

University Senate

Proposed: September 28, 2001

Adopted: September 28, 2001

MEETING OF APRIL 27, 2001

President George Rupp, the chairman, called the Senate to order at 1:15 pm in Schapiro Engineering Auditorium. Fifty-eight of 83 senators were present during the meeting.

Minutes and agenda: A report from the Commission on the Status of Women was added to the agenda. The minutes of the March 30, 2001 meeting were adopted as proposed.

Report of the President:

--The President announced the sudden death of Prof. Morton Klein of the Engineering School in his office on April 26 at the age of 75. The Senate observed a moment of silence for Prof. Klein.

--In response to a request from the student caucus, the President commented on current efforts to unionize Columbia's teaching and research assistants, a campaign that he said raises two main questions. The fundamental one is whether graduate students are employees. He said Columbia values the nine unions (13 bargaining units) represented among its employees, and is not opposed to unions in general. But the fiduciaries with final responsibility for the University--the Trustees, including the President--do not believe students should be unionized. In its recent decision on unionization efforts at NYU, the National Labor Relations Board decided by a 2-1 majority, at a time when its two other seats were vacant, to overturn 30 years of precedent in ruling that graduate students at private universities can unionize as long as they are expected to perform duties and are compensated for performing them. The President said he believed the decision was wrong, with contorted reasoning, and will have long-term adverse effects on private universities. One will be increasing standardization and inflexibility in the deployment of teaching and research assistants. In current negotiations at the University of Massachusetts, for example, the United Auto Workers' union is calling for assignment of teaching fellows by seniority. Such an arrangement, the President said, would favor the students who take the longest to finish their Ph.D.'s, who are invariably not the strongest students. A second problem is an inescapable tendency for collective bargaining to encroach on academic issues, despite assurances to the contrary in the recent NLRB decision. For example, at Berkeley, where teaching assistants are unionized, a graduate student who was terminated for academic reasons filed a grievance demanding the right to continue his duties as a TA, on the grounds that he was an employee. The President said it is easy to imagine that the content of assignments and exams could become the subject of collective bargaining.

He rejected the view--recently expressed in Spectator editorials and by some faculty--that the University should be neutral on the question of unionization of teaching assistants. He said that on a matter of such importance the University would be irresponsible not to assert its own long-term interests in seeking what it considers a better outcome, which is not to have students as members of unions. That's why the administration will be participating in NLRB hearings.

The President identified a second group of issues, involving the definition of the bargaining unit. He maintained that any attempt to unionize Ph.D. students should include doctoral students at Health Sciences, Lamont, and Nevis, as well as on the Morningside campus. Union organizers want to count only the Morningside graduate student population. They also want to include the very small number of undergraduate teaching assistants, a position the University will oppose at NLRB hearings.

In response to a question from Sen. Alex Oberweger (Stu., Bus.), the President clarified his definition of the student population in question: the group of graduate student teaching and research assistants includes master's as well as doctoral students.

Sen. James Applegate (Ten., A&S) dissented strongly from the view that the University should remain neutral on the issue of unionization of students. He said it is absurd to allow only one group to take political action on an issue that affects every important University constituency. In addition, he said, graduate students who vote in a union election will probably pursue their careers elsewhere, while many members of the group who are being asked to remain silent—especially faculty and administrators—may have to live with the results of that election at Columbia for the rest of their careers.

The President called on students who oppose unionization not to be intimidated into silence or deterred from voting on the question of unionization. He said the outcome of that vote may depend on students who don't feel very strongly on the issue.

Sen. John Broughton (Fac., TC) said groups who seek to unionize usually have reasons for doing so, and he welcomed an opportunity to hear graduate students' reasons. He also expressed optimism that "unintended consequences" of unionization can be understood and discussed, along with the perceived injustices that have prompted some students to unionize, and that a university community can arrive at a rational compromise.

Sen. Roosevelt Montas (Stu., GSAS/Hum.) said graduate students are interested in unionization because many of them feel overworked and underappreciated. This basic issue needs to be addressed, whether the unionization drive succeeds or not.

Sen. Rohit Aggarwala (Stu., GSAS/SS) thanked the President for addressing this issue in the Senate, where a range of university constituencies can join a conversation that has been conducted so far only in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Sen. Aggarwala, a CC preceptor, said he had not made up his mind about unionization, and was not alone among graduate students in wanting as full a debate as possible, including the administration. He also agreed with Sen. Montas that the underlying problems graduate students face have been obscured in the debate over unionization. Sen. Aggarwala hoped that if there is a union election, Senate discussion could reveal its broadest implications for the University, to the graduate students who must vote in the election as well as everyone else. He added that if there is no election, the University should look seriously at the issues that have caused many graduate students to join the unionization effort.

The President said Columbia is in the fourth year of a costly effort to provide multi-year support for most of its graduate students, many of whom had no support at all seven or eight years ago. He said there are still some remnants of this unhappy state of affairs, though the sense of being underappreciated may be more a matter of faculty culture. But the University regards the continued improvement of graduate student support as a core issue for the institution, because strong Ph.D. programs also help recruit faculty and strengthen instruction for undergraduates. The rigidities of unionization might make this course more difficult, the President said: increases in stipend levels, for example, could become a subject for protracted negotiation.

Sen. Brian London (Stu., SEAS) asked what preparations Columbia has made for possible power shortages in New York City in the coming summer. The President said that after the outages of the summer of 1999, which wrecked the work of many research labs at Health Sciences, Columbia has made invested in backup generators.

Old business:

--Revised Resolution to Amend Statutory Provisions for the Apportionment of University Senate Seats (with revised reapportionment report, Structure and Operations). Because three-fifths of the full membership of the Senate was present, the President proposed to skip ahead to the proposed Statutory amendments on apportionment, which required a superquorum for passage.

Sen. Joan Ferrante (Ten., A&S), chair of Structure and Operations, explained that her committee was asking the Senate to vote only on the two proposed Statutory amendments, and not on the revised reapportionment report. She noted a few minor editorial problems in the tables in the report that the committee would fix later.

Both tenured Law School senators, Debra Livingston and Avery Katz, asked how the committee had counted tenured professors with split appointments—between two Columbia schools, or between a Columbia school and another university. Sen. Livingston said the answer might affect the allocation of some seats.

There was some uncertainty about whether professors with split appointments were counted entirely in one faculty or on the basis of full-time equivalents. The President proposed referring this issue to the committee to settle later on.

Without dissent, and with more than three-fifths of the members present, the Senate approved both Statutory amendments.

Executive Committee chairman's report: Sen. Paul Duby (Ten., SEAS) thanked senators for making the effort to attend the present meeting, enabling the Senate to adopt the Statutory amendments in the reapportionment plan.

At its last meeting, on April 20, the Executive Committee had discussed a request for a modest increase in the Senate office budget for next year. Members noted that the staff member is struggling to maintain service to all the committees, and expressed appreciation for their efforts. The chairman repeated this sentiment, to applause.

The chairman reminded senators to let the staff know if they wanted to march with the Senate contingent at Commencement on May 23.

Another issue at the last Executive Committee meeting, raised by Sen. Aggarwala, was student concerns about dual degree programs; this was referred to Education, which was already working on the problem. Sen. Letty Moss-Salentijn (Ten., SDOS), chair of Education, said her committee had addressed issues raised by dual degree programs in its annual report. Some progress has been made on undergraduate dual degree programs; graduate dual degree programs need further study. A survey has gone to all program directors, and the results will be presented next year.

Annual committee reports: The President thanked committees that had submitted annual reports.

Sen. Peter Marcuse (Ten., SAPP), chairman of Physical Development, said his committee hoped to focus in the fall semester on longer-range issues, including the possibility of additional Columbia campuses.

New business:

--Report of the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing: Chairman Harvey Goldschmid of the Law School summarized the work his committee had done since his report to the Senate in January. The main focus had been on shareholder proposals on environmental and labor issues, including human rights. He said the committee had reviewed 21 such proposals, and he was now optimistic that the final total might turn out to be lower than the 50 he had predicted.

The committee had begun by developing an infrastructure, including by-laws with conflict resolution procedures and confidentiality guidelines, and a website.

It needed to find a way to evaluate the difficult proposals, those that haven't been resolved by compromise between the proponents and the company. The committee developed an effective working relationship with the Trustees' subcommittee that decides how to vote the University's shares.

The committee will provide an interim report on its efforts so far by the end of May, and a final report to the University community on its first year's work in September.

So far the twelve-member committee has achieved majorities on recommendations to the Trustees for 16 of the 21 proposals it has taken up. The Trustees have accepted nearly all of these recommendations. One concern is that the advisory committee tends to be a little more supportive of shareholder proposals than the Trustees are. Prof. Goldschmidt was optimistic that some of the differences could be worked out.

Over the summer the committee will evaluate its procedures and begin looking at some broader issues, like portfolio screening, particularly of an affirmative kind, in socially responsible mutual funds or other investment vehicles.

In closing, Prof. Goldschmidt said the committee is as good a group as he could imagine. He also expressed appreciation for the support of the administration, especially the committee's staff. He pronounced the committee's work so far a success.

Sen. Aggarwala praised the advisory committee as a model of effective deliberation, both in its creation through a joint effort of students, faculty, and administrators, and in its function, which must be advisory, leaving final decisions to the Trustees, but which provides a channel of open communication with them.

Prof. Goldschmidt noted that the Trustees' subcommittee, chaired by Michael Patterson, has communicated well with the advisory committee, meeting with it twice.

The President thanked Prof. Goldschmidt for getting the whole advisory process on investments up and running so effectively.

--Update on the anti-sweatshop efforts of the Fair Labor Association and the Worker Rights Consortium (External Relations): Sen. Eugene Litwak, chairman of External Relations reported that 31 universities belonging to the Fair Labor Association contributed \$250,000 to the International Labor Rights Fund to train monitors of factory conditions around the world. Sen. Litwak noted with appreciation that Columbia has played an active role in this FLA effort.

Sen. Litwak invited Ginger Gentile (Stu., Nonsen.), a member of External Relations as well as of Columbia Students Against Sweatshops and the Columbia Student-Labor Action Coalition, to provide an update on WRC activities. Ms. Gentile said she was very pleased with the progress Columbia has made in assuring that its apparel is not made in sweatshops. Now concerned students are waiting for the FLA, including Columbia's fellow universities, to pick up the pace of anti-sweatshop activities.

Ms. Gentile said the WRC, though it is only a year and a half old, is already monitoring factories and issuing reports, including one on a Korean-owned Nike factory in Mexico that makes university apparel (though not for Columbia). One finding of this report, corroborating student skepticism about the monitoring programs of the FLA, was that some kinds of monitoring can actually have intimidating effects on workers.

Ms. Gentile said the University is taking a wait-and-see approach to the work of the Collegiate Living Wage Association. She and Columbia Vice President for Public Affairs Alan Stone had attended a living wage conference in Indiana during the winter. She said Columbia had already urged its licensees to move toward providing a living wage for its workers, but few other universities have taken this step. She expressed satisfaction that the External Relations Committee has already written a letter to the Collegiate Living Wage Association urging it to move faster in defining and applying the idea of a living wage. She concluded that Columbia's present course will provide important progress in the fight against sweatshops.

--Report on faculty salary equity issues (Faculty Affairs): Sen. Litwak asked Sen. Frances Pritchett (Ten., A&S) to comment on the work of a faculty subcommittee that she chairs, including a report that had been distributed at the door. She said the subcommittee began in the faculty caucuses with broad concerns about some types of inequities in faculty salaries, and soon focused on the plight of Language Lecturers, whose salaries are not commensurate with their contribution to the University. She noted with satisfaction that a process of professionalization is under way for these positions.

More generally, Sen. Pritchett noted that the subcommittee hopes to demystify faculty salaries, which are widely considered unmentionable, by learning and thinking about the larger salary patterns in the institution. She thought that pursuing an issue like this, which matters to everyone, will help attract people to the Senate, the only body that represents the whole university. She invited comments from other senators about this issue.

--Interim report from the Commission on the Status of Women. Kim Kastens, a senior research scientist at Lamont-Doherty and a member of the Commission, presented the report, "Advancement of Women through the Academic Ranks: Where are the Leaks in the Pipeline?" Standing in for the chair, Prof. Jean Howard of the English Dept., and referring to tables and graphs projected on slides, Dr. Kastens first discussed attrition of female Ph.D. students. After one year, 16 percent of all female students who entered doctoral programs in the fall of 1999 had left, compared to only 5 percent of male students. After seven years, 43 percent of the female students who entered graduate programs in 1993 had left them without getting their doctorates, compared to 34 percent of the male students. All of these rates are high, Dr. Kastens noted; the overall attrition rate in Columbia College, by contrast, is about 10 percent.

To understand these data better, Dr. Kastens suggested asking students who leave the doctoral programs why they're leaving, and taking a closer look at advisory and support services. She said that the identification of causes must await a more detailed study, which actually tracks cohorts of students through time. But she said the data available suggest that this situation is not getting better.

Turning to the question of female representation in tenure-eligible ranks of the Arts and Sciences faculty, Dr. Kastens noted that the overall increase since 1990 has been minimal, from 31 percent to 33 percent, with an actual decline in the number of faculty from 63 to 58. But she also noted that female applicants win these junior faculty positions in proportions larger than their proportion of the applicant pool (34 percent, as opposed to 23 percent). On the other hand, that proportion of Columbia's applicant pool is much smaller than the fraction of women in the national availability pool (43 percent). Dr. Kastens offered some tentative hypotheses to explain these disparities: women may be put off by New York City, or by Columbia's tradition as a male institution; advisors and mentors may tend to encourage male applicants for challenging positions, or seek advice from others more disposed to male applicants; women may seek "easier" jobs, with a better balance between work and the rest of their lives; women may apply

for fewer jobs.

Women have made larger gains in the tenured ranks in Arts and Sciences since 1990, Dr. Kastens said: from 13 to 20 percent (or 39 to 68 professors). The overall rate of internal promotions (33 percent) was positive, but the rates were less encouraging for external hires (22 percent overall) and "targets of opportunity," or faculty stars who are listed in Affirmative Action records as an applicant pool of one (27 percent overall). Of the 11 target-of-opportunity hires in the natural sciences in the 1990s, none were women.

Finally, Dr. Kastens noted that aggregate numbers can mask important differences among what she called "microenvironments," or departments. Without identifying them, she gave data on one department in which the proportion of tenured and tenure-eligible women has shrunk in the last decade, and on another in which the proportion rose during the same period. As an additional indicator of the appropriate fraction of female faculty in a particular department, she suggested considering the gender ratios among students (grad and undergrad) in that department. Dr. Kastens referred to a list of departments whose proportion of full-time female faculty substantially improved during the 1990s and to another group of departments whose gender ratios improved the least. She noted that a number of departments in between these extremes, particularly in the sciences, may have missed an opportunity to change their gender composition.

Dr. Kastens concluded by identifying some problems for further study: Why aren't there more women in the applicant pools for tenured-eligible positions in the Arts and Sciences? Why has the hiring rate for women in appointments to tenure from outside the University lagged behind internal promotion rates? Finally, she suggested disseminating the department data that has been carefully compiled for the Commission by Lucy Drotning of the Provost's Office to the departments themselves for self-study, looking into gender ratios among faculty who leave Columbia, and conducting similar pipeline studies of other Columbia schools.

Sen. Phyllis Garland (Ten., Journ.) urged the Commission to look at professional schools.

Sen. Applegate said the Commission is now dominated by Arts and Sciences faculty members (including himself), who don't understand other divisions of the University as well as their own.

Sen. Stephanie Neuman (Research Staff) asked about the composition of the applicant pool. Dr. Kastens said the national availability pool number comes from a National Science Foundation pipeline study. It represents the total number of Ph.D.'s granted, with a lag of a few years. As a check against the possibility that the national applicant pool does not meet Columbia's standards, the Commission also considered new Ph.D.'s from Columbia's own departments. The gender ratios of these two groups were similar.

Sen. Neuman questioned the usefulness of national availability pool numbers, saying that they give no indication of which recent Ph.D.'s are even in the academic job market. Sen. Applegate said disparities between the proportions of women in Columbia applicant pools and in national availability pools has been consistent across the time span of the study and across academic disciplines.

--Resolution to Establish a Public Policy Studies Certificate Program (Education): Sen. Moss-Salentijn, chair of Education, presented the certificate proposal. Sen. Aggarwala said the proposed program appears to be part of a welcome trend of Ph.D.students pursuing professional opportunities outside academe.

The Senate approved the resolution without dissent.

--Resolution to Establish the Sackler Institute for Developmental Psychobiology (Education): Sen. Moss-Salentijn moved the resolution, which the Senate then approved without dissent.

--Resolution Concerning Summer Powers (Executive): The Senate approved the resolution without discussion.

The president adjourned the meeting at around 2:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff