

**University Senate**  
**Committee on External Relations and Research Policy**  
**Annual Report 2011-2012**  
**September 28, 2012**

The Committee, co-chaired by Sharyn O'Halloran and Elaine Larson, held eight monthly meetings during 2011-2012. These discussions reflect the various issues that make up our mandate, including community affairs, public affairs, and research policies. Some of our other issues, such as smoking policy on Morningside, fit into none of these categories.

The September 30 meeting was devoted to a review of the previous year's activities: the work of the Ad Hoc Conflict of Interest Review Committee, which functioned in part as our subcommittee; the reception of Sharyn O'Halloran's 2010 Manhattanville report; and preparations for the October Senate hearing on Morningside smoking policy.

At the October 28 meeting, Sen. Howard Worman presented the Ad Hoc Conflict of Interest Review Committee's report. He said that making faculty aware of potential conflicts of interest is the big issue. The medical faculty are most aware, but that may be less true in philosophy or history. There was, however, potential for conflict of interest in any field. Sen. Larson said the committee should recommend that every employee of the university sign a form disclosing potential conflicts of interest.

The November 18 meeting was primarily devoted to Columbia's Community Benefits Agreement. Karen Jewett, Vice President for Government and Community Affairs, explained that the agreement was negotiated with the community as part of the process for Columbia's Manhattanville campus expansion. The West Harlem Local Development Corporation was assembled to negotiate the agreement and to implement it, including the disbursement of a \$76 million fund Columbia is providing over 16 years. So far, Columbia had paid about \$3.5 million to the WHLDC, which has spent the last couple of years in a period of transition--preparing to become a 501(c)(3) corporation, name a director and establish a web site.

At the December 9 meeting, George Gasparis, Director, Institutional Review Board, gave a presentation on IRBs and their function, which is to promote the ethical conduct of research, especially with human subjects. At the time there were four IRBs at CUMC and one at Morningside; a fifth CUMC IRB was being established. Every investigator signs a conflict of interest form and all positive responses are investigated and removed. Mr. Gasparis touched on the need for prompt reviews of student research projects, so that they can finish their research in their limited time frames.

The January 27 meeting was primarily devoted to a discussion of Morningside campus smoking policy. Sen. O'Halloran noted that there was growing support for a complete ban. She said that three issues stood out: conditions for students in residence halls; the impact on union regulations regarding breaks if there is a campus-wide smoking ban; and signage and communications, which have been lacking so far. An External Relations task force would

study the implementation of the current rule, prohibiting smoking within 20 feet of university buildings.

At the February 10 meeting, the guests were David Stone, Executive Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs; Doug Levy, Executive Director of Communications and Public Affairs, CUMC; Brian Connolly, Associate Vice President for Public Affairs; and Deborah Sack, Vice President for Strategic Communications. Messrs. Stone and Levy discussed press relations and Columbia's publicity efforts at Morningside and CUMC, including the redesign of the Columbia home page and attempts to standardize the format of Columbia web pages, which vary widely in design. Mr. Levy described CUMC's recent use of Facebook and Twitter to publicize its research and activities. Committee members were alerted to identify potential story and news items and communicate with the appropriate press office.

On March 23, the guest was Anne Louise Oates, Associate General Counsel. With Naomi Schrag, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, who had recently joined the External Relations Committee, she discussed recent changes in the university's conflict of interest policy which brought it into compliance with new National Institutes of Health regulations. The new regulations are more stringent; for instance, researchers must now report certain income from nonprofit sources and any amount of financial reimbursement >\$5,000 now represents a significant financial conflict of interest (reduced from the previous value of \$10,000).

The final meeting, on April 20, was devoted to Elaine Larson's presentation of the Columbia University Institutional Review Board Policy on Students as Researchers. It is labeled a draft but, she said, it is the operating policy. Sen. Larson said that most research on human subjects was exempt or expeditable but it still needs to be reviewed by the IRB to be exempted. In human research, much depends on whether the human subject is identifiable from the data collected. The investigator cannot make the decision as to whether the research is exempt – it has to be decided by an IRB. The committee agreed that more needed to be done to make people aware of the policy.

After that meeting, a task force to review smoking policy held its initial meeting. Chaired by Elaine Larson and Francis Y. Lee, it was to conduct its work over the summer and is presenting a report at today's Senate plenary.