

MEETING OF APRIL 29, 2022

Executive Committee chair Jeanine D'Armiento (Ten., P&S) called the Senate to order shortly after 1:15 pm on Zoom. XX senators were present during the meeting.

Sen. D'Armiento reminded all present that only senators can vote at plenaries, and only senators are normally allowed to speak. She also reviewed the steps for electronic voting.

Adoption of the agenda. The [agenda](#) (see plenary binder, page 2) was adopted as distributed.

Adoption of the minutes. The [minutes](#) of April 1 (binder, 3-8) were adopted as distributed.

Executive Committee chair's remarks. Sen. D'Armiento said the president was unable to attend the present meeting. She urged any senators who had questions for the president to send them to her, and she would forward them to him.

Sen. D'Armiento said this plenary would be a busy one; she preferred to dispense with her own remarks and go straight to the first resolution.

Resolution to Approve an Academic Program Leading to the Master of Science in Political Analytics (School of Professional Studies). Education Committee co-chair Letty Moss-Salentijn asked Sen. Alan Yang (TTOT, SIPA), who had chaired the subcommittee that reviewed the program, to present the [resolution](#) (binder, 9-13).

Also in attendance for this discussion were Steven Cohen, Senior Vice Dean in the School of Professional Studies; Erik Nelson, Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in SPS, and Prof. Gregory Wawro, chair of the Department of Political Science in the Arts and Sciences.

Sen. Yang described the proposed program as a joint venture between the School of Professional Studies and the A&S Department of Political Science, to start in Fall 2023. After reading the proposal, the subcommittee, whose other members were Tao Tan and Sen. Anne Elise van Vlimmeren (Stu., GSAS/NS), prepared detailed questions for the program sponsors. Within a few days, they had received detailed written responses and also held a productive meeting with the sponsors, with forthcoming, even compelling answers to all remaining questions. On April 8, the subcommittee recommended the program to the full Education Committee, which unanimously endorsed it. Before the plenary the subcommittee was also pleased to receive detailed syllabi for the 10 new courses that were being developed for the program.

Sen. D'Armiento invited questions or comments from senators as well as from the program sponsors in the room.

Prof. Wawro, the Political Science Department chair, thanked the subcommittee for its close reading of the proposal. He said the subcommittee's questions prompted important thinking among the proponents, which would be incorporated in the program.

Sen. William Duggan (TTOT, Bus.) asked whether SIPA had an institutional view on the program.

Dean Cohen understood that SIPA did review the program and agreed to it. He added that he was also on the SIPA faculty.

Sen. Duggan asked if there was more than just an understanding.

Sen. D'Armiento invited the committee to respond to that question.

Sen. Jim Applegate, (Ten. A&S/Natural Sciences), the other Education Committee co-chair, said the proposal was a collaborative undertaking—a partnership—between Political Science and SPS, not a rival effort.

Prof. Wawro added that he had spoken with SIPA Vice Dean Wolfram Schlenker about the program. He thought he had allayed any concerns SIPA might have had that the proposed program would impinge on turf that SIPA had staked out.

Sen. Duggan suggested that in principle, whenever there's a clear overlap or commonality of subject matter with a professional school in a proposed academic program, there should be some kind of formal endorsement from that professional school.

Sen. Moss-Salentijn said there is a formal review by the Council of Deans, where questions of possible overlaps are discussed, and there was agreement in this case that the proposed program presented no problems.

Julie Kornfeld, Vice Provost for Education Programs and a member of the Education Committee, said that the decanal review of the proposed program did seek confirmation from the SIPA dean that the school had no objection to it, and received confirmation in writing.

Sen. D'Armiento understood Sen. Duggan to be asking for some kind of formal written statement of support from professional schools with similar academic programs.

Sen. Duggan said he simply wanted for there to be some record of the approval of the relevant professional school.

Sen. D'Armiento said Sen. Duggan was simply asking for some kind of statement in the record that the relevant professional school had no objections, either in this particular case, or the next case.

Sen. Duggan said he was asking, as a matter of policy, to have a statement in the record that the Council of Deans had discussed a program, and there was a formal agreement by the relevant professional school. He said he was not insisting on enacting this provision for the present case, but wanted to see it in future cases.

Sen. D'Armiento thought Sen. Duggan had made a good point. Did he want to make a resolution to that effect?

Sen. Duggan said he did not. He was making a more general point. He hoped to see such a statement accompany future program proposals of this type.

Sen. D'Armiento, determining that there were no further comments, called for a vote. The Senate approved the proposed program by a vote of 52-0, with no abstentions.

Resolution Concerning Summer Powers. Sen. D'Armiento said this [resolution](#) (binder, 14), adopted at the last plenary every year, authorizes the Executive Committee to act in the name of the Senate during the summer, when the Senate is not in session. These powers are used only for essential matters, and any use of summer powers must be reported to the Senate at the first fall plenary. Sen. D'Armiento said the most recent use of summer powers was in 2020, when the Executive Committee modified the academic calendar in response to the pandemic.

Sen. D'Armiento invited discussion. There was none.

She called for a vote. The Senate approved the resolution with 54 votes in favor, without dissent or abstentions.

Committee reports and updates:

- *Practice and performance space: An update from the Campus Planning and Physical Development Committee* co-chair John Donaldson (Ten., Bus.) presented a brief [update](#) (in the plenary meeting folder, not the binder) on the committee's report at the previous plenary.

- *2021-22 Annual Report of the Commission on Diversity.* Diversity Commission co-chairs Colby King (Stu., CC) and Andrea White (Ten., UTS) presented the [report](#) (binder, 16-19), with a contribution from Sen. Tina Lee (Stu., TC). When they were done, Sen. D'Armiento, a member of the Commission, expressed particular appreciation for the leadership and commitment of Sen. King, who was now only a couple of weeks from graduation.

- *2021-22 Annual Report of the Student Affairs Committee* (postponed till later in the meeting).

Other reports and updates:

- *Draft Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group.* Sen. D'Armiento welcomed the working group. She said the Senate would take no action at the present meeting on the draft [report](#) (binder, 24-34) it was about to hear. It would study the final report, which was due out in a week, and take it up during the summer and fall.

Senior EVP Gerald Rosberg spoke first, standing in for Provost Mary Boyce, who had convened the working group last summer. She had hoped to introduce the report at the present meeting, but was delayed by other obligations. Mr. Rosberg said the provost had appointed two co-chairs for the group: Executive Vice Provost and EVP for University Life Dennis Mitchell and University Professor Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic, who would present the working group's recommendations.

Mr. Rosberg expected those recommendations to prompt a lot of discussion and a lot of action within the administration. He said there would be a role for the Senate in considering the recommendation to establish a university-wide standard of conduct.

Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic said Provost Boyce charged the working group to make recommendations to the University about how to address complaints of workplace misconduct that do not constitute violations of current policies on various kinds of prohibited behaviors, but that are nevertheless understood to be abusive. The roster of the working group included, in addition to the two co-chairs, eight representatives (3 faculty, 3 research officers, and 2 graduate students) plus five staff members. She asked four of the eight working group members to present the working group's findings and recommendations.

- Christine Hendon, Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering, spoke on the prevalence of bullying in academia, and on the path the working group took to reach its recommendation.

- Tulsi Patel, Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Pathology and Cell Biology (VP&S) spoke about the working group's first recommendation—to provide a definition of bullying and abusive behavior.

- Etienne Meunier, Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Sociomedical Sciences, School of Public Health, discussed the working group's second main recommendation, which called on the University to establish a remedial framework for addressing bullying through the creation of an Office of Conflict Resolution.

- Colin Adams, a graduate student in Physics, outlined the third recommendation, which was to foster a culture and climate that would prevent bullying.

Discussion. Sen. D'Armiento thanked the working group, and invited discussion.

Sen. Eli Noam (Ten., Bus.) said he had not heard any mention of free speech or due process or academic freedom in the presentation. He read a passage from an article in the Journal of the American Association of University Professors that identified a number of dangers in new anti-bullying policies on campuses, including the risk that administrators will use them to punish dissenting faculty.

Sen. Maria Uriarte (Ten., A&S/NS) said her concerns were similar to Sen. Noam's, but more focused on bureaucratic and legal issues. She thought it was an unfair characterization to say bullying problems are not addressed at Columbia. They are addressed, through the Ombuds Office (unfortunately without teeth), and by the Office of Research Integrity. When she looked at the roster of the working group, she did not see representation from either of these offices. She asked how the working group had engaged with these two offices, which are both responsible for addressing bullying behavior. Noting the involvement of the Office of General Counsel in the working group, she also asked about the legal basis for establishing hard rules to regulate bullying.

Sen. D'Armiento invited Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic to address these comments.

Responding to Sen. Noam, Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic, said the working group strongly agreed that the it did not want to limit curtail academic freedoms. Responding to Sen. Uriarte, Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic said Provost Boyce had asked the group to come up with recommendations on bullying because what Columbia had established so far was simply not meeting the needs. Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic said that when the working group's final report was published in the coming week, there would be an intensive effort to collect comments from the Columbia community. She recognized that this initiative could only succeed if it works for most people. In principle, she said, any policy changes must be customized for the Columbia environment. As for the question of who would institute this new policy, Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic said that authority belonged to the provost.

Sen. Henning Schulzrinne (Ten., SEAS) made two points. He suggested, first, that in a well-functioning department, the local knowledge of the chair and program directors might enable them to deal more effectively with bullying than some newly created central entity. His second concern was about politically sensitive situations, such as the recent graduate student strike. Would the new office get involved in bullying charges between administrators and union members?

Sen. James Applegate (Ten., A&S/NS) mentioned a problem that had come before the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee numerous times over new policies of this kind. New policies typically speak of providing support for the accuser, but there is no support for the accused. This asymmetry has troubled Faculty Affairs over the years. Sen. Applegate the working group to correct this imbalance from the start.

Sen. D'Armiento reminded the Senate that it was discussing recommendations, not current policy.

Sen. Daniel Savin (Research Officers) said that in his nearly 20 years as chair of the Senate Research Officers Committee he had heard complaints about bullying from numerous research officers of all ranks. He had tried to work with the administration to resolve these issues. He said people's careers have been destroyed because tenured faculty members are able to abuse research officers under their supervision with impunity. He said serious reforms are desperately needed. Sen. Savin said he had to applaud the union representing postdocs and associate research scientists for making the administration finally address this issue.

Prof. Vunjak-Novakovic noted Sen. Schulzrinne's comment that department chairs should intervene in bullying cases. She added that many people should could intervene, and possibly correct problems at this level. But sometimes that doesn't happen. Responding to Sen. Applegate, she added that the working group had offered recommendations, but had not made policy.

She said the University does need a place where the perceptions can be sorted out, because both sides in a dispute may need that. She hoped that the final working group document would help resolve concerns expressed in this discussion, and would prompt an open dialogue to shape the proposed policy into something people really want.

Sen. Nikolas Kakkoufa (TTOT, A&S /Humanities) strongly agreed with Sen. Savin's statement. He added that this year the Senate lost a valued member, who had to leave the University because of bullying.

Sen. Kakkoufa said there are people in Columbia academic units who are being bullied by colleagues and then being evaluated by the same colleagues for the rest of their careers. He was skeptical that people in this situation could get help from a new committee. He said faculty who are on tenure track face a similar dilemma, and may feel they have to accept abuse rather than make a complaint. He said new ideas are needed for ways to make a complaint process accessible to the most vulnerable faculty. He said the Lecturers' Advisory Committee, which he co-chairs, also sees a number of cases where the abuse is coming from administrators, not faculty. His final point was that though he was open to the idea of academic freedom and freedom of speech, these were not the first principles on his mind when he thought about bullying. He said that having worked on queer issues for years, he was prepared to respond to objections from senior colleagues to restrictions on their academic freedom by saying, "Well, your academic freedom does not have to include language that is abusive to people in the trans community, the LGBTQ community, or the racial communities." He didn't think the principles of academic freedom and freedom from abuse need be in conflict. He also understood that new policies directed at abuse of various kinds are not ideal, and can create still more problems, but he said there should be a way to talk about bullying and departmental culture without having to worry about academic freedom of speech.

Sen. D'Armiento said the Senate would be considering all these points, and wanted to contribute to the thought process leading to a final policy.

Sen. Katherine Brooks (Libraries) said that before she joined the Libraries she had been a postdoc in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology (E3B). She offered heartfelt thanks for the anti-bullying initiative, which she said was urgently needed. She said she had experience with bullying, both as a postdoc along with many other postdocs, and in the Libraries, and there was no good recourse through existing structures. In the Libraries, she had worked on a staff advocacy group designed to help people in these situations, but had not been able to find good solutions. Sen. Brooks said it was important to find a path to a solution that doesn't require someone to go to the EOAA office, which she said is a scary option. She said the Ombuds Office can try to mediate between an employee and the person bullying them, but the current process doesn't go far enough. She hoped that the current recommendations from the working group could address these issues. She added that people often do not feel comfortable bringing bullying complaints to their department chair, especially if there's a power differential involved. There are even cases of tenured faculty members who are bullied by tenured colleagues. What what is needed is a process that is separate from the environment of a particular academic. She said that like Sen. Savin, she felt strong emotions about this issue.

Sen. Benjamin Orlove (Ten., SIPA) gave thanks to Senate colleagues who were speaking. He said Sen. Savin had stirred memories of colleagues from his previous position, before Columbia, who were devastated by bullying from senior people in their departments, without recourse.

Sen. Orlove said he recognized points made previously about the destructive power of accusations, though he thought most complaints were justified. Deliberations on this problem were clearly a work in progress. He said it would take a lot of work to bring apparently diametrically opposed views on bullying together. He said the current issue is baked into capitalism, and would require a transformation of the university and of American society.

Sen. Jeremy Wahl (Stu., GS) said bullying is a complex and nuanced issue, and the Senate was right to take it on. Discussion so far had focused on the impact of bullying on academic environments. But he said it was also important to talk about its impact on the Senate. Sen. Wahl said he had learned the day before that the Senate Executive Committee had met and voted on a contentious issue relating to student groups on campus without so much as informing the students, including himself—a member of the Executive Committee. Sen. Wohl said the vote was unanimous because he wasn't there to say no. He said student senators are supposed to have access to the room where decisions are made.

Sen. Wohl briefly outlined the events of the Columbia student rebellion of April 1968. He said that out of those protests the Columbia Senate was born—the very mechanism for shared governance and transparency that was now meeting. Sen. Wohl said the Senate was now broken, and student dissent was being suppressed. His own voice had been watered down through a culture of obstruction. People in power in the administration, and in the Senate, have pushed him away to keep him from challenging the status quo. He said Columbia has a culture of profits before people. It never works faster than when it has to explain an embarrassing truth to the public. The racial reckoning taking place across the country is taking place at Columbia too. He said there had been strong and widespread sentiment for renaming one of the Teachers College buildings after Dr. Edmund Gordon, a respected scholar of color.

Sen. D'Armiento interrupted to say that the Senate was now discussing an anti-bullying policy. She said Sen. Wohl's concerns were important but off-topic.

Sen. Greg Freyer (TTOT, Public Health) suggested that Sen. Wohl raise these issues in the Executive Committee. But they were not relevant to the present discussion of bullying.

Sen. Wohl protested that he was being silenced by Sen. D'Armiento, and he needed a few minutes to state his issues.

Sen. D'Armiento said Sen. Wohl could keep talking. But she wanted to know if he would talk about the issue now before the Senate.

Sen. Noam said senators could see how the term “bullying” could be freely applied to any discussion in which there is a disagreement.

Sen. Wahl said he still had the floor.

Sen. D'Armiento told Sen. Wahl to proceed. He thanked Sen. D'Armiento. He said Harvard had recently allocated \$100 million to study its historical relationship with slavery. But Columbia was unable to put a black man's name on a building because it puts profits before people to wait for a donor to provide the money first. On a related subject, Sen. Wohl said he had asked President Bollinger at the previous plenary to address Columbia's relationship with the Sackler family, whose name is closely linked to the opioid crisis. Sen. Wohl considered the president's response—that the Sackler money raised difficult issues, and that Columbia wouldn't accept any more money from the Sackler family—inadequate. He said one important reason why Columbia hadn't severed ties with the Sacklers was that its standards are broken. He had been told not to speak to the press. The

plenary is open to CUID holders, but students are not given information on how to attend. Students can't contact their representatives because the Senate website hasn't been updated since 2019. These issues matter, and the situation of the pandemic did not excuse them. Shortly before the pandemic fellow senator Tanner Zumwalt had reported on the devastating lack of investment in Columbia's student parents. How can Columbia build new schools before investing in these areas of need? He said recent figures show a high rate of food insecurity among students in his school, General Studies. Problems have gotten worse during the pandemic. He said Columbia nevertheless built a new business school, while tuition and executive pay are sky-high, and while students are striking and can't be heard. Students are living in an era marred by chaos, confusion, and division. But Sen. Wohl said he was confident that the resources and the knowledge were available to fix these problems. He appealed to senators to support the Gordon renaming project, and to follow Harvard's lead and dedicate significant resources to addressing Columbia's legacy of racism. He said attention to these issues was long overdue. He said the connection to the bullying issue in his statement was that he had been silenced and pressured not to speak about them in Senate settings.

Sen. D'Armiento invited other student senators to speak.

Sen. Elias Tzoc-Pacheco (Undergrad/SEAS) said his constituents seemed to be more concerned about other problems—such as inappropriate attention from faculty—than about bullying. He said it is important for Columbia to address this student discomfort. As for freedom of speech, students—particularly students of color—often feel they don't have access to it, and have to self-censor. He said it is important to balance academic freedom with the need to have a path to make complaints. He said he supported the anti-bullying initiative, but with an awareness that some students may be mainly concerned about somewhat different issues.

Sen. Tina Lee (Stu., Teachers College) said that in her graduate program there had been a lot of bullying issues involving faculty and students. She said students are evaluated anonymously by faculty every year, and some of the categories, such as professionalism, are highly subjective. The experience can feel like a popularity contest, and abuses of power can occur. For example, a number of black students got low professionalism ratings because they looked angry on Zoom. So students got together and requested a town hall to discuss all of these issues. They also conducted an anonymous survey, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The results would be sent to the faculty and to the student body. She initiated a conversation where students and faculty could discuss the underlying issues of the last few years, a situation that required people to think about solutions. She saw this as one way to address a climate of bullying and harassment in a way that was not punitive but that encouraged community building. Sen. Lee said the first step is to address these issues and their impact on students.

Sen. Colby King (Stu., CC) said he had thought about cases where charges of harassment or discrimination don't quite fit the problem conduct. He said he was pleased to hear the focus in the working group's recommendations on restorative justice and other non-punitive measures. Sen. King said students of color, women, and queer people tend to be affected by these policies in ways different from everyone else. On the subject of the Senate, he noted that the website does need updating. He added that Sen. D'Armiento had been very helpful to him in thinking about diversity-related issues. He thanked her.

Sen. Andrea White (Ten., UTS) underscored Sen. King's statement about how bullying pertains to people of color. She also added her own statement of appreciation for Sen. D'Armiento, whose support for the Diversity Commission over the past two years she considered indispensable.

Sen. Cheng Gong (Grad students, SEAS) said the definition and explanations of bullying were helpful to students. Sometimes people may be suffering from bullying without knowing it. And it was also important to be aware of the risk of having a student use the term "bullying" as a weapon to attack a faculty member.

Jeanine D'Armiento said there was time for one last comment.

Sen. Freyer said there had been many valuable comments in the present discussion. His main takeaway was that the only way to make successful policy for addressing bullying is for people to maintain a certain attitude, a determination to educate themselves and to work together and to think of themselves as a community. He said some of the same issues had come up in Faculty Affairs. The only way forward is through dialogue. He thought people would also have to think more about how to have open forums. He concluded by praising the job Sen. D'Armiento had done as chair.

Sen. D'Armiento thanked the working group again for their report. She said the Senate would take up these issues in its committees, and offer feedback.

- *Student Affairs Committee 2021-22 Annual Report*

SAC co-chair Valeria Contreras (Arts) and vice chair Tina Lee (TC) presented the [report](#) (binder, 20-23). Sen. Contreras invited Sen. Wahl, the other co-chair, to join them, but he declined, saying the Senate had heard enough from him.

Sen. D'Armiento thanked Sen. Contreras for the report and SAC for its hard work throughout the Senate session now ending. There were no questions.

She also thanked the Senate for its work, wished everyone a restful summer, and adjourned the meeting shortly after 2:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson, Senate staff