Proposed: December 15, 2016

Adopted:

MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2016

In the absence of President Lee Bollinger, Executive Committee chair Sharyn O'Halloran (Ten., SIPA) called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 pm in 103 Jerome Greene Hall. Sixty-eight of 99 senators were present during the meeting.

Minutes and agenda. The minutes of October 21 and the agenda were adopted as proposed.

Resolution to Establish the Department of Emergency Medicine. Seeing that a super-majority of three-fifths of all incumbent senators was present, Sen. O'Halloran went immediately to this agenda item. At the two previous meetings the Senate had fallen short of this threshold and so had been unable to approve the new department, which requires a Statutory amendment.

Education Committee co-chair Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., CDM) said Columbia is lagging behind a number of peer institutions that already have emergency medicine departments. Columbia already has a residency program in this discipline, which would be strengthened by the establishment of a department.

There being no further discussion, the Senate then voted unanimously to approve the creation of the new department. There was applause.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn added that Faculty Affairs Committee, which she also co-chairs, had just sent the Structure and Operations Committee a proposal for a solution to the problem of the Senate's struggles with super-majorities for non-controversial resolutions. She said that when the Senate began in 1969 there may have been a compelling need to have all senators in the same room for every vote, but technology had changed some of those conditions. It may now be possible to conduct a responsible deliberation and vote without having everyone in the room.

Sen. Philip Genty (NT, Law), chair of Structure and Operations, said he had received the proposal and would add it to the agenda of the next S&O meeting in early December. He said he was eager to hear what changes Faculty Affairs thinks have taken place since 1969.

Questions for the provost. Sen. Aidan Quinn (Stu., GSAS/NS) said Columbia was fortunate to be in a "sanctuary city," given President-Elect Donald Trump's stated intention to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Executive Order enacted by President Obama. He asked if the Columbia administration was considering specific measures to protect undocumented students.

Provost John Coatsworth said senior central administrators have been working on the issues affecting international students. Columbia will issue a statement of support for that population in the next few days. It will focus on the protection and support of Columbia's DACA students.

Columbia will maintain an existing commitment not to cooperate with immigration services if they request information about these students, or access to them, unless they present a subpoena or an arrest warrant. The provost stressed that Columbia is a sanctuary university in this sense.

He said Columbia is also arranging through the Law School's Immigration Law Clinic to hold sessions that DACA and other undocumented students can attend without identifying themselves, so that they can learn from an expert what rights and recourse they have, and what steps they should take now to protect themselves in the future.

A third step has been to plan for the possibility that President-Elect Trump will carry out the threat he made during the campaign to abolish the DACA program on his first day in office. Columbia will support any DACA student who is disadvantaged by such a decision. The principal focus is on students who are employed by Columbia. If DACA is abolished, the university cannot legally continue to employ them. Instead it will provide backup resources for them, and it now has to figure out the possible costs and ways to pay them.

It is also clear, the provost said, that a number of international students have become quite concerned about possible changes in American immigration policy. Some may be worried that if they go home over the holidays, their visas might not be recognized when they return. He said most fears of this kind are without foundation. The International Scholars and Students Office has already been scheduling information sessions for the coming week, which are listed on the ISSO website.

There was applause.

Executive Committee chair's remarks.

--Update on student unionization. Prompted by Sen. O'Halloran, Sens. Sean Ryan (CC) and Grace Kelley (Nursing), Student Affairs Committee co-chairs, said SAC would be hosting three information sessions on student unionization and the upcoming election, in which student teaching and research assistants would be deciding whether to accept Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers as their union. Sen. Ryan said SAC has consistently declined to take a position for or against unionization, preferring to provide information and to urge affected students to vote. The first two sessions would be for students only, with student panelists, on November 28 at CUMC and December 2 on the Morningside campus. A third session, on December 5, would include additional views in the room.

Sen. Kelley stressed that these events are for students. If faculty want to attend, they should come to the third and last session. The goal in the first two was to provide as safe a space as possible for students to state their questions and opinions honestly. Even in the last session, only students would be allowed to ask questions.

New business.

Resolution to Establish a Master of Science in Sustainability Science (School of Professional Studies). Education Committee co-chair James Applegate (Ten., A&S/Natural Sciences) said the proposed program was for students with bachelor's degrees in a STEM field who want to focus more on the science of sustainability, environmental, and energy issues than

on the policy and management side, which is actually the subject of another SPS master's degree program. The SPS collaborated with the Earth Institute in preparing this 36-point program, which will take about a year and a half. Its director is Arthur Lerner-Lam, a deputy director of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Some 15-20 Lamont faculty have signed on for this program, which the Education Committee enthusiastically endorsed.

Sen. Ron Prywes (Ten., A&S/Natural Sciences) asked why, it there was already a similar program, the two programs couldn't be combined.

Sen. Applegate said there actually isn't that much overlap between the programs. In the existing program 9 of the 12 courses focus on policy, and the other three on science; in the proposed program, the split is the opposite, with the three policy courses actually drawn from the existing program. So it really is more like two separate programs than two tracks of the same program.

By show of hands, the Senate then approved the resolution, with one opposed.

Resolution to Establish the Joint M.D. and M.S. in Biomedical Engineering (SEAS and P&S). Sen. Moss-Salentijn said that aside from a small overlap of six credit points that are earned in the medical program, all of the courses for the M.S. in biomedical engineering are in the biomedical curriculum, which will come as an additional year between the third and fourth years of the medical program. Sen. Moss-Salentijn said she thought so highly of the program that she hoped to have a similar joint program with her school, the College of Dental Medicine.

Sen. Richard Smiley asked why the two programs were joined in this way. Why not just take the two degrees separately? Was there some saving in time in the joint program?

Sen. Moss-Salentijn said the history was that two people who did earn the M.D. and then the biomedical M.S. said they wished they could have done the two programs together. She said that having access to P&S labs while talking the biomedical program might be a valuable benefit.

Sen. Smiley responded, inaudibly.

Sen. Sonya Nanda (Stu., Bus.) asked whether students would apply to both programs at the outset, or apply for the biomedical program after they've started medical school.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn referred the question to Prof. Katherine Reuther from the Biomedical Engineering Dept. Prof. Reuther said the idea is for medical students to apply to the bioengineering program during their first or second year, and then pursue the bioengineering degree in their third year. One student served as kind of a pilot for the proposed program, taking a year off from med school to do the master's degree, and he was excited about the combination. She said the level of student interest in the joint program is only anecdotal at this stage, but her department works closely with clinicians and residents at P&S, and she expected students to be interested as well.

Sen. Robert Pollack (Ten., A&S/Natural Sciences) asked facetiously if other degrees besides the M.D. will require the Hippocratic Oath. More seriously, he expressed concern about the idea of

the Medical School curriculum branching out into other schools with the M.D. as the degree. What are the boundary conditions for the name of the degree relating to the subject studied?

Sen. Smiley asked where the boundary is between a joint degree program and an interlude in the middle of medical school of the kind that med students already use to get specialized training.

Melissa Begg, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and a member of the Education Committee, said some of the specializations Sen. Smiley had mentioned actually are dual degree programs.

The Senate then voted unanimously to approve the new program.

Resolution to Establish the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as an Academic Holiday, Starting in 2017 (Education, Student Affairs). Sen. O'Halloran said the resolution was up for discussion only at the present meeting, not a vote. She asked Sens. Ryan and Kelley to lead the discussion.

Sen. Ryan said most of the work on this resolution was done by last year's Student Affairs Committee leaders. The goal has always been to enable students to spend Thanksgiving with their families, especially international students who otherwise would be spending that day on an airplane. For completing the work on the resolution, Sen. Ryan thanked the Education Committee, the Provost's Office and the Registrar's Office.

Sen. Applegate moved to the front of the room and offered some historical background. He said the Education and Student Affairs committees reviewed the academic calendar at some length a few years ago. The conclusion was that the Columbia's calendar is no one's Plan A, but a highly functional Plan B that serves a lot of different needs. With such a well-crafted compromise, the temptation is to conclude that if it's not broken, don't fix it.

But Sen. Applegate said the Wednesday before Thanksgiving has been a sore point for students going back several SAC leaderships, and even beyond. And faculty have also been complaining about it at least for at least as long as the 30 years he had been at Columbia. The reason why it was now possible to take action on this complaint was that Vice Provost Begg had done a lot of historical research to determine that Columbia could make this change without violating any state or federal regulations.

Sen. Applegate said there is an extra Wednesday in the fall academic calendar. Thirteen weeks of classes are enough to be (barely) in compliance, but there are 14 weeks in the fall semester before finals. The extra Monday and Tuesday are absorbed by the Election Day break, and Thanksgiving takes the extra Thursday and Friday. That leaves an extra Wednesday. After some 18 months of checking and consultations with other groups, Sen. Applegate said, Education is prepared to go forward with this change, which is a clear benefit to both faculty and students.

Vice Provost Begg said her sole contribution to the discussion was to share that according to New York State, a week of class is a week in which anything occurs in the class, including an exam.

Sen. Peter Platt (Fac., Barnard) thanked the Education Committee and SAC for postponing the vote till the next meeting. He said Barnard people had no idea this was coming until the Tuesday before the present meeting when he received the emailed packet. Sen. Platt said this idea may be popular, but he could not have felt comfortable voting for it without consulting with his faculty first. The Barnard provost and registrar knew nothing about it.

Sen. Platt added that he wasn't very sympathetic to the resolution itself. He teaches a once-a-week seminar on Wednesdays, and always has at least half of the class there on the day before Thanksgiving. No one is required to attend or hand in work or to take exams. He said he couldn't imagine that dropping a day of classes is actually wise or good business. So he expected to speak out against the resolution. If his faculty supports it, he will vote for it because he is a representative of Barnard, but he would prefer some other solution to this problem.

Sen. Eli Noam (Ten., Bus.) asked if the extra Wednesday is part of the schedule across the university, or just in the Arts and Sciences. He also asked whether, if that Wednesday is just an academic holiday and not a university holiday, the same argument about the hardship of travel wouldn't apply to anyone. If it does, what would the consequences be?

To Sen. Noam's second question, Sen. Applegate said the resolution was designed specifically for students traveling long distances. People who work at Columbia don't travel far. To the first question, Sen. Applegate replied that the academic calendar the Education Committee approves is in fact a recommendation. It is used by a number of units on the Morningside campus—Arts and Sciences, Barnard, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, etc. But not all schools use it. The Business School uses multiple calendars, depending on its programs. So the recommended calendar will be posted as such, and schools that do not wish to follow it can continue to post their own calendars for their use.

Sen. O'Halloran said Registrar Barry Kane had made clear that schools that depart from the master calendar just need to notify the Registrar and provide their own calendar for posting.

Sen. William Duggan (NT, Bus.) asked if dropping the Wednesday before Thanksgiving would mean a net loss of contact hours. Sen. Applegate said it would.

Sen. Mary Sormanti (NT, Social Work) said she would be pleased not to have classes on that Wednesday. But she questioned the idea of having a holiday for Thanksgiving, which many people—Native Americans and others—recognize as a national day of mourning. She didn't know if there had been any discussion of this issue, especially given the context of the new political climate and the provost's earlier remarks.

Sen. Applegate said the Education Committee had not considered that point of view. It believed that making the Wednesday before Thanksgiving an academic holiday would make the world a better place in a small way.

Sen. Ramond Curtis (Stu., GS) said he had Native American constituents who were disturbed by the Thanksgiving holiday. But he doubted that taking the additional Wednesday off would trouble them any further.

Sen. Lisa Northrop (Fac., Barnard) said she shared Sen. Platt's reservations about the resolution. She noted that Barnard's calendar is so closely meshed with the calendar of Columbia College that it would probably be difficult for Barnard not to go along with the results of the Wednesday resolution, regardless of the option to seek an exemption from the master calendar. She also wondered whether dropping the Wednesday before Thanksgiving would result in doubts about the rest of the week before Thanksgiving. She understood that there was no more room in the fall calendar for holidays, but she thought it was worth asking whether there will still be full attendance at those Monday and Tuesday classes.

Sen. Applegate took responsibility for the failure to notify Barnard that the resolution was headed for the Senate now. He apologized. He said the consultation that did take place was to make sure there were no drop-dead regulatory or legal reasons why the calendar could not eliminate the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. So the consultation went through administrative channels but not through all faculty governance bodies. Having learned of no regulatory obstacles, the committee decided to bring the proposal to the Senate floor for discussion.

Sen. Applegate said the committee had heard the question Sen. Northrop raised about the impact of a Wednesday holiday on the Monday and Tuesday of Thanksgiving week. He said this is a serious concern. He said the committee felt that the change was worth the risk, but that the question should be decided on the Senate floor.

Howard Jacobson, the parliamentarian, said the University Statutes explicitly exempt the following schools from following the official academic calendar: Law, Medicine, Journalism, Business, Dental Medicine, Nursing, Professional Studies and Public Health. He said other schools can seek an exemption through a Statutory amendment. He did not believe schools could just depart from the master calendar on their own. They would have to make a proposal, and the Senate would have to go through the whole process including a super-majority vote.

Sen. O'Halloran understood that Registrar Kane has treated the master calendar as a recommendation, and he approves exemptions.

Mr. Jacobson said he was just reporting on the Statutes.

Sen. Vincent Blasi (Ten., Law) said that when he was a law student at the University of Chicago, he had a required class not only on the day before Thanksgiving, but on the day after as well. His torts teacher began the class by asking, "What do we have to be thankful for?"

Sen. Erica Avrami (NT, Architecture) said the University of Pennsylvania was called out during its last Mid-Atlantic States Review for having too few weeks in its semester. They were required to expand their semester to 14 weeks. Did Columbia face similar oversight in its last review?

Vice Provost Begg said it did not.

In response to questions from Sen. Pollack, Sen. Applegate explained that in the current calendar a Tuesday-Thursday class in the fall semester meets 26 times over 13 weeks. A Monday-

Wednesday class, with the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, meets 27 times. Both types of classes meet 28 times in the spring, over 14 weeks.

Sen. Sonya Nanda (Stu., Bus.) asked if any Columbia schools that do not have classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving have class attendance data for the Monday and Tuesday before that. She understood that the Business School does not hold classes on that Wednesday. She also thought it would be useful to have similar data from other schools across the country.

Sen. Applegate said the Education Committee had not asked those questions.

Sen. Pollack asked for a justification for having a different number of weeks in each semester.

Sen Applegate did not know how to answer that question. He said the current effort was to solve problems with the current calendar, not to offer other justifications.

Sen. Pollack said one solution to the imbalance between the semesters might be to add a week of classes in the fall.

Sen. O'Halloran said the discussion was straying from the business before the Senate—whether to have a particular academic holiday.

Sen. Daniel Savin (Research Officers) asked if the Senate could get data on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving before voting on the resolution.

Sen. Applegate said he didn't know how the committee would gather that data, or poll other universities, before the next plenary.

Sen. O'Halloran doubted that professors systematically take attendance in these classes.

Sen. Kelley asked if anyone who teaches in a school that doesn't have class on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving could speak anecdotally about how that works.

Sen. Greg Freyer (NT, Public Health) said he always cancels his class on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. But he does teach on the Monday and Tuesday just before that, and he hasn't noticed any difference in the attendance.

Sen. Susan McGregor (NT, Journalism) said her school was not holding classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving for the first time this year. She normally teaches on Mondays and Wednesdays. Aside from minor adjustments, this arrangement seems to work well. It was relevant to note that the school always takes attendance, and attendance counts for grades.

Sen. O'Halloran said this situation would enable Sen. McGregor to know whether people actually don't show up on the Monday before Thanksgiving. Sen. McGregor said she would supply this information.

Sen. Raimondo Betti (Ten., SEAS) said that in his 26 years at Columbia he has taught every class scheduled during the semester. On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, he expects no more than 20 percent of his students. On those days he cannot cover new material, so he conducts a review session. He said he did not see the rationale for courses on the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving.

Sen. O'Halloran brought the discussion to an end. She invited senators to gather any available data. She also asked Vice Provost Begg to provide any relevant information that she had.

Reports.

Libraries Committee. Co-chair Arthur Langer (NT, SPS) explained that the committee's report had been postponed from the previous year in order to be able to comment on the report of the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Libraries (PACOL), which was issued over the summer. Then, along with Sen. Ann Thornton, Vice Provost and University Librarian, Sen. Langer presented his committee's the report, referring to PowerPoint slides projected on the screen. The other co-chair, Samuel Silverstein (Ten., P&S), was absent.

At the end of the report Sen. McGregor asked how interested faculty could participate in the committee's discussions. Sen. Thornton said she would be delighted to talk to Sen. McGregor.

Sen. Ryan thanked the presenters for their attention to student concerns, particularly over the issue of diversity and inclusion. Sen. Kainen Bell (Stu., SW) asked to hear more about diversity and inclusion initiatives in the Libraries.

Sen. Thornton said diversity and inclusion were themes of the Libraries' work not only in its dealings with users, but also in the continual unlearning the library staff has to do to address inherent biases that affect their work environment. She said the Libraries were also fortunate to have a social justice interest group that had been started the year before by Sen. Ian Beilin (Libraries) and a colleague. She said the group has begun to raise a number of these issues, and added that the Libraries are articulating other related high-level initiatives.

Sen. O'Halloran thanked Sens. Langer and Thornton for the report, noting that the Libraries have consistently been among the most highly rated university services in the recent quality-of-life surveys of both students and faculty.

She adjourned the meeting shortly before 2:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff