this forms the basis for disciplinary action, even if incorrect. We need further definition of many terms and procedural guidelines for responding to inaccurate allegations." Numerous other Members of the Faculty Assembly had related concerns, although most (with at least one exception) felt the general spirit of the proposed policy was appropriate.
    - It was decided that the policy should be revised and presented again to the Faculty Assembly at a later meeting to reconsider approval of the policy.
    - More specific meeting minutes can be found at [http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Oct%2011%202016\\_1.pdf](http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Oct%2011%202016_1.pdf).

- The Expanded Executive Committee Meeting was held on October 17<sup>th</sup> just prior to the current SEPC Meeting. During this meeting, the Chairs and Co-Chairs of each Committee presented a summary of the work from each committee and a few goals for the coming year.
  - Vice President Kear described plans for the upcoming Plenary Meeting, which will focus on research metrics and associated software, and concerns which have been raised about related software packages (which are already being used in practice). There was some discussion of whether teaching metrics would also be part of the Plenary Meeting since the topics are related, but a decision was made to limit the scope to research metrics only.
  - Other topics discussed by various committees included the following:
    - Budget Policies: Creating a report on salaries of part-time faculty.
    - Equity, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination Advocacy Committee: Creation of working groups on gender equality, personal leave issues, retaining female faculty; issues related to race and ethnicity; and support groups for alumni.
    - Governmental Relations: Expanding the role of Pitt faculty in Harrisburg and government relations.
    - Plant Utilization and Planning: Discussing ongoing strategic planning, including facility issues and safety.
    - Research: Revising policies specific to intellectual property. Encouraging community-based research efforts. Conducting a search for the new Senior Vice Chancellor for Research.
    - Tenure and Academic Freedom: The moratorium is still continuing on salary reductions given the concern of using only one metric (external funding) for such decisions. Concerns were also discussed specific to other uses of analytics and associated metrics.
    - The SEPC identified 3 issues as key topics: 1) teaching evaluations and associated metrics, 2) emerging challenges with technology, and 3) strategic planning.
    - Computer Usage: The committee is being more proactive on security issues. Pitt Passport multi-authentication process can be requested. Concerns about safe links, administrative rights, and expanded web presence were also discussed.

#### **Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence (ACIE) update**

- The first meeting has not yet taken place for this academic year, but we anticipate the call for Innovation in Education awards/funding will be announced soon.
- The previous Innovation in Education funding announcements have focused on technology and large classes.

**Next meeting is November 21, 2016 3pm in CL 826**

**Adjournment:** at ~4:30pm.

Links of potential interest:

- <http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/weeklyupdate> has an article on Improved Turnitin Integration with Blackboard.
- <http://www.chronicle.pitt.edu/> has an article on the new School of Computing and Information.
- Workshops are being held on “How Bias Creeps into Decision Making and How to Minimize Its Impact.” The first workshop in this series is titled “Are You Aware?” and will be held on November 29, 2016. This interactive theater performance explores obstacles in increasing diversity in faculty hiring. The link to register is at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/are-you-aware-with-theater-delta-tickets-29285311154>.
- Leslie Poljak also passed along some links related to academic integrity at [Academic Integrity: Avoiding Plagiarism and Understanding Research Ethics](#) and [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism Tutorial](#).