

University Senate Plenary

July 16, 2026



University Senate

Proposed: July 16, 2026

Adopted: July 16, 2026

University Senate

Thursday, July 16, 2026 at 1:15 p.m., via Zoom

[Registration](#) required

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

PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Adoption of the minutes of June 18, 2026
3. President's report and questions
4. Chair's report and questions
5. Old business:
 - a. Resolutions:
 - i. Implementation of the Resolution to Establish the Title and Track of Professor of Instruction
(adopted April 10, 2026)
 - ii. Discussion of Resolution to Amend the University Senate By-Laws regarding Term Limits
(Executive)
6. New business:
 - a. Committee reports, statements and updates:
 - i. External Relations and Research Policy Annual Report 2025-26
 - ii. Structure and Operations Committee Annual Report 2025-26
7. Adjourn

Minutes of the Meeting of June 18, 2026

55 out of 102 Senators were present.

Senator Jeanine D'Armiento (Ten., P&S), Executive Committee Chair, called the University Senate to order at 1:18pm. Sen. D'Armiento welcomed Senators and guests to the tenth Plenary of the 2025-2026 session. Sen. D'Armiento reminded attendees of the Parliamentary procedures and that recordings are not permitted in Plenary meetings.

Senators adopted the [agenda](#) for the Plenary.

Senators then adopted the [minutes](#) of the May 29, 2026 Plenary.

Updates from President Shipman

Sen. D'Armiento noted that President Shipman could not attend and that Senators should send their questions to the Senate staff to be passed along to President Shipman.

Chair's Report and Questions

Sen. D'Armiento began her remarks by thanking President Shipman for her service as Acting President over the past year-and-a-half, noting that she has consistently attended Plenaries, [Executive Committee](#) meetings, and taken questions from Senators throughout a period of turmoil at Columbia and across higher education. Sen. D'Armiento stated that President Shipman's work was not easy and that the Senate appreciated her consistent engagement. Sen. D'Armiento welcomed President-Designate Jennifer Mnookin and noted that her term would begin on July 1, 2026. Sen. D'Armiento stated that the Senate would formally welcome President-Designate Mnookin at the July 16, 2026 Plenary.

Update on Draft Resolution to Amend the University Senate By-Laws Regarding Term Limits (Executive)

Sen. D'Armiento stated that there was a [draft of a resolution regarding term limits](#) for the Senate that had been presented at a previous Plenary. Sen. D'Armiento restated [her comments from the previous Plenary](#) regarding the revisions to the draft resolution in response to the revisions that the Board of Trustees had undertaken on May 6, 2026 to their own By-Laws. She stated that the Executive Committee had also heard feedback from members of the Senate that opposed the adoption of term limits for democratically elected Senators. Sen. D'Armiento stated that herself and Executive Committee Vice Chair, Senator Holger Klein (Ten., A&S/HUM), had met with the Co-Chairs of the Board of Trustees to address these concerns in May 2026 and that they would continue to meet with them to work on the resolution. She stated that a group of

Executive Committee members were working on drafting the revised resolution but that they were not yet ready to present it to the Plenary. Sen. D'Armiento stated that the resolution would likely be brought in the July or August 2026 Plenary, noting that the [Board of Trustees had stated that the resolution should be voted on by August 2026 through the Senate](#). Sen. D'Armiento stated that, due to the need of the Senate to discuss the resolution at a Plenary beforehand, herself and Sen. Klein have requested from the Board of Trustees to allow the Senate to have the September Plenary to vote on the resolution. She stated that she believed the Senate itself can make and pass the resolution.

Update Regarding Resolution to Establish the Title and Track of Professor of Instruction and Its Implementation (Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure)

Sen. D'Armiento introduced Sen. Klein, Co-Chair of the [Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee](#), to provide an update on the [Resolution to Establish the Title and Track of Professor of Instruction](#).

Sen. Klein stated that he had updated the Senate of the work to implement the resolutions establishing the Professor of Instruction title and track at the [previous Plenary](#) and that, since then, a subgroup of the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure provided an update on the work of the committee to the [Academic Affairs Committee](#) of the Board of Trustees on June 5, 2026. He stated that the [handout](#) that provided background information on the work of the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, which was given to the Trustees, was included in the Plenary materials. Sen. Klein stated that the next steps are that the Board of Trustees must establish the titles of Professor of Instruction, Associate Professor of Instruction, and Assistant Professor of Instruction through formal changes to the University Statutes. He stated that the Trustees are expected to take a vote on the change in their August 2026 meeting. Sen. Klein stated that the Provost's Office and the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee will also work on updates to the [Faculty Handbook](#) so that the appropriate policies are associated with this new title, noting that the Faculty Handbook governs all Schools at Columbia on hiring and title structure. He stated that the language in the Faculty Handbook needed to be updated because faculty are being moved from the current system of Special Nontenured Instructional Ranks into a new system of Professor of Instruction, noting that this requirement was also [outlined](#) in the original April 10, 2026 resolution. Sen. Klein stated that the conversations to update the language in the Faculty Handbook began last week and that a group of the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee had met with Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Eugenia Lean, and with Provost Angela Olinto, to discuss next steps. He stated that the work will continue over the next few weeks, including meetings with the Deans of each School in order to develop solutions to address the [concerns over historical caps for each individual School](#).

Senator Gerard Ateshian (Ten., SEAS) asked if Senators should reach out to the Deans of their respective Schools in order to discuss the misunderstanding discussed at the last Plenary regarding the caps. Sen. Klein responded that every Senator was free to discuss this with the Deans of their Schools. He stated that the Senators in each School likely have the best knowledge of their individual Schools when discussing

with their Deans but that the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee has broad representation in its membership across different Schools. Sen. Klein stated that what the *Columbia Spectator* had [reported](#) on the issue a few weeks ago was unfortunate, noting that he had spoken to the reporter to correct parts of the article, particularly the subtitle of the article that stated that the University Senate blocked faculty hiring into the title and track of Professor of Instruction, which, he stated, was not backed up within the article itself. Sen. Klein stated that, in reality, the title and track are not established yet and therefore the Senate was not preventing hiring into those new titles. He stated that there was a set of steps that have to happen in order to allow each School to hire into the new title and track but that what has been established is the groundwork to allow the existing Special Lecturers in the Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) to transition into the Professor of Instruction title and track as soon as the title is established. Sen. Klein stated that this was explained to the *Spectator* reporter but that there was not any correction made. He stated that there was not any Dean who had openly accused the Senate of overreach and noted that there was a lack of facts in the body of the article. Sen. Klein stated that he hopes the *Spectator* is committed to journalistic excellence and will make the corrections as asked. Sen. D'Armiento responded that there had been a [question at the previous Plenary](#) from Senator Amy Hungerford (Adm., Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences) if Schools could immediately hire into the new title and track of Professor of Instruction, to which Sen. Klein responded "no." Sen. D'Armiento stated that the answer was no because the title had not yet been established rather than because the Senate was prohibiting Schools from doing so. She stated that she believed this is where the confusion stems from. Sen. D'Armiento stated that the other issue in the article is that no Deans quoted that there is overreach, noting that caps have existed always and that the work that the Senate, Provost's Office, and Deans are doing together is to state what the caps are and how each School exists. Sen. D'Armiento stated that she had spoken to then-Dean of the Faculties of Health Sciences and the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons Katrina Armstrong regarding how caps for the Medical Center presented a very different conversation than the caps primarily being discussed within the Professor of Instruction resolution, noting that former Dean Armstrong understood this. Sen. D'Armiento stated that, over the summer, the Faculty Handbook will be updated so that confusion will not occur anymore.

Sen. Ateshian stated that, regarding the caps Sens. Klein and D'Armiento mentioned, these limits were never enforced beforehand and asked what individual Senators should recommend to their Deans on how to enforce the caps when they meet with them, noting that Sen. Ateshian recognized that individual Senators could not resolve the issues themselves. Sen. D'Armiento responded that right now the focus is on having conversations with each Dean in order to better understand their School in order to understand what the appropriate caps should be for that School, if at all. She stated that this was not the moment to recommend enforcing caps because that is not the conversation that is occurring currently but rather assessing the needs of each School individually. Sen. Klein responded that [he had stated in the last Plenary](#) that this was a historic opportunity to revisit the historical decisions made regarding caps over the past decades, noting that the 1994 resolution by the Senate had established caps and that there were various points in time after that resolution that those caps had been enforced across Schools through the Faculty

Handbook. He stated that the situation in Schools might be different and that the establishment of the title and track of Professor of Instruction gives the University the opportunity to look at the caps across different appointments throughout the University. Sen. Klein stated that the needs across Schools are not comparable and the current process the Senate is undergoing allows each School to have policies designed to allow them to hire the best faculty possible. Sen. D'Armiento responded that the benefit of having broad representation on the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee is that each particular School can have their respective Senator explain the situation for that School. Sen. Klein stated that, if a specific School does not have a representative on the Faculty Affairs, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, then a member of that School's faculty will be sought out for expertise.

Statement on Educational Reforms and Proposed Major in Global Affairs and Public Policy (Student Affairs)

Sen. D'Armiento introduced the [Statement on Proposed Global Affairs and Public Policy Major](#) from the [Student Affairs Committee](#). Sen. D'Armiento then turned the meeting over to Senator Nasser Odetallah (Stu., ARTS) to lead the discussion on the statement.

Sen. Odetallah stated that he was reading the statement given that Senators Matthew Beck (Stu., Graduate), SEAS) and Helen Han Wei Luo (Stu., GSAS/HUM), Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Student Affairs Committee, were presenting later in the Plenary on a different item. Sen. Odetallah then read the statement.

Sen. D'Armiento stated that, given that President Shipman could not attend the Plenary, she had been given a response to the Student Affairs Committee's statement to read aloud from the President's Office. Sen. D'Armiento then read the following statement: *"Great universities like Columbia have a responsibility to continually evolve academic offerings in ways that invite students to follow their curiosity, deepen their understanding of the world, and engage the most important issues of their time. The new Global Affairs and Public Policy major emerged from Columbia's academic planning and review processes and reflects longstanding undergraduate interest in this area of study. Each year, more than 120 students petition to enroll in SIPA courses, demonstrating clear interest and demand for this type of rigorous, interdisciplinary study. The major responds to that interest while strengthening Columbia's undergraduate offerings in a field that has become an important part of liberal arts education at many of our peer institutions. Drawing on the deep expertise of the SIPA faculty, the major will open new pathways for students to combine the breadth of an undergraduate Columbia education grounded in the Core Curriculum with serious preparation in public policy and global affairs. Students will examine issues including geopolitics and diplomacy, international economic policy, technology and artificial intelligence, climate and energy policy, data science for public decision-making, and approaches to solving complex policy challenges. The curriculum will also offer meaningful opportunities to study regions and societies around the world, equipping students with both global perspective and regional expertise. By bringing together insights from multiple disciplines, the major will create a distinctive educational experience that prepares students to analyze emerging problems, navigate an interconnected*

world, and contribute thoughtfully to public life. I am excited about the opportunities for discovery this new major presents and how our students will take that knowledge and expertise and apply it to our increasingly complex world. The addition of this major will bring us in line with many of our peers, including Princeton and Yale, which have separate undergraduate majors offered by their schools of policy and international affairs. New opportunities often generate intense discussion and debate, and it's my belief that such a process will make the program stronger. The administration has tried to be as responsive as possible to interested parties, setting up meetings with Deans, providing course materials, and it's my understanding that the Education Committee has played a critical and transparent role in the Senate. I've been pleased to hear from so many faculty and students, including from many in the Senate, that this new offering seems an exceptional addition. Finally, I want to take a moment to directly address again the concern that has been raised in this body regarding the genesis of this new major. To be very clear about any and all of our academic programs and decision-making, at no point did the federal government direct, request, or require the creation of this undergraduate major or any academic program, nor was it involved in the design, review, or approval of the curriculum of this major or any other major or program. The university's federal resolution agreement and reporting requirements are publicly available and contain no provision related to the establishment of a Global Affairs and Public Policy major. There are no separate or undisclosed agreements with the government concerning its creation. The Global Affairs and Public Policy major is a Columbia academic initiative and ours alone. It has gone through the requisite Columbia processes, and I believe will be a remarkable opportunity for our students, so many of whom arrive here determined to examine and understand the world. Thank you."

Senator Ulrich Hengst (Ten., P&S) thanked the student Senators for their contributions. He stated that, as the Co-Chair of the [Education Committee](#), he felt compelled to provide context on whether the proposal had been reviewed by the Senate or not. Sen. Hengst stated that the Provost's Office provided a draft of the proposal on February 20th, 2026 and asked for comments, noting that this was unusual because proposals usually come to the Education Committee much earlier before they have been submitted to the [New York State Education Department \(NYSED\)](#). Sen. Hengst stated that the Education Committee began its consideration of the proposal on March 13, 2026, noting that there were strong arguments brought forward for not picking up the proposal at all, including concerns around setting a precedent, as well as violating a precedent of not reviewing undergraduate degrees. He stated that there were concerns around duplicating efforts around other committees as well as legitimizing a post ad hoc process where the Education Committee is asked for comments after a proposal has been submitted to the NYSED. Sen. Hengst stated that, at the same time, it was emphasized that the Senate and the Education Committee are charged with reviewing both undergraduate and graduate programs and that this situation was both unusual and without clear precedent. He stated that the result of this discussion was that the committee agreed to proceed with a review but focused on compiling a list of questions and concerns that would then be discussed with the proposing Deans and subsequently submitted to the undergraduate Columbia College/General Studies Committee on Instruction (COI) and the joint Committee on Instruction between the Arts & Sciences and the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Sen. Hengst stated that no motion as ever made in committee to order that the proposal be brought to the full Plenary for debate and

that, therefore, the Education Committee proceeded accordingly. He stated that on March 27th, 2026, the Education Committee met with the proposing Deans – Senators Lisa Rosen-Metsch (Adm., Dean of the School of General Studies) and Josef Sorett (Adm., Dean of Columbia College) – to discuss concerns directly, which Sen. Hengst stated was productive. He stated that on April 17th, 2026, the Education Committee reviewed the proposal for a third time and was the sole topic of discussion for an hour, noting that a broader and contentious conversation took place between Senators on the Education Committee over email. Sen. Hengst stated that the resulting list of questions from the committee were developed collaboratively, shared transparently, and forwarded to the COI with the clear disclaimer that the questions represented a compilation of individual perspectives rather than a majority opinion of the Education Committee. He stated that overlapping concerns have since been raised in a meeting between the Chairs of the Student Affairs Committee, the Chairs of the Education Committee, and the proposing Deans, which occurred two weeks ago. Sen. Hengst stated that the proposal has been reviewed by the Education Committee, and that the COI has given provisional approval while the review is still ongoing. He stated that, in his personal view, this proposal has a lot of issues but, by focusing on the motives, he believes that the Senate is not doing itself a favor. Sen. Hengst stated that the role of the Education Committee is to ensure that academic standards, educational quality, and institutional processes are being upheld. He stated that, if the Senate starts litigating the motives, it will come close to infringing on the academic freedom of the faculty. Sen. Hengst stated that academic freedom dictates that only faculty dictate who teaches what and that questioning the motives of the other faculty makes him feel uncomfortable. Sen. Hengst stated that the [Senate recently approved a new Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence](#) in SEAS, noting that he had personal and philosophical issues with AI but that the MS in Artificial Intelligence was a good contribution to people who wanted to study AI. He stated that his personal opinions about AI should not influence whether people should study and that, in the case of the Global Affairs and Public Policy major, whether other people co-opt the major for their political major cannot be a vote driving motivation as long as the educational quality, institutional processes, and academic standards are being maintained.

Sen. Ateshian stated that the process does not have seem to have been followed for the Global Affairs and Public Policy major. He stated that, in the late 1990s, he was responsible for creating the degree program in Biomedical Engineering at Columbia, which required approval through the COI in SEAS, before going to the Senate, and then finally going to the NYSED. Sen. Ateshian stated that after all of those approvals was the program allowed to enroll students and grant the degree. He stated that he was not passing judgment on the content of the major but wanted to know what process was followed in this case. Sen. Ateshian stated that he did not recall voting on the Global Affairs and Public Policy major and that Sen. Hengst had mentioned the MS in Artificial Intelligence but that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major was being introduced at the undergraduate level. Sen. Hengst responded by saying that the Education Committee shared the same concerns as Sen. Ateshian and that the Education Committee raised these concerns to the Provost's Office. Sen. Ateshian stated that there was a discussion about what to do about a program that had already been sent to the NYSED. Sen. Hengst stated that, if the Senate Plenary or Education Committee were to vote on the Global Affairs and Public Policy major, the two outcomes would be either that the Senate approves the major, which would give a stamp of approval to a flawed process

which should not have happened this way, or that the Senate votes down the major, which would likely result in the vote being ignored and further weaken co-governance at Columbia. Sen. Hengst stated that the Education Committee grappled with these questions for a long time and decided to try to improve the process and program as much as possible by voicing concerns and working with the COI constructively. He noted that he agreed with Sen. Ateshian that the process should have been completely different and that the Education Committee has been told by the Provost's Office that, in the future, this process would be done differently and that the Education Committee will be involved much earlier in the process.

Sen. Ateshian asked if both the undergraduate Global Affairs and Public Policy major and the MS in Artificial Intelligence were approved by the NYSED. Sen. D'Armiento responded stating that these approval processes have been occurring in parallel and that it has been rumored, but not confirmed in writing, that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major has been fully approved. Sen. Ateshian responded that the NYSED posts publicly its approvals in order to see if the Global Affairs and Public Policy major had been approved. Sen. D'Armiento responded that she hopes that it is clear from Sen. Hengst's statement that the Education Committee was in a complicated position. Sen. D'Armiento stated that, in response to Sen. Hengst's statement that the Provost's Office reassured the Education Committee that in the future a different process would be followed, the Senate does have concerns about this because of the conversations around the powers of the Senate and a concern that the Senate Education Committee would not have oversight in reviewing programs that might be duplicative or overlapping between Schools in the future. Sen. Ateshian responded that the By-Laws of the Senate and the Statutes of the University clearly state that the Senate needs to review educational programs and asked if there is no legal recourse with New York State about this. Sen. D'Armiento responded that she did not have an answer to that question.

Sen. Luo stated that, in her time on the Senate, the Senate has voted on a number of programs at Plenaries, noting that recent proposals included not just the MS in Artificial Intelligence but also a [MS program in Oral Sciences](#), among others. Sen. Luo stated that, in the case of the MS in Artificial Intelligence, the conversation that occurred at the Plenary was about inviting roughly 100 to 150 students onto campus and straining existing resources in line with overcrowding. She stated that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major is set to be capped at 150 students and that, within its first year of operation, would potentially be one of the largest majors at Columbia and that this fact alone merits a conversation by the Senate body. Sen. Luo stated that she appreciated the difficulty that the Education Committee was under but that she believed procedural rules trumped pragmatic concerns, noting that the procedure is that programs should come to the Plenary for a vote. She stated that, regardless of the concerns that Sen. Hengst stated regarding undermining shared governance, the end result of what has happened on the Senate is a disagreement between the student Senators and the faculty and that this could have been avoided if the Education Committee had taken more time to consider this proposal or discussed with a larger group of people. Sen. Luo stated that she is alarmed that the program has been sent to NYSED without the requisite internal Columbia approval. She stated that the Student Affairs Committee traditionally addresses concerns over student life but that the Student Affairs Committee has received a number of requests from SIPA students

with concerns about this major and sharing resources and classes with undergraduates for a program that they worry has been underdeveloped. Sen. Luo stated that this has now become a campus issue and that there should be a serious consideration of whether a program of this size is involved with the federal government. Sen. D'Armiento noted that it was the summer and that President Shipman did notify the Senate at the May 29, 2026 Plenary that she could not attend this Plenary. Sen. D'Armiento stated that President Shipman has been responsive and spent time with the Executive Committee on this issue in advance of the Plenary. Sen. Luo stated that she does appreciate the response from President Shipman in stating that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major has no relation to the [federal agreement](#) but that Sen. Luo would like to acknowledge that the April 1, 2026 [Semi-Annual Report on the Resolution Agreement](#) mentions [evaluation of academic programs](#) and [hiring processes](#) in alignment with the federal government agreement. She read the following from the federal agreement: *"Columbia shall, consistent with its announcement on March 21, 2025, appoint new faculty members with joint positions in both the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies and the departments or fields of economics, political science, or SIPA. These faculty members will contribute to a robust and intellectually diverse academic environment."* Sen. Luo stated that the Semi-Annual Report then states in response to that clause in the federal agreement that multiple faculty positions fulfilling this commitment are underway in the Economics and History Departments, as well as in SIPA. Sen. Luo stated that she was unable to get more information from the administration regarding these faculty hiring processes, when the hiring search began, who was being recruited, whether the positions were tenure-track or off-track, and whether these positions were in association with the Global Affairs and Public Policy program. She stated that the version of the proposal that she had seen did not cite any new faculty hires or provide any information about new course offerings past Fall 2026, noting that the version that the Student Affairs Committee saw contained minimal details.

Senator Stuart Firestein (Ten., A&S/NS) stated that, in response to Sen. Ateshian's question, there is no legal issue here because this is not a new degree program. Sen. Firestein stated that this is a new major, which is different from a new degree program, noting that this major is unusual in that a professional school is sponsoring the undergraduate major. He stated that this is unquestionably unusual but that the Education Committee has already decided to take this issue up in the next academic year to see whether there needs to be a set of rules around this type of program. Sen. Firestein stated that the Education Committee stated clearly, as did the COI, that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major does not set a precedent. He stated that, while unusual, the people that created the major did follow all the correct procedures. Sen. Firestein stated that there should be a debate about how these types of programs are approved in the future, as well as if the professional Schools do have something to offer for undergraduate education because they are a significant part of the University. He stated that this is not at this point the business of the Senate and does now come close to infringing on academic freedom, given that the COI and the Deans of the Arts and Sciences and SIPA have overseen this major through faculty-run processes. Sen. D'Armiento responded to a written question that asked if the MS in Artificial Intelligence was sent to the NYSED before Senate approval and clarified that this was not true, noting that Senate approval was required for the MS to be sent to the NYSED. Sen. Firestein responded that this was the case because the MS in Artificial Intelligence was a new degree. Sen. D'Armiento responded that there was no way to go

back and debate what should have happened, noting that it is very clear in the Statutes that programs that affect several Schools go through the Senate. She stated that this is both an undergraduate major but also a program that affects more than one School, noting that, despite what the Education Committee had decided, it is possible that the program fell within the purview of the Senate. Sen. D'Armiento stated that the Education Committee had been candid about the program not starting properly and that they managed the situation the best they could. She stated that there is nothing in the Statutes that states that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major could not have come to the Senate.

Sen. Odetallah stated that, in response to Sen. Hengst's earlier comments, he wanted to clarify that it was the understanding of the leadership of the Student Affairs Committee that there was a good faith effort by the students serving on the Education Committee to request that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major be reviewed by the full Plenary, regardless of whether a formal motion to do so had been called for. Sen. Odetallah stated that the statement today and the actions of the Student Affairs Committee has very little to do with the actions of the Education Committee and that he would like the Senate to not get bogged down in discussing any formal processes taken by the Education Committee. Sen. Odetallah thanked the faculty for their input and noted that he had not served on the Education Committee and understood there were multiple considerations they were undertaking throughout this process. Sen. Odetallah stated that Sen. Hengst used the phrase "litigate the motives" to describe the Student Affairs Committee's involvement in questioning the major but that the genesis of the student Senators' concerns around this major came from the University itself mentioning the new major in legal documents to the federal government, noting that the link between the federal agreement and the Global Affairs and Public Policy major was created by the University and not by students. He stated that the Student Affairs Committee has asked why this link was created for months but has never received an answer as to why that is the case. Sen. Odetallah stated that he was a little bit astounded that senior administrators, Deans, and high-level faculty have referred to the statements coming out of the President's and Provost's Offices as statements made by individuals with motivations that are unclear to those responsible for overseeing and creating the major. He stated that, if the Provost's Office is submitting information about Columbia's educational programs to the outside world that are incomprehensible to the people that run those programs, Sen. Odetallah feels that the University is in a different issue than any specific major, noting that this was at the heart of part of the Student Affairs Committee's statement. He stated that the Student Affairs Committee has yet to receive an answer to this question despite asking for a very long time. Sen. Odetallah stated that the Student Affairs Committee's statement and recent discussions are not commenting on the quality of the major because, from what they have been told, the individual classes seem interesting and exciting but also because there has been no information given about the classes in the major. He stated that it has taken over a month for the Student Affairs Committee to receive the proposal so that the Student Affairs Committee Chairs could set up a meeting with the Education Co-Chairs and involved Deans. Sen. Odetallah stated that the Student Affairs Committee knows very little about the major, which is part of the reason they have had to continuously ask questions about it. He stated that student constituents have continually raised these questions yet the major is already enrolling classes for Fall 2026, enrolling students to declare the major as their program of study beginning this academic year, and estimated to be

one of the largest majors at launch, which has also raised questions about the financial resources in and out of the Arts and Sciences and SIPA. Sen. Odetallah stated that the student Senators have received no answers to their questions about the financial issues surrounding this major. He stated that they have received no clear communication despite trying to go to the President, Provost, Deans, and faculty on and off the Senate, noting that it has taken months to even get to the point of discussing this major at the Plenary. Sen. Odetallah stated that the students were not interested in the process of what did or did not happen on the Education Committee and that the students have very serious concerns as students who care about the education at the University and what the University is saying about their education.

Sen. Ateshian stated that SIPA has never taught an undergraduate program before and asked how this would not be the introduction of a new degree program through SIPA. Sen. D'Armiento responded that this is the question that many have asked. Sen. Firestein responded that the degree that will be conferred will be a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University, rather than a degree in Global Affairs and Public Policy. Sen. Firestein then referenced a [statement from the website](#) for the Office of the Provost that states that new undergraduate programs do not require the approval of the Senate, noting that he is not sure he agrees with this policy but that it is what the Provost's Office outlines. Sen. Firestein stated that he was a member of the COI and spent an enormous amount of time debating the major through the COI, noting that it would not be the largest undergraduate major because of limits set on enrollment and that there would be a re-review. He stated that there is no standing for the Senate to be discussing this matter at this point. Sen. D'Armiento responded that the students would not know some of the things that Sen. Firestein is stating, noting that transparency goes a long way in stopping concerns.

Senator Susan Bernofsky (Ten., ARTS) stated that she has not heard any reason in the discussion why this program would be approved in such haste and sent to the NYSED before local approval processes.

Sen. Rosen-Metsch stated that this program is not a new degree program and that the result would be a BA from Columbia College or the School of General Studies in Global Affairs and Public Policy. She stated that, in response to Sen. Bernofsky's question, that the program came to the COI in Fall 2026, resulting in provisional approval in December 2026 that then resulted in consultation between departments in the Arts and Sciences. Sen. Rosen-Metsch stated that she and Dean Sorett attended a meeting with the Education Committee and had a meeting with the leaders of the Student Affairs Committee and the Education Committee. She stated that the feedback from the Education Committee was shared with the COI. Sen. Rosen-Metsch stated that the major was discussed at faculty meetings in the Arts and Sciences. She stated that there has been approval of majors from the professional school, including a program in the Climate School and a Special Program from the Journalism School. Sen. Rosen-Metsch stated that the COI is a faculty-led body with student representation that has spent an enormous amount of time this year reviewing the major. Sen. D'Armiento responded that the students are not asking about the process or the Education Committee's decision and would like answers to their questions.

Sen. Klein asked Sen. Rosen-Metsch to clarify where the majority of requirements for the major are being fulfilled, within the Arts and Sciences or within SIPA. Sen. Klein asked Sen. Firestein about the language Sen. Firestein quoted from the Provost's Office, asking why the Senate should not be worried that this will become a model for other majors established in the professional Schools without Senate input. Sen. Rosen-Metsch responded that, for the major, there is one course, Principles of Economics, located within the Arts and Sciences, and all other classes for the major located within SIPA. Sen. D'Armiento responded to Sen. Klein that the quotation that Sen. Firestein read is from the Provost's page and needs to be looked at because it is significantly changed from what the Senate understands. Sen. Firestein stated that the COI made it clear that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major was not to be a precedent-setting degree. He stated that this issue needs to be discussed and will be discussed next year. Sen. D'Armiento responded that there's a concern this exact same process of submitting the new major to the NYSED before internal approval. She stated that there is no commitment that this will not happen again. Sen. Rosen-Metsch responded the COI put together a document that went to the Provost's Office requesting a moratorium for halting approval for any new similar major until discussion around these processes are taken up. She stated that there is a committee being led by herself and Dean Sorett to look at the relationship between the undergraduate Schools and the professional Schools. Sen. D'Armiento responded that these conversations should be updated to the Senate in alignment with shared governance that currently exists.

Senator Simon Ogundare (Stu., P&S) submitted a written question asking how the students would be reassured there would not immediately be a new program approved via the same process as the Global Affairs and Public Policy major was in the immediate future. Sen. D'Armiento responded that Sen. Rosen-Metsch's statement somewhat answered that but that there was no official commitment given to the Senate on this question, noting that Sen. Rosen-Metsch was a Senator and could update her committees on information like this.

Senator Mahmood Mamdani (Ten., A&S/SS) attempted to ask a question but had technical difficulties.

Sen. Ateshian stated that, in response to Sen. Firestein, he questioned how the argument around the new BA in Global Affairs and Public Policy would be any different than a new MS in Artificial Intelligence, stating that an argument could be made to say that SEAS already offers Master of Science degrees and would therefore not need approval from the Senate for a new MS degree. He stated that this argument might mean that any School could introduce any degree without approval from the Senate. Sen. Firestein stated that he did not know all the rules but that SIPA had completely redone its educational requirements internal to the School a few years ago, which did not come to the Senate and also noted that, within the Department of Biological Sciences that he teaches within, that faculty was in the process of updating the requirements for one of their majors without any input or approval from the Senate. Sen. D'Armiento responded that the point here is that changes within a School are different than programs that are cross-School, noting that cross-School programs affect multiple constituents and would therefore be discussed by the Senate.

Sen. Luo stated that the discussion so far has not been about whether this program was a result of the federal agreement and that this question still warrants consideration. She stated that the students Senators asked this question in the joint meeting with the Education Committee and the proposing Deans. Sen. Luo stated that the proponents of this major, when asked the question as to how the major ended up in the Semi-Annual Report on the Resolution Agreement, gave no answer. She stated that this question was answered by the Deans and administration by saying that the answer was “above their paygrade” or that there was no answer to this question. Sen. Luo stated that being told there is no answer to why this major is referenced in the Semi-Annual Report is the tenor and example of the dialogue the students are having with the administration, noting the disregard for the students’ well-reasoned concerns.

Senator Benjamin Orlove (Ten., SIPA) stated that this was an important discussion and conversation, noting that he understands many of the concerns raised by other Senators, but that the Global Affairs and Public Policy major has been in the works for more than 40 years and that there have been a number of courses that undergraduates have taken in SIPA. He stated that the President’s Office, Provost’s Office, and Office of General Counsel should be more transparent about a lot of things but that the question of rethinking the process for program approval is a different question from whether this major is a product from the agreement with federal government.

Sen. Odetallah stated that he appreciated everyone’s input and that these conversations are helpful for everyone to have. He stated that he recognized that SIPA faculty have told the students that this major has been talked about for a long time but that this was not a compelling argument to the entire Student Affairs Committee as to why this program is mentioned in the most serious document between Columbia and the federal government in the University’s history. Sen. Odetallah stated that, to his knowledge, there has never been a major that has been so heavily advertised to the outside world as the Global Affairs and Public Policy major, especially considering that it does not yet exist. He stated that the students do not understand why the University feels the need to explain this major to all sorts of different places and that the students have still not received an answer. Sen. Odetallah stated that the student Senators have asked the Provost and Senior Vice Provost about this, did not receive an answer, and then were directed to other administration and faculty for the answer, who in turn responded that they themselves had no answer. He stated that this does lead the students to believe that they have been misled. Sen. Odetallah stated that the students first raised these concerns on a small level through committees back in March 2026, when Student Affairs Committee members first learned about this program. He stated that, had there been a level of honest, transparency, and respect for the students’ concerns back then, this discussion would not be happening now. Sen. Odetallah stated that, increasingly, it was made extremely difficult to allow the students to be able to voice our concerns and have a discussion. He stated that the students have still not received any answers to their questions today and that the Student Affairs Committee will have to discuss their next steps on this issue. Sen. Odetallah stated that he cares about academics both at the undergraduate and graduate level and that all of the Student Affairs Committee is excited about new academic programs, noting that he remembers when the Cognitive Science major launched for undergraduates and how exciting that was for students. He stated that, throughout the discussion today, faculty members have

mentioned how the process for the Global Affairs and Public Policy major approval was flawed, incomplete, and caused a lot of disagreements and controversy among the faculty. Sen. Odetallah stated that he did not understand why the University was rushing to implement this instead of waiting to do this the right way. He stated that, had the Global Affairs and Public Policy major been brought to all parties transparently, everyone could have supported the major from the offset in line with many other new programs. Sen. Odetallah stated that this was not done for this major and that the students have to question why this is the case, noting that, when there are no answers to a question like this, the students have to rely upon the evidence that they do have, which indicates that the University is enacting the major as a response to the federal agreement without evidence stating otherwise.

Sen. D'Armiento thanked everyone for the conversation and stated that the Senate will consider what to do next.

Student Affairs Committee Annual Report 2025-26

Sen. D'Armiento introduced Sen. Beck, Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, and Sen. Luo, Vice Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, to lead the discussion of the [2025-2026 Student Affairs Committee Annual Report](#).

Sen. Luo stated that this was the last Plenary that herself and Sen. Beck would be chairing the Student Affairs Committee, before leadership turnover in July 2026. Sen. Luo then read the annual report. Sen. Luo thanked the student Senators for their work over the year and the trust that the Senate has in student leadership.

Sen. D'Armiento thanked Sens. Luo and Beck, as well as former Senator and Student Affairs Committee Co-Chair Huda Paracha (Stu., Barnard, *former*), for their service this year, noting that she appreciates how difficult it is for student Senators pushing forward issues even at great personal cost. Sen. D'Armiento stated that there has been several years of great controversies and that the students persist to continue advocating for their constituencies. She stated that Sens. Luo and Beck have both indicated to Sen. D'Armiento that one of the reasons they are not continuing their service on the University Senate, despite being eligible, is because they are tired and burdened by the pressures of serving as a student Senator. Sen. D'Armiento thanked Sens. Luo and Beck again and noted she understood how personally difficult the work has been for them both.

Sen. D'Armiento stated that she had received a few questions during the discussion of the Global Affairs and Public Policy major. She stated that the Senate staff will consolidate questions received from Senators and send them to the administration to get answers in writing from the administration in the coming weeks.

Sen. D'Armiento adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Senate staff

Draft By-Laws Language Regarding Term Limits for Executive Committee Discussion

Updated July 13, 2026

General Term Limitation: No person may serve as a Senator for more than six terms or partial terms of office, except as provided below.

A person rendered ineligible for continued service by this limitation shall become eligible for election or appointment as a Senator only after four years have elapsed from the conclusion of that person's most recent term as Senator. Until that four-year period of ineligibility has elapsed, such person may not serve in any capacity in the Senate.

The following persons shall be exempt from this term limitation and the related period of ineligibility: the President of the University; the Provost; the Dean of the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; the Dean of the Faculty of Columbia College; and any Senator appointed by the President pursuant to section 20.a.5 of the University Statutes. Time served as a Senator in a capacity covered by this exemption shall not count toward the term limitation established by this section.

Service as a Student Senator shall not count toward this term limitation if the person subsequently becomes eligible to serve as a Senator as a faculty member, staff member, administrator, or research officer.

Vacancy Exception to Term Limitation: Notwithstanding the term limitation set forth above, a person who is otherwise ineligible to serve as a Senator by operation of that limitation may stand for election to the Senate as a representative of a constituency if, at the close of nominations, the number of eligible candidates for that constituency is fewer than the number of seats to be filled for that constituency. In that event, the nomination period may be extended for no more than seven days to receive nominations of persons who are term-limited but otherwise eligible to serve.

This exception shall apply only to the extent necessary to permit the constituency to fill seats that would otherwise remain vacant.

If at least one term-limited and at least one candidate who is not term-limited are standing for election, there shall be separate elections. The first election shall select Senators from among the candidates who are not term-limited. The second election shall determine which term-limited candidates are elected to fill any seats that remain unfilled after the first election.

Any term served pursuant to this exception shall be deemed a term as Senator and shall reset the period of ineligibility established by this section. A Senator elected pursuant to this exception shall

be eligible to serve only for the term to which elected, unless again permitted to stand for election under this exception.

Senator Emeritus Status: A person who has served as a Senator for a total of eight years or more may be nominated to serve as a Senator Emeritus if the person has reached the term limitation or has otherwise ceased to serve as a Senator, provided that the person is otherwise eligible to serve as a member of a Senate committee.

A person may be nominated as a Senator Emeritus by a standing committee of the Senate, other than the Executive Committee, on which the person previously served. Such nomination shall require a three-fifths vote of the full membership of that committee. Upon approval by the Senate Executive Committee, the person may be appointed to serve as an observer on the said committee for a one-year term, with a voice in discussion but not a vote.

A Senator Emeritus may serve no more than four consecutive one-year terms and may be reappointed to each such term by the same procedure. No committee may have more than two Senators Emeriti serving at any time, and no Senator Emeritus may serve on more than one committee at any time.

As an observer, a Senator Emeritus shall not be counted as a member of the Senate for purposes of section 4.e of the By-Laws, which requires that a majority of every committee be Senators, and shall not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

Term limits for Chairs of Committees: No person shall be elected as Chair of a Committee more than three consecutive terms. A person who becomes ineligible to be elected as chair because of the number of consecutive terms that they have been elected shall not become eligible to become chair until at least one year has elapsed since the completion of their previous term.

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.

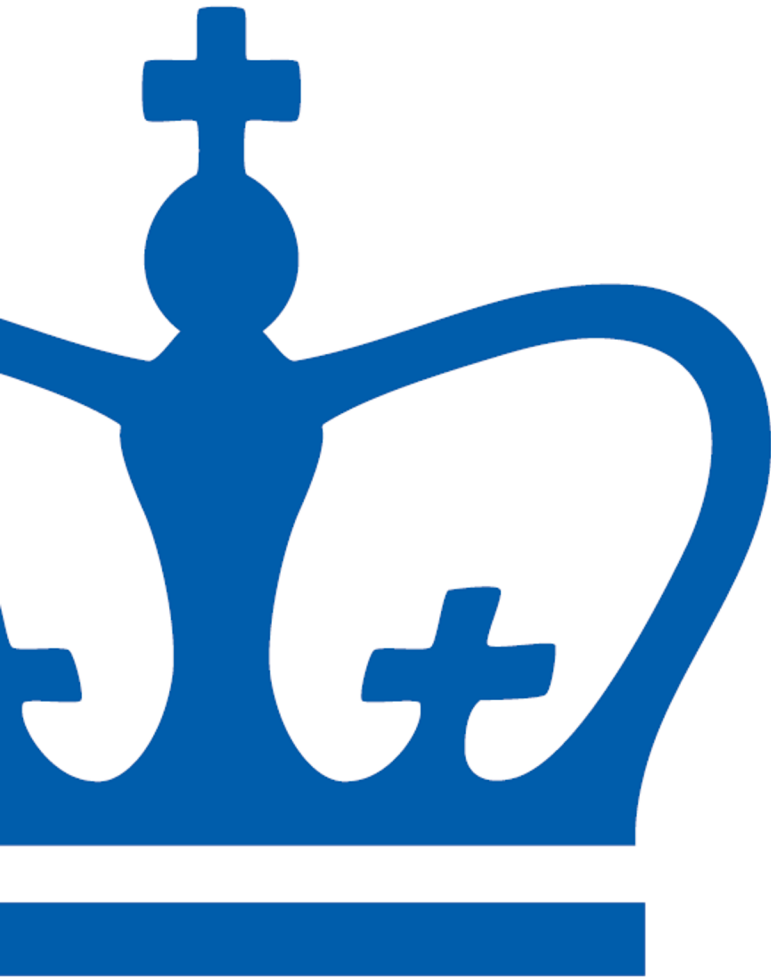
A panelist stressed the importance of a united front that does not separate student worries from faculty worries, noting that there is a chilling effect on faculty activism due to fear of repercussions. They added that many of the issues noted are larger than the University Senate itself. They noted 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.

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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 Plenary

External Relations & Research Policy Committee
Annual Report 2025-2026



Sen. Elizabeth Adeoye & Sen. John Santelli, Co-Chairs



Overview: The Committee's Year

- Mandate: the University's external relations including, research, relations with sponsors and government, and Columbia's standing in the wider world
- This year's work centered on three questions:
 - How the University accounts for its past — the Hadden report
 - How it safeguards research integrity — the updated Misconduct in Research policy
 - How it protects its mission under external pressure — the Forums on University Governance
- Looking ahead: the OMB proposed rule, continued Hadden accountability, and institutional ties to Jeffrey Epstein

The Hadden Report

- Committee authored the University Senate's unanimous October 2023 resolution — treated as a continuing obligation
- External investigator's report: an important step on transparency, but fell short on accountability
- Mandate stopped at 2012; trustee role unexplained; survivors' accounts underweighted
- Co-signed the Resolution on Institutional Accountability and Governance (proposed by the Commission on the Status of Women), seeking:
 - Transparency on trustee oversight and the investigation's independence
 - Accounting of decisions behind \$1.2B+ in settlements; stronger whistleblower protections; ethical standards for affiliates and donors

Institutional Policy on Misconduct in Research

- Brought updated policy to the plenary in December — compliance with revised PHS federal regulations effective January 1, 2026
- Reviewed over two meetings; unanimous vote to move forward
- Core procedures and due process protections unchanged; revisions:
 - Formalize the Research Integrity Officer role
 - Add a documented assessment stage for allegations; define key terms
 - Close off informal resolution of concerns brought to institutional officials
- Standards apply to all Columbia research, not only federally funded work
- Shared governance functioning as it should: administration and Senate working together

Forums on University Governance

- January: committee assessed governance under strain, leadership transitions, contested Trustee actions, an unshared University Senate review (at that time)
- March: forums held, March 26 on Morningside, March 31 at the Medical Center; strong turnout in person and online
- To explore and critically examine how universities can and should be governed. How we can best organize university governance to support excellence in scholarship, across research, teaching, and service to the broader world.
- Speakers: Prof. David Pozen on university democracy; Prof. Emerita Jean Howard on the AAUP Board-reform proposal; Sens. D'Armiento & Slaughter on shared governance at Columbia
- Synopsis prepared (attached in Plenary binder)
- These findings have and will continue to shape the committee's agenda going forward and conversations with new University leadership.

Looking Ahead

- **OMB proposed rule:** Proposed rule would demote peer review to advisory, give political appointees final funding authority, tie research to presidential priorities, restrict publication costs, broaden termination powers — could take effect Oct 1, 2026. Committee circulated guidance for public comments (July 13 deadline)
- **Hadden:** Follow up on Hadden Report's findings and implementation; follow the Attorney General's investigation; insist on transparency about the settlement's financial impact

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