



Annual Report of the Campus Planning
and Physical Development Committee
2025-2026

For presentation at
the May 29, 2026
Plenary

The Campus Planning and Physical Development Committee (CPPD) met seven times during the academic year.

The Committee spent time formulating its priorities for the year and, ultimately, decided to continue its focus on 1) Classroom supply, 2) Common spaces at the Medical Center (CUIMC) and 3) FLI Space & Lerner Hall rededication. The Committee formed three subcommittees to tackle each issue in greater detail.

Classroom supply

The Committee continued to interface with University administrators to understand pain points regarding classroom supply and course scheduling. Associate Vice President and Registrar Barry Kane provided an update on the current classroom situation in Spring 2026.

Fifteen years ago, the university faced acute shortages resulting in 60 to 70 unplaced courses at the start of every semester. Over the past three years, classroom supply has increased by 1,940 seats across 36 additional classrooms secured in Chandler, Uris, Lerner and the Riverside Church's Martin Luther King Building (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

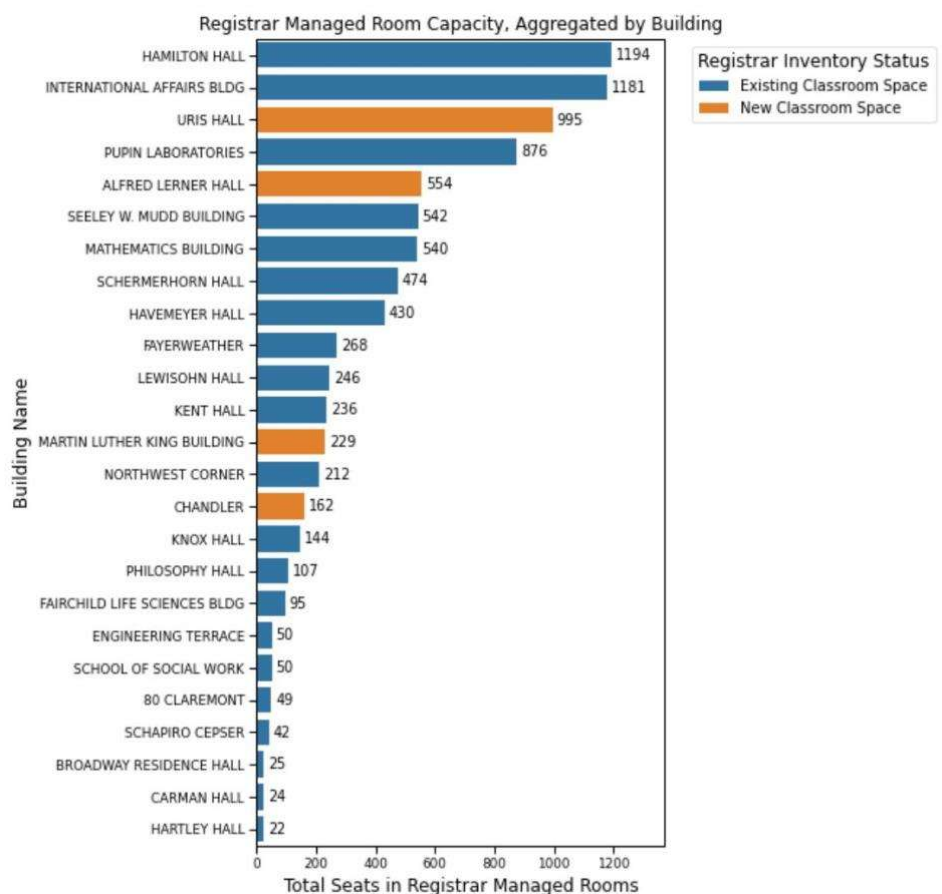


Figure 1. Number of seats in Registrar-managed rooms per building (source: Office of the University Registrar).

In Spring 2026, the Registrar worked with Arts and Sciences and Engineering to implement a de-densification pilot in 19 departments. During the pilot, each department was only allowed to schedule up to 40 percent of their courses during the peak hours of 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The pilot improved classroom scheduling, alleviating problems, and will be expanded in Fall 2026 to include all undergraduate departments in the Arts and Sciences and Engineering.

The Committee recommends that the University form a group to plan for the eventual renovation of Uris. If new classrooms are not identified before the renovation begins, the University will again face a serious classroom shortage and course scheduling crisis.

Classroom Addition Size Distribution		
Building Name	Room Code	Capacity
ALFRED LERNER HALL	568	18
ALFRED LERNER HALL	476A	18
ALFRED LERNER HALL	476B	18
ALFRED LERNER HALL	302	20
ALFRED LERNER HALL	569	36
ALFRED LERNER HALL	SAT	36
ALFRED LERNER HALL	477	36
ALFRED LERNER HALL	B60	72
ALFRED LERNER HALL	CIN	300
ALFRED LERNER HALL Total Seats		554
CHANDLER	401	36
CHANDLER	402	126
CHANDLER Total Seats		162
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	604	7
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	612	9
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	614	11
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	610	21
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	607	22
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	609	23
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	608	41
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	606	44
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING	616	51
MARTIN LUTHER KING BUILDING Total Seats		229
URIS HALL	305	14
URIS HALL	327	18
URIS HALL	328	20
URIS HALL	306	23
URIS HALL	329	28
URIS HALL	307	44
URIS HALL	140	52
URIS HALL	333	52
URIS HALL	331	53
URIS HALL	332	54
URIS HALL	330	61
URIS HALL	141	66
URIS HALL	303	67
URIS HALL	326	69
URIS HALL	142	108
URIS HALL	301	266
URIS HALL Total Seats		995
Grand Total Capacity		1940

Figure 2. Data on the number of seats and building location for each new classroom managed by the Registrar (source: Office of the University Registrar).

Common spaces at the Medical Center (CUIMC)

The Committee continued its conversations with Diana Mejia, Vice President for Student and Campus Services at CUIMC, and Dennis Scott-Torbet, Director of Campus Services at CUIMC regarding the lack of common space available on the CUIMC Campus. Vice President Mejia & Director Scott-Torbet provided an update to the Committee in Spring 2026.

VP Mejia shared that they had selected a local vendor, Buunni Coffee, to run the former B&N space and the former *Hole in the Wall* cafe space. Both cafes are now open and provide coffee, tea, breakfast and grab and go lunch options.

Additionally, the 50 Haven Ballroom has been refreshed for eating and events, the primary student lounge is being relocated to an upgraded location at 60 Haven, and they hope to introduce a second-floor seating area on Haven Plaza.

FLI Space & Lerner Hall Rededication

The Committee expressed severe concern regarding the lack of progress on two student space initiatives, each enjoying strong University Senate support and University Senate resolutions: the Resolution for the Creation of Dedicated Space for Columbia University's First-Generation, Low-Income Students, adopted on March 22, 2024, and the Resolution to Rededicate Lerner Hall as a Student Space, adopted on March 7, 2025. A dedicated FLI space has yet to materialize despite a potential space in Lerner having been identified in summer 2025 as members worked closely with then Vice President for Campus Services Scott Wright.

CPPD's FLI Space and Lerner Hall Rededication subcommittee brought together student leaders and CPPD members who had worked on both initiatives. The subcommittee focused on information sharing and planning next steps to achieve the implementation of both resolutions.

Beyond the above activities, CPPD spent considerable time discussing the upcoming undergraduate expansion that will begin in Fall 2026. Ultimately, the CPPD co-chairs collaborated with four other Senate Committees to present a *Statement on Undergraduate Expansion* in the April 9, 2026 Senate plenary. The statement voiced the five committees' opposition to the expansion, the Administration's lack of consultation with the Senate and other bodies and the lack of plans to accommodate more students on an already overcrowded campus.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen. Katherine Brooks, Co-Chair

Sen. Ben Orlove, Co-Chair

Campus Planning & Physical Development Committee 2025-2026
Members & Contributors

Ten.	Heidi Allen		SSW	Sen.
Ten.	Richard Davis		A&S/NS	Sen.
Ten.	Andrew Einstein		P&S	Sen.
Ten.	Ben Orlove	Co-Chair	SIPA	Sen.
Ten.	Brent Stockwell		A&S/NS	Sen.
TTOT	Christopher Munsell		GSAPP	Sen.
Stu.	Karla Camacho		CC	Nonsen.
Stu.	Robert Mulvey		GS	Sen.
Stu.	Armando Javier Gimenez		CC	Nonsen.
Libraries	Katherine Brooks	Co-Chair	Libraries	Sen.
Research Officers	Giovanni Oliveros		Research Officers - Postdoctoral	Sen.
Admin.	Honey S. Fishman		Adm.	Nonsen.
Alum.	Carlos Cruz		Alum.	Sen.
Ten.	John B. Donaldson		BUS	Contributor

UNIVERSITY SENATE STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Annual Report 2025-2026

The Student Affairs Committee worked throughout the 2025-2026 academic year to address **the following five priorities** in response to ongoing concerns and issues raised by our constituents, and by the University community at large:

1. *Accessibility and affordability*
2. *Physical and mental wellbeing*
3. *Student quality of life and campus overcrowding*
4. *Stronger common ground amongst students and with student leaders across Columbia*
5. *Transparency and fairness for all members involved in Columbia's shared governance*

We summarize our major projects in line with these priorities, **noting objectively both important successes and failures** in the interest of transparency, and for future student leaders.

ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

As cost of living and tuition at Columbia continue to increase, SAC prioritized improving affordability and meeting basic needs on campus through two major initiatives:

- (i) Lower costs of campus dining - *Campus Climate Poll & subsidized meals*
- (ii) Subsidized transportation - *Partnership with MTA through Fair Fares Program*

Our Campus Climate Poll, conducted in November 2025, found significant student populations impacted by housing and food insecurity, with 23% of students reporting some degree of food insecurity throughout their time at Columbia (compare this to 36% reported by the Columbia LENS survey, and the nation-wide average at 45%). During the 2025-2026 year, Columbia Dining regularly operated at 150% capacity, with a 9-1 student to seat ratio, and prohibited graduate student access to Morningside dining halls. After SAC's analysis and peer-benchmarking on dining and food access issues was presented in the February 2026 Plenary, Columbia Administration expanded campus dining hours and access through Faculty House, but did not include plans for new dining spaces in their March expansion announcement. As a short-term solution SAC presented plans for subsidized food trucks offering limited to-go meals in the \$5-8 price range in March, along with temporary outdoor seating as weather permitted, but failed to obtain necessary funding and administrative approval before the end of the academic year.

To ease transportation costs for our commuter students, SAC partnered with the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) in an awareness campaign for Fair Fares, the city-sponsored subsidized transit program for low-income commuters. A tabling and enrollment event was held on March 23rd 2026 with high turnout, and many participants indicated interest for a long-term partnership. We hope the sustained student interest in affordable transportation initiatives, as well as the demand for subsidized Metrocard pilot programs run by student councils, will lead to a Columbia-based subsidy. One possible subsidy model SAC has advocated for would have Columbia match the discounted rate of the Fair Fares

program for students falling outside the income threshold, capped according to demonstrated need and funding availability.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Student physical health and mental wellbeing have direct effects on their academic success. In response to longstanding student concerns regarding maintenance, capacity and equipment upkeep issues at Dodge Fitness Center, SAC launched a partnership with Wellhub, a fitness and wellness services provider offering affordable off-campus gym access across the city and nationwide. As of January 2026, Columbia students gained access to a subscription-based network which offers access to multiple fitness providers and premium apps at discounted rates, including local providers like NYSC and PureGym locations near Morningside campus. Within two months of program launch, Wellhub utilization reached a 5.6% total subscription rate (1876 students), with most students subscribed to the digital access tier (0\$/month) and the Starter+ tier (\$16.70/month). Student interest remains high, with frequent inquiries into (i) expanding access to partners/spouses (ii) increasing accessible locations and (iii) extending access to affiliates at Barnard and Teachers College. Though this initiative was a highlight of our leadership, we emphasize that partnering with external providers remains a short term solution to overcrowding and maintenance issues on campus facilities.

STUDENT QUALITY OF LIFE AND CAMPUS OVERCROWDING

In response to widespread campus criticism of the expansion plans announced in March, SAC co-authored and co-sponsored the April Senate Plenary Statement *On Expansion of the Undergraduate Population*. SAC Chairs also presented several student concerns on campus overcrowding to the Trustees Committee on Student Life in September and February. Notwithstanding, SAC has not had substantive influence over or input into expansion plans.

COMMON GROUND WITH STUDENTS AND STUDENT LEADERS

In an effort to build consensus amongst elected student leadership, and to strengthen their collective voice, SAC established the standing committee *Council on Councils* composed of leadership from SAC and Student Councils, where student leaders collaborated on issues including ongoing campus closures and cost of student events. This year, student leaders worked together and responded quickly following the announcement of the relocation of Commencement to Bakers' Field, and succeeded in returning Commencement to Morningside campus. SAC hopes to continue fostering traditions of collaboration between the Senate and Student Councils, protecting forums of free engagement amongst elected leadership without Administrative presence. Continuing the practices of the 2024-2025 year, SAC hosted town halls to engage student input, with two sessions held in September 2025 and in May 2026.

TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS

Following the ongoing tensions from the recent political crises at Columbia, SAC has dedicated significant time and attention to two following projects:

- (i) Transparency on the Hadden case - *Advocating for the release and distribution of the Hadden Report*
- (ii) Fairness in Rules and Standards of Conduct - *Notifying student body on Code of Conduct Changes*

Following extended delays to the release of the Hadden Report, student Senators read impact statements from victims of Robert Hadden at the February 2026 University Senate Plenary.¹ Once released, the Hadden Report drew extensive criticism from survivors describing the document as part of an institutional cover-up. SAC communicated regularly with student constituencies on the Hadden case through campus-wide emails, including a critical summary of the Hadden report in March 2026.

Over summer 2025 the Board of Trustees unilaterally changed the University Statutes, including the Code of University Conduct, to add new restrictions on protests and demonstrations and altered procedures for disciplinary proceedings and sanctions. Notable changes include removing a respondent's right to request a public hearing, giving the Rules Administrator full discretion over requests to access relevant information, and removing protections against permanent records being kept on students found not responsible for Rules violations. Following independent monitoring, SAC was the first to notify the general student body of these rules changes in a campus-wide email in October 2025. Subsequently, repeated requests from SAC to the Administration asking for clarification and public communication on the scope and intent of these changes have generally gone ignored. We remain uncertain of the reasoning behind and enforcement of these changes.

The 2025-2026 Student Affairs Committee was led by Matthew Beck (*Graduate Co-Chair, SEAS '28*), Huda Paracha (*Undergraduate Co-Chair, Barnard '26*), and Helen Han Wei Luo (*Vice-Chair, GSAS '27*), with the support of Keana Simon (*Chief of Staff, CC '27*). We are grateful to SAC members for their service to the University, and thank our constituents for their trust and support of our student leadership.

¹ Starting in the early 1990s, Columbia began to receive complaints that Hadden, then a Columbia OB-GYN physician, had sexually abused patients during gynecological exams. He was eventually apprehended in 2012, and briefly allowed to return to practice after leaders at the medical school signed a letter supporting his reinstatement. To date, settlements to Hadden victims run more than \$1.2 billion. In October 2023, the University Senate unanimously adopted a resolution calling for an external investigation led by an independent law firm, the public release of the resulting report, and accountability for the failures that enabled Hadden's crimes.

Student Affairs Committee 2025-26 | Membership¹

Sen. (Grad.) Matthew Beck, Co-Chair	SEAS	mb5159@columbia.edu
Sen. Huda Paracha, Co-Chair	BAR	hp2571@barnard.edu
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Sen. Marc N. Younker	LAW	mny2108@columbia.edu

¹ Including members who served part of the 2025-26 Academic Year. Find more about the Student Affairs Committee [here](#)

University Senate | Synopsis of the Forums on University Governance

Thursday, March 26 and Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Hosted by the University Senate External Relations & Research Policy Committee

Moderators:

Senator John Santelli Professor of Population and Family Health and Pediatrics, School of Public Health
Co-Chair, External Relations and Research Policy Committee

Senator Elizabeth Adeoye, Student, Columbia College
Co-Chair, External Relations and Research Policy Committee

Panelists:

David Pozen, Charles Keller Beekman Professor of Law, Columbia Law School

Jean Howard, George Delacorte Professor Emerita in the Humanities and Member, AAUP Executive
Committee

Sen. Jeanine D'Armiento, Professor of Medicine in Anesthesiology; Chair, University Senate Executive
Committee

Sen. Joseph Slaughter, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature

Introduction & Panelist Presentations

Senator John Santelli and Senator Elizabeth Adeoye, co-chairs of the External Relations and Research Policy Committee of the University Senate, welcomed audience members to the forum. The co-chairs thanked the University community for attending in person and welcomed University members joining online. They noted that the University Senate is not distributing flyers at this event, and should an attendee wish to distribute flyers, advised that they be placed at the back of the room. They further noted that the University Senate believes in free speech, but does not wish to disrupt the event. (We would note that Adeoye and Santelli prepared this welcome statement; both moderated the panel on March 26 and Santelli moderated the panel on March 31).

