MINUTES OF THE T-FACULTY SENATORS COUNCIL MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

The New York University Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty Senators Council (T-FSC) met at noon on Thursday, September 24, 2020 via Zoom.

In attendance were Senators Amin, Battista, Cappell, Coslovsky, Das, De Leon, Duncombe, Economides, Fenton, Hartman, Hoffman, Irving, Kamer, Lapiner, Ling, Makarov, Merritt, Mincer, Nonken, Parekh, Pursley, Quinn, Schlick, Sternhell, Stimpfel, Upham, Young, and Zelikoff; Active Alternates Alter and Cole; and Alternate Senators Branski, Deierlein, Frechette (for Jaurernig), Gary, Jassen, Ogrodnik, Partridge, Rock (for Barker), Rosendorff, Santtila (for Geppert), Schuman (for Chen), St. Clair, and Van Cleave; and Observer Miao.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the May 7, 2020 meeting and the June 18, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON: DARCEY MERRITT

Chairperson Merritt called for a moment of silence in memory of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Chairperson Darcey Merritt reported on the Executive Committee (EC)’s summer meetings with the President and Provost. She provided updates on in-person and remote classes, COVID testing on campus, the number of positive cases, and the ways the University is addressing compliance issues regarding mask-wearing, large gatherings, etc.

She noted the NYU Returns emails to all NYU community members, which provide answers to specific questions received from the University community.

Merritt stated the EC has been working closely with the C-FSC Steering Committee over the summer, discussing the re-opening plan and safety measures. They also collaborated on reviewing anti-racism training and how to encourage participation.

PRESENTATION AND VOTE

T-FSC/C-FSC Anti-Racism Ad Hoc Committee Resolution and Faculty of Color Caucus Letter on Scholarly Excellence and Inclusion

See attached Document A.

Committee Co-Chair Sonia Das introduced a joint resolution developed by an ad-hoc subcommittee comprised of members of the T-FSC and C-FSC which addresses issues concerning anti-racism training at NYU.
The Committee discussed the status of anti-racism training modules at NYU, racial bias in hiring, retention, and promotion, and assisting faculty to identify and eliminate racism and racial bias in their teaching and scholarship to create an anti-racist campus. The C-FSC approved the resolution and the T-FSC will present for vote at the October Council meeting.

Das also introduced the Faculty of Color Caucus Letter on Scholarly Excellence and Inclusion, which was endorsed by the C-FSC.

The letter is in reaction to the recent publication and subsequent retraction of New York University Politics Department faculty member Lawrence M. Mead’s “Poverty and Culture”.

Discussion by the Council on the resolution and letter will take place at the October meeting.

Spring Semester

Vice Chair David Irving presented on spring semester planning. He reported they anticipate a decision in October on the spring plans for in-person and/or remote classes. The University is also planning for changes if NYU reaches the New York State set threshold for temporary suspension of in-person classes.

Brightspace/COVID Update

School of Medicine Senator Bob Hoffman provided updates on the current COVID cases in New York City, antibody testing and rates, and the upcoming flu season. He urged the importance of receiving a flu vaccine this season.

A Senator inquired if New York City, New York State, and/or NYU has considered using wastewater or sewage monitoring to detect positivity rate. A Senator responded an inspection of sewers was rejected by the City. He also suggested more frequent testing of community members.

A SOM Senator noted the Community Outreach and Engagement program is working on a YouTube video of a live question and answer with NYU pulmonologists on the flu, allergies, and other associated respiratory illnesses during COVID.

Hoffman reported on Brightspace, the learning management system (LMS) that is available at the School of Medicine and will soon be introduced to Washington Square. It is a platform that can house calendar functions, document storage, and handle recorded lectures. Vice Provost for Educational Technologies Clay Shirky will explain more on this new LMS during the Provost’s visit later in the meeting.

Faculty Benefits & Housing

Committee Co-Chair Angela Kamer reported NYU’s Employee Assistance Program provider will transition from Carebridge to Optum, part of UnitedHealthcare. The Committee will be meeting with Human Resources on the details of the new program.

T-FSC COMMITTEE REPORTS

See attached Document B.

