

Faculty Assembly Meeting Minutes
Via Hybrid
2700 Posvar Hall and Zoom

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

1. Call to Order

President Robin Kear called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Past Faculty Assembly Meeting

Kear asked for a motion to approve the minutes. On a motion duly made (Parker) and seconded (Stoner) the minutes of the October 4, 2023, Faculty Assembly Meeting were approved.

3. Items of New Business.

None

4. Report of the Senate President, Robin Kear (submitted in written form)

In my home we celebrate Halloween, and it can be a fun holiday, a chance to acknowledge Autumn and harvest, dress up and eat candy, and meet neighbors. I am glad for it, and if you celebrate, I hope that you took joy in it too.

War, and its devastation and destruction, is ongoing in many parts of the world, and is intensifying in the Israel-Hamas War. Our students, faculty, and staff continue to be impacted by these tragedies, and need support and community. It is sobering to read of the increase in antisemitic and Islamophobic remarks and actions on college campuses in the United States. I have talked to instructors about how difficult navigating these issues are in the classroom.

In the past month, there have been thoughtful events on our campus to further our empathy and understanding. I am heartened by the generosity of our faculty during an extremely difficult time, it is giving and gracious.

To recap a few:

- Talking About Israel and Palestine, sponsored in part by the Jewish Studies Center
- Human Rights Amid Violent Conflict: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Events in Israel and Gaza, sponsored by Pitt Global Studies

- Pitt United in Compassion, conceived and convened by Jennifer Murtazashvili and Abdesalam Soudi.

If you are struggling or impacted, there are resources available from OEDI, the Teaching Center, and avenues for counseling and reflection. During tumultuous events, we must hold tight to our humanity and the recognition of the humanity of others. I will paraphrase Jennifer Murtazashvili from the United in Compassion event “Compassion and unity are not idealistic notions; they are powerful forces.” I want to thank Jen and Soudi for holding that event, it was very powerful itself.

Provost Search Committee

- As you have seen from my email on Monday, our faculty elections were finalized, and the Provost Search Committee is in the process of gathering feedback for the position description. Thank you to those that attended in person on Zoom, you can also fill in the survey on the Provost Search website. <https://www.provostsearch.pitt.edu/>
- Chancellor Gabel invited me to serve on the Search Committee in the spirit of shared governance and I am happy to join my colleagues.
- If you have nominations for the search firm, Korn Ferry, please submit those using the form. They follow up on all suggestions. Prospect development continues through November.

Graduate Student Healthcare

- Work is proceeding through shared governance on the Student Health Insurance Task Force. As an update, which I did share at Senate Council,
 - After speaking with James Gallaher just before Senate Council a few weeks ago, since there is an expectation now that the Student Health Insurance Task Force will continue beyond one year, we agreed that this group for students can run in parallel with the Medical Advisory Committee for non-represented faculty and staff, under an umbrella group – the Human Relations Advisory Committee.

Senate Committees and Expanded Executive Committee

- This month I have been attending as many senate committee meetings as I can, at the start of the academic year. The committees drive the work of the Senate. Thank you all for your service commitment.
- We do have a few open spots on Senate Committees, so if you know of someone to approach please let me or Lori Molinaro know.
- The yearly meeting for the Expanded Executive Committee, consisting of the Senate Officers and the chairs/co-chairs of the Senate Committees, took place on Friday October 6th.

- We had a discussion of committee functions, general Q&A, a discussion of current committee issues, and a discussion of free speech vs. hate speech at the university. We decided to join broader educational efforts that are in place this year (Year of Dialogue) and will be in place next year (Campus Callout for Free Expression). If you have any ideas for these, please let me know. Thank you to the Chancellor and Interim Provost for joining us for the last hour for an open discussion.

University Policy Open for Comment

- Related to the new Vaccinations and Immunizations Policy, the removal of the COVID-19 requirement meant that the decommissioning of Interim Policy CS 29, COVID-19 Vaccination. The decommissioning of this interim policy is up for comment through November 16th.
- This policy was identified for potential decommissioning because it establishes requirements that are no longer operationally relevant or are no longer aligned with Federal, State, or local guidance.
- You can directly comment through the Policy Office website, or you can let me know your thoughts to incorporate into a Senate response.
- The decommissioning of this policy is also related to the finalization of the soon to be published draft of the Vaccination and Immunization Policy.

