

**Meeting of the Governance Council**  
Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 1:30-3:30 PM  
Room 708, Auditorium; Chair: Sean Haley

**Attendance:**

The following Voting Members of the Governance Council (GC) attended: Juliana Bol, Luisa Borrell, Spring Cooper, Sasha Fleary, Karen Flórez, Lauren Fowler, Ann Gaba, Elizabeth Geltman, Renee Goodwin, Jean Grassman, Christian Grov, Sean Haley, Terry Huang, Mustafa Hussein, Glen Johnson, Elizabeth Kelvin, Susan Klitzman, Philip Kreniske, Meg Krudysz, Jeffrey Lazarus, Meredith Manze, Suzanne McDermott, Theresa McGovern, Christopher McLaughlin, Sehyun Oh, Christopher Palmedo, Brian Pavilonis, Lynn Roberts, Diana Romero, Thomas Rouyard, Nasim Sabounchi, Mary Schooling, Zachary Shahn, Ghada Soliman, Chloe Teasdale, Rachel Thompson, Emma Tsui, Karmen Williams, Katarzyna Wyka, Constantin Yiannoutsos

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: Mohit Arora, Besnik Berisha, Mollie Braaten, Louie Cao, Sumana Chandra, Julie D'Aprile, Lea Dias, Ayman El-Mohandes, Rosemary Farrell, Alexis Feinberg, Abigail Goldberg, Danielle Greene, Sahana Gupta, Sara Ingram, Ingrid Kalemi, Davinder Kaur, Jennifer Keane, Patti Lamberson, Cesar Leon, Deborah Levine, Maya Lloyd, Matthew Lootens, Matt Paczkowski, Jeanette Rodriguez, Roxanne Towler, James Warren

**Call to Order: Approval of December 2024 Minutes, Mission Minute, Ad-hoc Committee to Protect Public Health**

Sean Haley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:32 PM. He then requested and received approval by general consent of the minutes from the December 4, 2024, meeting

For the Mission Minute, Brian Pavilonis stated that he has worked with nail technicians and has learned how much they struggle. He notes that we can learn from them and how much they contribute to society and that we should be mindful of the impact on the health and safety of vulnerable workers.

Sean Haley then thanked Danielle Greene for graciously volunteering to lead the Ad-hoc Committee to Protect Public Health and noted that others who are interested are welcome to join the committee.

**GC and CEI Committee Nominations**

Sean Haley stated that with Paulo Léllis' promotion to Chief of Staff, there were vacancies in staff positions on both the Governance Council (GC) and the Committee on Equity and Inclusion (CEI).

The GC position is classified for Non-Teaching Instructional (NTI) staff, and only people in this classification are eligible to be nominated and vote for the NTI position.



Susan Klitzman asked for confirmation that HEO series staff and IT employees are the eligible employees for the NTI position, which was confirmed.

Besnik Berisha and Davinder (Dee) Kaur were nominated, and both gave brief speeches supporting their candidacies.

Luisa Borrell then made a motion to have an electronic vote lasting one week for the vacant NTI position, which was seconded by Emma Tsui. This motion was approved by verbal affirmation. Dee was elected.

For the CEI staff position, Sumana Chandra has been nominated. Receiving no other nominations, Luisa Borrell then made a motion to accept Sumana Chandra to fill the vacant staff CEI position by acclamation, which was seconded by Christopher McLaughlin. This motion was approved by verbal affirmation.

### **Dean's Report**

Dean Ayman El-Mohandes opened by asking whether attendees were aware of 3 recent major health news stories. First was the death of a school-aged child in Texas from measles. The second was that an unidentified infectious agent that is not Ebola has stricken over 400 people in Africa and has caused 15 deaths so far. The third was that Governor Hochul has refused the extradition of a physician to Louisiana as a result of a legal case brought in that state related to abortion. These are examples of the present reality for public health. Ayman stated that we will need to face uncertainty and unknowns with a sense of resilience and connectedness to the community. He also noted that we will need to demonstrate courage and conviction.

Ayman attended the recent CUNY Council of Presidents meeting and several points were stressed. Title VI training is mandatory and must be completed by full-time faculty and staff. Further, a government shutdown – if it occurs – could present challenges. There is also the potential for cuts at the city and state levels resulting from federal decisions. It was also relayed at that meeting that Governor Hochul has proposed giving CUNY additional funding in the state budget to cover changes in the recently approved PSC contract.

Ayman noted that there are concerns at the university, however, with Title IV, which could impact some students with financial needs. It is important to remember that we can connect our students with mental health services and the student emergency fund should the need arise.

Ayman shared that the university has received a Dear Colleague letter from the Department of Education about potential claims of discrimination and that the DOE will be monitoring this going forward. The university does not use race in admissions decisions, and as a public institution, CUNY SPH will need to make sure that all clubs and student activities are open to all who are interested.

Ayman stated that the current admissions report is very encouraging, as the number of non-deferral applicants has increased year-over-year. CUNY SPH has also seen student growth in recent years, which has not been the case at other public health programs in New York City.

