

december 4, 2024

**Meeting of the Governance Council**Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 1:30-3:30 PMRoom 708, Auditorium; Chair: Sean Haley

**Attendance:**

The following Voting Members of the Governance Council (GC) attended: Marilyn Auerbach, Nevin Cohen, Spring Cooper, Sasha Fleary, Karen Florez, Lauren Fowler, Nicholas Freudenberg, Ann Gaba, Elizabeth Geltman, Renee Goodwin, Jean Grassman, Christian Grov, Sean Haley, Terry Huang, Mustafa Hussein, Glen Johnson, Julie Katz, Elizabeth Kelvin, Philip Kreniske, Meg Krudysz, Jeffrey Lazarus, Paulo Léllis, Meredith Manze, Pedro Mateu-Gelabert, Suzanne McDermott, Theresa McGovern, Christopher McLaughlin, Denis Nash, Sehyun Oh, Christopher Palmedo, Brian Pavilonis, Rachael Piltch-Loeb, Lynn Roberts, Nash Rochman, Diana Romero, Thomas Rouyard, Nasim Sabounchi, Ramla Sahibdin, Zachary Shahn, Ghada Soliman, Chloe Teasdale, Rachel Thompson, Emma Tsui, Yaddy Valerio, Levi Waldron, Katarzyna Wyka

The following Alternate Members of the Governance Council (GC) attended: Robyn Gertner, Sapphire Howard

The following Non-Voting Members of the Governance Council (GC) attended: Moaz Abdelwadoud, Giacomo Antonello, Mohit Arora, Besnik Berisha, Mollie Braaten, Louie Cao, Julie D'Aprile, Ayman El-Mohandes, Rosemary Farrell, Alexis Feinberg, Danielle Greene, Sahana Gupta, Rositsa Ilieva, Sara Ingram, Jennifer Keane, Patti Lamberson, Maya Lloyd, Matthew Lootens, Yesenia Mena, Cheyanda Onuoha, Matt Paczkowski, Marcel Ramos, Doris Suarez, Roxanne Towler, James Warren

**Call to Order: Approval of October 2024 Minutes**

Sean Haley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:44 PM. He then requested and received approval by general consent of the minutes from the October 16, 2024, meeting.

**Dean’s Report**

Dean Ayman El-Mohandes opened by noting the warmth and graciousness of the many school community members who came to celebrate our CUNY SPH colleagues who are retiring.

Ayman acknowledged Moaz Abdelwadoud who has joined the school as a Research Assistant Professor in the Center for Systems & Community Design.

The Presidents’ Council has indicated that they are close to reaching an agreement with PSC on a new contract. It also advised that all international students should return to New York by January 19.

CUNY Central Facilities has asked the Presidents and Deans of the schools involved in the SPARC Kips Bay project for their input on the designs being considered. They supported a design that has separate entrances for the high school and for the university. They also emphasized the design where each school has its own angled part of the building, which allows for uniquely identifiable space for naming purposes.

Ayman thanked everyone for their participation in the CEPH accreditation. He received very positive feedback from CEPH during APHA. Ayman noted Robyn Gertner’s work on our self-study document.

The school will now embark on its next strategic plan. Ayman said that he would like this one to start similarly to the previous one, where a small committee went to the grassroots level and gathered community feedback. The plan will have certain elements related to the new facility. The city provided SPH with additional square footage with the idea of starting an undergraduate program. Students would complete general requirements at one of the other colleges and then proceed to SPH for the last two years.

Second, the new facility will have 10,000 square feet of wet labs, which will become a component of SPH’s research. The school will need to begin planning for this now in terms of faculty recruitment.

Third, the school needs to be involved with New York State’s 1115 Medicaid waiver, as it provides us with an opportunity to significantly expand our practice component and demonstrate our commitment to the community. It can show who we are as a public school of public health. Ayman thanked Danielle Greene for leading this initiative.

Fourth, the school is rethinking its global health agenda. Ayman thanked Terry McGovern for her leadership on this issue, and he is confident that there will be clarity on this matter over the next six months.

Ayman acknowledged the strong meeting attendance and welcomed Tim Leshan from the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) to give a presentation to the Governance Council.

**Election Implications for Public Health**

*Tim Leshan, Chief External Relations & Advocacy Officer, Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health*

Tim began by noting the results of the November elections and that with a 53-47 majority in the Senate, the Republican party can confirm any of President Trump’s nominees on a party line vote. He mentioned that Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, who has called himself a liver doctor, is leading a bill to create funds to eliminate hepatitis C and is someone who understands public health.

Tim mentioned the close party split in the House of Representatives, which will be even tighter once some members who are set to be nominated to the Trump Administration are confirmed to their positions, will make it difficult to pass a lot of legislation. Congress must still pass a budget for Fiscal Year 2025, and the most likely outcome will be that both houses of Congress agree to pass a continuing resolution that will fund the federal government through March.

In terms of public health, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., will be nominated as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Among his concerns are the pharmaceutical industry, the commercial farming industry, and the food that most Americans eat. He has stated that there is a conspiracy involving these industries and that HHS has failed to stop this conspiracy. As HHS Secretary, he may focus on promoting alternatives to medications and the idea that vaccines are dangerous.

Tim suggested that public health institutions may want to focus efforts on chronic diseases – which have a significant impact on public health – and that the obesity crisis may be a focus in the next administration.

Other people who will be nominated to key public health positions in the administration include Jay Bhattacharya at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Dave Weldon at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Mehmet Oz at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

In terms of higher education issues, the incoming administration is likely to focus on dismantling the Department of Education, gutting anything related to DEI, 1st Amendment rights, eliminating public loan forgiveness, reducing student aid, and cutting research funding.

Tim suggested that there are three general postures that institutions can take. The first is to not worry and that there will not be much big change. The second is to find opportunities to work with Congress and the new administration. The third is to get ready to fight against bad public health policies.

Tim concluded by noting that you cannot assume that someone else is speaking up for your priority and that everyone in attendance needs to advocate even more now for public health.

*Danielle Greene, Executive Director of State and Local Public Health Initiatives*

Danielle highlighted that funding for public health programs and research may decrease. Additionally, the scope of what these funds can support may be more limited. These changes would impact higher education, the pre-K through 12 educational system, hospitals, and community-based organizations, among others.

Program funding could also be converted to block grants to the states. When block grants are used, programs are typically funded at lower amounts, a cost of living adjustment (COLA) is not included, and services are bundled together. Ultimately states are forced to make decisions on which programs or priorities they will fund, and they may also need to create more infrastructure and bureaucracy to support the block grants.

Regarding ASPPH’s plans for the early part of the year, Tim said that they are taking more of a “wait and see” approach to see whether there are some issues where they can work with the administration, such as the effort to eliminate hepatitis C. Tim acknowledged they cannot tackle every issue that may arise. Danielle also noted that it will be important to read the fine print of new policies to see how they are targeted because it is possible that they could be written to leave certain groups of people out.

*Breakout Group Discussions and Report Back*

Following breakout groups discussions, several members reported back on key action steps.

Brian Pavilonis: Given the tight margins in Congress and the presence of some moderate members, it may be beneficial to intentionally network with these members.

Suzanne McDermott: It would be helpful to have a group that is making inroads with private philanthropic organizations in New York City that have a national focus. A philanthropy hit list would be a helpful tool.

Ann Gaba: We need to fix the fieldwork to capstone to employment pathway. A lot of community partners will probably need us more than ever as they face budget cuts. They will need our students to help them fill in some of the gaps, and our students need to be prepared with practical and pragmatic skills to support these organizations.

Phil Kreniske: What is going to happen to the topics we care deeply about? Where do we stand on these topics and how do we make that explicit?

Diana Romero: Related to Phil’s point, during the previous administration, institutions changed the titles of grant applications and minimized certain aspects in applications. It is important to come up with a strategy related to this issue.

Liz Geltman: To build a better public health workforce, it is important to build environmental and occupational health back into the core public health curriculum. Additionally, our courses and the size of our classes need to be appropriate for the learning objectives and competencies that we are trying to teach. It is a particular issue for fieldwork and capstone courses.

Ayman El-Mohandes: There is a need for active networking with CBOs and to convene networks to allocate resources to CBOs. These networks may also need to train CBOs in how they can get sustainable funding.

Ghada Soliman: We need to reach out to students to let them know that they are supported and do what we can to support them. Some students are not aware of what CUNY SPH can do for them.

Denis Nash: Public health has a reputational problem that requires thought leadership about how we reinvent the field, how we message about what it is that we are really about and where we are trying to go, and how we transform from where we are right now. Overall, how does public health position itself?

An action group consisting of Terry McGovern, Nick Freudenberg, Karen Florez, Diana Romero, Danielle Greene, Mustafa Hussein, and Sasha Fleary volunteered to participate in this effort.

**PSC-CUNY Negotiations**

*Jean Grassman, PSC Delegate*

Jean announced that there will be a PSC meeting following the Governance Council, beginning at 3:45 PM in Room 539. Sofya Aptekar, chapter president, has been invited to attend.

**Committee Reports**

*Mary Schooling, Curriculum Committee Chair*

Vote to change catalogue language for doctoral students: Meredith Manze stated that the language that was added on probation and dismissal is intended to make it clear for doctoral students that they need to follow the dissertation guidance outlined in the handbook and pass the exams. The intent is to clarify the language, and the Curriculum Committee is not changing anything in practice.

Karen Florez noted that the previous concern was about the number of students who would be impacted by the change in language and that faculty thought this issue may be clarified before taking a vote.

Robyn Gertner said that she is aware of 1 student historically who has been affected by this.

Ghada Soliman mentioned that more details are in the Doctoral Handbook, and the link to the Doctoral Handbook is provided to the students and their advisors.

Christian Grov called the question, and Nevin Cohen then made a motion to change the catalogue language as presented, which was seconded by Terry Huang.

The motion was approved, 37-2.

**Associate Deans’ Reports**

*Lynn Roberts, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Alumni Relations*

At the request of Lynn Roberts, Muniyat Choudhury, GSGA President, presented the GSGA budget for the academic year.

Lynn noted that the GSGA budget was approved by the GSGA members, faculty, and staff. Lynn also put out a call to help in the recruitment for 2 doctoral senators to fill vacant seats.

**New Business**

No new business was brought forth.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Sean adjourned the meeting at 3:25 PM.

Minutes submitted by Christopher McLaughlin