Interim Policy

- The last Senate Council heard the rationale for the interim policy on Research Data Management from Bill Yates, Vice Chancellor for Research Protections.
- The Research Committee heard the reasoning for this interim policy at their September meeting and found the interim policy to be reasonable. While the interim policy is substantial it does not substantially deviate from current practice and more closely aligns with federal requirements, and it included a representative from the Research Committee. There will be a permanent policy committee convened soon.

Items to watch for developments:

Federal Government

- A federal government shutdown would have an impact on the work we do here at Pitt. If this directly affects your work, keep on the lookout for more emails from the Research Office and others as needed when the stopgap funding agreement ends next month. I appreciated the communication and updating from our administration late last week when a shutdown seemed imminent earlier this month.
- Questions came up last month at Faculty Assembly about how a federal government shutdown impacts students, and I am following up with OAFA.

Artificial Intelligence

- The working group is continuing its discussions, and several Senate members continue to be involved in these deliberations that will result in recommendations.
- There was just a Presidential Executive Order on Artificial Intelligence that should help guide ethical and responsible development of AI.

Finally, a thank you,

- A thank you to Pitt's public safety teams for improved communications during crisis on or near campus. The alerts are very helpful for avoiding an area, and those that are interested can get authoritative information at emergency.pitt.edu.

Thank you all for your service and dedication to shared governance.

Any questions or comments on my report?

Keown: Concerning the covid vaccine policy, will the interim policy be replaced by a more permanent policy?

Kear: I was hoping that the draft policy would be made available at the same as the decommissioning of the interim policy but that has not happened. The decommissioning removes the requirement for vaccination and the new policy (vaccination and immunization policy) is under consideration by the policy committee.

5. Reports by and Announcements of the Special and Standing Committees of the Senate **Bylaws Resolution**

Dr. Nick Bircher, Bylaws and Procedures Chair

Bircher presented the revisions made to the Bylaws resolution on part-time faculty following the suggestions made at the previous Faculty Assembly. Several changes were made to the previous document. The concerns raised about the ability of part-time faculty hired on a term-to-term basis to fulfil their duties on FA have been addressed in the new document. Part-time faculty will not be eligible to be Senate officers and the resolution proposes limiting eligibility to FA, and committee chairmanships, to those faculty who have a one-year appointment. If the faculty member has appointment in two schools, they can only represent one school at a time.

Stoner: How many people are still excluded because they are only hired on a semester basis?

Bircher: We do not have those numbers.

Stoner: In our department we have several faculty that are hired on a semester basis but that has continued for multiple years. It would be nice to get those numbers from HR.

Stoner raised a question as to whether the language describing the positions needed to be changed.

Bircher: This is just an editorial change and will not require a bylaws change.

Tashbook: I have never heard of any part-time faculty wanting to run or participate. Does any one know the number of part-time faculty want to take part in these activities?

Bircher: Very few have utilized the opt-in option that existed before.

Tashbook: Do any departments require service from part-time faculty?

Kear: No there is no requirement.

Bircher: The likelihood that a part-time faculty will participate is quite low.

Scott: Thanks for this. This is much better. We had talked about whether to set up a committee for part-time faculty. Is this something the committee has considered?

Bircher: The committee has considered this and we are looking at a proposal to create constituency committees, which would require a bylaws change. A more informal mechanism is to establish constituency caucuses that would allow individuals who share interests and concerns to work together to solve them in less formal setting

Adams: At the Greensburg campus certain part-time faculty, who meet certain requirements, such as number of credits taught, years at the University, can become voting members of the Senate and can work on committees. There is a small number who do participate in committees, and this also includes staff. There is no expectation for them to participate but we do appreciate when they do that.

Vote:

Yes: 37; No: 1; Abstain: 1.

Access to and Use of University Computing Resources Policy

Ms. Angie Zack, CITC Chair

Zack presented the policy which outlines use of university computing resources. This was approved by SCITC at the September meeting. This is an update of an existing policy and the revisions include updates concerning fair and equitable use of resources, privacy language, and the responsibilities of the users and the university with respect to the use of university-owned computers and resources. It includes the addition that personally owned resources are not covered by the policy.

Questions?

LaMonica: Does this policy refer to physical resources or does it include online resources?

Hart: It covers all resources physical and online.

LaMonica: Does it also cover library resources?

Hart: Yes, it does in so far as the University provides access to the whole community and it is important to maintain fair and equitable access for all. If someone has a need to use a large amount of resources, we encourage them to contact Pitt IT in advance so that we can assist them with this.

Mattern: Does this affect visitor's access to Pitt systems?

Hart: Yes, it will affect visitors. To the extent that they are allowed to use the resources they will be covered by the same rules

Mattern: Does this cover whether they can access the resources?

Hart: The access to resources is determined by the department, and this policy does not define access but how the resource should be used.

Shafiq: I saw that it says that political activity is not allowed. This may infringe on free speech.

Hart: This has been brought up quite a lot. The intent of the policy is to say you cannot make political statements on behalf of the university, but you can make a statement on your personal website.

A robust discussion ensued concerning this issue as many student organizations may be using Pitt resources for political activity and that this is not covered in the policy. Several faculty members expressed these concerns including Stoner, Parker, Bonneau,

Kear: Suggested that the policy change add "on behalf of the University"

Hart: The intent of the policy is prevent political activity on behalf of the university.

This suggestion was not considered to be adequate by several FA members (Bonneau, Parker). It was felt that it is not good to vote on the "intent" of the policy and that the policy should say what it means. Also, adding "on behalf of the university" is not in keeping with the rest of the provisions in the policy that preclude the use of university resources for personal gain.

Hart: It sounds like the recommendation is that we strike that bullet altogether. We will need to take this back to the committee.

Bonneau: My suggestion is to keep it as is or it should be clarified what is really meant by this political activity.

Stoner: As it stands it would preclude many student political organizations from using Pitt email for their activities. I like the addition of "on behalf of the university".

Kear: Another alternative is to list political activities that are not permitted in the footnote.

Anthony: There are other policies that govern this. A CS10, participation in political campaigns, and CS12, political contributions, that cover some of these aspects and specify that university

resources cannot be used for these activities. It also includes exceptions for student organizations.

Scott: Something could be added to refer to the 501 c3 status, since it is illegal to participate in political activities.

Graham: We can refer to CS10 in this policy

Stoner: One problem is that CS10 was written in 1989 before the use of any electronic communications. So that policy does need to be updated

Adams: I advise college democrats can endorse candidates but not use Pitt resources. Faculty and student can do this and it is written into the policy, but I have found various inconsistencies in these policies over the years.

Upon further discussion it was decided that the policy should go back to the committee for more clarification.

Hart: These issues may not be fully addressed in this policy, but there is clearly a need to point to other policy documents which deal with these issues more directly

Kear: Yes, it appears we are not ready to vote on this and we will ask you come back to FA in a month or so.

Parker: A final point is that rather than listing all of the activities that cannot be performed using Pitt resources, it might be better to include the phrase "Pitt resources cannot be used for any activity that is prohibited by law or other Pitt policies"

Hart: The other policies need to be looked at and there are plans to do this.

There was no further discussion.

6. Unfinished Business and/or New Business

None

7. Announcements

None

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Documents from the meeting are available at the University Senate website:

<http://www.univsenate.pitt.edu/faculty-assembly>

Respectfully submitted,

Penelope (Penny) Morel

Secretary, University Senate

Members attending: Adams, Bell, Bircher, Bonneau, Burton, Caldwell, Cutsumbis, Dallal, Damiani, DiCesaro, Dietz, Epitropoulos, Ferdinand, Fort, Glynn, Guterman, Hall, Holding, Jacobs, Jenkins, Jones, Kanthak, Kear, Keown, Kohanbash, Lemery, Mattern, Mauk, McCormick, Melnick, Molinaro, Morel, Morris, Murtazashvili, Paljug, Parker, Pitetti, Reed, Schuster, Scott, Shafiq, Shephard, Stoner, Swigonova, Taboas, Tashbook, Wiggins, Zack

Members not attending: Almarza, Archibald, Balaban, Bratman, Dewhirst, Falcione, Flick, Glass, Heffernan, Kaufman, Khader, Kovacs, Lewin, Mahboobin, Maier, Nguyen, Potoski, Salcido, Schmidt, Wert, Wood, Yates

*Excused absences: Boulder, Bove, Cousins, Good, Massanelli, Songer, Tudorascu

Others attending: Armony, Buchanich, Conner, Frieze, Graham, Hart, Jones S., SantaCasa, Schackner, Stonesifer, Tokowicz, Tuttle, Wells, Wilson