

University Senate
Proposed: January 26, 2001
Adopted: January 26, 2001

MEETING OF DECEMBER 8, 2000

President George Rupp, the chairman, called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 pm in the Schapiro Engineering Auditorium. Forty-two of 87 senators were present during the meeting. There was no quorum.

Minutes and agenda: The agenda was adopted as proposed. When the President asked for additions or corrections to the minutes of November 17, Sen. Luciano Rebay (Ten., A&S) commented that the Provost's uncertainty at that meeting about whether he had communicated with the Senate a decade ago about the sale of the Casa Italiana was disingenuous; he made a similar complaint about the description in the last annual President's Report of the Italian Academy, which is located in the Casa Italiana. The minutes were adopted as proposed.

President's report: At the President's request, the Senate observed a moment of silence for Andrea Melendez, a Columbia College sophomore who died in a fall on December 6.

The President invited questions from about his decision on November 13 to declare a pause in the construction of a new Social Work building on 113th Street, to enable planners to consider alternative plans for the school. There were no questions. The President mentioned two important new appointments: --Jonathan Arac, a faculty member in the Columbia English Dept. a decade ago, is returning as chair, an addition that will lead to other major appointments in this traditionally distinguished department; the President thanked Roger Bagnall for his service as acting chair.

--Gerald Fischbach, director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke at the National Institutes of Health, will become Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Vice President for Health Sciences in early February; the President thanked Thomas Morris and David Hirsch, who have served as interim deans since Herbert Pardes left to lead New York Presbyterian Hospital a year ago. **Executive Committee chairman's report:** Sen. Paul Duby (Ten., SEAS) reported on the plenary meeting of the Trustees on December 2 that he attended with Sen. Rit Aggarwala (Stu., GSAS/SS). The main topics were the triumphant conclusion of the capital campaign and the pause in construction of the new Social Work building. A subcommittee of the Executive Committee has exchanged short lists of nominees for Senate-consulted Trustees with their Trustee counterparts. The two nominating subcommittees will meet on February 13.

On the same day, the whole Executive Committee will meet with another group of Trustees to discuss issues of concern to the community. Likely agenda items are Fathom.com and on-line learning, as well as Columbia's long-term space needs.

At its December 4 meeting the Executive Committee followed up on issues Sen. Debra Wolgemuth (Ten., HS) had discussed in her report to the Senate in November, particularly the question of interaction with the Trustees' nominating subcommittee for honors and prizes. Sen. Duby stressed the responsibility of the Columbia community--particularly the faculty--to recommend excellent candidates for honorary degrees. Also on December 4, the Executive Committee responded sympathetically to a sketch of a proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on research staff affairs, and looked forward to a more formal proposal in January, specifying the group's mandate, composition, and life span.

New business:

--Update on inquiry into Fathom.com: Sen. Sharyn O'Halloran (Ten., A&S), co-chair of a subcommittee drawn from the Budget Review, Education, External Relations, and Student Affairs committees, summarized the group's thinking so far, as expressed in the November 17 letter to Provost Cole that was distributed in the Senate packet. She said Fathom.com is an internet company providing general, topical information--a kind of intellectual *People* magazine on line--whose revenue comes from advertising, and from selling books and online courses. Sen. O'Halloran said senators can learn about it by looking at its preview site, at www.fathom.com.

She listed the subcommittee's main questions:

--What is the relationship between Columbia and Fathom.com? --What is Columbia's stake in Fathom and what are its prospects for success, particularly given the recent shakeout in the stock market of internet companies dependent, like Fathom, on advertising revenue? What is the University's legal and financial liability?

--How do commercial ventures like Fathom fit into Columbia's overall strategy for online learning?

The subcommittee will meet on December 14 with Executive Vice Provost Michael Crow, and is awaiting Provost Cole's response to the subcommittee's letter. Sen. Michael Resnick (Stu., SDOS), a member of the subcommittee, said students are particularly concerned about faculty involvement in Fathom.com and its effect on their primary obligations to their students, and about quality control. Sen. O'Halloran said it has been valuable to have a subcommittee that reflects the membership and concerns of the entire Senate.

Sen. Aggarwala asked if the subcommittee will address online initiatives apart from Fathom. Sen. O'Halloran said one lesson she has learned from the subcommittee is that there is a large reservoir of expertise and interest among students and faculty that has gone largely untapped in the University's pursuit of its online strategy. She said the subcommittee could play a positive role in that effort.

Sen. Duby said he would be very disappointed if what he has seen on the Fathom preview site were all that Columbia is offering on the internet. He said the current offerings do not reflect Columbia's basic mission or values. He asked when and how Columbia will put courses on the web that are developed by Columbia faculty.

President Rupp said Fathom.com is only one of a number of online initiatives Columbia is undertaking, any of which the subcommittee is welcome to study. He said he wrote a five-page letter about a year ago (now somewhat out of date) summarizing the full range of the University's online initiatives. He said that, without providing more background information, he did not think was worth reviewing these at the present meeting.

--Report from External Relations on recent correspondence with the Academic Consortium on International Trade: Sen. Eugene Litwak, chair of External Relations, said the purpose of the committee's letter distributed in the Senate packet was to make clear that its recommendations on anti-sweatshop policy were based on a careful review, not on sit-ins or unthinking reactions.

The President said the letter reflects well on the committee, for having included experts in its deliberations, including Prof. Jagdish Bhagwati, a prominent member of the consortium that has criticized the anti-sweatshop policies that Columbia and other universities have adopted.

--Report from Faculty Affairs on a proposal to add professorships of practice in the School of International and Public Affairs: Speaking now in his role as chairman of Faculty Affairs, Sen. Litwak said the committee had met with SIPA Dean Lisa Anderson and approved the school's request for renewable appointments for professors of practice--that is, gifted teachers and practitioners in international and public affairs whose careers do not fit the academic mold. But the committee had reservations about Dean Anderson's interpretation of the guidelines established in a 1994 Senate

resolution setting a 10 percent limit on the fraction of professors of practice in any faculty. Dean Anderson had based her calculation of 10 percent on the total number of faculty FTEs in SIPA (now about 60); the 1994 guidelines use the total of tenured and tenure-track faculty as a basis (39 this year). Dean Anderson said four professorships or practice--the limit under the original guidelines--are sufficient for SIPA's current needs. Sen. Litwak said the committee agreed to meet with Dean Anderson later on to discuss possible changes in the school's needs.

Sen. Litwak said the Senate's 1994 guidelines have important implications for the University, because their purpose is to protect the institution of tenure, including the freedom it affords professors to express unpopular ideas. He urged fellow senators to keep this principle in mind in thinking about Sen. Rebay's comments earlier in the meeting.

Sen. Litwak asked Sen. Frances Pritchett (Ten., A&S) to speak briefly about a new subcommittee that she is chairing on inequities in faculty salaries. Sen. Pritchett said the subcommittee wants to learn about several types of inequities, including discrepancies among the salaries of senior professors in a single department, between salaries in different departments, and between the salaries of research officers and professors. Another concern is the exceedingly low salaries paid to language lecturers. She said the subcommittee hopes to see some of the data gathered by the Provost's reconstituted Salary Equity Committee, chaired by Sen. Irwin Garfinkel (Ten., SW). One solution worth considering is the idea of a cap on salary discrepancies within a certain group. She invited senators to comment on the subcommittee's project. In response to a question from Sen. Roosevelt Montas (Stu., GSAS/H), Sen. Pritchett said the salaries of student instructors are marginal to the mandate of the subcommittee, which was formed by the faculty caucuses, but may deserve attention as well. Sen.. Sekou Campbell (Stu., Arts) said faculty in the School of the Arts have unique salary issues.

Sen. Joel Banlaben (Stu., SIPA) said that professorships of practice would provide crucial stability for the SIPA faculty.

Sen. Avery Katz (Ten., Law) asked if all faculties observe the 10 percent limit on professorships of practice. Sen. David Cohen, Vice President for Arts and Sciences, said the Arts and Sciences overall are under that cap, but some A&S schools are not.

Sen. Litwak said some other instructional ranks, including clinical titles at Health Sciences and possibly lecturer titles as well, closely resemble professorships of practice. The President cautioned against overlooking the differences among these titles.

Sen. Joan Ferrante said there is some question about the fraction of professorships of practice in the Law School.

--Resolution to Establish a new Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology (Education). Sen. Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., SDOS), chair of Education, moved the resolution, which the Senate passed without dissent.

The President adjourned the meeting at around 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff