



Pittsburg State University Support Staff Senate Meeting Minutes October 14, 2020

President Terri Blessent called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Senators present: Cindy VanBecelaere, Terri Blessent, Ann Courtney, Kevin Elrod, Betty Geier, Tina Gregory, Jordan Harding, Michelle Hensley, Jerrica Lair, Diane Letner, Stephanie Willis, Mary Wolfe, Dan Workman, Woody Lopez, and Jeannice Parker. Guests present were Tammy Higgins, representing the Professional Staff Senate, Dr. Cole Shewmake, representing the Faculty Senate, new employee Scarlett Bowles, and graduate student Nikole Cook. Excused senators were Kathy Benard, Terry Pierce, and Tish Potter.

Terri asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 9th meeting. Mary Wolfe moved to approve them, and Michelle Hensley seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Cindy VanBecelaere reported there were no expenditures, so the primary account balance remained \$2,380, while the Foundation account balance remained \$57.04. Terri requested a motion to approve the report. Mary Wolfe so moved, and Woody Lopez seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Tammy Higgins, representing the University Professional Staff Senate on behalf of Dr. Jason Kegler, reported that the 2020-2021 Senators and executive committee had been seated. Kathleen Flannery and Dr. Scott attended the UPSS October meeting. The next meeting would be November 4th.

Dr. Cole Shewmake, representing the University Faculty Senate, reported that the Senate was working on a Free Expression statement for KBOR in conjunction with other campus groups. Commencement ceremonies will take place the Friday and Saturday before Thanksgiving. There will be seven ceremonies. The procedure will be that students and their four selected attendees will form lines in Plaster and will then walk through the auditorium. The stage will be occupied by only a few people, and no seating will be available. The next UFS meeting will take place on October 27th at 3 pm in the ballroom.

Terri reported on her October 13th meeting with Dr. Scott. He wanted to emphasize the importance of watching the Town Hall on Pittstate.tv tomorrow, October 14th, at 1 pm. No live audience will be present. Important information will be presented. Dr. Scott is very concerned about the stresses and strains of pandemic, not just at work, but at home, and is trying to figure out ways to help employees. He is very pleased with everyone's compliance with masks, handwashing, and social distancing. COVID numbers for students have dropped significantly, while faculty and staff numbers never reached levels of concern. He is very thankful to everyone for doing our part. Dr. Scott is meeting with KBOR today; although the agenda was light, action needs to be taken student insurance. After the November elections, expect another town hall to offer a vision of the possible consequences of elections. Everyone is encouraged to vote, but not while using PSU electronic devices or during working hours. Regarding cost savings, and in response to a repeatedly asked question, no furloughs are planned currently. PSU's fall enrollment was down 3.7% (6,398), a lesser drop than expected. However, we will know more about our longer-term outlook after the elections.

Committees:

1. Elections – Ann Courtney – nothing new to report.
2. Public Relations – Ann Courtney – the Senate photograph was taken outside today, with masks.
3. Welcoming – Diane Letner – Ken Griffing was hired to join the University Police.

4. Parking – Jordan Harding – Jordan is replacing Tish, who is now the committee’s chair. The next meeting will be Oct 21 to review appeals.
5. Board of Governors – Michelle Hensley. The committee was unaware Michelle was a member, so she did not attend the last meeting. The next one will be October 16th.
6. Strategic planning – Terri Blessent – the committee will meet October 26th.
7. IT Council – Michelle Hensley – the department is revamping financial aid, and has acquired new equipment from COVID money for updating classrooms and expanding outdoor WIFI.
8. USLCC – Terri Blessent – the committee meets in springtime.
9. University Revenue Planning – no report in Terry Pierce’s absence.

Old Business

There are still two at-large Senator positions available.

New Business

The Pitt State Subcommittee to develop the follow-up KBOR Survey, consisting of Michelle Hensley, Mary Wolfe, and Terri Blessent, will meet in Overman October 27th at 11 am.

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The next USSS meeting will be Nov 11th, Veteran’s Day.

There was discussion regarding quarantine leave for staff. Currently, the policy will pay employees for ten days, but if the same person has to be quarantined again, they have to use their own time. It was suggested that people contact Chris Myers in HR as specific concerns arise. Terri Blessent will follow up on the following queries: Could CARES monies be used to create more COVID paid leave to cover additional quarantine time for those whose job duties don’t allow them to work from home? Could an exception be made allowing those who wish to donate sick time to create a shared pool to be used by that same subset of employees, or for other issues – people who have to quarantine, use up their leave, and then later get sick, or people who have long-term aftereffects?

Dan Workman raised the issue of the hiring freeze and its effects on the adjunct pool. He teaches as an adjunct, for which he is paid via EDC, and has been asked to teach a 3rd class, but can’t since he’s hourly. Should regulations governing such restrictions be temporarily adjusted during the hiring freeze? Terri will investigate.

Concerns were expressed regarding the campus diversity climate survey. One Senator noted that the questions identify the position of the person answering very clearly, and wanted to reassure everyone that the information will not be used to persecute people for answering honestly, and was concerned about people being unwilling to answer the questions because of the level of identification possible. The person also noted that if training becomes available as a result of the survey, we should all be open to learning new things. Mary Wolfe serves on the committee and noted that all data will be managed by a 3rd party, and only demographics will go back to the college. She also noted that some members of the committee expressed concerns that some of the questions could be perceived as problematic, or could even create problems where none currently existed, but that they agreed that the idea was to get everybody’s views to ensure that people do feel included and welcomed. Several Senators said that they had not completed the survey due to their privacy concerns, but agreed that they would now be willing

to complete it due to the clarifications they had heard. The survey went out to students as well as employees. The university want as many responses as possible so they can get a big picture view. Dr. Scott has expressed his hope that everyone will take it so the university can take action to improve.

Terri Blessent reminded everyone again about the Town Hall at 1 pm on October 15th, to be viewed on the Pittstate.tv website.

Tina Gregory will be retiring sooner than expected, on December 2nd. Congratulations, Tina!

Terri Blessent adjourned the meeting at 2:05 pm.