

COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND RESEARCH POLICY

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

The Senate Committee on External Relations and Research Policy had a busy year addressing issues relevant to its purview regarding the University's research strategies, including its relations with private and public sponsoring agencies, and its strategies for enhancing its local, national and international reputation.

As per its mandate, the Committee met with the University's Executive Vice President for Public Affairs, Shailagh Murray. This was Ms. Murray's first meeting with the Committee since joining Columbia in September 2018. Ms. Murray told the Committee that she had been a journalist for twenty years, in 2011 became U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden's communications director and in 2015 a senior advisor on communications to U.S. President Barack Obama. She told the Committee that there were about 300 people involved in communications across the University and that one of her goals was to create a single planning document to leverage visibility and access through a more centralized channel. She said Columbia needed different kinds of online content, with shorter stories and graphics and that the effort needs to be sustained

Loftin Flowers, Associate Vice President, Government Affairs, updated the Committee on the University's government relations effort. Mr. Flowers noted that there had been approximately five scientists in Congress for the past 50 years but that the 115th Congress has 16. He noted that U.S. Representative Nita Lowey will chair the House Appropriations Committee, that her district includes Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and that she is proud of the Columbia connection. She is an advocate for climate research and supports the National Institute of Health (NIH). Mr. Flowers further noted the NIH funding increase for FY19 but noted that in future years it is possible that entitlements will crowd out discretionary and non-defense spending, including research and student aid.

Sen. Suzanne Goldberg, Executive Vice President for University Life, met with the Committee to discuss the operations of the Office of University Life and Columbia policies regarding gender-based misconduct. Sen. Goldberg said that the idea of the office was to have a senior administrator overseeing issues such as inclusion and belonging, mental health, sexual respect and prevention of gender-based misconduct. Before the Office of University Life, the University's efforts to address these issues were not centralized. The Committee had numerous questions about due process and fairness in cases of alleged sexual misconduct, including the right of cross-examination for an accused student, and the role of alcohol intoxication in such cases. Sen. Goldberg explained the University's position on this matter. After meeting with Sen. Goldberg, some Committee members expressed concern that the University may one day lose a lawsuit brought by a falsely-accused student and that this could be harmful to its reputation.

In April, Rudi Odeh-Ramadan, Vice President for Research Administration, updated the Committee on Columbia's research funding. Total research awards to Columbia in FY18 were \$1,118,700, up approximately 3.5 percent from FY17. NIH provided almost half of this funding, \$521,200,000, with \$474,100,000 going to CUIMC and \$47,100,000 to Morningside. In FY18, year over year total funding to CUIMC increased approximately 2.3 percent and to Morningside approximately 6.6 percent.

The Committee devoted significant attention to two topics it has focused on in past years. One was freedom of expression on campus. The second was how the growth of degree programs in the School of Professional Studies may be impacting on Columbia's academic reputation.

At several meetings, the Committee discussed the Resolution on Freedom of Expression on Campus passed by the Senate in April 2018. The Resolution originated in the External Relations and Research Policy Committee and the Student Affairs Committee. Discussions focused on two main issues: 1) is the resolution now official university policy and, if not, how or should it become so, and 2) the organization and procedures for the Board on Town Hall meetings, in which students can discuss ideas and respond to controversial speakers. Regarding the first of these issues, the Committee felt this resolution should become some sort of University policy and that it should be more broadly known that Columbia supports freedom of expression based on First Amendment Principles. Some Committee members felt this to be especially important in light of U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order protecting freedom of speech on college campuses. It pondered how to obtain support of University Administration or Board of Trustees for this effort. Regarding the second, the Committee developed a framework for the Board on Town Halls (BOTH). Sen. Eli Noam, Sen. James Piacentini and Sen. Megan Mroczkowski presented this to the full Senate. As per this framework, the Committee elected members of BOTH, with Sen. Mroczkowski serving as its first chair.

Regarding the School of Professional Studies, the Committee heard from Sen. June Cross, who chairs a special subcommittee on this issue. The major questions concerning the Committee on External Relations and Research Policy are: 1) Is there adequate academic oversight at the School of Professional Studies? 2) Has the school been growing so fast as to sacrifice quality for quantity and in a manner that may be harmful to the reputation of Columbia University? Another issue is the granting of a Master of Science degree in instances where a Master of Professional Studies degree may be more appropriate. Sen. Cross noted that the University of Pennsylvania is the only other Ivy League institution that offers a Master of Science degree in its continuing education program whereas others offer a differentiated degree, including Master of Professional Studies by Cornell.

Other topics addressed by the Committee on External Relations and Research Policy in 2018-2019 included food insecurity and the Food Panty at Columbia, unionization of associate research scientists and postdoctoral research scientists and difficulties faculty and students face in seeking timely reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenditures on University business, including travel.

Finally, the Committee thanks Ms. Jessica Raimi for her incredible work for many years as its Senate staffer. It wishes Jessica the best of luck in her retirement from Columbia and in future endeavors.

Howard J. Worman
Chair, Committee on External Relations and Research Policy

Megan M. Mroczkowski
Vice Chair, Committee on External Relations and Research Policy

External Relations and Research Policy Committee 2018-2019				
Ten.	Jeanine D'Armiento		P&S	Sen.
Ten.	Mary Gamble		SPH	Sen.
Ten.	Eli M. Noam		BUS	Sen.
Ten.	Colin Nuckolls		A&S/NS	Sen.
Ten.	Brendan O'Flaherty		A&S/SS	Sen.
Ten.	Samuel Sia		SEAS	Nonsen.
Ten.	Howard Worman	Chair	P&S	Sen.
Nonten.	William Duggan		BUS	Sen.
Nonten.	Megan Mroczkowski	Vice Chair	P&S	Sen.
Stu.	Toqa Badran		CC	Sen.
Stu.	Jonathan Criswell		GS	Sen.
Stu.	Luna Koizumi (fall semester)		SPS	Sen.
Libraries	William Vanti		Libraries	Nonsen.
Research Officers	Manuela Buonanno		Research Officers - Professional	Sen.
Research Officers	Stefaan Van Liefferinge		Research Officers - Professional	Sen.
Admin.	Karen E. Jewett		Adm.	Nonsen.
Admin.	Naomi Schrag		Adm.	Nonsen.
Alum.	Michelle Estilo Kaiser		Alum.	Sen.