Finance & Policy Planning

Committee Co-Chair Nick Economides reported the financial situation of NYU is better than had been expected last spring and summer. In particular, the summer 2020 program had more student enrollment than last year, the UG registration in the fall semester was higher than last year, and the graduate programs are on track with last year’s registration and payments numbers. They will fully know the numbers for graduate programs in early October.
Committee Co-Chairs Meeting

Merritt stated the Committee Co-Chairs met and discussed agenda items for the academic year. She noted a few Committees are in need of a Co-Chair, and she encouraged Senators serving on those committee to consider the role. At the meeting, she detailed the agenda items carried over from last academic year:

1) Personnel Policies and Tenure Modifications: PPTM review of NYU Abu Dhabi Faculty Governance Guidelines and NYU Abu Dhabi Promotion and Tenure Guidelines
2) Governance Committee: Academic Calendar (being reviewed by SCOG)
3) Governance Committee: Senate Seat Allocations (being reviewed by SCOG)
4) Grievance Committee Charge

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

The new Senators and Alternates introduced themselves and were welcomed by the Council. New members include: Senators Anja Jauernig and Robert JC Young and Alternate Senators Guillaume Frechette and Simon Gilchrist from the Faculty of Arts and Science, Senator Zhe Sage Chen and Alternate Senator Joel Schuman from the Grossman School of Medicine, Senator Shady Amin from NYU Abu Dhabi, Senator Amy Stimpfel and Alternate Senators Ann-Margaret Navarra and Janet Van Cleave from the Rory Meyers College of Nursing, Alternate Senators Andrea Deierlein and Donna Shelley from the School of Global Public Health, Alternate Senator Brett Gary from the Steinhardt School, Senator Anindya Ghose from the Stern School of Business, and Alternate Senators Victor Rodwin and Travis St. Clair from the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The following former Alternate Senators are now serving as Senators: Judith Zelikoff from the School of Medicine, Niyati Parekh from the School of Global Public Health, Ryan Hartman from the Tandon School of Engineering, and Salo Coslovsky from the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: PROVOST FLEMING

See attached Document C.

Provost Fleming visited the meeting and addressed questions sent by the Council.

Daily updating of the NYU Dashboard on Testing

Fleming reported, per the New York state guidelines, NYU updates according to the test date, rather than according to the date when the results are received.

She noted the New York State threshold for temporary suspension of in-person classes is 100 cases within a 14-day period. She noted the Washington Square, Brooklyn, and Health schools’ campuses are separate segments and only those segments that go beyond this number would need to suspend in-person, not the entire University.

Contact Tracing Efforts

Fleming reported when a student or employee tests positive for COVID, the individuals are contacted as well as the COVID Prevention and Response Team (CPRT). The individual is asked about their living situation, if they are taking in-person classes, and if so, their location in the classroom, and other settings where they may have come in contact with others. The University follows the CDC guidelines, which state that people who have been within a six-foot proximity to the person who tested positive for over 10 minutes will be contacted. She stated that due to HIPPA, individuals who fall outside this category would not be contacted.
**Different Protocols on the Portal Campuses**

Fleming reported Shanghai and Abu Dhabi are following their own local guidelines. At NYU Abu Dhabi all courses are being offered remotely, but they are having more in-person non-classroom activities. They moved to fully remote instruction because of the travel restrictions that prevent about 75 to 80% of their student body to be physically present.

**Three Semester Plan in Dealing with COVID**

Fleming reported the administration is working with schools to encourage more summer offerings. Faculty not teaching in person and/or remotely were given the option to teach in the summer. She noted undergraduate enrollments are currently strong and they will monitor the spring and use the option of the summer if course compensations are needed.

**Mandatory Bias/Anti-Racism Modules**

Fleming reported the administration is currently reviewing the processes for building a training module for all faculty, students, staff and administrators, with introductory content on anti-bias and anti-racism and related content. Lisa Coleman, Senior Vice President for Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation, is reviewing the literature in terms of outcomes of mandatory anti-racism training.

A Senator inquired if more advanced modules would be offered for further education. Fleming responded Coleman is developing advanced tool-kits and making them available to Schools. She noted the focus is on encouraging participation without creating bias related to level of knowledge on these topics.

**Brightspace**

Clay Shirky visited the meeting to discuss Brightspace, the new learning management system (LMS) at NYU, which will be implemented in 2021.

Shirky noted the search for a new LMS stemmed from the need for a new tool that was more web-based, user friendly, and with better presence on mobile devices.

There will be one group of faculty that convert in spring 2021 and one group in summer 2021. Trials are being run this fall 2020.

He stated that all existing material will be preserved. Existing material from the last few semesters will be saved in an active format and everything else will be archived.

He noted if Senators know of faculty in their schools interested in participating early and offering feedback, they should contact nyu-lms-transition@nyu.edu.

**Zoom/Google Meet**

Shirky addressed the four-hour Zoom outage related to logins. He noted since the Zoom outage only occurred once since March, the administration is not asking faculty to actively manage the backup Google Meet. If Zoom has a similar issue again, there will be emergency communications with alternative URLs for individual classes.

He noted one complexity is the class size limit in Google Meet. Those with classes over 101 students will receive a special communication on the process.
In response to a Senator’s question, he responded that Google Meet has recording capabilities and that they are working to improve this feature.

*Pandemic Effects on Research Funding by School*

Fleming reported the largest savings for the University budget was the freezing of OTPS (other than professional services) spending this spring. By this freezing, the University has not had to reduce salaries, enact furloughs, or layoffs. In order to continue this, the University will have to sustain controlled spending on research money, which is part of the controllable OTPS. The University will have more information on spring revenue estimates in late December and early January.

A Senator commented the suspension of research discretionary funds is impeding faculty from completing their research. Fleming noted the new tenure clock extension to offset this issue.

A Senator suggested the University revisit mitigation efforts as more data on financial status is obtained. He noted the current mitigation plan took into account a 25-30% reduction in enrollment, which has not been the case.

*Feedback on Hybrid Teaching Model*

Fleming concluded by asking Council members for feedback on their experience teaching in the hybrid model. Senators expressed their concerns and detailed the challenges of this teaching model.

A Senator suggested creating two sections of a course, one in person and one remote, noting the challenges of having both in-person and remote students in the same session.

A Senator noted that remote students were having difficulty hearing the in-person students because of the six-foot spread and the poor microphone technology. Fleming commented that in Shanghai they have been using wall mounted cameras and improved microphone systems, which have been effective. She noted the challenge of weighing the costs of investing in these improvements.

The Council thanked the Provost for her visit.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.
JOINT T-FSC and C-FSC ANTI-RACISM & RACIAL BIAS RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty Senators Council (T-FSC) and the Full-Time Continuing Contract Faculty Senators Council (C-FSC), representing the NYU tenured/tenure track and full-time continuing contract faculty (hereinafter, the “Faculty” and “NYU Faculty”) acknowledge that New York University has publicly condemned the racist attacks that have taken place in the United States over the past several months and applaud the educational initiatives, resources, and programming offered by NYU’s Office of Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation (OGI) as well as the ongoing efforts of NYU’s Office of Equal Opportunity to address racism nationally and at NYU;

WHEREAS, racism and racial bias continue to exist at NYU in teaching and scholarship and in the recruitment, retention, and accountability of Faculty;

WHEREAS, NYU Faculty desire to eradicate racism and racial bias in the recruitment, retention, and accountability of Faculty;

WHEREAS, NYU Faculty want and need assistance in their ongoing efforts to identify and eliminate racism and racial bias in their teaching and scholarship;

WHEREAS, NYU Faculty stand in solidarity with those who oppose hate, ignorance, and divisiveness, and are committed to taking action to eliminate race-based bias that threatens excellence in teaching and scholarship; and

WHEREAS, a statement of commitment by NYU Faculty, both as a whole and individually, regarding their ongoing efforts to identify and eliminate racism and racial bias is desirable as a necessary first step to making lasting change;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1) NYU should adopt and customize existing anti-racism and racial bias education and training materials (“Materials”) that Faculty throughout NYU-NYC and its portal campuses can use1;

2) NYU should facilitate and encourage use of the Materials by frequently and regularly disseminating them to all Faculty and requiring that they be discussed at all Faculty meetings, whether school wide or departmental;

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1 Among possible software is that offered by companies such as Race Forward (https://www.raceforward.org/trainings), Overcome Racism (https://www.overcomeracism.com), and Traliant (https://www.traliant.com/diversity-training/), as well as Ohio State University implicit bias training. These are widely used in corporate and educational communities, easily procured, and adaptable to our needs,
3) The T-FSC and C-FSC encourage use of these Materials and other resources that Faculty may create or discover;

4) NYU must avoid racism and racial bias in Faculty recruitment and retention, adopt a comprehensive plan to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse Faculty, and hold the schools and academic programs accountable for implementing the plan by among other things, requiring special effort in the selection and training of search committees and the use of policies and practices to address equity gaps and racial bias in recruitment and retention.

5) We ask every member of the Faculty to add the following pledge to their signature block and to their syllabi: “I will be brave enough to have uncomfortable conversations and take action against racism at NYU”;

6) The T-FSC and C-FSC endorse the Faculty of Color Council August 24, 2020 Letter on Scholarly Excellence and Inclusion (attached) and encourage individual Faculty members to also endorse it; and

7) The T-FSC and the C-FSC are committed to these resolutions and to taking steps to transform NYU into an institution and community for all people.
To: Tenured Tenure Track Faculty Senators Council

From: Angela Kamer and Wen Ling, Co-Chairs  
Faculty Benefits and Housing Committee

Re: Activities in Summer 2020

Date: September 16, 2020

On behalf of TFSC, Angela Kamer and Wen Ling participated in three meetings organized by the University to review written and verbal presentations from three finalists competing for administering our health care (Aetna, United Healthcare, and Empire/Blue Cross Blue Shield) in May 2020. Based on the current pandemic situation, recommendations of the faculty and budget presented by each vendor, the University selected United Healthcare to continue as the administrator for faculty/staff health plans. However, this selection will be reviewed in one year.

We heard from the University in July that there will be no increase in the 2021 monthly health insurance premium for faculty.
TFSC Finance Committee Report 9/22/2020

The Finance Committee met on 9/21/2020. The financial situation of NYU is better than expected last Spring and Summer. In particular, the Summer 2020 program had more students’ enrollment than last year, the UG registration in the fall semester was higher than last year, and the graduate programs are on track with last year’s registration and payments numbers. We will fully know the numbers for graduate programs in early October.

Since students’ registrations and payments were much higher than the “moderate losses scenario” that was based on a 25-30% decrease in students’ payments, the mitigation of the “moderate scenario” was more than sufficient to cover the actual losses and the extra costs. We believe that the mitigation program should be re-evaluated at end of the fall semester. Additionally, as NYU recovers fully from covid-19, Spring 2021 is a good time to evaluate ways to make NYU more efficient.

We discussed the necessity for a clear and permissive policy on dissemination to TFSC of information disclosed in SFAC meetings. We believe that frequent and thorough dissemination of aggregate financial information is important given the lack of such information disclosed by NYU directly, and the high level of faculty anxiety because of covid-19 and related stresses.
MEMO TO: Katy Fleming, Provost NYU
MEMO FROM: Executive Committee, T-FSC
RE: Questions to consider
DATE: 9.15.20

The T-FSC Executive Committee is pleased to have the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the University Provost at our first Council Meeting on September 24 at 1pm EST.

Let us first congratulate you on the manner and success in which you and the NYU administration opened the school, and the resources that you are providing to address hardship in our community. A truly impressive job.

These are some of the concerns we have:

a. What is the current number of Covid cases on campus?
b. How are faculty being informed of students who test positive for Covid? How is contact tracing being conducted?
c. Can you discuss any plans for a pivot to fully remote education should that become necessary?
d. Can you share any developments associated with the three semester plan in dealing with Covid?
e. It is the goal of both councils this academic year to investigate how a mandatory bias/anti-racism module can be implemented much the way the state mandated sexual harassment training is required. What updates can you offer about the likelihood of widespread and mandatory training?
f. How do you like Brightspace, the new LMS at NYU?
g. Both councils would like to see an Ombudsman Office at the University. How can we work with the Provost's Office on this?
h. Individual schools seem to have been unequally affected by the pandemic, especially in relation to research funds. Is this true and if so, can you provide the logic behind current funding of research?
i. We raise the issue of the lack of updating of the NYU COVID Testing Dashboard and ask for a commitment of a daily update, with new data each day.
j. Are there different protocols in response to Covid at the Shanghai and Abu Dhabi campuses?