
The University Senate

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2023-24 P&A SENATE MINUTES: No. 4

April 5, 2024
9:30 - 11:30 A.M.

The fourth meeting of the P&A Senate for the 2023-24 academic year was convened via Zoom on Friday, April 5, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. Sixty-one senators and 18 alternates signed in as present. Chair Whitney Taha Frakes presided.

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Update

Whitney Taha Frakes, chair, P&A Senate and P&A Consultative Committee (PACC), welcomed everyone and began the meeting.

Taha Frakes encouraged senate members to review the following documents so that the P&A Senate could have a robust and informed discussion on the Workforce Reinvestment Resolution and response at its May 2024 meeting:

- The [Workforce Reinvestment Resolution](#)
- [Administrative Response](#) to the Workforce Reinvestment Resolution
- Workforce Reinvestment Resolution [Task Force Report](#)

Taha Frakes next shared that she was appreciative of the many responses she received regarding the proposed amendments to the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA) and that she would be testifying later today, at the Minnesota Legislature, regarding the input she has gathered from P&A employees. She added that there would be additional time later in the meeting to further discuss PELRA.

Next, Taha Frakes said that a working group of the Communications Subcommittee had created an informational document to help constituents and interested parties, inside and outside the University, better understand the P&A working class and its importance to the mission of the University. More information will be shared later in the meeting in the Communications Subcommittee report.

2. Civil Service Senate Report

Stacy Maher, chair-elect, Civil Service Senate/Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC), provided a summary of the work the Civil Service Senate is engaged in and which can be reviewed in this [document](#).

3. Student Senate Report

Taiwo Aremu, vice chair, Student Senate/Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC), provided a summary of the work the Student Senate is engaged in and which can be reviewed in this [document](#).

4. Elections for P&A Chair-elect, Subcommittee Chairs and Co-chairs, and P&A Serving on University Senate

Taha Frakes confirmed that there was a quorum present at the meeting so voting for P&A officers would take place. Floor nominations for the positions were accepted along with those submitted prior to today's meeting.

P&A Senate and P&A Consultative Committee chair-elect: Toni Abts was elected to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2024.

Co-chairs of the Benefits and Compensation Subcommittee: Monica Kocon and Brian Olmsted were elected to one-year terms beginning July 1, 2024.

Co-chairs of the Communications Subcommittee: Angela Hague and Dierdre Opp were elected to one-year terms beginning July 1, 2024.

Chair of the Outreach Subcommittee: Erin Fider was elected to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2024.

Professional Development and Enrichment Subcommittee: Molly Bendzick was elected to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2024.

P&A Senate members elected to serve on the University Senate for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2024:

- Grant Barthel, University Imaging Centers, Medical School, Twin Cities
- Molly Bendzick, Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education and Human Development, Twin Cities
- Deirdre Opp, Education Abroad, Carlson School of Management, Twin Cities
- Nick Skulan, One Stop Counselor, University of Minnesota Morris
- Megan Weber, Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species, University of Minnesota Extension

5. Subcommittee Reports

Written reports from each of the four P&A Senate subcommittees may be reviewed in this [document](#). The chair or co-chairs of the subcommittees are:

- Outreach Subcommittee - Toni Abts and Stacy Doepner-Hove
- Professional Development & Enrichment - (Molly Bendzick and Angela Vetsch)
- Communications - Maureen Long
- Benefits & Compensation - Marti Fasteland and Monica Kocon

Maureen Long thanked members of the Communications Subcommittee Kalli-Ann Binkowski, Megan Weber, and Steven Wicks, for their efforts on creating a two-page informational document describing P&A employees and their work at the University. Wicks said the document is in a first draft stage, and once it is finalized will be shared more broadly.

Adolfo Carrillo Cabello asked B&C Subcommittee co-chairs if they were aware of updates being made to the [Performance Assessment Tool](#) (PAT)? He noted that it might be valuable to bring up this topic at an upcoming B&C Subcommittee meeting vis-a-vis how it may relate to future merit increases as referenced in the Workforce Reinvestment Resolution.

Senate members had a robust discussion (via Zoom chat) regarding the PAT. The relevant portion of the [Zoom chat file](#) is linked at the end of these minutes.

6. PELRA Discussion

Taha Frakes provided P&A Senate members with the following documents, relating to proposed amendments to the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA), prior to today's meeting:

- Definition and description of [PELRA](#)
- Senate bill: [SF 4597](#), [Bill Summary](#)
- House bill: [HF 4508](#)

Taha Frakes provided an overview of current activity at the University in light of the proposed amendments, submitted to the Minnesota Senate by Senator Jennifer McEwen. The proposed amendments will be presented and discussed today at the Minnesota State Legislature. The amendments seek to: *modify the exceptions to the definition of the term "public employee" by striking a reference to temporary or part-time student workers and full-time undergraduate students employed by the institution that the student attends and striking a reference to full-time students employed in a work-study program or in connection with the receipt of financial aid.*

Taha Frakes said the proposed amendments, if adopted, would essentially provide the possibility of forming a union to *all* employees at the University (those who are not already represented by a union). There are also similar amendments to a bill in the House of Representatives, she added.

For P&A Senate members who wished to share their feedback regarding the proposed amendments and the University's response to them in a private setting, Taha Frakes invited members to use a [Google Form](#) that accepts comments from P&A constituents which go directly to the P&A Senate chair.

Taha said she would be attending the public hearing at the Minnesota State Legislature today at which the proposed PELRA amendments would be shared. She invited an open discussion from senate members. Comments and questions included the following:

- There is a lot of confusion about what PELRA is and isn't.
- A statement from the P&A Senate further explaining PELRA to its constituents would be valuable.
- What will happen to our access to the University's retirement program?
- What will happen to our ability to participate in shared governance?
- Should unionization move forward, the P&A job class is too broad for any single contract.
- Are there any immediate impacts for P&A employees if this legislation were passed? If yes, what are they?
- There is significant confusion about emails that are being circulated to various campus bodies and asking for support. What is it that we are being asked to support?
- What are the issues that the proposed amendments to PELRA are supposed to resolve, what is the intended goal, and who is pushing for the changes?
- Unions are great to protect employment classes that are at risk of being exploited or that do not have the power to advocate for themselves but I believe P&A at the University *are* in a position to advocate for themselves.

- The recent graduate student efforts to unionize are separate from these proposed amendments.
- Even if the proposed amendments are voted on and approved, that does not mean that anyone at the University *must* union; nor will it mean that anything will automatically change. The proposed amendments to the PELRA language would allow for any public employee to choose to unionize if they wished to.
- The proposed amendments are actually a restoration of a right that was taken away by this law; restoring the right to organize.
- A senate member who had previously worked at the legislature said they read the bills and they looked “straightforward and clean”; that nothing underhanded is being promoted within the proposed amendments.
- There is confusion about the term “outstate instructional unit.” Taha Frakes said she is planning to request clarification from the bill’s author on what they intend by that term.
- Is there a place where the University’s P&A employee class is defined? Taha Frakes shared [a link](#) that explains how P&A employees are currently defined at the University.

Taha Frakes was asked to give a quick summary of what would be happening today at the Minnesota State Legislature and how she would be involved. Taha Frakes said she would be attending the State and Local Government and Veterans Committee, who would be receiving testimony around the proposed amendments. She added that she would be sharing her testimony today, sharing comments she had received regarding the proposed amendments, and advocating neither for nor against the proposed amendments; simply trying to shed light on concerns and questions heard from constituents.

In the interest of time, Taha Frakes thanked senate members and adjourned the meeting.

Geanette Poole
University Senate Meeting