

MEETING OF NOVEMBER 17, 2017

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 104 Jerome Greene Hall. Sixty-four of 100 senators were present during the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda. The agenda was adopted as proposed.

Adoption of the minutes of October 20. Sen. Raimondo Betti said the October 20 minutes only captured half of his remarks about the policy providing \$40,000 payments to faculty to encourage them to choose alternatives to Columbia rental housing. He said he would talk to the staff member about his additional remarks. With this understanding the Senate approved the minutes as distributed.

Executive Committee chair's remarks.

Sen. Smiley's tribute to Prof. Ronald Breslow. Sen. O'Halloran noted the passing on October 25 of Ronald Breslow, a University Professor, a distinguished scientist, and a longtime member of the University Senate. She invited Sen. Richard Smiley (Ten., P&S) to speak.

Sen. Smiley spoke for several minutes about Prof. Breslow, who was his mentor in the Ph.D. program in the Columbia Chemistry Dept. from 1977 to 1981. Sen. Smiley's remarks are appended here, starting on page 5.

Old business.

Resolution to Approve the Faculty Affairs Committee Report on Academic Freedom. Sen. O'Halloran reminded the Senate that it had voted on October 20 to table the FAC resolution until the present meeting.

FAC co-chair Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., CDM) said she and co-chair Robert Pollack (Ten., A&S/NS) had met with leaders of the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) and worked hard on the issues raised at the last plenary. She said there were some issues remaining, but the two groups were close, and were determined to make sure every viewpoint is included in the final document.

Sen. Pollack made a motion to move forward the date certain for Senate action on the resolution to the next plenary. He hoped that SAC members would second the motion.

SAC co-chair Sonya Nanda (Bus.) seconded the motion.

Sen. O'Halloran invited discussion.

Howard Jacobson, the parliamentarian, said the only discussion allowed on such a motion is about the date certain of the resolution's return to the Senate for action.

Sen. O'Halloran affirmed the new date: December 8.

Sen. Pollack said discussions with SAC would continue, and he hoped the two groups would come back with a version of the resolution acceptable to both for a Senate vote.

The Senate then voted without dissent, by show of hands, to postpone consideration of the resolution till December 8.

Ombuds Office Annual Report for 2016-2017. Joan Waters, the University Ombuds Officer, based her report on a set of slides that were projected on the screen. Recorded here are questions and comments from senators.

Sen. Daniel Savin (Research Officers) asked if the Ombuds Office kept track of which kinds of officers (administrators, researchers, librarians, faculty) were coming to them.

Ms. Waters said faculty are identified, but there are no precise numbers for other types of officers who visit her office.

At the end of the presentation, Sen. Savin said many people don't understand that the Ombuds Office cannot advocate for them—an important fact that he said did not come across clearly in Ms. Waters's presentation. Among those who do understand, there is disappointment. Sen. Savin said he thought the Ombuds Office should be more straightforward on this point.

He asked for the main types of issues that people bring to the Ombuds Office. How many complain about sexual harassment, or about abusive supervisors, or about inadequate salaries?

Ms. Waters said she was not prepared to report on those fractions yet, but she was revamping her website, and the finished product (due in two months) will have a page for those numbers. She said it's tricky to come up with firm numbers on these types of issues, which can end up sounding very generic. Many people don't want their complaints exposed.

Sen. Savin asked how, if it was difficult to get more detailed numbers, Ms. Waters would be able to inform the senior administration of the primary issues to address. Ms. Waters said she can report on trends to the senior administration.

Committee annual reports and updates

Information and Communications Technology Committee 2016-17 Annual Report. IT Committee co-chair Julia Hirschberg (Ten., SEAS) presented the [report](#), which had been distributed. Recorded here is discussion of matters not touched on in the report.

Sen. Hirschberg gave an update on the Recruitment of Academic Personnel System (RAPS), which is used for faculty hiring. She said it has been the source of some dissatisfaction for faculty. She recently learned that a planned upgrade of the system, which had been discussed for

a couple of years now, has been further delayed. But she said Heather Parlier, Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, had recently said there are other possibilities for new academic personnel systems that are now being worked on.

Sen. Hirschberg said Ms. Parlier had been coming to schools and departments and providing training on unconscious bias. In a pilot program in the Engineering School, all of the recruiting committees will be trained in unconscious bias and how to try to avoid it.

Sen. Hirschberg said the committee also discussed Accounting and Reporting at Columbia (ARC), which she said is still being tweaked several years after its introduction to make it more “human-friendly.” A new iteration is now being tried out at CUMC.

Gaspare LoDuca, VP for Information Technology and a member of the IT Committee, said he hoped the refinements to ARC now being implemented at CUMC would reach the Morningside campus in the summer of 2018.

Sen. Irving Herman (Ten., SEAS) asked about a program called Mathematica and some other new software tools that seem to be available to students but not to faculty. He asked if faculty could get access to these tools.

Sen. Hirschberg said she knew nothing about this. Are these tools provided by the University?

Mr. LoDuca, looking at his laptop, said he wasn’t aware Mathematica was not downloadable. He said the University makes decisions on each software package, based on academic needs. He is prepared to take up requests for central funding of packages that are in demand.

Sen. Hirschberg said the professor needs to make the case. Mr. LoDuca said his office is happy to manage licenses or negotiate contracts, because it can help get favorable terms for Columbia users, and make sure that they are not giving up their data to a cloud software program. If the demand for a product is not widespread, then the department or school will have to pay for it.

Student Affairs Committee updates on space and quality-of-life survey. SAC co-chair Sonya Nanda (Business) said the 2017 QoL survey had come to a conclusion after three weeks in the field. This time the survey had 11,800 responses from the student body—the highest number yet. SAC was now working with a data analyst to clean the data and to get a high-level summary ready for a Trustees committee meeting early in December. Next semester SAC will report to the Senate on a deeper dive into the data. She said the committee hoped satisfaction levels are rising, but if not they are eager to address any problems that may have come up.

SAC co-chair Josh Schenk (CC) reminded senators of the SAC initiative last year to revamp Lerner Hall as a space better suited to build community. He showed the [PowerPoint deck](#) that SAC had presented to the Senate last spring, adding some updates.

Sen. Schenk identified short-, medium-, and long-term goals for Lerner. Among the long-term goals is building a unified student health center somewhere outside Lerner. The idea is to move a number of health-related spaces now in Lerner—including psychological services and sexual

violence response—thereby opening up a lot of recreational space for students. Sen. Schenk said a number of other administrative offices—the chaplain’s office, event management, financial aid—may also be relocated.

One of SAC’s short-term goals was to create dedicated spaces for LGBTQA students and students of color. Those spaces were opened up in September. Another was to create a student-led food bank to address students’ food insecurity. That space was launched in October, and was fully functioning on the fifth floor of Lerner. Sen. Schenk said it has been a huge success so far.

Students are now working on the medium-term project, the creation of a central student lounge. All of the mailboxes in Lerner have been moved out (with a new mail pick-up site in Wien Hall), and there are plans to put the 200, 300 and 400 levels together to create the three-story lounge. Sen. Schenk showed the slides of the preliminary design that SAC had presented in the spring. He said planners have identified architects, worked on the funding, and developed a timeline. Starting in February 2018, the renovation will turn the first floor (the 200 level), which now provides reservable spaces, into open recreational spaces. At the same time the current computer lab will be moved from the third to the fourth floor, with new technology. In the third-floor space now occupied by the computer lab, there will be two reservable spaces for student groups. Sen. Schenk said this is a win-win situation, with new space for all students and reservable spaces for groups. These changes will all take place next spring. Sen. Schenk said students are excited about the speed of the progress toward their short- and medium-term goals.

Sen. Savin asked if students had numbers to report on food insecurity. Has there been an increase or a decrease since the problem was reported in April? His second question was about access to these new spaces for disabled students. He said the spiral staircase in the design drawings of a new student lounge would be problematic.

Sen. Schenk expected the quality-of-life survey to provide useful information about food security. He said the food bank has helped, though SAC had no data on current numbers of food-insecure students. He said the food bank has expanded from a service run by a few GS students to a bigger operation run out of a central location, so there’s a clear sense that students are getting their meals. Sen. Schenk said he would work on providing some numbers.

As for the spiral staircase, Sen. Scheck agreed with Sen. Savin. He said it had been included for brainstorming, as a way to connect the floors. He added that there are two nearby elevators that can provide access to each floor.

There being no further business, Sen. O’Halloran adjourned the meeting at about 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff

APPENDIX

REMARKS ABOUT PROF. RONALD BRESLOW

SEN. RICHARD SMILEY (TEN., P&S)

SENATE PLENARY, NOVEMBER 17, 2017

First, I'll start the perfectly worst way to start anything—by apologizing. I know that a lot of people here probably knew Ron better than I did. I was asked to speak because I've known him for a long time. I was a graduate student in his research group from 1977 to 1981, getting my Ph.D. here in 1981, probably (conceivably) the last Ph.D. thesis ever typed on a typewriter at Columbia University. He got a word processor while I was working on it, but I didn't really know how to use one back then. Neither did he.

I'll just tell a few stories to give you a sense of my relationship with Ron Breslow. For my last couple of years of undergraduate work, in a city north of here at a technical college down the street from Harvard, I was planning to spend four years in California because that's what every East Coast kid wanted to do in the late '70s, because it was going to be sunny all the time and I could work on my tennis game. On the flight back from California in March of 1977, having interviewed or looked at the departments at Stanford and Cal Tech and UCLA, I finally opened the envelope from Columbia, and only at that moment did I find out I'd been accepted, because I had absolutely no interest in staying on the East Coast. I read the brochure from the Chemistry Department and there was this guy Breslow doing this work where he was attempting to synthesize small organic molecules that would mimic the active site of biological molecules, mostly enzymes. And as an aspiring organic chemist I just thought this was the coolest thing in the world, to actually do molecular design, to have the audacity to think that you could design a molecule with a certain bond length or a certain distance between two nitrogens or a certain ability to hold a metal ion in a certain way. So on the plane back I had decided, Well, California was a lost cause for me and I was probably going to be suffering another four years on the East Coast. I remember landing at Kennedy Airport and my father said, "So what's it going to be, Stanford, Cal Tech or UCLA?" And I think my words were, "God damn it, I'm going to Columbia." I really think—it may have been worse language than that, but it was basically that. He asked why and I said, "There's this guy Breslow and I've got to meet him."

About a week later I met him and—they say you shouldn't meet your heroes (I'd known a little bit about his work before), but sometimes it's okay. And in the next forty years that I knew Ron he never disappointed my initial impression from reading about his work or anything else. I joined his group. He was an excellent research advisor, a wonderful person to work with and be friends with.

I'll tell two quick stories. I was told to take as much time as I want; I won't. As a research advisor, you know, when you work for someone in a research group doing a PhD it can be either hell or heaven or usually somewhere in between. He told the story of his research advisor. It's easy for a research advisor to abuse students, even unintentionally. But his research advisor was

Robert Woodward, who had some credentials of his own. He won the Nobel Prize for the total synthesis of chlorophyll in the 1950s, I believe, maybe late '40s. And Breslow used to talk about how Woodward had a standard way of, I guess, getting his students to work harder. If someone was trying to work on a chemical problem in the lab and it wasn't working, Woodward would come in and say, "How's it going?" and the guy would say—mostly guys back then, I guess—would say, "You know, I didn't know what to do, so I spent the last 17 days in the library trying to find the right synthesis for this molecule and I just can't get it." And Woodward would say, "You know, sometimes 20 minutes in the lab would save you 17 days in the library." Of course, if the student said, "You know, I've been chugging away in the lab trying attempt after attempt to get this carbon-carbon double bond to form," Woodward would say, "You know, 20 minutes in the library with the right textbook could've saved you 17 days in the lab." And it's really not fair, because of course we know that the problems in science are not always amenable to one or the other, sometimes not either one, but you never quite know. And the truth is that Ron was pretty good about understanding that before you solved a problem you didn't really know how it was going to be solved, and he gave us a lot of leeway, but of course gave us a lot of advice.

I was in his group at an interesting time. It was the time of the Breslow Report, the report that made Columbia a coeducational institution. And I remember sitting with him, I specifically remember this conversation when we were sitting there having—I think for those of you who are here for a long time, it was over meatloaf subs from Takome Foods with the spicy sauce, if any of you remember that. And he was having one too because I picked it up for him. Because he wanted to talk about what he thought about the report. He had two daughters; he was obviously leaning towards allowing women to attend Columbia College. And I just remember him sitting there saying, "This is such an easy decision, but I just have to make it clear that this is the right decision for the College."

The last thing about the group at that time: he was younger and he participated in what we called the Breslow athletic club at the time. We played softball, we played basketball. I played him in squash a lot. I think he won most of the time because I did not know how to play squash. And for some reason, you know, all of us had our names on the back of the tee shirts to play softball, on the back of his was "Le Grand Fromage," the big cheese. Why it was in French I don't know, but that's what we called him. And I honestly cannot remember how it started or who started calling him it, but his shirt said "Le Grand Fromage" on the back. He played mostly outfield when we played softball.

The truth is he was supportive of me when I decided, after agonizing about this, to leave pure chemistry. Frankly, I didn't think I could be Ron Breslow, and I wasn't sure I wanted to be a pure chemist if I couldn't be Ron Breslow. So I decided to go to medical school after graduate school. And so in the last year or so of my graduate work I was applying to medical school. He was to me surprisingly supportive, including one time when he sat me down and said, "Look, I just talked to the people up at P&S and I told him how good you are and they said, 'Well, okay, but we're really not interested in a Ph.D., we have to train primary care physicians.'" So I did not get accepted at P&S. I now have a tenured position at P&S so I'm doing my harm there now as a faculty member, not a student. But he was very helpful to get me into a program that actually allowed me to do medical school in two years because I had a Ph.D. in chemistry, which is kind of weird.

Probably the proudest moment of my life, I mean this quite honestly, was [when] I received an endowed chair [as] an anesthesiologist up at P&S, and Ron came to the dinner at which I was sort of awarded the chair and got a medal, and he actually spoke to some people and told them how proud he was that I had been his graduate student, which really turned things—actually I'm having trouble saying that—it was quite a moment for me because he—I barely [saw him] for 20 years as I was working uptown, didn't know if he'd even remember me, but then we got closer again as I had some more work to do down here. But that moment at that dinner was quite something.

So I will conclude by—as I said, my opinion of Ron Breslow did not change over 40 years. He was a great scientist and a great man and a great friend. He always had a twinkle in his eye. I always knew he was thinking one or two or five steps ahead of you. And so, as I said, my opinion hasn't changed. So I'll just read the words I wrote in May of 1981, the acknowledgement to my thesis, on a typewriter:

Professor Ronald Breslow has been everything I could have wanted in a research advisor. His imagination, energy and enthusiasm for science have been an inspiration, carrying me through the inevitable periods of graduate research when the progress has been less than spectacular. I have also appreciated his understanding that there is a city and a world outside the lab, and his encouragement to spend at least some of my time in it. Professor Breslow is the most recent in the series of extraordinary teachers....

...and I don't have to mention the others. None of them are here. So anyway, I think we all know what Ron Breslow was. I think we all miss him and I know I certainly do.