The moderators explained the purpose of the forum is to explore and critically examine how universities can and should be governed, and that the purpose is to ask how university governance can best be organized to support excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service to the broader world. Santelli outlined the structure of the forum in two parts: first addressing broad questions of academic and institutional governance and then applying those ideas specifically to Columbia University. They framed the discussion as taking place at a particularly important and challenging moment in Columbia's history.

Adeoye and Santelli described how the university's governance structures are currently under strain from both internal and external pressures. Internally, they pointed to instability marked by multiple presidential transitions, preceded by several provostial transitions, and controversial decisions that have raised concerns about the balance of power among governing bodies. They highlighted recent actions affecting the University Senate as especially controversial, noting that these actions had prompted serious questions about the integrity of shared governance, often understood as a balance among Trustees, Administration, and the University Senate.

The moderators outlined recent moral and institutional challenges faced by the university, including the handling of high-profile cases and the broader reckoning over Jeffrey Epstein's historical ties to Columbia, which have raised concerns about accountability and transparency. They added that changes affecting student participation in governance, such as those involving the University Judicial Board, have intensified debates over whose voices are included in decision-making.

Turning to external pressures, they noted that the university community has also been affected by major global and national developments, including conflicts in the Middle East, political threats to academic

freedom, and the freezing of research funding. They further emphasized concerns about the misuse and politicization of issues like race, class, religion, and national origin, as well as recent actions perceived as limiting protests and restricting campus access, which have led some to question the university's commitment to academic freedom and constitutional values.

Santelli and Adeoye observed a growing sense of dissatisfaction among faculty, students, and staff regarding the university's direction and moral clarity. They framed the question of how to create a future in which stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to be heard and to shape governance in ways that restore trust, accountability, and shared purpose.

They then outlined the three main power centers in university governance: the Board of Trustees, which holds ultimate fiduciary authority; the Administration, including the president, provost and academic leaders; and the University Senate, which includes faculty, students, researchers, librarians, staff, and alumni and is the only democratically elected body. They noted that governance functions best when these three centers work in alignment, but that recent years have seen division and disruption.

Referencing remarks by the former president of Columbia University Lee Bollinger, Adeoye and Santelli highlighted external political threats to academic freedom, arguing that attacks on universities by political actors follow a broader authoritarian pattern of targeting independent institutions such as the press and academia. They stressed that these external pressures compound the university's internal challenges.

They introduced David Pozen, the Charles Keller Beekman Professor of Law at Columbia Law School, who teaches and writes on constitutional and nonprofit law. They highlighted Pozen's co-authorship of a substantial paper on university democracy with Daniel Hemel of New York University, describing it as an excellent account of the topic.

They then introduced the second speaker, Dr. Jean Howard, George Delacorte Professor Emerita in the Humanities and Member, Columbia AAUP (American Association of University Professors) Executive Committee, who would address democratizing governance at Columbia starting with a proposal for reforming the Board of Trustees. . .

They then introduced Dr. Jeanine D'Armiento, who would speak on shared governance. Santelli noted her positions as Professor of Medicine in Anesthesiology, and Chair of the University Senate Executive Committee, and described her as a strong and consistent defender of shared governance at the university.

Santelli and Adeoye then introduced Dr. Joseph Slaughter, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, and University Senate Executive Committee Member, who would also address issues of shared governance.

Professor Pozen delivered his presentation, available [here](#).

Dr. Howard delivered her speech as follows:

I am here to speak about the proposal for Board Reform being advanced by the Columbia chapter of the American Association of University Professors, a proposal that offers a version of what Professor Pozen has termed a stakeholder models of governance. In a nutshell, we propose that Columbia institute open nominations and direct elections for half of the seats on the University's Board of Trustees and embrace practices that promote a culture of transparency and accountability. We invite all of you to join this campaign.

Let me back up and explain why we are making this proposal. We all have become newly aware in the last three years of the enormous power lodged in Columbia's Board of Trustees. If at one time most community members knew very little about what our Trustees do and how they affect our lives, that is surely no longer the case. In April of 2024, shortly before the Board concurred in inviting the NYPD onto campus to shut down student protests, all of us were able to see, on national TV, the Chairpersons of the Columbia Board flanking President Minouche Shafik as she, and they, testified before Congress about charges of antisemitism on the Columbia campus and about the status of confidential faculty disciplinary investigations. In July of 2025, we were all able to see, affixed to the end of the unprecedented Agreement between The United States of America and Columbia University, right next to the signatures of Pam Bondi, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Linda McMahon, the signature of a member of the Columbia Board of Trustees. The Agreement committed the university to some extraordinary changes: to appoint new faculty members in particular institutes and departments, to provide new oversight mechanisms for certain academic units, to "examine its business model" to decrease financial dependence on international student enrollment, to allow an external Resolution Monitor to oversee compliance with the agreement, to pay directly to the federal government \$221 million. Whatever one thinks of the agreement, it represents a highly visible and highly consequential exercise of Trustee power. Those attentive to *The Spectator's* excellent investigative reporting learned in early fall of 2025 that the Board of Trustees had further exercised its power by authorizing changes to Columbia University Statutes and Rules of Conduct without faculty consultation or Senate consent. Recently, from both *The Spectator* and *The New York Times* the

community has learned that Columbia has paid out over \$1 billion to survivors who suffered abuse by OB-GYN Robert Hadden of Columbia Medical School while dragging its feet on releasing a report commissioned to investigate this scandal, a report which, when released, many survivors found insufficient. In this instance, the Board's apparently failed properly to exercise its oversight responsibilities, a perception strengthened by a March 10 Board statement promising that as a result of the investigation it was instituting "a number of reforms to bolster its oversight of the medical center." These examples suggest how consequential Board actions are, and even, in some cases, how consequential its failures to act can be.

The knock-on implications of the Board's decisions in the last three years will reverberate for a long time. They affect Columbia's global reputation. They affect what former President Lee Bollinger has termed the special "freedoms" of the university. They affect the customary rights of the faculty over appointments, academic affairs, admissions, discipline, and university codes of conduct. They affect long-standing norms surrounding student protest. They affect the powers of the University Senate. They affect the budget. They affect the well-being of hundreds of women who were patients at Columbia's medical center. For many of us, these actions have made us consider more deeply who is making these weighty decisions, how they came to hold their posts, and with whom they are in consultation and collaboration.

The Columbia Charter and the Statutes of the University grant broad, but not absolute, powers to the Board. In its fiduciary role the Board is empowered to manage the endowment, oversee fundraising, the budget, and university finances; it also oversees the selection of the President and senior administrators; and exercises broad oversight over a range of university activities including maintenance and expansion of the physical plant, long-range planning, and compliance with regulatory requirements. Trustees, however, are also responsible for protecting the university's reputation, defending it from illegitimate outside interference, and safeguarding its mission and values, especially academic freedom and shared governance. By statute, the Trustees are to consult with the Executive Committee of the University Senate on certain decisions, such the selection of the President, the Provost, and six Senate-nominated members of the Board of Trustees, while the By-Laws of the Senate specify a range of other matters on which Senate input and review are required. Such mandated consultation embodies the principle that governance at the top must be accountable to and exercise its powers in concert with students, with staff, and with faculty, in particular, whose length of service to the university, and daily knowledge of its workings, culture, and values, far outpaces that of most Trustees.

While the AAUP does not question the motives or good intentions of individual Board members, the Board's actions during the last several years have led the Columbia AAUP to look further into the Board's culture, its composition, and the processes of its appointment.

For a comparative perspective, we have explored how our Board compares to those at our Ivy Plus peers. The results are instructive. The Columbia board stands out for its relatively homogeneous composition and for the undemocratic way its members are selected. While the average board size among Ivy Plus peers is 47, Columbia's Charter specifies 24 Trustees only; however, the current Board website lists only 20 members, and one of them, Acting President Shipman, has repeatedly stated that she is no longer a Board member. Consequently, 19 Trustees currently oversee the vast operations of this university and people the Board's many committees. Moreover, a majority of current Trustees, 10 of 19, are drawn from the worlds of business and finance. Only four have had careers largely outside the private sector, and only a single Trustee holds an academic appointment. This imbalance narrows the range of expertise and lived experience that should inform the governance of a modern research university where the Board's mission extends far beyond financial stewardship. The dominance of business interests also sets Columbia apart from its peers. At Harvard only 8 members of the university's 42-person bicameral Board have ties to the financial sector while 11 have experience within academia as faculty or leaders. 26 Board members have had careers largely outside of the private sector ranging from the arts to advocacy organizations. The Boards at other Ivy plus peers show a similar diversity of experience among Board members.

Current research on effective university Boards stresses that such diversity of background and expertise is a very good thing. It best prepares Boards to respond creatively to the complex challenges universities currently face, especially in moments of crisis when decision-making should be made in light of clear statements of long-term goals and objectives, shaped by explicit values, and enacted with robust faculty and student input so as not to distort the research programs, the values, or the pedagogical mission of the university.

To put one important question in stark terms, is it optimal for a Board with the sweeping powers our Board has exercised in the last three years to have only one member who holds an academic appointment and who therefore understands higher education from the inside? Who intimately understands, for instance, the crucial importance of academic freedom to the rigorous pursuit of unbiased knowledge and to the excellence on which Columbia's reputation depends? A university is much more than a business; it is a

unique social institution whose flourishing depends on upholding particular practices, values, and norms that are disregarded at the institution's peril.

Unfortunately, Columbia's Board also stands out from its peers for the unusual degree of secrecy informing its operations and for the strikingly undemocratic way in which it is selected. At many peers (Harvard, Princeton, Brown, Cornell and elsewhere) there are direct elections for certain Board seats. Typically, alumni vote for a specified number of Trustees; many Boards have "young trustees," recent grads who are elected by their peers to Board posts. At Columbia, however, trustees are appointed, not elected. 12 are appointed directly by the existing Board, six are nominated by the Columbia Alumni Association's Nominating Committee, and six are selected from a slate prepared by the University Senate's Executive Committee; but in each case, the Board's own Trusteeship Committee retains final decision-making authority. Consultations with the Alumni Association and the Senate are advisory only. In recent years, several Senate "slots" have remained unfilled by the Board for extended periods.

Many peer Boards also operate more transparently than Columbia's Board. Many peers distribute minutes of Board meetings soon after they have occurred, informing the community of key actions and decisions. Most make public robust Conflict of Interest policies for Board members; many list the composition of all Board committees. At many, Trustees hold regularly scheduled meetings with members of the campus community, signaling that Board-community consultations are a valued part of decision-making. In all of these areas, Columbia's board is an outlier, with an insular, inward-facing culture.

The most direct way to begin to remedy these shortcomings, the AAUP suggests, is to change how Columbia's Board is chosen. Recognizing that the size and nomination structure to the Board is fixed by the Charter and Statutes, change is nonetheless possible if undertaken by a collectivity of community members who recognize the inherently political nature of such a change process. It must gather buy-in from various quarters, make its case in public fora and in the media, and energize partners to join in.

Consider, for example, if students, faculty, and staff made more effective use of what is currently an open, but under-publicized and under-utilized, nomination process for identifying candidates for those Board seats for which the Senate has primary responsibility. The process for making such nominations is now posted on the Senate website and allows all of us to make the case for trustee candidates who might, for example, have successfully held academic leadership positions at peer institutions, run major research libraries, learned societies, or arts organization, or who have expertise in climate science or the ethical use of AI in research and teaching. To take part in this open nomination process directly involves members of

the Columbia community in proposing people who would bring the greatest value to Board deliberations and best protect the core values of the institution. The Board selection process has high stakes, and we should all be involved in it.

Students and alumni should also be involved as they are at most peer schools. Of course, the Board itself could at any point institute practices of accountability and transparency comparable to those at peer institutions and entertain proposals for changing how its members are selected, thereby signaling a willingness to work in concert with faculty, alumni, and students, rather than at odds with them.

The AAUP's purpose tonight is not to outline a single process for reform, but instead to invite a coalition of partners to devise the most creative and visionary paths forward. Change, however, is urgent. Columbia needs and deserves a Board that is more democratically chosen and more open in its practices than is currently the case. To help bring this about, join the AAUP, join the AAUP Organizing Committee, speak to AAUP members here tonight, or email ideas to the AAUP leadership. We all need to lean into the project of forging more democratic governance structures, and we might as well start at the top.

Dr. D'Armiento delivered her speech as follows:

Good afternoon everyone. I am Jeanine D'Armiento, Chair of the Executive Committee of the University Senate. I would like to first thank the previous speakers for their insights and care for the Columbia community. I would like to begin my remarks by focusing on the role and importance of shared governance.

Shared governance ensures that the decisions of university leadership are not made in isolation, but through collaboration with those they affect. Drawing on the knowledge and perspectives of the community strengthens operations while guiding long-term strategy. This approach protects academic freedom, elevates expertise, and builds trust—ultimately resulting in a more effective, resilient university, better prepared for the future.

At Columbia, our shared governance structure emerged from the protests of 1968. In the wake of this crisis, when failures in communication and responsiveness at the highest levels of the University brought operations to a standstill, the Board of Trustees and Administration recognized the need for a more engaged leadership structure and shared authority to restore trust and stability across the institution through the creation of the University Senate.

Today, the University Senate is composed of elected representatives from every constituency of the University—including faculty (both tenured and Tenure-Track and Off-track), students, staff, research officers, librarians, alumni, and administrators. Our Senate is unique among peers in the inclusion of students at all levels of our structure - which has given our work legitimacy and trust within the community and ensured that such work is properly informed.

For those unfamiliar with our work, much of what we do is unglamorous and largely invisible. Not the kind of work that is going to make headlines. Yet the commitment of our Senators is substantial. They dedicate hours, often days-all volunteer, to evaluating policies, drafting resolutions, reviewing academic programs, and thinking carefully about how to make the University a better place for all its members.

But our work, and shared governance, depends on those in authority adhering to the University Statutes and established practices. Yet in responding to ongoing crises at the University, the Board of Trustees has sought to curtail the authority of the University Senate: eroding both our formal statutory authority and the longstanding norms that have structured this relationship.

Under President Bollinger's administration, for example, the University Senate was involved in many areas, including selection of the University President, through sustained and meaningful conversation, attendance at meetings of the Council of Deans, and other high-level meetings of the senior administration, authority over policies and regulations related to faculty advancement and academic freedom, important decisions around security measures such as of NYPD on campus, transparency around budgetary and benefits concerns and oversight of the Rules of University Conduct.

Since the 2023 Presidential transition, the engagement with the Senate has changed. This began in the fall of 2023, President Shafik, new to and unfamiliar with the institution and the American university system, was mainly advised by senior administrators surrounding her. Such a start only worsened as the University began to grapple with protests over Palestine and the fallout of the Robert Hadden scandal. The president was isolated from the advice and collaboration from the Senate and guided again by long term senior administrative staff. By the time we were facing ICE detention of students, the Trump administration's withholding of federal money, and the subsequent agreement the University signed with the Trump administration, the Senate was completely removed from consultation.

The successive crises that the University has found itself in - which have cost the community tremendous amounts of money, trust, and reputational harm - are not simply accidental or a consequence of

circumstances beyond our control. Rather, it is the backsliding of true shared governance that has left Columbia in a weakened position and the community more distrustful and with a deflated morale. This is not simply a problem of the Senate “losing authority” but rather the entire community - which elects and engages with the Senate - being left out of decisions of tremendous consequence that affect us all.

This manifests in the following ways. First, information has routinely been withheld or obfuscated from the Senate and the community’s view in recent history. Second, regulatory power has been whisked away from the Senate under now frequent and unannounced revisions to the University Statutes and other regulatory documents. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, parallel bodies - picked entirely by senior administration - have emerged on almost every major issue - ranging from campus safety to academic freedom - coming forward with recommendations without communicating with the relevant Senate committees, delegitimizing democratic decisions.

Developments at Columbia are deeply concerning, not only to those committed to principles of shared governance, but to anyone concerned with the broader state of democracy. Columbia’s situation mirrors a wider national climate in which the stability of the rule of law is increasingly uncertain. Subsequently, our agreement with the federal government raises significant questions about the extent to which Columbia remains a meaningfully independent entity.

Perhaps the starkest example is the review of the University Senate announced by President Shipman in April 2025. This review was completed and the report provided to the Board of Trustees in December 2025. Although Vice Chair Holger Klein and I have been provided a copy of the report, we are not allowed to make it available to the Executive Committee or full Senate. We have been informed that it will only be released when the Board has fully reviewed the document and determined its next course of action regarding Senate reform.

Shared governance works when those in authority actively share information and opportunities to lead with the constituents of the University. Creating an environment in which there is no proper engagement contributes to a culture of disconnection, distrust, and apathy.

We are here today not only to reflect on how shared governance has eroded in recent years, but also to consider the future of our university. This summer brings the appointment of a new president, an important opportunity for a real reset. With new leadership comes the possibility of building a presidential team and senior administration committed to reengaging with the core principles of shared governance. At this

critical moment, we must also take a clear look at continuity in leadership. While much attention has been focused on transitions at the level of the president and provost, it should be noted that much of the Board and senior administration has remained unchanged throughout multiple controversies and crises. Any meaningful path forward requires examining not just the new leadership, but the members of those structures within the administrative bureaucracy that have persisted throughout this period.

It is time for real substantial changes to ensure shared governance continues at Columbia. I will end my remarks by stating that shared governance is not simply a tool for protecting the university but is a culture that brings all constituents in to feel a part of the university we all deeply care for every day. Thank you.

A clarification: In Thursday's forum I mentioned that designate President Mnookin was visiting this week and Senate leadership was not scheduled to meet with her. I am pleased to report that on Friday, Holger and I were invited to meet with President Mnookin on Monday, which we did and had a very productive conversation.

Dr. Slaughter delivered his speech as follows:

I had originally drafted a rousing encomium to shared governance to open these remarks. It ended with a familiar refrain: that shared governance, alongside academic freedom and tenure, forms the backbone of higher education in the United States—and has done so for more than a century; that together, they constitute the defining features that have made our universities—especially top-tier research universities—the envy of the world.

Rousing is good. But my draft sounded familiar, echoing statements that faculty and organizations like the AAUP—often dismissed as “radical”—have been compelled to repeat for years.

Then I found a convincing statement by someone from a different institutional location (who would not routinely be dismissed as radical):

“To be clear: I am deeply committed to shared governance and the values that represents Our model does not always make sense to those outside Columbia, but we know it is the essential characteristic that makes American research universities—this University—the envy of the world.”

On that point, Acting President Claire Shipman and I are apparently in full agreement.

However, I would underscore, as I did in my original draft, that shared governance does not stand alone. It is part of a triad of interdependent principles that operate together to protect the independent pursuit and dissemination of knowledge so crucial to higher education. Shared governance, academic freedom, and tenure are mutually reinforcing. Together, they secure the necessary conditions under which knowledge can be pursued, tested, and disseminated independently of competing, or even hostile, interests—knowledge, it is important to note, that can also help sustain a university, its governance, and its backbone in hard times.

They enable universities like ours to attract and nurture the world’s leading liberal arts scholars and scientists, physicians and jurists, journalists and social scientists, by protecting the space of inquiry in which we produce the essential knowledge that humankind desperately needs. And they create the atmospheric conditions within which that knowledge can be shared and scrutinized freely and responsibly with the next generations of students, scholars, and citizens.

Properly understood, these principles are safeguarded by a governing structure in which the first and foremost responsibility of a Board of Trustees is to stand as a strong line of defense between the academic mission of the university and interference from the outside world—that, indeed, was a primary purpose of an academic governing board recognized by the Supreme Court in 1819.

The tenets of shared governance, academic freedom, and tenure (with a strong Board backing them) provide shelter for the pursuit of truth—for pursuing truth critically, courageously, and openly, without undue interference by external political pressures or internal forces that would constrain inquiry, and that would prefer that the community—both narrowly and broadly understood—simply not know some things.

This, ultimately, is what is at stake in shared governance: not a procedural accommodation tolerated by a remote governing board and insulated university administrators, but the very integrity of the modern university’s core mission.

Ironically perhaps, Claire Shipman’s eloquent affirmation of shared governance served as the preamble to one of her first official acts as Acting President: the announcement, in April 2025, of a presidential review of the university senate, undertaken on behalf and at the behest of the Board of Trustees. In other words, the declaration of presidential commitment to shared governance introduced a top-down initiative to reconsider one of its central institutional expressions.

The review was framed as an effort “to have an open conversation about how to create a Senate model that represents the complexity of our institution while enabling us to respond to the demands of the moment.” But what followed—like so many consequential decisions of the past year—was not “an open conversation” about what “best serves our community.” Instead, it was a quiet review conducted for the Trustees in order, it seems, to possibly justify another unilateral revision of the University Statutes that would further weaken, if not eliminate, the vital role of the Senate in shared governance.

To be fair, we cannot now say with certainty what purpose the review of the Senate will have served, because its findings have not yet been made public, despite Shipman’s explicit commitment to openness and the stated intention of sharing recommendations “before the start of the fall [2025] semester.”

Of course, the University Senate is not the only manifestation of shared governance at Columbia. But it is the only university-wide, elected body charged with representing the variety of voices of the Columbia community across constituencies within the structures of institutional power and governance. Other forums and structures exist, and they matter; but they do not replicate the representative legitimacy of the University Senate when it comes to issues that affect the entire university.

Over the past couple of years, a parallel structure of ad-hoc committees has proliferated at the level of the President and Provost. Appointed by the Provost and constituted by selection rather than election, these bodies often appear designed to duplicate (and to displace) the work of Senate committees.

Such hand-picked committees are no substitute for the breadth of expertise, experience, and perspectives represented in the University Senate. Touted as fulfilling the norm of shared governance, this shadow shared governance routinely marginalizes a broad swathe of voices, knowledge, and insight available on our campus. Most notably, it generally excludes students and staff from critical deliberations that directly affect them. It also taxes our already over-taxed faculty resources, diluting rather than strengthening the practice of meaningful, effective shared governance.

Shared governance at Columbia, as at other schools across the US, is under severe threat just now.

The threats come not just from a zealous federal administration that seeks to bend independent institutions to its will. They also come from within: the autocratic concentration of authority in the executive offices of the university (what my colleague Dave Pozen has analyzed as presidentialism). They come, too, from an outdated model of trusteeship at Columbia, one that claims ultimate and final authority on the basis of

a Charter dating back to 1810—a time when most of the people who now constitute the Columbia community would have been entirely excluded from being students, faculty, or Trustees.

The best way to defend the university, to counter the threats to the autonomy of higher education, and to protect the academic mission of higher education is not to curtail or circumvent structures of shared governance, one of whose purposes is to provide informed checks and balances on executive and Trustee powers. It is, rather, to bolster it; to reaffirm and reinvest in the deliberative structures that give shared governance its legitimacy and force.

To conclude, I turn briefly to some recent documents issued by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges—the principal professional organization for groups like our Trustees. The AGB has consistently advocated for the critical importance of shared governance to good university stewardship.

Beyond issuing formal statements on shared governance principles, the AGB develops training materials and educational courses designed to “unbaffle” the lawyers and other trustees coming to the distinct world of academia from “the corporate sector.” (I don’t know if our Trustees are members.)

In a December 2024 issue of *Trusteeship* magazine, addressing Campus Activism (Aside: am I the only one who reads *Trusteeship* magazine?), David Fine writes that “shared governance is particularly useful in higher education’s recent trying times. To set new trustee expectations, shared governance should be a centerpiece of board orientation and should be the subject of ongoing education.”

I offer these remarks in the spirit of “open conversation” invited by Acting President Shipman, and as a contribution to the kind of “ongoing education” the AGB recommends for governing boards.

Let me close with a more recent statement published by AGB on October 31, 2025. In it, Steven Bahls emphasizes that shared governance and academic freedom are indivisible; they mutually strengthen “institutional autonomy” [he says] by “enhanc[ing] truth-seeking, generat[ing] innovation, enhanc[ing] . . . economic competitiveness through research, protect[ing] institutions from shifting political winds, and protect[ing] controversial positions that enhance the marketplace of ideas.”

Now, I would not reduce the value of shared governance or academic freedom to market metrics or the language of competitiveness; I prefer higher minded arguments. And yet, even in the languages of market

competition, liability, and risk management that prevail among our own Board and senior administration, the conclusion is the same: shared governance is indispensable.

Here, however, is Bahls' higher-minded argument:

Academic freedom is a necessary component of effective shared governance. Without it, many faculty members might hesitate to participate in faculty-governance They might fear reprisal if they take positions that are inconsistent with those of institutional leaders, including the president and board members. Faculty and other stakeholders must be free to criticize the policies of their institution, often for its betterment—even if it makes those in power at the institution feel uncomfortable. In other words, faculty members need to be able to argue for policies that advance their institution, even when they point out an “inconvenient truth.”

Ay, there's the rub. I worry that even asserting the need for an institutionalized community-wide body—ready, willing, and able to articulate inconvenient truths—may itself be taken as an inconvenient truth by our trustees. It is, therefore, a truth we must continue to articulate, demonstrate, and demand—however inconvenient.

Following remarks, members of the audience were invited to ask questions, but asked to keep their questions short to maximize participation.

Questions from March 26, 2026 Forum

Question:

An audience member asked why the University Senate has not taken a vote of no confidence in the administration, given their disregard for Section 440 of the University Statutes.

Answer:

A panelist notes that the Senate operates as a collective body, which requires a committee to bring this to the broader group. She adds that a question of no confidence is not one for the panelists to answer individually, but notes that members of the University Senate are concerned about free speech and are actively working on this issue.

Another panelist noted that they could not explain why the full Senate has not pursued a vote of no confidence, but emphasized that the Rules Committee still exists as a Senate-constituted body, even though its formal statutory powers were removed by the trustees. They stressed that the committee continues to function and relies on receiving information from the community about ongoing concerns. They encouraged individuals to submit such information either directly to the committee chairs or through senate@columbia.edu so the committee can stay informed and responsive. The panelist added that the Senate's awareness of issues depends heavily on community outreach, underscoring that faculty and colleagues should actively send relevant information to the Senate email address because that is currently their primary source of insight into unfolding problems.

The panelist further explained that this situation reflects a broader issue of shared governance. They argued that the Senate needs access to this information to represent and articulate the community's voice effectively. They expressed concern that excluding the Senate from decision-making weakens institutional processes, noting that trustees simultaneously sideline the Senate while blaming it for past decisions. They suggested that the Senate serves as an essential "pressure valve," providing a public forum where concerns can be openly discussed and resolved more thoughtfully, rather than being handled in isolation by leadership.

Question:

An audience member asked about whether there is any precedent for democratizing university boards, and what conditions typically lead to such reforms. They framed the question by comparing university

governance to the UN Security Council, where reform is widely desired but blocked by those with veto power, and asked whether there are historical examples of successful reform and what conditions made them possible.

Answer:

A panelist responded that reform is difficult because those in power must agree to limit themselves. They pointed to internal advocacy, pressure campaigns, and collective bargaining as possible strategies. External routes include appealing to state legislatures to change university charters. They noted that in some cases, major crises or unrest have triggered reforms. They also clarified that attorneys general typically only address fiduciary violations, not governance structure.

Question:

An audience member asked about a proposal to allocate half of trustee seats to community voting, specifically whether those seats would include students or be limited to faculty. They also asked more broadly whether students could or should serve on boards in shared governance models.

Answer:

A panelist responded that there is strong interest in student input and the possibility of including recently graduated students, since current rules bar active students. They emphasized that charter reform is complex and risky. However, they suggested that pressure campaigns could push boards to include new voices and that coalition-building is key to advancing such proposals.

Question:

An audience member asked for clarification on which statutes govern the Senate's authority and what "consultation" with the Senate actually requires. They specifically questioned whether current practices, such as provost-led committees that exist in parallel to the Senate, meet those requirements.

Answer:

A panelist responded that Statute 22 gives the Senate authority over academic programs, campus planning, and academic freedom. They argued that recent practices bypass the Senate and do not meet statutory requirements. Another panelist added that even required "meaningful consultation" has not occurred and that trustees are violating their own rules, though there is no formal enforcement mechanism.

Question:

An audience member asked whether AAUP reform proposals include representation from surrounding

communities (such as Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood) and whether there are plans to push for transparency around the university's real estate holdings.

Answer:

A panelist responded that community representation is not currently part of the proposal but could be added through advocacy and coalition-building. They noted that such changes would require organized support. Another speaker clarified that many governance details are governed by the trustees' bylaws, which are easier to change than the charter.

Question:

An audience member asked a two-part question: first, whether the erosion of the Senate's role predates recent crises (including whether earlier presidents disengaged from Senate meetings), and second, how the university president fits into shared governance historically and strategically moving forward.

Answer:

A panelist responded that earlier presidents were generally engaged, especially in executive meetings, even if they missed some plenaries. They argued that disengagement is more recent and tied to newer leadership practices. Going forward, they emphasized the need for a president who actively consults the Senate. Other speakers added that presidents are constrained by boards but can influence governance through appointments and engagement.

Question:

An audience member asked how faculty, students, and the Senate can effectively engage with a new incoming president, especially given that traditional roles in the presidential selection process appear diminished and the transition process is already underway.

Answer:

A panelist responded that the Senate must demonstrate that it is a supportive and constructive partner. They acknowledged limited access during the transition but emphasized reaching out once the president formally begins. They stressed the importance of offering guidance and building trust early.

Question:

An audience member raised concerns about a broader shift toward top-down governance, where decisions are made by trustees and administrators before being presented to faculty and the Senate, making consultation feel performative. They asked whether this reflects a systemic change.

Answer:

A panelist responded that decision-making has become increasingly top-down, with leadership disconnected from faculty and student experiences. They gave examples of decisions announced before discussion, arguing this undermines shared governance and treats major academic issues merely as financial decisions.

Question:

An audience member asked whether the erosion of shared governance is also happening at lower levels of the university, such as schools and departments, and whether there is evidence that this affects engagement and sense of ownership among faculty and staff.

Answer:

A panelist responded that historically faculty had influence over academic matters but less over budgets and leadership. They suggested centralization has likely increased. Another speaker added that governance is weaker at the school level and that lack of participation leads to disengagement across the university.

Question:

An audience member asked what short-term actions individuals and groups can take to push for governance reform, especially given that larger structural changes (like charter reform) take time. They also asked how to force trustees to follow existing statutes.

Answer:

A panelist responded that change depends on community pressure and engagement. They emphasized that the Senate's power comes from its constituents, so broader participation is necessary. Without active involvement from faculty, students, and staff, enforcement is unlikely.

Question:

An audience member asked how to address the misalignment between short-term decision-making by leadership and the long-term reputational and financial health of the university, especially when those long-term consequences are not immediately visible.

Answer:

A panelist responded that negative impacts may take time to appear, making them harder to act on. They also noted that fear of retaliation limits faculty willingness to speak out. They encouraged using the Senate as a channel for raising concerns and emphasized the need for more faculty engagement.

Question:

An audience member asked whether recent collective responses to a campus incident involving a student suggest a growing willingness among faculty, students, and administrators to cooperate, and whether multilateral approaches beyond formal structures are effective.

Answer:

A panelist responded that coalition-based efforts across students, faculty, and others can be effective, but require sustained pressure rather than one-time responses.

Question:

An audience member asked what can be done in the near term to ensure the Senate retains meaningful authority during a critical transition period, including the arrival of a new president and the release of a governance review.

Answer:

A panelist responded that the transition period is critical. They suggested focusing on achievable goals like filling vacant board seats with Senate nominees and making the case for the Senate's value in governance decisions.

Question:

An audience member asked about possible legislative strategies beyond charter reform, including state-level action, alliances with city officials, and broader political advocacy, especially given the university's public subsidies and tax status.

Answer:

A panelist responded that legislatures usually avoid intervening in private universities unless prompted. However, external pressure (such as proposed tax-related legislation) could create leverage for reform. They noted this is uncertain but potentially significant.

Question:

An audience member asked whether a class action lawsuit could be brought against trustees for breach of fiduciary duty, arguing that recent decisions harm students and the institution despite available financial resources.

Answer:

A panelist responded that such claims are very difficult to win without clear conflicts of interest. They explained that courts defer to boards acting in good faith, even if decisions turn out poorly. Additionally, legal standing is limited.

Question:

An audience member asked whether faculty or organizations like AAUP could bring a lawsuit against trustees on similar fiduciary grounds.

Answer:

A panelist responded that faculty and organizations generally do not have legal standing to bring such claims. Only university fiduciaries themselves or the state attorney general can typically pursue lawsuits alleging breach of fiduciary duty.

Questions from the March 31, 2026 Forum

Question:

An audience member asked about a flyer distributed with an attached QR code suggesting that multiple survivors of Jeffrey Epstein were treated at New York-Presbyterian Hospital and referenced a separate complaint reporting Epstein to the State Department of Child and Family Services for alleged child sexual abuse in 2019. The audience member questioned why the University limited the Hadden Report's scope to events ending in 2012, despite indications that misconduct may have continued beyond that date.

Answer:

A panelist responded that some of the information mentioned was new to members of the Senate and had not previously been brought to their attention. They noted that while the Senate was aware of the Hadden Report and had passed a resolution pushing for further investigation, they are still awaiting responses from the administration regarding outstanding questions. The panelist emphasized that the Senate is actively pressing the administration for answers and is not ignoring the issue.

A panelist added that they had not seen the QR code materials referenced and could not verify their contents. However, they affirmed that the Senate shares concerns about the Hadden Report and had strongly advocated, particularly through the Commission on the Status of Women, for its release. The panelist emphasized the importance of continuing to raise and pursue these questions.

Question:

An audience member raised concerns about university posting policies, reading aloud a rule prohibiting unauthorized signage. They asked whether posting a specific poster criticizing the Board of Trustees would violate university policy and followed up by describing receiving a disciplinary notice for similar activity. The audience member then asked what power the Senate has to prevent what they described as unnecessary or harmful disciplinary actions.

Answer:

A panelist declined to make an immediate determination about whether the poster violated university policy but emphasized that academic freedom is a core priority for the Senate. They noted that relevant incident materials could be reviewed by Senate committees, including Faculty Affairs, for further discussion.

The panelist clarified that the disciplinary notice referenced may not have been issued under the Rules of University Conduct but rather through a different administrative body. They expressed that while some restrictions on posting might be reasonable, it is important that individuals feel able to express their views. They explained that the Senate has limited formal authority to prevent disciplinary actions imposed by trustees but retains informal influence through advocacy and calls for reform.

A panelist added that the Senate Rules Committee had previously held authority over such matters but lost that authority after trustees unilaterally changed the statutes. They emphasized that the Senate now relies on gathering and amplifying community experiences to advocate for change, as it no longer has statutory authority in regard to such disciplinary measures.

Question:

An audience member asked whether Columbia's Board of Trustees is compensated and how such information can be verified. They also questioned why Columbia's board has received less public scrutiny compared to peer institutions.

Answer:

A panelist explained that, at private nonprofit institutions, trustees are typically not compensated and serve in a volunteer capacity. They noted that while nonprofit law permits reasonable compensation, their understanding is that Columbia's trustees are not paid, and this can be verified through publicly available financial documents such as IRS Form 990.

A panelist added that while trustees themselves are not compensated, their affiliated organizations may have business relationships with the university. They also agreed that there has been relatively limited public scrutiny of Columbia's board compared to other institutions, despite the board's central role in governance and decision-making, including appointing the university president.

Question:

An audience member asked for a more detailed explanation of how disciplinary processes at the university have changed and how authority has shifted away from the Senate.

Answer:

A panelist explained that it is a misconception that the Senate previously controlled individual disciplinary cases. Instead, the Senate's Rules Committee functioned as a policy-making body that helped shape rules

governing conduct, while cases were adjudicated independently by the University Judicial Board (UJB). They argued that the Senate was sometimes unfairly blamed for administrators' decisions about discipline.

A panelist described recent changes as complex and not fully transparent, involving multiple bodies such as the Center for Student Success and Intervention (CSSI), a restructured UJB now appointed by the provost, and other committees created independently of the Senate. They characterized this as a "shadow" governance structure that duplicates and displaces the Senate's traditional role.

A panelist further outlined three main disciplinary bodies: the UJB, which handles cases under the Rules of University Conduct; CSSI, which increasingly addresses student and speech-related issues; and the Office of Institutional Equity, which manages federal anti-discrimination law compliance. They emphasized that the Senate's role in shaping speech-related policies has diminished as these bodies have evolved and expanded.

A panelist added that the Senate has consistently advocated for due process protections, expressing concern about recent changes that limit students' access to evidence unless they sign nondisclosure agreements and allow allegations to remain on records even without resolution.

A panelist noted that, in principle, trustees and legal counsel should not be directly involved in individual disciplinary cases, though they suggested this norm may not always be upheld in practice.

Question:

An audience member asked whether presentation materials would be made available and whether a recording of the event would be accessible. They also asked what alumni can do to support efforts toward shared governance, including the possibility of electing trustees.

Answer:

A panelist responded that presentation materials, including slide decks and related articles, could be shared upon request.

A panelist expressed strong interest in engaging alumni and emphasized the importance of collaboration between faculty organizations and alumni groups. They noted that organizing efforts are necessary to develop concrete governance proposals and highlighted that alumni hold designated seats on the Board of Trustees, though these may not currently be used to their full potential.

A panelist thanked alumni for their participation and support, especially during a critical period for the university, and emphasized that continued alumni involvement is essential to advancing governance reform efforts.

Question:

An audience member expressed deep concern that any complaint filed through OIE (Office of Institutional Equity), regardless of whether the student was found responsible, would appear on a student's permanent record. They worried that this would harm students' futures (e.g., residency applications) and noted that this change came without University Senate consultation. They further asked why university leadership seems apathetic compared to students, especially given the medical students' ethical grounding and relentless advocacy around issues such as the Hadden case, and asked why students must push for change that leadership does not pursue.

Answer:

A panelist clarified that the concern about complaints appearing on permanent records likely refers not an OIE rule but to the Rules of University Conduct, which the Board of Trustees recently revised. OIE complaints, according to their understanding, only appear on records if someone is found responsible. They noted that the Senate Rules Committee, though weakened, is trying to push back on the permanent record issue under the Rules of University Conduct.

On the broader question of culture and leadership, a panelist said the trustees and senior administration primarily govern from a liability and risk-management perspective, which is often narrowly defined as financial risk. They view student and faculty activism as potential liabilities rather than legitimate ethical warnings. The panelist argued this perspective blinds leadership to other types of liability, such as reputational and legal liability, and suggested reframing concerns in "liability language" leadership might understand.

A panelist emphasized that student activism, especially from medical students, brought attention to problems like Hadden to a wider audience, including faculty and alumni. They acknowledged students' suffering and advocacy but emphasized that students should not carry the burden alone; faculty and trustees must share responsibility.

Question:

An audience member asked about stakeholder governance models abroad. Specifically: What historical processes led to these governance structures, how were they established, and what role did students and faculty play in achieving them?

Answer:

A panelist said the emergence of stakeholder governance varies by country and institution. In some places like parts of Germany, tragic incidents and intense student protests forced governance reforms. In Latin America (e.g., the Córdoba model), student unrest helped establish systems where students and faculty sit on governing boards.

In contrast, at Oxford and Cambridge, the current system of university-wide governance with strong faculty presence developed in the mid-1800s through external political action (Parliament) rather than student protests. The panelist noted this was relevant to Columbia because Columbia's Charter (from 1810) is a piece of special legislation, meaning governance changes are intertwined with New York State law. Numerous reforms could be done in trustee bylaws or statutes, but fundamental charter elements such as the number of trustees would likely require legislative action.

A panelist summarized that both internal advocacy (students, faculty, alumni) and external pressure (for example, legislative engagement) are part of how governance models evolve.

Question:

An audience member asked about the trauma caused by the Hadden case and the current traumatized campus climate. They referenced research layoffs (nearly 180 research workers terminated) around the time the university agreed to a nearly \$1 billion settlement related to Hadden. They asked whether there was any insight into the relationship between the settlement and those layoffs.

Answer:

A panelist acknowledged the layoffs were devastating and happened with little communication to supervisors or staff. While it is not officially confirmed that the layoffs were linked to settlement costs, the timing and context made it hard not to connect them. They emphasized the importance of prioritizing support for the University's research and education missions while addressing financial burden.

They noted that the Senate's Budget Committee is seeking accountability and clarity behind financial decisions, though its work is confidential. The committee hopes to meet soon and has drafted a letter

outlining what it needs to understand. The senator reiterated that the goal is to find ways to support the mission while paying obligations, not to sacrifice core functions.

Question:

An audience member raised two points; that long-serving staff without election representation should be considered in governance reforms; asked how the Hamilton Hall encampment and police intervention would have been handled under shared governance.

Answer:

A panelist acknowledged the representation gap and said the Senate's Structure Committee is exploring options for better inclusion of different staff categories in elections.

On shared governance and major events surrounding the encampment, a panelist noted the difficulty in speculating exactly how decisions would differ because current governance wasn't involved. The panelist explained that if the Board of Trustees were differently composed, with more representation from students, faculty, and staff, there likely would have been a stronger emphasis on academic freedom and traditional norms (like handling protests without police). They noted that recent decisions diverged from those deeply ingrained values because leadership and board members were not steeped in them.

A panelist used the Oxford/Cambridge model as an example where stakeholders can vote on major decisions. They noted that even in such systems, vetoes are rare but occur when core values are at stake, suggesting that governance with broader constituency input could lead to different outcomes in crises.

Question:

An audience member asked about board transparency, wondering how difficult it would be to publish trustee meeting minutes, even if high-level, to help the community understand major decisions? The audience member then asked why Dr. Mary D'Alton, chair of OB/GYN who was implicated in failures around Hadden reporting and characterization of a patient as "crazy," has not stepped down or had interim leadership appointed, and inquired as to what her current clinical role is.

Answer:

A panelist strongly supported publishing minutes, saying even bad minutes are better than none because they would increase awareness of board actions (appointments, budgets, etc.). They said at their previous

institution, Brown University, minutes were routinely shared and demystified the board, improving general knowledge about boards and the scope of their actions.

On Mary D’Alton, a panelist noted that many in the community thought her announcement implied she had stepped down, but the phrasing (“stepping down”) was ambiguous, and she does not appear to have actually resigned. The senator admitted that the lack of clarity and action is baffling and frustrating, particularly given survivors’ demands for accountability. They could not provide specifics about D’Alton’s current clinical role and acknowledged that the decision-making process remains opaque.

Question:

An audience member asked about the 1810 Charter, citing a blogger who noted trustees can only hold real estate up to a certain value per year. They asked whether Columbia has violated that clause over time and why the Charter is selectively referenced to justify absolute trustee authority but ignored in other contexts.

Answer:

A panelist said they did not know the exact legal answer but would look into it but believed there must be a legal explanation. They noted they hadn’t seen an amendment to the relevant clause, and said the provision might involve income from property rather than value alone.

Another panelist agreed and said that Columbia has likely been in violation of that provision since the 19th century, and it was surprising the Board leaned on the Charter to justify its authority while ignoring other parts. They said legal interpretations from history do not neatly match modern language, especially around archaic terms like “furniture of the mind,” underscoring that reliance on the Charter is inconsistent.

A clarification: the panelist wishes to clarify that “furniture of the mind” appears in a Yale Report that is contemporaneous with Columbia’s 1810. It serves here as an example of the kind of archaic formulations found in these early documents that do not always translate transparently into the contemporary context. The panelist also notes that the real estate clause of the 1810 Charter was modified by the NY legislature in 1884. However, the 1884 modification also makes clear that any real estate income “shall be applied to, the proper conduct and support of the several departments of education heretofore established or hereafter to be established by such Trustees.”

Question:

Another audience member asked what role the AAUP can play in moving faculty from concern to coordinated action and what value collective engagement has compared to acting individually.

Answer:

A panelist said collective action is essential. They described AAUP as a thought engine, capable of generating ideas and rationales, but lacking formal decision-making authority. They emphasized the need for AAUP to work with governance bodies like the Senate, faculty committees, and alumni groups to build momentum for reforms like board restructuring. They stressed that no single group – not students, not faculty, and not AAUP alone – can create change; sustained collective effort is required.

Question:

An audience member asked about Dr. John Evanko, who signed the letter allowing Hadden to return to practice and was later promoted to high-level administrative and malpractice insurer roles. They asked why he was repeatedly promoted given his role in harmful decisions and what his involvement was in the malpractice insurer (MCIC Vermont) related to the settlement, in which the hospital is a stakeholder. The audience member notes that Evanko remained in this last role until 2024, and asked what his role as a leader in the hospital's malpractice insurance in the Hadden settlement. The audience member notes the apparent conflict of interest, then moves to ask how shared governance could promote sharing responsibility for these decisions between the Board of Trustees and the University Senate.

Answer:

A panelist confirmed that Evanko did head the malpractice corporation used by the university's physicians and that he remained in that leadership role until 2024. They said the Senate has not been fully informed about how settlement negotiations occurred or where money came from (insurers, self-insurance, etc.) and noted that discussions about these details are happening in the Budget Committee. They reiterated that they lacked full answers but acknowledged the importance of this question.

Question:

An audience member asked whether members of the Board of Trustees can be held personally responsible if their decisions cause financial or reputational harm, what standing exists to pursue fiduciary breach claims, and whether trustees face personal liability.

Answer:

A panelist said that under New York State law and most states, individuals such as students, parents, or employees generally do not have standing to sue trustees for breach of fiduciary duty. The Attorney General has authority to investigate trustee fiduciary breaches, and such an investigation is reportedly ongoing regarding the Hadden matter. Trustees are typically indemnified and rarely personally liable unless there are clear financial conflicts of interest.

Question:

An audience member asked why the Board appears “obsessed with disciplining students” while failing to discipline leadership or trustees, and whether specific trustees and administrators could be held accountable for targeting student activists. They also asked about concerns surrounding the federal agreement and the potential sharing of private student information with the government, asking whether the Student Affairs Committee or others could obtain transparent answers about what data is shared and how.

Answer:

A panelist addressed the federal agreement first, saying the Senate leadership has been reassured that academic processes and freedom in the setting of admissions, appointments will not be altered. They noted one New York State court case appears to block the university from providing student information to the government, which suggests the university should not be sharing identifiable data. However, members of Congress are pressuring the university for such information.

A panelist clarified that the agreement primarily discusses aggregated and anonymized data for compliance with Title VI and acknowledged a vulnerability if a monitor demanded data relevant to compliance. They said as far as they know, no such demand has occurred yet.

On disciplinary targeting and accountability, senators emphasized that the University lacks direct mechanisms for the Senate to influence trustee actions or discipline individual trustees. They reiterated that the problem is structural, related to how the board is selected and held accountable. Litigation might lead to public discovery of board actions and decision-making. They also stressed that students and faculty share concerns about disciplinary practices and that a united front is necessary.

A panelist stressed the importance of a united front that does not separate student worries from faculty worries, noting that there is a chilling effect on faculty activism due to fear of repercussions. They added that many of the issues noted are larger than the University Senate itself. They noted that the Senate's role is to advocate for structural, rules-based reforms that would make egregious overreaches by the Board visible and accountable.

A panelist pointed out ongoing court cases as an example, especially the Hamilton Hall case, which are beginning to publicly expose records that could reveal the Board's involvement in disciplinary matters. The panelist explained that this type of discovery process allows for subpoenas that might show the kinds of involvement under question. The panelist expressed frustration that the Board of Trustees, despite asserting ultimate authority over campus decisions, is not publicly scrutinized. In contrast, University Senate members, who have very limited authority, often face disproportionate public scrutiny.

External Relations and Research Policy Committee Membership 2025-2026					
Ten.	Jeanine D'Armiento		P&S	Sen.	jmd12@cumc.columbia.edu
Ten.	Adana Llanos		SPH	Sen.	al4248@cumc.columbia.edu
Ten.	Aliou Cissé Niang		UTS	Sen.	aniang@uts.columbia.edu
Ten.	John S. Santelli	Co-Chair	SPH	Sen.	js2637@cumc.columbia.edu
Ten.	Rebecca Schnall		NURS	Sen.	rb897@cumc.columbia.edu
Ten.	Henning G. Schulzrinne		SEAS	Sen.	hgs@cs.columbia.edu
Ten.	Howard Worman		P&S	Sen.	hjlw14@cumc.columbia.edu
TTOT	Amir Ziv		BUS	Sen.	az50@columbia.edu
Stu.	Elizabeth Adeoye	Co-Chair	CC	Sen.	ea3130@columbia.edu
Stu.	Simon Ogundare		P&S	Sen.	simon.ogundare@columbia.edu
Stu.	Maeghan Sill		TC	Sen.	mms2380@tc.columbia.edu
Libraries	William Vanti		Libraries	Nonsen.	wbv2101@columbia.edu
Research Officers	Rohan Munoth		Research Officers - Staff	Sen.	rm4294@cumc.columbia.edu
Research Officers	Marco Tedesco		Research Officers - Professional	Sen.	mt3102@columbia.edu
Admin.	Loftin Flowers		Adm.	Nonsen.	llf2105@columbia.edu,
Admin.	Naomi Schrag		Adm.	Nonsen.	ns2333@columbia.edu,
Alum.	Tiffany Bryant		Alum.	Sen.	

University Senate Structure and Operations Committee

Annual Report 2025-2026

During this academic year, the committee:

- Conducted two orientation sessions for new Senators, which many continuing Senators also attended.
- Following a request from Senators, began providing a parliamentary “cheat sheet” for each plenary.
- Received the 2025 reapportionment recommendation from the Election Commission and forwarded the recommendation to the Plenary. Following the formula in the Statutes, there were no changes in the apportionment of Senate seats among schools and divisions.
- Recommended to the Executive Committee that Senate terms end on August 31 instead of two weeks before commencement in order to allow smoother operations whenever the Senate had to take action during the summer. The Executive Committee accepted this recommendation, announced it to the community in May 2026, and the new term-ending date went into effect in 2026.
- Worked with the Executive Committee on the timing of Senate plenaries to avoid conflicts with religious observances.
- Completed the final report on the Mitts and Bernofsky Section 1.m. petitions and presented it to the plenary on November 21, 2025..
- Recommended new procedures for assigning Senators to committees. These were presented to the plenary on two occasions, October 24 and November 10, 2025, and revised based on comments received. The committee referred these recommendations to the Executive Committee, which approved them and the final policy was presented in the plenary of May 8, 2026 (The Executive Committee is the Senate’s “committee on committees.”)
- Recommended revising the Election Code to allow electioneering during the voting period. The Senate adopted this recommendation in the plenary of May 8, 2026..
- Proposed a By-Law amendment that would include a conflict of interest policy for the Senate and advertised this policy to the entire Senate for comment, with the comment period closing on April

29, 2026 We are still working on the comments we received and hope to have a final proposal in the fall.

- Began discussions with the Provost's Office on possible teaching relief or other recognition for Executive Committee service, possibly extending this to all Senators in the future, following the Senate Review Committee recommendation. These discussions will continue in the fall and result in a report and recommendations to the Executive Committee and the plenary.

In the next academic year we look forward to completing the business we started this year, working on other recommendations from the Senate Review Committee, and revisiting confidentiality policy.

Structure and Operations Committee 2025-26 | Membership

Senator Jackie Dugard

Linda Mischel Eisner

Senator Greg Freyer

Senator Henry Ginsberg

Senator Serena Ng

Brendan O'Flaherty, Co-Chair

Senator Dafne Sarfati

Senator Daniel Wolf Savin, Co-Chair

Senator Henning G. Schulzrinne

Zeid Sitnica

Senator Janie Weiss

Susan Witte