

## MEETING OF DECEMBER 10, 2015

In President Bollinger's absence, Executive Committee chair Sharyn O'Halloran called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 pm in 104 Jerome Greene Hall. Forty-five of 100 senators were present during the meeting.

**Minutes and agenda.** The minutes of November 20 and the agenda were adopted as proposed.

### **Executive Committee chair's remarks.**

*Faculty quality-of-life survey.* Sen. O'Halloran said the survey had been out for a week and already had some 650 responses, a 17 percent response rate so far—a good start. She urged faculty senators to encourage colleagues to participate, and mentioned the extra effort Sen. Howard Worman (Ten., P&S) had already made. She said a similar survey for research officers would be going out in February.

### **New business.**

*Elaboration of the results of the 2015 student quality-of-life survey* (Student Affairs Committee). SAC vice-chairs Emily Moore (SEAS) and Ramis Wadood (CC) presented their report, referring closely to a [PowerPoint presentation](#).

A senator asked about the importance of stress as a factor in the student survey.

Sen. Wadood said the survey included a mental health category, which listed stress, amount of work, social life, fitting in—a range of issues. All of these will be included in the full report, to be released early in the spring semester. He said the survey includes a number of qualitative, anecdotal responses. A lot of them had to do with stress, especially stemming from academics.

In response to another question, Sen. Wadood said student participants were from all Columbia schools and affiliated institutions, including Barnard. Sen. Moore would be contacting student affairs deans in the various schools to discuss salient results of their portion of the survey, as SAC members had done two years ago.

In response to a question from Sen. Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., CDM), Sen. Wadood said the participation rate rose significantly from the first quality-of-life survey to the second one. In 2013 about 8,000 students started the survey, and about 6,500 finished it; in 2015 more than 10,000 students started and between 9,500 and 10,000 finished it.

Sen. Richard Smiley (Ten., P&S) said a survey measuring satisfaction or happiness is inevitably quite subjective. Is there any way to make the results more objective, perhaps by comparing them to previous surveys, or to similar surveys at comparable institutions?

Sen. Moore said no other institution has a survey of this magnitude. She added that a student who helped prepare the survey offered to help make the next (2017) iteration somewhat more objective. Sen. Wadood added that SAC was committed to repeating the survey every two years. This accumulation of results should help provide benchmarks.

Sen. Daniel Savin (Research Officers) joined Sen. Smiley in urging SAC to do peer comparisons, even if there are only limited data from other schools, and try to get a sense of where Columbia stands.

Sen. Nicole Wallack (NT, A&S/Hum) urged SAC to consult the National Survey of Student Engagement, and look for common categories with the Columbia survey.

Sen. Wallack also suggested including a section about how students understand the standing of their instructors—are they tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure-track, graduate students, adjuncts? Do students have access to them? How does this issue affect students' sense of the quality of their education?

Sen. Wadood said he would recommend incorporating this suggestion in the 2017 survey, just as the current edition incorporated suggestions made after the 2013 survey, particularly involving demographic information such as military veteran status.

Sen. Moore said Sen. Wallack's question about student perceptions of their instructors would be well suited to a survey by the Center for Teaching and Learning, which is conducting trainings for teaching assistants as well as full-time faculty. She said the CTL could get answers soon, without having to wait two years for the next SAC survey.

Sen. Kurt Roeloffs (Alumni) asked if the survey results provide deeper insight into the higher levels of dissatisfaction or of a sense of discrimination. Does the survey distinguish between Columbia problems and broader social problems? Is there a way to follow-up with dissatisfied groups to help form a possible action plan?

Sen. Wadood said anecdotal and qualitative responses were often revealing. Some were about living in New York City, while others were about the campus itself. One section of the report will focus specifically on ethnicity, race, discrimination, and particular demographics. SAC will bring these results to groups that specifically identified discrimination of various kinds. These highlights will be in the full report.

Sens. Moore and Wadood appreciated the suggestions senators had made.

Sen. O'Halloran thanked Sens. Moore and Wadood for their presentation. She adjourned the meeting shortly before 2 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson Senate staff