



Pittsburg State University
University Support Staff Senate
Minutes of Meeting, December 9th, 2020

The meeting convened and was called to order by President Terri Blessent at 1:30 PM.

Present were Senators Carrol Bell, Terri Blessent, Brandi Boswell, Ann Courtney, Jordan Harding, Michelle Hensley, Jerrica Lair, Diane Letner, Woody Lopez, Jeannice Parker, Terry Pierce, Tish Potter, Cindy VanBecelaere, Stephanie West, Stephanie Willis, Mary Wolfe, and Dan Workman. Guests present were Nathan Brungardt, representing the Professional Staff Senate, Faculty Senate President Dr. Cole Shewmake, Vice President of Student Life Dr. Steve Erwin, Barb Barto, Olivia Biondo, Scarlett Bowles, Lauren Eagan, Lindsay Grant, Kim Little, Randy Marietta, Michelle Moody, and Carol Young.

The November meeting minutes were reviewed. Jeannice Parker moved to accept them as written, Diane Letner seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Cindy VanBecelaere delivered the Treasurer's report. In November the Senate spent \$5.13 for photo printing, reducing the primary account to \$2374.87, with \$57.04 continuing in the Foundation account. Diane Letner moved to accept the Treasurer's report, Woody Lopez seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Nathan Brungardt reported on the Professional Staff Senate for Jason Kegler. The UPSS is currently revising its bylaws and will hold elections in spring.

Dr. Shewmake reported for the Faculty Senate that the commencement ceremonies all went well, and Provost Smith received very positive feedback. The Student Government Association (SGA) had proposed the inclusion of 3-5 mental health days in the Spring semester. A poll of the University faculty resulted in lots of responses, of which 60% were against, 27% in favor, and 13% undecided. Those against the additional days cited practicums, clinicals, or other certifications requiring a certain number of completed hours potentially being shorted. No decision has been reached as yet by the administration. The Council of Faculty Senate Presidents continues their work on the Freedom of Expression statement, to be published sometime in the new year.

Terri met with Dr. Scott on December 8th and discussed a list of questions submitted anonymously by USSS employees. Dr. Scott's responses will be related in New Business. Dr. Scott shared that there will not be a face-to-face convocation in the spring. It will instead be aired on pittstate.tv. Legislation is gearing up to start meetings in January, but need to decide how they will meet. He wants to be sure we know he, Shawn, and Riley are advocating for Pitt State's interests, in the face of low enrollment numbers.

Committees:

Elections, Ann Courtney: nothing to report.

Public Relations, Ann Courtney: the new photo has been placed in the cabinet opposite the Post Office and on our internal website at [USS Senate Officers 2020-2021 \(pittstate.edu\)](https://pittstate.edu/uss-senate-officers-2020-2021).

Welcoming Committee, Diane Letner: nothing to report.

Parking Committee, Jordan Harding: the committee will meet in January.

Board of Governors Committee, Michelle Hensley: Taylor Panczer's current position will not be renewed as of June 30th but she may continue on in some other capacity. Nothing is currently booked in the student center between Dec 20th and January.

Strategic Planning Committee, Terri Blessent: no meeting yet.

Information Technology Council, Michelle Hensley: no December meeting.

Campus Safety and Security Committee, Betty Geier: no report.

Docking Institute Survey Subcommittee, Terri Blessent: the subcommittee will meet in January.

Old Business:

There remain two at-large Senatorial seats, and guests were invited to contact Terri or Ann if interested in filling one.

New Business:

Terri received an email listing questions and concerns from anonymous employees for Dr. Scott, who answered the questions while respecting the individuals' desires to remain anonymous.

1. Are staff members working remotely being held accountable for traveling or doing unrelated activities while "working remotely?" Dr. Scott answered that they should be, but he doesn't see timesheets. He will review this at President's Council. Terri noted that our bosses should be able to trust us and should know if we're not working when we say we are. Dan Workman asked a side question regarding time increments for vacation/sick time, and Terri responded that USS-Hourly can use increments of vacation in very small amounts, and don't have to take four- or eight-hour chunks like UPS.
2. Are remote workers responsible for reporting time for doctors' visits or other sickness? Dr. Scott answered that they should be, and will also review this at President's Council.
3. Some departments purchased laptops for some workers to work remotely. Why aren't laptops available for all office workers? Dr. Scott answered that there is still money, every department head knows about it, and employees who are being asked to work remotely need to advocate for a laptop for this purpose. The deadline to use the money is the end of December. Dan Workman noted that he had assumed, when notified to replace computers five years old or more, that the order applied to faculty only, and others in IT may acted similarly, so he would check on that with his supervisor so as to place a new order ASAP. Dr Erwin noted that there's a difference between a decision not being made and a negative decision. It may be that the person chose not to purchase one. Terri confirmed that Dr. Scott had stated that not everybody would necessarily get a new computer. Dr. Erwin continued that sometimes decisionmakers don't realize how much time has passed, and tech that has held up well is not always considered for an upgrade, even when new capabilities are needed. Terri said Dr. Scott also recommended looking ahead to computers that are due for replacement in 2022; in any questionable situation, we should try to upgrade now in case we lack money in the future.
4. With the students gone, there is little traffic on campus, and therefore there is no risk of exposure at work. Why are so many office staffers working remotely while others are required to? Why does it vary by division and department? Dr. Scott said the decision was left up to the

VPs. If anyone is not happy with the situation, that person should have a conversation with their supervisor.

5. Remote employees are failing to acknowledge that some offices are being staffed full-time and not by student staffers. Mr. Bulk-E messages should not assume that everybody is working remotely. Dr. Scott agrees.
6. Will the University still close for inclement weather and allow inclement weather days, especially for those who can't work remotely? Dr. Scott responded that for employees who cannot work remotely, yes. There is an ongoing discussion to change the policy so that classes will not be canceled for inclement weather and must convene remotely, and that workers who can work remotely may not be allowed to take inclement weather days.
7. If the students get mental health days off during the spring semester, what about staff? Dr. Scott's answer was, "I gave you five days." He understands where it's coming from, and noted that the students have not yet been granted the requested days. Terri noted that we can use sick days if we truly need mental health days, and that for the sake of our health, we should focus on the positive and be thankful we have jobs. Dr. Smith will keep fighting for us. Hopefully next year will be better but there are no guarantees.

Terry Pierce introduced Carol Young, our new Communications Specialist in the Campus Police department.

Jeannice Parker thanked those who asked the questions. Terri confirmed that Dr. Scott does not know who asked them, and that she wanted to emphasize that she is happy to ask him anything that anyone needs an answer to.

Terri also noted that if the CDC were to reduce the gathering size, we might at some point have to consider meeting virtually if our attendance were to grow, but at this time we still have room for a few more attendees, even with the large number of guests today.

Good of the order:

The next USSS meeting will be January 13th. Terri also reminded everyone about the December 15th Town Hall on pittstate.tv. at 11 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.