



MINUTES OF THE C-FACULTY SENATORS COUNCIL MEETING OF MAY 3, 2022

The New York University Continuing Contract Faculty Senators Council (C-FSC) met at noon on Tuesday, May 3, 2022 via Zoom.

In attendance were Senators Abel-Bey, Brar, Chalas, de Leon, Dickey, Grendell, Hornick, Illingworth, Jahangiri, Killilea, Kim, Latimer, Liston, Maier, Maynor, McCarty, Mitnick, Nielsen, Patterson, Rao, Renzi, Spivakovsky, Taitel, Tourin, White, Williams, and Youngerman; and Alternate Senators Bridges, Bruno, Casey, Davis, Faber, Ferguson, Gandolfini, Iams (for Yuan), Keating, Owens, Piantella, Primm, Sun, Tyrell, and Veitz Keenan.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting agenda was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the March 29, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: EDWARD KLEINERT

The Council conducted a moment of silence to honor the life of Edward Kleinert.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Middle States Self-Study

NYU 2024 Accreditation Self-Study Co-Chairs Wendy Suzuki and Diana Arpino introduced themselves. Suzuki is a Professor of neural science and psychology and has been named the Seryl Kushner Dean of NYU's College of Arts & Science. Arpino is a Vice Provost and quantitative sociologist.

Arpino reported every ten years the University undertakes a comprehensive, institution wide self-study, including the global locations, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai. The last study was in 2014 and the topic was interdisciplinary studies. It was chaired by the prominent legal scholar and human rights advocate Norman Dawson.

She noted NYU is accredited with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which requires this comprehensive internal study every ten years. The study examines institutional goals, areas of success, and ways for improvement. A successful self-study provides continued access to federal financial aid for students and federal grants for faculty and the research community, and credibility with peers, current, and prospective students, alumni, employers, and the general public. It is a demonstration of NYU's commitment to meeting rigorous standards of institutional effectiveness and defining tangible ways the University can grow. She noted they are leading a self-study with a sharp focus on utility, inclusion, mindfulness, and rigor. They view the self-study as a point to reflect, learn, and make NYU better in the future.

The self-study will be conducted over the next two years with a final report of the findings and recommendations delivered in the spring of 2024. They are currently in the process of developing and finalizing the governance structure and substantive focus of the study.

Arpino noted that faculty are critical to the study's success. C-FSC representatives will serve on the self-study working groups, which are investigating specific research questions and will generate action-oriented recommendations. She noted they will also be seeking faculty perspective and feedback through forums.

Suzuki noted a focus of the study is how NYU can improve and map out that improvement over the next decade. They adopted the following priorities: 1) the broad university impact, addressing complex universal challenges, including diversity, equity, inclusion, sustainability, social impact, 2) transforming scholarly research across all disciplines, 3) excellence in education and excellence in the student experience, and 4) advancing global education.

They asked the Council to reflect on their vision for NYU ten years from now and respond in the chat. Council members' goals for NYU included: more seamlessly offering of courses across all schools, global sites, and portals; affordability; scholarship/financial support for all students; student diversity, particularly from underprivileged backgrounds; increased environmental sustainability of the physical campus; reduced reliance on adjunct and part-time faculty; greater opportunity for faculty to mentor students; integration and mobility between global sites; becoming a leader in social/climate education both within and outside the University; establishing a strong sense of community and identity throughout all sites and schools and integration among schools; and more support for non-traditional research among C-faculty, including sabbaticals.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Letter of Support Concerning Mental Health Accommodations

See attached Documents C and H.

Ana Roudebush, Member of Student Government Assembly as Student Senator-at-Large for Mental Health, Eating Disorders/Disordered Eating, and Student-Athletes and Johnson Liu, Member of Student Government Assembly's Health and Wellness Committee presented on the resolution on implementation of mental health accommodation days for the general student body at NYU.

Liu provided statistics from the U.S. Center for Disease Control regarding mental health of different age groups and demographics, with varying educational levels, including respondent characteristics and prevalence of adverse mental health outcomes, substance abuse to cope with stress or emotions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the age group of 18-24 years of age 49% had at least experienced anxiety disorders, 52% depressive, and at least 63% had the concurrent of both. For adverse consequences, at least 25% have begun to rely on substance dependency and either starting to use of substances or continuing to increase for substance use as well, and around 26% have suicidal thoughts, and around 75% reported as having one or more adverse mental health symptoms, as well as behavioral symptoms. See attached Document H.

Roudebush described their premise for mental health accommodations. They argue that mental health is a valid reason for absence in the workplace. FMLA does not acknowledge mental health at the moment, unless it is for a long term and diagnosed condition, for example, severe depression or nervous disorder, which requires proof of condition. This policy initiative would make it so that professors do not require proof verification or documentation if a student were to claim that they are struggling with mental health.

Roudebush noted the University does not make overarching mandates regarding absences, as different departments have different standards and requirements for absences. The implementation of this initiative would ensure a similar response from professors across departments and schools.

Throughout COVID, the University has told professors and their departments to be more lenient with absences surrounding health-related issues. In many instances, professors have allowed a certain number of days where students can be absent from lecture or recitation with no questions asked. However, there are still some professors who resist the idea that mental health is a legitimate issue for students.

Various states have weighed in on mental health days including Oregon, Utah, and Minnesota. New York state legislators have voiced their support for mental health accommodation for students.

Liu noted in term of higher education institutions, an example is the University of California-Berkeley slip days, which include 5 days per semester, allow students to submit assignments after due dates, and accommodate those who experience minor issues or scheduling conflicts. Slip days are not allowed when solutions or feedback are given that would provide an advantage to those who use them (i.e. exams).

Roudebush noted they gathered feedback from psychologists within NYU across various departments. A former student psychologist within the NYU Politics Department commented acquiring proof does not translate well in the realm of mental health and believed slip days are a great idea that can help preserve autonomy without compromising.

This initiative recognizes that every person deals with mental health, just as every person deals with physical health whether or not a person has a pre-existing or diagnosed condition. Students may have pre-existing mental health conditions, or they might struggle during a certain period of time.

They recognize that every student should take the opportunity to speak with a trained professional, but the initial response in a classroom setting and from trusted professors and TAs matters greatly. Students should not be required to provide proof of their condition or documentation that verifies their claim. Mental health is a sensitive topic that students may not wish to divulge.

Roudebush also mentioned an ad hoc committee for mental health accommodations. This would ensure that the conversation continues and they can keep working with Councils and the administration in the future on these issues.

Senators noted the concerns that in certain learning environments, student absenteeism has a profound impact on the mental health of students who are present. It was noted there is a need to find a way to both permit this kind of absenteeism but without costing the mental health of fellow students. He noted the importance this proposal take into account the variety of academic environments and collaborative learning spaces.

A Senator suggested refocusing the proposal on mental health being treated as a physical health condition. She also noted the proposal should distinguish between slip days and leaves of absence.

A Senator noted that faculty workload should be taken into account with missed days and the proposal might also include support for faculty supporting students.

PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND VOTE

Proposed Safeguards for the Office of Equal Opportunity's Current Method of Investigating Alleged Violations of the University's Non-Discrimination Policy

See attached Document D.

Personnel Policies and Contract Issues Committee Chair White noted this proposed resolution was developed following a specific case of an accusation of gender discrimination.

White listed the resolution's four recommended changes to the current method of investigating alleged violations of the university's non-discrimination policy: 1) all those accused of violating the university's non-discrimination policy shall be entitled to representation by an attorney or advocate whenever they appear before investigating officers; 2) anyone accused of violating the policy shall be entitled to a written statement from the university that specifies the words or conduct that are alleged to have violated the policy; 3) anyone accused of violating the policy shall be entitled to a written statement from the university of the evidence supporting the accusation, with no redactions other than those required to protect witnesses from retaliation; and 4) anyone accused of violating the policy shall be entitled to a written statement from the university of the reasoning by which the investigating officers have concluded that the accused has indeed violated the policy.

A Senator suggested adding language to make clear this is only addressing the employee policy, not student policy.

A Senator suggested creating an ad hoc group of C-FSC and T-FSC representatives to work on revising these policies. He noted the T-FSC has raised important issues that need to be adequately addressed and a joint statement would be stronger.

White suggested first putting the resolution to a vote from the Council and then if approved, bringing a Council supported resolution to the T-FSC.

A Senator made a motion to commit the proposed resolution to a joint Committee for review. The motion was not seconded.

A Senator suggested an amendment to clarify that the university's non-discrimination policy applies to employees.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the following amendment to the motion was moved and seconded:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the C-FSC recommends changes to the current method of investigating alleged violations of the university's non-discrimination policy for employees, so as to provide safeguards against false or unsubstantiated accusations, and other miscarriages of justice, to wit:

The amendment was approved by vote of the Council. The amended resolution was approved by vote of the Council.

Youngerman noted the resolution will be communicated to the T-FSC Executive Committee and they will plan a joint meeting with the Office of Equal Opportunity to discuss.

PERSONNEL POLICIES & CONTRACT ISSUES:

NYU Libraries Continuing Contract Faculty Guidelines for Appointment, Evaluation, Reappointment, and Promotion

See attached Document F.

Committee Chair White presented the recommendations of the Committee.

A Senator expressed concern that the document was distributed one day before the meeting without adequate time for review. Another Senator also expressed concern with lack of time to review the Stern document.

White noted the timing of the joint meeting caused the delay in finalizing the document and its distribution one day prior to the meeting.

A motion to table the recommendations regarding the NYU Libraries Continuing Contract Faculty Guidelines for Appointment, Evaluation, Reappointment, and Promotion was moved and seconded. The motion to table was passed by vote of the Council.

NYU Stern Continuing Contract Faculty Guidelines for Appointment, Evaluation, Reappointment, and Promotion

See attached Document G.

A motion to table the recommendations regarding the NYU Stern Continuing Contract Faculty Guidelines for Appointment, Evaluation, Reappointment, and Promotion was moved and seconded. The motion to table was passed by vote of the Council.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR: ETHAN YOUNGERMAN

See attached Document A and B.

Discussion/Questions on Chair's Report

Retreat and Meeting

Youngerman asked for feedback on when to host the retreat and meeting. Council members expressed preference for late May or early June. A survey will be sent to identify a date.

He noted this will include a retreat and a formal meeting to address any unfinished Council business, including the Libraries and Stern guidelines. This may also include an outdoor social event afterwards.

The Chair's Report was accepted into the minutes.

UPDATE ON NYU SHANGHAI AND THE LOCKDOWN

Alternate Senator Iams provided an update on the conditions in Shanghai. He noted Shanghai is facing week six of lockdown, which means people cannot leave their immediate surroundings. There are food issues related to the ability to receive delivery of healthy, nutritious protein-rich food. Clean drinking water has also been an issue, whether there is the ability to receive delivery of bottled drinking water or if there is a need to boil water.

NYU Shanghai has set up a 24/7 hotline to NYU Shanghai Public Safety. He noted faculty have received emergency food packages from the University. The University is working with the U.S. and other consulates for faculty who are trying to leave Shanghai. He noted it is very challenging to even travel to the airport. The University has reinstated its 2020 COVID hardship and emergency fund and is working with faculty who are financially disaffected by the situation. The Faculty Council in Shanghai has elicited concerns from faculty and is meeting with the administration on a regular basis. The student have been working primarily with student life to have their needs addressed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

See attached Document E.

No Discussion/Questions on the following submitted reports:

Educational Policies & Faculty/Student Relations
Faculty Benefits & Housing
Community Standards
Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee

Reports at Meeting:

There were no additional reports at the meeting.

The reports were accepted into the minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.