# **Minutes of the Executive Committee – APPROVED**

## **Jan. 13, 2022 (Zoom, business conducted)**

**Convener:** Tim Tryjankowski

**Officers Present:** Tim Tryjankowski (Chair), Don Erb (Vice Chair), Catherine Donnelly (Secretary)

**Executive Members Present:** Rachel Blane, Ed Brodka, Jessica Byerly Coram, Lynn Emminger, Hugh Jarvis, Chris Keough, Tim Matthews, RJ Multari, Marlo Roetzer, Melinda Saran, Eileen Sirianni, Fred Stoss and Krystal Testa.

**Absent/Excused:** Brianna Bennett, Ray Dannehoffer, Andrew Fogelsonger, Janiece Jankowski, Carl Lam, Dom Licata

**Members/Guests**: Mark Coldren, Kimberly Krzemien

**Parliamentarian:** Rachel Poole

**Staff:** Jessica Naish

**Recorder**: Catherine Donnelly

**Meeting** **called to order** by Tim Tryjankowski at 3:01 p.m.

**Quorum** **reached**: 12 members and 3 officers present.

***Supporting documents in Box.com folder in*** [***Professional Staff Senate/ Meetings/ Executive Committee Meetings/01-13-2022***](https://buffalo.box.com/s/v11h7oaub26x92do9pmbuct6j3m6lnq7)

## ****PRESENTATION OF AGENDA –**** Tim Tryjankowski

* Motion to adopt [Agenda](https://buffalo.box.com/s/67rtt694c7h9x3qgkbu548olup2nmq1g) included a request to suspend business and move Mark Caldron up the agenda to speak first.  **Melinda Saran (Chris Keough). Passed.**

## ****REVIEW OF PAST MINUTE(s) –**** Tim Tryjankowski

* Minutes available in Box folder.
* Motion to approve [Minutes from Dec. 9, 2021](https://buffalo.box.com/s/2bp2ygmikhbkt0zs92ir1ozyccohrj7v)**: Ed Brodka (Chris Keough). Passed.**

**Meeting started with Mark Coldren from HR.**

Mark discussed the current state of Covid protocols and the telecommuting pilot program. Tim shared “the good, the bad and the ugly” from PSS members who reached out to their senators.

Some of the comments included:

**Good**: The process was super easy – I am thriving in my work – I can be more flexible – My quality of life is vastly improved with telecommuting – I am more at peace with my own health and safety – I get more done – I save gas – I am productive and feel valued and my family life has never been more balanced – You took my stress away – I am eating healthier and more regularly from home – I have never been happier in my job – I finally feel valued as an employee.

**Bad**: I was told not to apply – I feel incredibly uncomfortable at work – I stayed away from family and friends over the holidays due to Covid and now I am with people who traveled – It makes me feel like my health and my well-being and my job are not as important – I feel like they're saying you really don't matter.

**Ugly**: Our entire unit all denied – Other academic advisors enjoy remote work each week – We can't even get an answer as to what might work – We are being punished with bad leadership that does not trust us – We did all of our work very well during the shutdown and we can't have one day a week to telecommute – Absolutely morale killing – Supervisors approved it, yet my Dean told us no and won't even discuss why – We appealed them were rejected – We fear retaliation for even asking and are afraid to submit again – I am actively looking to get out – I am made to feel the shame that I even brought up telecommuting

Mark replied to these comments that UB will work with staff who have health concerns, child care issues, etc. However, a universal policy is difficult because there is no blanket situation. We are working case-by-case. Now that the SUNY pilot has been extended, all staff who were denied should apply again.  However, the data suggests that UB is not the place where employees contract Covid, they are being exposed in their households and other activities. Here at work, our health and safety guidelines and the fact that we have a really high vaccination rate, along with people wearing masks and keeping some social distance that our campus is low-risk. If you do contract Covid you can quarantine for five days, if you are fully vaccinated, and get your sick-time back.

As for telecommuting, right now there are 812 remote work requests, 778 of those were approved, 34 were not approved, and we have another 125 in the queue. Our policy is really built on the premise that nobody's going to be 100% remote. As for the inconsistency between areas, that has to do with how people work together along with leadership and supervision.

Q&A.

*I’ve seen one person working remote 100% of the time with another team member who was denied any telecommuting. That created a really bad feeling in the building.* Mark replied that no telecommuting can be 100% but there can be exceptions for medical accomodations and other preexisting arrangements. HR is working through those issues.

*Should people try to apply again for telecommuting now that SUNY extended the pilot to June*? Mark said that if you want to apply again, try to create an updated document that addresses any of the previous concerns and perhaps a frame the requests in a different way. He also mentioned D’Youville switching to a four-day workweek.

*I've heard from several individuals who fear retaliation for even applying for the benefit because they know their supervisory chain isn't supportive.* HR can help to dialogue with an area leader and remind them that we can try it and end it if it doesn’t work.

*You said that people reapply and change something about their their application and their situation, and it seems like people are not being approved that it's not necessarily about the details of their application, it's about a concept overall of remote working in that division.* Mark replied that some appeals did provide enough info to overturn the initial rejection. The situation is different with the policy extended and supported by SUNY.

*How does telecommunity help with retention or attracting new employees?* Mark said that this is a large discussion. Just in the realm of higher ed, Iowa, California and Kansas schools have done some innovative things. Is this a benefit or a productivity tool? I’m not sure the external arguments going to change things as much here. But, one piece of interesting data is that many applicants are asking in the process. And when they find out we do not have 100% remote options they are withdrawing from the pool. We are getting fewer applications than we ever have. I think the fact is, people are being more selective.

*I know that my position requires me to be on campus. But, colleagues who can telecommute are saving gas and mileage and time. I drive 30 minutes to and from work. That adds up to real money that I have to spend and they do not.* Universities can save money with telecommuting, like when we don’t have to heat buildings for the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day. But, in an area where they're not necessarily supportive of telecommuting, it reinforces them to say no, because they'll say things like you chose to live where you do. 60 Minutes this week had a really great interview about the “big quit” and how people are finding ways to choose their work. As for sustainability, I don’t know if we are embracing that as a university or not. Parking is certainly another issue to consider.

*I work with colleagues who have been denited and it is very clear to me that they're completely disheartened.  They feel like they're they've been devalued.  What do we say to these colleagues to make them feel like they are still incredibly valued that the role they are performing is still greatly appreciated. I don’t want to lose them to other units or other universities.* Mark replied that units need to show value. Can be flexible work, or money or recognition. But, if someone tells me that I am not a candidate for telecommuting then then I have to decide what to do. But, in this market, units and companies who embrace it are going to be more popular.

*One more Covid question. How do staff tell you when they have tested positive and how to get the sick time back?* If you have tested positive reach out to us. Right now we are taking at home tests as a as a result but if you did test positive with a home test please take a picture of it before the lines fade. Data suggests you had symptoms before you took the test so we start any potential quarantine period then. If they are unable to work because they don't feel up to it, then they take sick time. When we get the positive test, we can restore their time.  If you feel OK but need to quarantine, you should ask your supervisor if you can work remotely while you are in quarantine.  This is very case by case, and what we've been consistent with that kind of direction.

*What will happen with faculty who test positive? Can they teach remote for five days?* That will be different and need to be handled by the department. At the end of last semester some classes were either postponed or cancelled or someone covered the classes. It was different school by school. .

*Do you have statistics on the applicant pools? We had a recent position, but a lot wanted flexibility. Our final pool was very small.* We are trying to compare data, but 2020 was a hiring freeze, but looking back at 2019,

We are seeing less applicants substantially across the board, and we think that's a result of lots of factors in the job market. Those places that do not have flexibility may not be as competitive. Also, we have to do some things different and it starts with the description itself, with what kind of experience we're demanding versus saying it's preferred. We have to stop writing niche positions that do not broaden the pool to find lots of different talent. I believe, higher ed will be six to eight months behind the rest of the market.

*Are there any metrics from departments that have been incredibly helpful in setting up telecommuting for other people?* The level of productivity that's equal to equal to or greater than the productivity of their employees that have to stay on campus it would be good to know.   We are trying to find details like that. Productivity is a tough question to answer, how did people do a good job of determining that before they have flexibility and do they look at it afterward? Also, areas are asked to do workforce planning and in that workforce planning they're supposed to look out three years and think about who are the people that work on their teams.

*Will UB do a new campus culture survey and compare it to the last one?* That’s a great question. We need to find indicators about how well we're doing in terms of culture and climate.

## ****CHAIR’S REPORT –**** Tim Tryjankowski

Award winners: PSS will not host an event, but the officers will provide gifts and recognition to the winners for 2020 and 2021.

Other issues will be covered later in the meeting.

* **Motion to receive: Melinda Saran (Chris Keough). Passed.**

## ****VICE-CHAIR’S REPORT –**** Don Erb

* *Awards Committee:* New chair will be addressed later. Submission deadline for Chancellor’s Award for Professional Services is done. Outstanding Service, and Outstanding Service to the Professional Staff Senate awards are open now and due March 9. Visit the website for details.
* *Budget Advisory Committee:* No update.
* *Constitution and Bylaws:* Reviewing annual governing documents. Proposed change to be discussed later.
* *Election Committee:* No update.
* *Inclusion and Diversity:* Working on the land acknowledgement. Have connected with Dr. Theresa McCarthy for her feedback and consultation.  Audoban parkway renaming will be voted on during the next general membership meeting. Also coordinating a meeting about environmental justice.
* *Marketing and Communication:* No update.
* *Recreation and Wellness Committee:* The group has nominated Mark Sorel as their next chair. Need a motion from the EC to approve.
  + **Motion to accept the nomination: Ed Brodka (Marlo Roetzer). Passed.**
  + Had 58 people participate in the ergonomics event. Slides and a recording are available.
* *Welcome Committee:* Investigating if we can host a live event later this spring to welcome new employees.
* *Sustainable Living Committee:* Planning Lake LaSalle cleanup event this spring.
* **Motion to receive: Melinda Saran (RJ Multari). Passed.**

## ****SECRETARY’S REPORT –**** Catherine Donnelly

* **No report**

## ****UNFINISHED BUSINESS****

* Marlo Roetzer spoke about the holiday giving drive, each family received $1000 worth of assistance.
* Awards Committee has nominated Krista Greenberg as the new chair of their committee. She has agreed to a one-year term and will add new members and train someone to take over in the future.
  + **Motion to accept the nomination: RJ Multari (Lynn Emminger). Passed.**

## ****NEW BUSINESS****

Proposal brought to reorganize how and from where senators are elected to be in alignment with UB’s structure. New format would not take effect until after January 1, 2023, if approved. Discussion included comments from Chris Keough, Kimberly Krzemien, and Don Erb about how long this has been under consideration and how the involved committees (special ad-hoc, elections, bylaws & constitution) have analyzed all aspects of this proposal and how the process will be implemented to follow all PSS rules. Would change five areas into representation from all decanal and professional units.

Currently elected senators will be grandfathered into the process to allow for the change to take place. EC is needed to approve this to send to the general membership since this a procedural change to our bylaws and constitution. If the general membership approves it (future meeting to be determined) then the Election Committee will handle the vote. If approved, the voting process wil need to take place 10 days after the general membership meeting.

Motion to approve the proposed redistricting of the PSS, to the Secretary and ask at the Secretary's discretion to get this onto the agenda of the most appropriate forthcoming general membership meeting. **Motion to accept the proposal: Chris Keough (Ed Brodka) Passed**

President Tripathi accepted resolution about graffiti on campus. He appreciated the PSS and Faculty Senate reaffirming UB’s commitment to inclusion.

Agenda for 1/27/22 meeting was previously approved. Will hear from Mark Alnutt in Athletics.

ADJOURNMENT

**Meeting ended at 4:18 p.m.**

*Attendance sign in sheet(s) available through the PSS office.*  
*Meeting audio recording available through the PSS office.*