Ayman then noted that all institutions of higher education are suffering as a result of recent federal decisions. CUNY has 7,822 federal grants and contracts, but has so far only received 18 stop work orders. Out of 1,304 employees supported by federal grants and contracts, 32 have been furloughed as a result of these actions. Of CUNY SPH's 92 federal grants and contracts, 1 USAID contract has received a stop work order, and 2 NIH grants have not received renewal so far. One employee working on the USAID contract lost their position but was moved to another grant and has maintained their employment. He is working with PIs on impacted projects to see what can be done to retain the academic and scholarly integrity of the work that has been completed.



Ayman affirmed that it is his responsibility as Dean to maintain the school's 9th ledger accounts, sustain infrastructure needs such as SPaR, and maintain fellowships for students. He will do his best to deal with the adversity that faculty are facing who have been impacted by recent federal actions.

Ayman referenced his memo stating that there will be a hiring pause for vacant full-time faculty and staff positions at the school until the end of the fiscal year or until things are clearer in terms of some of the new federal regulations. Employment contracts signed before February 10th will be honored.

Given that the Dean has additional items to cover and that she would like him to have a sufficient period to field questions, Susan Klitzman ceded her time on the agenda so that the Dean's remarks could continue and to allow for a full question and answer period as listed for this meeting.

Ayman then shared that he has proposed an agreement for a self-enforced slowdown of expenditures on 9th ledger accounts. He noted that, so far, the school has been receiving money from the Research Foundation (RF) that is equivalent to the original indirect cost rate, however there is a time lag between the time that the RF invoices a federal government grant for expenditures and when the government makes these payments.

Ayman stressed that his door is open to everyone in these challenging times. He also feels that the recent town hall listening conversation was productive and allowed attendees to voice their concerns.

Ayman shared that while some within CUNY have projected overall decreases in graduate student enrollment by as much as 20% in the Mid-Atlantic region, ASPPH reported that SOPHAS figures are up over last year.

Ayman concluded that CUNY SPH will pursue a strategic plan similar to what we did with the previous one, beginning at the grassroots level. The school will also identify domains that are important to us and will be flexible enough that they can be modified based on how major events continue to unfold. He believes we need to look for new sources of revenue and expand the school's capacity. In terms of the SPARC Kips Bay location, we must keep in mind three key aspects: planning for use of new wet lab space, including hiring appropriate faculty; expanding on the undergraduate portfolio; and reinitiating the DrPH program.

To open the Q&A, Diana Romero asked which areas the federal stop work orders have focused on so far. Ayman said that many of these have been focused on DEI but also highlighted that diversity is our strength, equity is our guiding light, and inclusiveness is why we are successful.

Christian Grov asked if we can get guidance on what constitutes political work. For example, does contacting your Congressman using your school email count as political work? Danielle Greene noted that you are allowed to educate or provide information to elected officials and employees of government agencies. If you are lobbying or doing advocacy work, it is advised to do so from a personal email address. Otherwise you would need to take a lobbying ethics training and be registered with CUNY to do so – which requires filing regular disclosures about this specific work. Danielle Greene and Donna Canfield will provide written guidance on this matter.

Phil Kreniske asked about the small percentage of expected grant renewals that have been approved so far, and Suzanne McDermott gave an example of an NICHD grant that was up for its third-year renewal of a five-year grant that is showing as "pending" in the system. Suzanne has contacted the grant officer for additional clarification but has only been told that nothing is getting reauthorized currently.

Sahana Gupta then shared a reminder from the Chancellor's Office that the 2020 Title IX policy is now back in place, replacing the 2024 policy. An email was sent to the campus community on February 4 with this information, including the highlights of key policy changes.

## **Old Business**



### *Faculty Mentoring Program Review, Karen Flórez and Emma Tsui*

Karen and Emma provided an overview of their findings from the program, including findings gleaned from faculty interviews and what was learned from them. Emma noted that from the strategic plan, 88% of faculty indicated an interest in a faculty mentoring program – and that via the COACHE survey, CUNY SPH faculty satisfaction with mentoring was lower than at peer institutions. Over 30 faculty were then interviewed in Summer and Fall 2024 to provide qualitative data to complement the existing quantitative data that the school has.

Karen highlighted the wide range of experiences with mentoring, ranging from those who have had a profound impact to some who had toxic relationships where they learned what not to do, while some others had no mentoring experience whatsoever. The smallness of school came up as a theme in many interviews, as did the impact of remote work on people not feeling connected to each other. It was noted that some Department Chairs really took on a role as mentor, but there were also concerns about bandwidth and whether filling this role for all faculty is possible.

Emma noted that they heard a lot in the interviews about aspirations for building a nurturing environment to support faculty success. These aspirations fit into three categories: structural support for mentoring; community building – especially in the context of remote work; and individual-level direct support and training – focused on teaching with our student body in mind, career planning, and refining grantsmanship skills. The interviewees had many ideas about how to address these issues.

Breakout groups then met to discuss one of the three categories with a goal of helping to prioritize and concretize the findings within that category. Karen and Emma will take the information from the breakout groups and report back to the Governance Council at a later date. Additional information about their findings can be found in the Faculty Mentoring report that was shared prior to this meeting.

