

February 6, 2024

**Meeting Minutes of the Governance Council**Tuesday, February 6, 2024 1:30-3:30pmRoom 708, Auditorium; Chair: Glen Johnson

**Call to Order and Approval of the Minutes**

Glen Johnson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm. He requested and received approval of minutes from the November 29, 2023 meeting.

Glen shared that the last GC meeting date for the semester was changed from May 1, 2024 to May 9, 2024, and reminded members to update their calendars. Glen then had the Council join him in welcoming Assistant Research Professor Matt Lootens to SPH.

**Dean’s Report**

Dean Ayman El-Mohandes welcomed everybody back for the spring semester. Starting with accreditation, Ayman called on Ann Gaba to share that the School’s Dietetic Internship (DI) program met all of the 2024 ACEND standards. Ayman thanked Ann and congratulated her on her recent recognition for the Nutrition Informatic Ambassador Award, which was awarded for her nutrition informatics module developed for the DI program.

Turning to the SPH budget, Ayman noted positive developments. The School had robust spring enrollment and retention, reversing some of the enrollment drop in 2022 and 2023, following the Covid rush. Regarding CUNY-wide budgetary concerns, Ayman noted that the budget situation at CUNY has somewhat improved since the fall semester. He noted that CUNY is a complicated system, comprised of community colleges, senior colleges, and graduate programs, and the SUNY system is facing similar budgetary challenges. While CUNY overall is still in the red (with nine schools in structural deficit), applications and enrollment were both up for fall almost across the board. In response, CUNY has disbanded the Vacancy Review Board (VRB), allowing schools not in deficit to hire replacements and to bring on limited new hires. SPH will assess Central Office’s willingness to fund merit and other increases (such as promotion, change in title, etc.) and will gradually address these increases over time.

Looking forward, eliminating the CUNY deficit is dependent on the State Legislature and Governor’s budget for CUNY in the new fiscal year. Ayman stated that the Governor’s proposed budget is favorable and includes additional funding for CUNY to compensate for a lack of tuition increases. Ayman shared that the stability of the CUNY budget is largely dependent on the ongoing negotiations over the new PSC contract, and whether New York State will cover the costs. CUNY’s request to New York State includes coverage of these expenses, including salary adjustments and increases. The agreements reached with DC37 and a few smaller unions establish a positive platform. Overall, CUNY is in a more stable fiscal position but will face serious challenges if costs of the new agreement are not in next year’s state budget.

Ayman shared that SPH recently began a search to fill two positions in the EOGHS department. Ghada Soliman is chairing the Search Committee. Ghada shared that Rachael Piltch-Loeb, Brian Pavilonis, Suzanne McDermott, and Jeffrey Lazarus will be serving this open-rank search. We hope to have these two new open positions filled for Fall 2024. Ayman also shared that Pat Stein will be retiring, and he thanked Pat for her numerous contributions. He noted that a search will be opened to fill this position.

Finally, Ayman noted that completion of the CEPH self-study is underway. Ayman noted that the strategic plan is a critical component of the self-study, and he would like to see more activity in the area of mentorship and faculty development. Karen Florez and Emma Tsui will present in this area later today.

**Admissions Committee Report**

*Ghada Soliman, Admissions Committee Chair­­*

Ghada Soliman shared the latest Admissions Committee report with the Council. Ghada stated that the Admissions Committee recently met with Sergio Costa on ongoing marketing and recruitment strategies. During the meeting, the committee focused on keywords and website updates to further drive admission growth at SPH, and changes to the website were shared with the Council. Ghada reminded faculty to review applications in their queue as soon as possible. Ghada noted that we are hosting an open house tomorrow from 6-8 pm and shared other upcoming Admissions events being held in Spring 2024. Finally, Ghada reminded faculty of the “NIH All of Us Database” workshop taking place at SPH on March 6th.

Renee Goodwin noted that the positive Admissions growth is excellent for the school, but it is increasing the faculty-to-student ratio across departments. Renee raised concerns regarding the student experience around class size. Ghada noted that TAs are available for larger class sizes to alleviate burdens on faculty and to provide a better student experience in the classroom. Sean Haley called for a point of clarification, as the topic of faculty-to-student ratio falls outside of the scope of the Admissions Committee’s work.

**Associate Deans’ Reports**

*Terry McGovern, Senior Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs*

Terry McGovern spoke on recent maternal, child, reproductive, and sexual health (MCRSH) initiatives at the School, noting that the Byllye Avery Endowed Professorship has raised nearly a half a million dollars since the December launch. Terry is working with Diana on MCRSH-related curricula, such as the currently offered MCRSH specialization. Terry shared that Danielle Greene is working on branding and reaching out to elected officials on having a Sexual Reproductive Justice (SRJ) Hub at SPH, which can help respond to the retraction of rights in this critical area. Terry added that education around environmental justice will also be explored as related to sexual and reproductive health.

In terms of global health initiatives, Terry is continuing to explore with faculty the school’s global health footprint and goals. Terry noted that CUNY is in a unique position to offer a different type of global health program, and the MS in Global and Migrant Health Policy is currently on pause as faculty brainstorm the best delivery options.

Terry also shared that she is serving on the COACHE task force, and is looking into promotion issues around female faculty (ie: mentorships, promotion process). Finally, in Academic Affairs, Terry is continuing to work with faculty and staff to identify and resolve complex problems. She noted that there is a good faith effort to make headway where faculty and staff are experiencing challenges.

*Susan Klitzman, Senior Associate Dean of Administration*

Susan Klitzman noted a current blood shortage in New York. To address this public health issue, SPH is planning to host a blood drive, targeting March 27th (to coincide with the next GC meeting, when most SPH personnel will be on campus). Susan turned to updates on the 2024 Staff Awards, where an award ceremony is planned for April; more details, including the nominating process, will be shared with the community this week. Susan also noted that her office is continuing to resolve issues related to HVAC and technology.

Regarding professional development, Susan stated that she is working with Arthur McHugh, Sahana Gupta, and Jennifer Keane on initiatives to enhance staff professional development. Susan shared further information with the Council on performance evaluation and best practices, emphasizing that professional development is a major goal in both CUNY’s Lifting NY initiative and SPH’s own strategic plan. The School is working to link professional development with the performance evaluation process. Moving forward, we will be offering trainings for managers and staff, and asking managers to send certificates of completion to HR via Dropbox.

*Michele Kiely, Associate Dean for Research*

Michele Kiely shared that effort certification deadlines are coming up. For individuals who supervise RF employees, Michelle reminded them to submit their annual leave. Michele reviewed NIH deadlines and protocols for the end of this year through the start of next year, noting that she will send the specifics to faculty in an email.

*Lynn Roberts, Associate Dean of Student Affairs & Alumni Relations*

Lynn Roberts shared a few announcements and open seats, including on the Student Election Review Committee. With the expected departure of Ilias Kavouras, the chair for the Faculty Student Disciplinary Committee and Title IX Committee will also need to be filled. Lynn shared that Sherry Adams received a $10k grant, which is being used to set up an LGBTQ+ Resource Room. The School also received a grant to provide CUNY SPH Anti-Hate Workshops, which will commence this semester through May on different topic areas and are open to all (students, faculty, staff). The funding is provided for three years, so there will be additional workshops in the future. Lynn encouraged all to attend.

*Zaire Ali, President of Graduate Student Government Association*

Zaire Ali shared updates from GSGA on their recent retreat, where events were mapped out for the coming semester. Zaire noted that a Back to School Event will be held next Tuesday in a hybrid format (open to both in-person and online students). Zaire encouraged faculty to stop by if they are available. He added that a mix of in-person and online events will be held throughout the semester, and that SPH merchandise will be sent out to students from the GSGA.

**Other Business**

Ghada Soliman and Karmen Williams presented as two SPH Career Success Fellows who teamed with Professor Richard Storrow from the CUNY School of Law to focus on teaching, engagement, and partnership with students. On the teaching side, Ghada reviewed essential skills needed for career advancement, and Ghada and Karmen introduced the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies in their classes (FNPH 620, FPH 623, EPID 630, and EPID 632). In terms of engagement, Karmen noted that she and Ghada attended faculty meetings and invited faculty to join numerous SPH Career Services events and workshops. Their partnership with the CUNY School of Law yielded events on avoiding imposter syndrome in the workplace and shared communication strategies.

Hannah Lathan presented on “Public Health Everywhere: Non-Traditional Career Path,” an in-person symposium, featuring panelists who work in different public health fields. Hannah encouraged all to attend (it is open to the public), and shared a link where the Council can find the full agenda and list of speakers.

Rosemary Farrell followed up on the special topic discussion from the November 29th GC meeting centered on artificial intelligence. Rosemary shared a new link on the CUNY SPH library page that includes AI Resources, and a one-pager for faculty with quick, useful links. The information will also be distributed via email after the meeting. Chris Palmedo asked about plagiarism related to AI, and Rosemary encouraged faculty to refer students to her. Ayman noted that more events on AI with faculty would be helpful. Sergio reminded the Council of Blackboard resources that are available to faculty and students in these areas. Lynn also shared the importance of academic integrity through the Office of Academic Affairs if there are plagiarism infractions.

Suzanne McDermott turned to the Council to help establish strategies to improve response rates on course evaluations. Suzanne questioned the possibility of withholding grades until students submit evaluations, or having staff monitor the submission of evaluations during class time. From the student perspective, timing is an issue, with evaluations closing before finals. Lynn noted that there may be hesitancy among faculty that final grading will influence the student’s review. Renee shared that the low response rates present validity concerns and that there could be unfairness if course evaluations are factored into tenure and promotion. Denis Nash noted that it may be difficult for students to submit their evaluations when they do not see the direct results of their contributions; he suggested that publishing results to our website could incentivize students. Elizabeth Geltman added that this was done at Hunter College, and the data was helpful for students making course selections. Ghada stated that for her in-person courses, she reserves a computer room so students can fill out the surveys at the end of class after she leaves the room. Elizabeth Kelvin noted that more statistics would be helpful. Malika Christopher recommended a gift card raffle. Lynn expressed concerns that there might be ethical issues (ie: coercion) in offering a prize incentive for an evaluation. Rachael Piltch-Loeb and Ann Gaba shared that they make the submission of the course evaluations a small portion of the class participation grade to encourage completion.

Karen Florez and Emma Tsui provided an update on the proposed SPH faculty mentoring plan. Emma emphasized that the plan uses a facilitator model, and they will be taking an inventory of needs in the coming weeks. Karen also presented on the Spring 2024 14-Day Writing Challenge, where colleagues share writing goals with one another on Zoom to foster community and accountability. Emma added that more information will be provided on the mentoring plan’s progress in future meetings.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Glen adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by Matt Paczkowski