

University Senate

Proposed: May 3, 2024

Adopted: May 3, 2024

PROPOSED AGENDA

University Senate

Friday, May 3, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom

**[Registration required](#)**

**After registering you will receive a confirmation email with meeting details.**

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Chair's report and questions
3. New business:
  - a. Discussion of events on campus
  - b. Task force update

May 3, 2024

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

NEXT STEPS FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

1. Our plan is to identify a neutral external investigator to support a task force made up mainly of members outside the Senate, including a prominent outside academic. We will make a request for support of this task force through the administration evoking Section 28 of the University Statutes: The University shall furnish, to the extent provided for in the University's budget, assistance to the University Senate as a whole and to its committees in connection with its official business, as may be authorized by the Executive Committee of the University Senate. This task force will be overseen by the executive committee and the final report will be presented to the executive committee.
2. It is our recommendation that our administration engage with the student protesters as a matter of urgency. Our university should not require an encampment to meet with our students in dialogue and negotiation.
3. We would like to restate that at times of great difficulty, we should remain constant, including in our use of legitimate policies and procedures. We include in this the Rules of University Conduct.

## COLUMBIA COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL:

### A STATEMENT ON SHARED GOVERNANCE

*As representatives of the Columbia College student body, we are writing to you to express the extreme ways in which Columbia University administration has failed us over the course of the year. In the past couple of days, circumstances on campus have changed drastically as the administration's decision to completely close campus to the majority of the student body has severely impacted learning. This shutdown has created food insecurity, healthcare insecurity, and has deprived students of access to educational spaces where they can study and complete assignments. While we understand that administration is citing student safety as the reason for keeping campus closed, the University has provided nothing to ensure that students are well, safe, and fed. Thousands of students only have access to one dining hall that is only open from 11 AM to 7 PM. Today, that dining hall is only accessible to TC ID holders, so undergrads that live off campus are without any dining hall. There are no dining halls open to students who don't live in the 7 dorms within campus. Instead, \$80 for Grubhub is not acceptable for 3 meals a day for 7 days. We are appreciative of Columbia Dining's work and the pop-up breakfasts they offered this morning, but students don't know where the rest of their meals today will be coming from. This is unacceptable. You are starving your students. Student Councils have been taking the responsibility of feeding our peers and using our budgets to buy them dinner for the past three nights, with hundreds of students waiting in line to receive food from us. This should not be our responsibility. Senior administration's neglect and apathy shown towards student well-being over the past several weeks is astounding, and the fact that student councils have shouldered the burden of feeding our peers, helping them seek academic accommodations, and more is completely unacceptable.*

*On April 30th, we watched in horror as hundreds of police in riot gear flooded our beloved campus and brutalized our classmates. The next morning, students awoke with faces swollen from being kicked by police, wrists bruised from being handcuffed with zip ties, and lacerations from being thrown down staircases. Shots were fired inside our own Hamilton Hall. President Shafik commended the NYPD's behavior and called it "professionalism." Since then, our students have reported being sexually and verbally harassed by the NYPD officers that administration has enlisted to allegedly keep us safe. The past two weeks have been tumultuous, marked with mass arrests of student demonstrators, national media attention, and vile acts of hatred that have unfolded on our campus.*

*None of these issues started four days ago, or even two weeks ago. By enforcing punitive actions against student groups without due process, the University has been creating a hostile environment that is uncondusive to dialogue since the beginning of the year. On October 24th,*

*2023, Columbia's senior administration unilaterally created an illegitimate University Event Policy in the aftermath of peaceful pro-Palestinian demonstrations, granting them the power to regulate protests and "sole discretion" to determine sanctions on student organizations and their members." This was the first instance of what would become a pattern of executive overreach. The consequences of this unprecedented action first revealed themselves on November 3rd 2023, when the Columbia chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine were suspended due to claims of "threatening rhetoric and intimidation." Why was the University's response to rising tensions and ideological differences on campus to silence an entire viewpoint? This action was clearly suppressive and not at all representative of their alleged commitment to dialogue and discourse.*

*The administration has continued to make decisions without input from student leaders, disregarding our community's well-being, values, and rules. Had the University been committed to dialogue, respected student group's rights, and followed due process from the start, we might not have seen the escalations that have occurred over the past few weeks. The administration's handling of this situation is akin to a parent kicking a crying baby over and over again in an attempt to get it to stop crying, rather than assessing the needs of the baby and trying to meet them. The approach that the University has taken throughout the year — repeatedly enacting discipline without recourse or due process — has clearly led students to feel unseen, unheard, and unsafe. These are the sentiments that led to the recent escalations we have seen on campus — if students felt they had other means to advocate for themselves and their values, they would have used them. University administration has betrayed Columbia in unimaginable ways, and has left a wound on our community that will take years to heal. The administration has failed every member of this community — no one feels safe here, and that responsibility ultimately lies with them.*

*The Columbia College Student Council, as well as other councils, senators, and student journalists have worked tirelessly and thanklessly to address the needs of our community members in the capacity that we can. Again, this should not be our responsibility, but we have had no choice but to shoulder the burden of keeping our peers fed, safe, and healthy.*

*We strongly condemn the behavior of the University administration over the course of the past year, and we hope you will heed our advice and seek our input in the future, especially with the plans for an investigation as outlined in the three points.*

## **Statement from Sen. Andrea C. White (UTS) in the University Senate Plenary of May 3, 2024**

My name is Andrea C. White. I am a senator, a member of the Commission on Diversity, past faculty chair of the Diversity Commission, and professor at Union Theological Seminary.

### **1. Letter to the President re: Union Theological Seminary Community Members Stand with Columbia Students of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment**

I want to both share with the entire senate and also state for the record, that Union students, faculty and alumni sent a letter to the president declaring support for student protesters. The letter states,

“In solidarity with these very students, we demand:

1. full amnesty from all charges and disciplinary action against all encampment participants, faculty, and recently suspended students; and
2. the immediate reinstatement of all suspended students denied access to housing, funding, and healthcare.”

The letter, sent by Michelle Alexander, well known legal activist for prison abolition and a student at Union, was addressed to the Columbia University President, COO, and Provost with the Senate Executive Committee chair copied.

1. President Minouche Shafik
2. Cas Holloway, Chief Operating Officer
3. Angela V. Olinto, Provost of the University
4. Jeanine M. D'Armiento, University Senate, Executive Committee Chair

The letter was signed by 300 students, faculty and alumni of Union Theological Seminary.

### **2. Invitation from Morningside Neighbors for a daily Neighborhood Walk**

I also want to invite those who live here in the community to join Morningside Neighbors for a neighborhood walk at 5pm daily.

As residents in this community, Morningside neighbors are concerned about police presence in our community and assaults upon education and learning. We reject the NYPD's incursion into our neighborhood and their violent arrest of peaceful student protesters on Columbia's campus. We do not consent to ongoing police patrols, surveillance, and intimidation in our neighborhood.

Each day at 5pm we will walk our streets to reject police presence in the neighborhood, to support our students and protest, and to assert that coercion has no place in teaching and learning. We will walk daily until police presence has been removed.

We will gather at the Northwest corner of 120<sup>th</sup> and Broadway at 5pm and march the perimeter of Columbia University Morningside Campus, moving downtown to 114<sup>th</sup> Street, uptown at Amsterdam Avenue, West along 120<sup>th</sup> Street. Please join us.

Thank you.