### **Committee Reports**

#### *Mary Schooling, Curriculum Committee Chair*

Mary presented the committee's proposed updates for the PUBH610 course title and description, which are intended to more closely reflect the course content. These proposed changes were shared by email in advance of the Governance Council meeting.

The updated PUBH610 course title and course description were approved, 34-0.

#### *Karen Flórez, Budget Committee Chair*

Karen reviewed the Q2 projections and noted that figures were submitted to CUNY Central shortly before federal actions took place and that this committee looks at the Tax Levy side only – not the Research Foundation. Expenditures seem on track, but given the federal issues that have occurred, some proactive steps have been taken for the next few months. The Budget Committee will report back on this in the future. Additionally, the school savings account will remain in a positive balance with the current revenue and expenditure projections. Overall, the news is mostly good in terms of revenue (i.e., tuition), but we will need to come together as a community to think about ways that we can remain robust in this area moving forward.

### **Associate Deans' Reports**

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

Lynn noted that the school will hold student elections soon. Students can self-nominate during a 3-week period, which starts next week. Faculty and staff are asked to encourage students to self-nominate for elections, as that is



the only means available for nominations. The Student Election Review Committee (SERC) still needs to give final approval of the elections timeline but will do so soon. Additionally, the Office of Accessibility will soon introduce some information on the ACCOMMODATE platform, which was launched this semester to assist students who are requesting accommodations.

## **New Business**

### *Sexual Reproductive Justice and Health (SRJH) Concentration Proposal, Diana Romero*

Diana presented the SRJH concentration proposal. This concentration has a public health lens and is justice-centered. There are several programs around maternal and child health, but they lack the sexual and reproductive focus. This concentration will be intersectional and multidisciplinary. The proposal is for the concentration to reside in the Community Health and Social Sciences department. The concentration would have 9 elective credits.

The goal is to avoid competency redundancies with other concentrations or departments. CUNY SPH has had a specialization in Maternal, Child, Reproductive, and Sexual Health (MCRSH) since before becoming an independent school in 2016, and the demand for it existed before the specialization was created. ASPPH has primarily reported on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) specialization programs and has identified 13 among its members, and only 1 is in the Tri State area – Population and Family Health at Mailman.

Chris Palmedo asked if the introductory course will have multiple sections and if it will be open to all master's level students. Diana said that the earliest the course will be available is in Spring 2026 and that it may be offered in a process similar to a "Topics" course.

Suanne McDermott raised concerns about the concentration being located exclusively in CHaSS and the participation of other departments and disciplines. Diana suggested that the location of the program was related to organizational requirements within the SPH and the positioning was not intended to be limiting or restrictive.

Elizabeth Kelvin suggested that a lot of methods classes may be relevant to the concentration. Diana concurred, noting that more electives in research and training would be ideal and that they welcome recommendations from all departments.

Terry McGovern noted that there are ample opportunities going forward to talk about ways to develop new electives, but there is a bit of a time crunch from CEPH in order to begin offering courses related to the concentration by next spring.

Diana Romero and Meredith Manze agreed to field any questions that attendees have that cannot be addressed during this meeting.

Meredith Manze then made a motion to extend discussion by 5 minutes, which was seconded by Emma Tsui. The motion was approved by verbal affirmation.

Mustafa Hussein offered strong support for the concentration and suggested including a potential list of electives covering a wide range of offerings that may be of interest to students.

Mary Schooling asked if there are any implications of putting this concentration into practice during the current climate. Diana acknowledged this concern and noted that it demonstrates how we should serve as public health professionals and the way that we should be serving in such an environment. The New York State public health guidelines say that we are to advocate and engage in ways that improve and secure the health of populations in need of support, and this concentration is consistent with that mandate. Terry McGovern also noted that we cannot teach about maternal and child health without speaking to the current legal climate.



### *PSC Update, Jean Grassman*

Jean commented that everyone should be getting communications and updates from the union. PSC is the union that represents full- and part-time faculty and staff within CUNY. The contract with the university was settled in mid-January; details are available on the PSC website.

Jean notes that it includes a \$3,000 ratification bonus and that raises are retroactive to March 2023 – but when retroactive raises will be paid out is still to be determined.

For those who are not aware, CUNY SPH is part of the CUNY Graduate Center chapter of PSC, and the next chapter meeting is tomorrow from 12:00-1:30 PM at the Graduate Center. The chapter is working to bring a “Know Your Rights” training to CUNY SPH related to immigration rights.

Jean encouraged anyone to contact her directly if they have any questions or would like additional information.

Sean called on Liz Geltman who raised a motion to consider changing the by-laws to accommodate exigent conditions. The motion was raised at the end of the meeting, and although a vote was taken, we lost quorum.

### **Adjournment**

Sean Haley reminded attendees of the CUNY SPH blood drive taking place downstairs until 6:00 PM.

There being no further business, Sean adjourned the meeting at 3:49 PM.

Minutes submitted by Christopher McLaughlin