

Time: 4:00 – 5:00 pm

Location: Webex

Voting Members Present: Drs. Anton Alerte, Jenna Bartley, Audrey Chapman, Kirsten Guertin, Jaclyn Olsen-Jaeger, Adam Perrin, Linda Shapiro, Andrea Shields, Jody Terranova, Kristyn Zajac, and Ms. Deb Polun

Voting Members Excused: Dr. Howard Gutstein and Ms. Carolyn Alessi

Voting Members Absent: Dr. Michael Grey

Others in Attendance: Drs. Enrique Ballesteros and Linda Barry

Dr. Bartley called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Dr. Bartley seconded by Dr. Perrin, to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2023 meeting.

Favor to approve: 11
Against: 0
Abstain:
Motion Passed: 11:0

2. Update from Deans Council reported by Dr. Perrin. Operating guidelines were discussed for Public Issues Council regarding representatives outside the University do not need to be faculty members as well as adding the ex officio from Office of Multicultural and Community Affairs. This position is currently non-voting seat, but the intent of the committee is to pursue changing the bylaws to be a voting seat.
3. Update from the Oversight Committee reported by Dr. Ballesteros. Discussions in December were regarding the shortage of chairs and center directors on the School of Medicine Governance Committees and Councils. Further conversations ensued regarding how to resolve this and realizing there might not be enough chairs and center directors to cover all governance councils and committees.
4. Discussion ensued regarding UConn Health programs for STEM outreach to students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds given the recent SCOTUS decision regarding affirmative action. The committee agreed to submit an executive summary to Dean's council regarding how UConn Health can be more involved by increasing opportunities for underrepresented individuals. Dr. Bartley presented a comprehensive listing of some (not a complete list) of the programs UConn Health currently offers to middle school or high school students. This listing includes Connecticut Area Health Education (AHEC), Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP), and The Cato T. Laurencin Institute for Regenerative Engineering and a few other independent programs. It was further discussed how inaccessible the current information is to find. More specifically, it was noted that the target external users, e.g. younger students and/or teachers and guidance counselors at middle and high schools, are unlikely to be able to find these resources themselves given the nuances of the UConn Health websites. The committee discussed that this outreach should be prioritized and be more forward-facing so that students, teachers, and guidance counselors can easily locate information as needed.

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5. Conversation followed regarding the SCOTUS affirmative action decision and how this could affect the previously stated STEM programs. The committee noted that some of these programs fall under the “yellow” category of programs that could potentially be targeted in the future based on the SCOTUS decision. The committee recognized this and confirmed that more efforts should be focused on proactive ways to bolster these program rather than waiting to react if they targeted next. The discussion also noted that our Executive Summary should state this concern and recommend more organization and forward-facing accessibility of current programs for underrepresented individuals. The committee agreed to work on an Executive Summary to the Dean’s council regarding making recommendations to maintain UConn Health’s mission of diversity, equity and inclusion in light of the SCOTUS decision on affirmative action.
6. Round Table of next topic for the council to discuss ensued. Potential topics of concern included Artificial Intelligence (AI) medical applications, medical misinformation, gender and gender identity issues, politicization of medicine, health disparities related to COVID, among others. The committee agreed to discuss next the medical misinformation and politicalization of information related to vaccines.

Adjournment:

Motion made by Dr. Bartley, seconded by Dr. Alerte, the meeting was adjourned, and concluded at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Sullivan

Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting

[Public Issues Council Operating Guidelines](#)

February 26, 2024