

University Senate

Proposed: February 8, 2019

Adopted:

### MEETING OF DECEMBER 7, 2018

In President Bollinger's absence, Executive Committee chair Sharyn O'Halloran (Ten., SIPA) called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 pm in 1501 IAB. Sixty-five of 106 senators were present during the meeting.

**Minutes and agenda.** The minutes of November 16 and the agenda were adopted as proposed.

**Executive Committee chair's remarks.** Sen. O'Halloran said the president was on the road working on the current capital fundraising campaign. She said the campaign was 60 percent of the way toward its goal of \$5 billion.

She asked Provost John Coatsworth to respond to any questions senators might have for the president.

Sen. O'Halloran thanked senators for the recent increase in committee and plenary attendance.

*Student Affairs Committee statement on a recent episode of anti-semitic vandalism at Teachers College.* Prompted by Sen. O'Halloran, SAC co-chair Kira Dennis (Barnard) read a short statement. There was applause.

*Framework agreement for union negotiations.* A senator asked about the status of negotiations between the University and the newly recognized graduate student union.

Provost Coatsworth expected meetings with union representatives to start soon. He said the National Labor Relations Board recently approved two distinct bargaining units at Columbia. One is a graduate student union, which includes teaching assistants and research assistants employed throughout the University, and is affiliated with Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers. The other, consisting of postdoctoral research scientists and scholars and associate research scientists and scholars, is affiliated with Region 9B of the UAW.

The provost said the first formal meeting would not take place until the end of February, partly in order to allow the University enough time to gather the documents and the data the union needs for its bargaining effort. The provost understood that the first contract in the history of a union at a workplace typically takes one to two years to negotiate. He hoped to beat that pace, but said talks would last as long as necessary during the next year and a half to get a contract that's fair both to the employees and to the University, that respects Columbia's academic mission, but that also recognizes that almost any benefit or

increase in pay that either union negotiates will redound to the University's benefit, because Columbia does not share its revenue or costs with stockholders. Any step that can make life better and more interesting for graduate students and post-docs increases the University's competitiveness in the market for the best minds in the world. Because the University and these employees have a fundamental common interest, he doubted that it would take a long time to achieve agreements. But it could take until the deadline set in the framework agreement—April 6, 2020. During negotiations there can be no strikes or other disruptions, a provision that the provost expected would be helpful to the community as well. He offered to answer questions.

Sen. Alfredo Dominguez (Stu., CC) reported the concern of some graduate students that the provost's office had bypassed them—the democratically elected bargaining committee—to bargain with senior UAW officials. Members of the bargaining committee felt blindsided by the framework agreement, which was approved in a vote of the graduate student body, but over significant opposition. Sen. Dominguez asked how this situation arose, and how the provost would make sure that such problems don't extend into the actual bargaining process.

The provost said he did not want to discuss intra-union disagreements, which the UAW and its various officials and members have to work out for themselves. But he said the University approached the UAW last September *not* in order to negotiate a legally binding contract, but to seek a set of guidelines acceptable to both the union and the University that would make it easier to reach an agreement as quickly as possible once bargaining started. The provost recognized that there was some discontent among members of the two bargaining units that this framework agreement was proposed without their input. But he said that since the framework agreement was mostly uncontroversial, he was optimistic that the Columbia community would have an easier time adjusting to a new way of doing business—with academic unions. The provost said the University and the regional UAW leadership were not trying to exclude union members, but to find a way to make it possible to achieve the goals that the graduate students and research officers have been seeking for the last three years.

Sen. Andrew Hsu (Stu., GSAS/Pure Sciences) asked why the framework agreement has a provision barring strikes until a certain date.

The provost said the no-strike provision is a standard feature of contract negotiations with American unions. Generally, bargaining takes place until the expiration of a contract, after which a strike can take place if there is no agreement. But before the first contract, no-strike agreements are often reached before bargaining begins. This has been the practice at some other universities.

Sen. Hsu asked whether the two unions would be bargaining jointly or independently.

The provost anticipated two parallel processes for the two groups, which would also include two slightly different bargaining committees on the University side. He was hopeful, but not certain, that such an approach would make final resolutions easier. He

said that an agreement with one group might facilitate bargaining with the other group. The parallel process would include separate contract ratification votes.

*Postdoc Award for Sen. Regina Martuscello.* Sen. Daniel Savin, chair of the Research Officers Committee, announced that Sen. Regina Martuscello, a Postdoctoral Research Scientist in the Department of Pathology and Cell Biology, had recently received an award for her work on behalf of postdocs, much of which was done in the Senate. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs had conferred the honor—the Scott Smemo Memorial Postdoc Service Award—acting on the recommendation of the Columbia postdoc community.

Sen. Savin mentioned Sen. Martuscello's work for the Research Officers and Housing Policy committees and the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as a substantial report that she had presented to the Campus Planning Committee on facilities problems in some labs at the Medical Center. He also noted her work outside the Senate on the Columbia University Postdoctoral Society (CUPS), where she serves on the executive committee and as chair of the advocacy subcommittee.

Sen. Savin thanked Sen. Martuscello for her service. There was applause.

#### **Old business.**

[Resolution to Establish the Certificate in Comparative Media in GSAS \(Education\)](#). Education Committee co-chair Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., CDM) reminded senators that they were now getting their second look at this resolution, after voting at the November plenary to send it back to her committee for further review. She said that new programs undergo an extensive vetting procedure—two years in the case of the present proposal. The executive committee of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences approved it, the vice provost for educational programs studied it carefully, the provost's council of deans reviewed it, and a subcommittee of the Senate Education Committee and then the full committee voted on it before it arrived at the plenary for a final vote.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn said she was therefore surprised to see the comments that were submitted by the faculty of the Journalism School's Communications Ph. D. program. They should have been addressed two years ago, or at least one year ago, when the sponsors of the present certificate proposal invited them to meet.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn said the good news was that immediately after the last plenary there was a productive discussion that led to revisions in Whereas clauses 4, 5 and 6 of the enacting resolution. The proposal itself was not changed. She invited comments from Profs Noam Elcott of Art History, one of the program sponsors, and Andrea Tucher, director of the communications program in Journalism, who had asked the Senate to reject the program at the previous plenary.

Prof. Elcott thanked Sen. Moss-Salentijn for her work on the proposal, and also thanked Prof. Tucher and her colleagues for the productive meeting that reached agreement on the text of the resolution.

Prof. Tucher said there were a few missteps at the beginning of the process, but she thanked the Education Committee, the program sponsors, her senator June Cross (Ten., Journalism) and the full Senate for conducting a thorough and productive review.

Sen. Susan Bernofsky (Ten., Arts) asked for a summary of the changes that were made in the text of the resolution between the two plenaries.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn said she had been hoping not to have to go into the details. Her brief summary was that the revised resolution explicitly recognizes other schools at Columbia that have similar courses or programs in the field of comparative media.

Prompted by Sen. O'Halloran, the Senate then voted on the resolution, approving it 63-0.

**Adjournment.** There being no further business, Sen. O'Halloran adjourned the meeting at around 1:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff