

MEETING OF MARCH 8, 2019

In President Bollinger's absence, Executive Committee chair Sharyn O'Halloran (Ten., SIPA) called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 p.m. in 103 Jerome Greene. Sixty-seven of 105 senators were present during the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda. The agenda was adopted with two abstentions.

Adoption of the minutes. The minutes of February 8 were adopted as proposed.

President's remarks. Sen. O'Halloran explained that Provost John Coatsworth would take questions in President Bollinger's absence.

Sen. Andrew Hsu (Stu., GSAS/Pure Sciences) said he didn't understand why the agenda item was called President's Remarks, when most of the time it's the provost who's making the remarks. This lack of clarity was the reason why he had abstained on the motion to adopt the agenda. He suggested calling the agenda item Provost's Remarks.

Sen. Hsu also noted that students had heard that the administration had canceled the recent bargaining session in its current contract negotiations with two unions: graduate student teaching and research assistants, and research officers with post-doctoral and associate research scientist and scholar titles. Sen. Hsu asked why the meeting had been canceled, and how such conflicts could be avoided in the future.

Provost Coatsworth said there had been first meetings with each bargaining group on February 25. But it has been difficult to schedule the next round of meetings. He hoped to meet every week or every other week. He said the administration had not canceled any meeting.

The provost added that there are two web pages, one for each of bargaining unit, that provide useful information on the sessions, as well as other relevant information. He said the University wants to be as transparent as possible. A week after the first bargaining session, an account of it was posted. He hoped to maintain this practice.

Sharyn O'Halloran noted that there would be bargaining sessions in the coming week.

Sen. David Cheng (Stu., SW) asked if it was now possible to affirm a new policy on sexual and romantic relationships between faculty (or staff) and undergraduate students. He noted that the new version of the policy was now posted online.

Sen. O'Halloran said student senators could use their legislators' franking privileges to communicate this news to their constituents in mass emails.

Sen. Cheng asked if there would also be a memo from the Senate informing the student body.

Sen. O'Halloran said she would be happy to work with Sen. Cheng on language for a memo. But she thought students would be more likely to read a communication from their senators.

Sen. Cheng asked if the Senate could have a timeline for the development of the graduate student relationship policy, including an indication of the point in the process when students can get involved in the drafting. He said there have been concerns about how this process went before, and he hoped for an assurance from the Executive Committee chair on this point.

Sen. O'Halloran said she would set up a meeting with General Counsel for the purpose of determining this timeline, and she hoped to have this arranged in about a week.

Tributes to Dean Peter Awn. Two senators from the School of General Studies, Lisa Rosen-Metsch (the dean) and Jonathan Criswell (a student) both read [tributes](#) to former GS dean and longtime Columbia professor Peter Awn, who died on February 18.

Statement of concern from Sen. Julia Hirschberg (Ten., SEAS). Sen. Hirschberg asked the provost for help with a particular problem. She said the IT Committee, which she co-chairs, met on February 1 met with a group of administrators in the office of Executive Vice President for Finance Anne Sullivan, who are preparing the new travel and business expense report system, or TBERS. Sen. Hirschberg said the present system is mainly on paper, and people have been pushing for years to get it more automated. Guests on February 1 included Paul Reedy, assistant vice president for finance services, and several members of his team, including Kate Sheeran.

Sen. Hirschberg said decisions have already been made about what software and what companies will be involved in the new online booking system. The system will use World Travel and a new expense management system called Concur to replace the old TBERS. Concur is used by many Ivies, but designers of the new system seem to have checked only with upper-level system management people and not with the people who actually work with Concur.

Sen. Hirschberg said she had actually used Concur two weeks ago, to expense two receipts from a meeting at the National Academies. She said this task took her 45 minutes. She said she is a computer scientist, and is not stupid, but this is not a user-friendly system. A friend at NYU and other faculty who have used Concur say it's awful.

Sen. Hirschberg said there will also be a new credit card to go with this system. A knowledgeable person says this will not be the magic wand to eliminate the headache of documentation and submissions, though it will eliminate some paper, and some administrative documents and approvals. If the traveler uses World Travel for bookings and the Concur expense system, and approved vendors like Lyft, United, and Starbucks, then the documentation will be automated. If you use their network, things will go more easily. But if one does one's own booking arrangements, as she does, then the reimbursement subsystem will be more involved. She worried that the experience will get worse, not better.

Sen. Hirschberg said no faculty or administrative staff or students now have input into this process. The IT Committee pushed to get some faculty included so they would actually be able to make some suggestions, and tell the planners how people actually travel here and what kind of expenses they want to submit. A faculty advisory committee has been promised but not yet established, and its role is not clear—will it have any real influence on decision making? There have also been no plans to include the department administrators who often do the work involved in reporting these expenses, and no word about input from students, who also travel on University business.

Sen. Hirschberg said decisions are being made without faculty or student input. She urged senators to talk to their chairs and deans, and urge them to insist on getting this problem solved. She repeated her request for help from the provost.

The provost said an application to be used by hundreds of people will surely be piloted first.

Sen. Hirschberg said that once the system is in place, there will be outreach to get user feedback, but at that point it will be too late to make significant changes.

Provost Coatsworth said he would look into this problem.

He added that the practice of sending provostial letters to faculty reaffirming their reappointment and indicating their new salaries will be discontinued. It's too cumbersome a job for his limited staff, and takes too long to complete. Faculty have also already received notice from their academic units, and don't need a second letter from the provost. So his office is no longer sending out thousands of reappointment letters, and is saving some trees.

Sen. Daniel Savin, chair of the Research Officers Committee, said the description of the new expense reporting system reminded him of Accounting and Reporting at Columbia (ARC), which he said had a disastrous rollout in 2012 and needed several years of additional work to get into usable form, although there are still significant complaints about it. Sen. Savin said he was surprised to hear that the administrators who rolled out ARC may be making the same mistakes here. He appealed to the senior administrators in the room, the provost and Senior Executive Vice President Jerry Rosberg, to put pressure on the appropriate administrators to make sure the system is designed properly before it's rolled out.

Sen. Hirschberg said this was exactly what she had said at the February 1 IT Committee meeting.

Sen. Nachum Sicherman (Ten., Bus.,) asked who was making these decisions. In over 30 years at the University, he still doesn't know who decides what.

Sen. O'Halloran repeated the request to the provost and Mr. Rosberg to get the needed information for Sen. Hirschberg.

Sen. Hirschberg said Paul Reedy and Kate Sheeran had heard from the IT Committee, and would certainly want to hear from others.

Sen. Sicherman asked who has the authority to order this to be done the right away. The provost cannot simply fire the vice presidents involved.

Sen. O'Halloran said that instead of firing people, the provost can work on improving communication about this decision-making process, to make sure there is no repeat of ARC, which was not only difficult and painful for administrators and for faculty, but it was extremely expensive to make the fixes that are now in the system. So a replay is in no one's interest, and she was sure the provost and Mr. Rosberg agreed.

Sen. Sicherman noted that the current phone system does not have a redial feature.

Sen. O'Halloran said the Senate IT Committee, a ready-made faculty advisory group with genuine expertise, is a resource for any administrators who want to make good, strong policy decisions. This well-run committee represents the entire University.

Committee reports:

Update on the [Board on Town Halls](#) (External Relations and Research Policy Committee).

Sen. O'Halloran introduced three members of External Relations, which produced the resolution on free expression that was unanimously adopted by the Senate a year ago. One of its provisions called for a board to organize town hall meetings on controversial subjects, an initiative that President Bollinger agreed to support financially.

Sen. Eli Noam (Ten., Bus.), the first speaker, mentioned President Trump's statement of the past few days threatening an executive order to withhold federal funding from universities that fail to uphold the principle of free speech. As he was reading this news story, Sen. Noam realized that Columbia set its house in order last year with the Senate's [Resolution in Support of Freedom of Expression](#). Columbia doesn't need Washington to tell it what to do.

Sen. Noam said senators may be familiar with the University of Chicago principles on freedom of expression in a campus setting. They're fine, Sen. Noam said, but they're basically just a declaration, an exhortation. The Columbia Senate resolution sets a standard, which is basically that what you can say on Broadway you can also say on College Walk. This is a powerful principle, and if applied correctly, it will make Columbia a wonderful example of freedom of expression, even though it is a private university.

To help implement this principle, the resolution called for town halls that could address controversial issues, countering or supplementing the presentations on campus of controversial outside speakers. Sen. Noam said the committee had now established that board. He introduced Sen. James Piacentini (Stu., GSAPP), vice chair of the Student Affairs Committee, whom he credited with a crucial role in securing student support for last year's resolution, and with the very idea of town hall meetings.

Sen. Piacentini added special thanks to members of SAC last year—particularly co-chair Sonya Nanda—who were full partners in the freedom of expression initiative.

Sen. Piacentini then announced the student members of the Board of Town Halls roster.

Sen. Megan Mroczkowski (NT, P&S) then introduced the faculty, administration, and alumni members of the BoTH roster. She looked forward to addressing divisive issues in a principled way, thereby helping the University to achieve its full purpose.

Update on “[Achieving women’s equity in academic medicine: challenging the standards](#)” (*Commission on the Status of Women*). Commission chair Jeanine D’Armiento (Ten., P&S) began by wishing everyone a happy International Women’s Day.

She reported on the Commission’s contribution to a special issue of the British medical journal *The Lancet* called “Advancing Women in Science, Medicine and Global Health,” which addresses inequities in health and leadership around the world. She mentioned her coauthors: Sen. Susan Witte (Ten., SW), Lamont-Doherty administrator Kuheli Dutt, biostatistics professor Melanie Wall, and Senate staff director Geraldine Mc Allister. The issue included articles from China, Yemen, Cameroon, Nepal, and Singapore, and the UN.

For the special issue there was a launch in London, and also one in New York, at Columbia’s Lerner Hall, which was sponsored by the School of Public Health, with Sen. Anne Taylor, vice dean for faculty affairs at P&S, on one of the panels.

Sen. D’Armiento said the Commission’s *Lancet* contribution was closely based on its report to the Senate last year, which focused on the decade from 2007-08 to 2016-17 on the medical campus. During that span, the total share of female faculty increased from 40 percent to 45 percent, but the fraction of tenured women barely moved, starting and ending at around 18 percent, and the overall fraction of tenured or tenure-track women actually declined.

The Commission maintained in its Senate presentation that the persistently low tenured rates were tightly linked to leadership. A year ago 11% of department chairs were women (3/27), and women made up 28% of division chiefs and 13% of center directors. Sen. D’Armiento reported some improvement over the past year, with the appointments of a female chair of Pharmacology (Dr. Cory Abate-Shen) and a new Division Chief in Infectious Diseases in the Dept. of Medicine (Magdalena Sobieszczyk).

Sen. D’Armiento said the Commission would give its final report at the May 3 plenary, addressing the situation of female faculty in other Columbia schools. She thanked her co-authors.

Sen. Witte said it was exciting to see Columbia and the experience of female faculty as part of a worldwide issue on which the Commission has a voice and a position. She urged colleagues to seek out more opportunities of this kind.

Sen. O’Halloran said the Senate does serious work, and should be more active about making its findings public.

Sen. Daniel Savin said that as science editor for the *Astrophysical Journal* and as an organizer of multiple conferences, he finds that when he asks female colleagues to review articles or give invited talks, he finds that there are too few of them, they’re overcommitted, and they’re asked

too often. But women are more numerous now in the less senior academic ranks—postdocs, graduate students—where they are not so overcommitted. He suggested reaching out to these junior members of the academic community in the interest of enhancing diversity.

Sen. Anne Taylor, P&S vice dean for academic affairs, thanked Sens. D'Armiento and Witte for their work, including their contributions to the *Lancet* conference. She said the event was important for the participation not only of academic institutions but also of professional societies. Sen. Taylor mentioned the recent news that the NIH not only has a policy on sexual harassment now, but it has actually discontinued funding for individuals found responsible for sexual harassment. She said this action marks a change in the entire culture of an organization closely linked to academe.

Sen. Taylor also noted that P&S had actually looked at the Commission's data from last year, as well as some other data, and an advisory committee broadly representative of the P&S faculty conducted a review over the past nine months. The committee has presented recommendations to Dean Lee Goldman, and will present them to the uptown Faculty Council and eventually the Senate.

Other reports.

Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing (Prof. Merritt B. Fox, chair). Prof. Fox said ACSRI advises the Trustees on social issues that may affect decisions on how to vote on shareholder proposals, and sometimes on where to invest the University's endowment. The Trustees make all final investment decisions.

The Committee has 12 voting members: four students, four faculty, and four alumni. ACSRI has voting guidelines for proxy resolutions, based on a codification of previous decisions, for certain types of related shareholder issues that are posted on the Committee's website. But there are always close cases that require discussion. In recent years, the most common shareholder resolutions have concerned political spending, gender pay equity and greenhouse gas emissions.

Prof. Fox said the ACSRI from time to time considers divestment proposals that come from the University community through a procedure that has become established. This year there have been no divestment proposals so far through that channel, and he doubted that there would be one before the end of the academic year.

The Trustees have over the years approved several types of divestment—from companies conducting certain activities in the Sudan, and from the tobacco, private prison, and thermal coal industries. Another regular exercise for ACSRI is to go through the list of companies excluded from the portfolio, and to add or subtract a few.

Sen. Andrew Hsu asked what the process is for submitting a divestment proposal.

Prof. Fox said there's a form on the ACSRI web site on which proponents can write a rationale for a divestment proposal. The ACSRI takes it from there.

Sen. Alfredo Dominguez (Stu., CC) asked whether a certain level of student support would be sufficient to get a divestment proposal seriously considered by ACSRI. Is the decision to make a recommendation to the Trustees entirely at the discretion of ACSRI?

Prof. Fox said every proposal submitted through the process gets considered. One of the criteria for divestment is the existence of a broad consensus within the University community on the issue at hand.

Sen. Hsu asked whether vaping is included in the ban on tobacco.

Prof. Fox said ACSRI discussed that question this year, and decided that a company solely involved in vaping did not fit the Trustees' definition of an activity to be banned. The committee also recognized a division of opinion on this question within the public health community. [*In a later correction, the ACSRI said, "Columbia's 2019 Tobacco Divestment/Non-Investment list does include publicly traded vaping companies."*]

Sen. Toqa Badran (Stu., CC) asked how frequently the criteria on which ACSRI bases divestment decisions are reviewed and revised.

Prof. Fox thought those criteria have not been changed in many years. He added that all current members of the ACSRI seem to be comfortable with them.

Sen. O'Halloran said she believed that the Senate established ACSRI through a resolution. There were general guidelines in discussion of the committee's role.

Student Affairs Committee co-chair Zoha Qamar (SEAS undergraduate), referring to Sen. Badran's question, asked whether there is a process for members of the community to recommend adjustments to the list of companies that might be involved in divestment decisions—or to revise the criteria for divestment.

Prof. Fox said that if there were community sentiment for raising these issues—expressed in the Senate or in some other organization—ACSRI would consider them, and would alter criteria if the committee were persuaded of the value of the idea. He understood Sen. O'Halloran to be suggesting that any such revisions would have to come before the Senate.

Sen. O'Halloran thought such a change would also require Trustee approval. There would have to be a broad dialogue to change the process at this point since the procedures for working with the president and the Trustees are well established. She suggested that any serious concerns should be articulated in a concrete way.

Sen. Qamar said she understood.

Prof. Fox said a clear starting point is the strong presumption that Columbia is a socially progressive institution that is organized to do good, to educate and to develop knowledge. These activities require financial resources, and therefore the endowment should be invested in a way that maximizes those resources. But in certain situations that are deeply offensive to nearly all

members of the community, the University sometimes commits what ultimately, in terms of its effects, is a symbolic act, which is to withdraw from a particular industry. Such a decision will probably not seriously damage that industry, but it's a way for the University to make a statement.

Sen. Mike Ford (Stu., GSAS/Humanities) asked how student members of ACSRI are chosen. He said the ACSRI roster now includes three Columbia College students and one CC alumnus.

Prof. Fox said the University Senate Student Affairs Committee nominates members, and then the administration, if there are more nominations than seats, chooses among those, probably with a preference for students in representative roles. He said EVP for Finance Anne Sullivan would be the right person to answer that question. He added that candidates have to understand the workload involved. He said appointees serve two-year terms.

Sen. O'Halloran said staff director Geraldine Mc Allister could explain the details of the selection process.

Sen. Piacentini added the clarification that SAC does not choose the student members of ACSRI. It submits its recommendations, and the decisions are made elsewhere.

Other issues. Sen. D'Armiento said she had forgotten during her own presentation to thank the provost's office for all of its collaborative work on the Commission's studies.

Adjournment. Sen. O'Halloran adjourned the meeting shortly after 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff