Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Senate President Mary Ann Forgey at 12:37 p.m. in the O’Hare Special Collections Room, Walsh Family Library, Rose Hill Campus. Senate President Forgey indicated that Joseph M. McShane, S.J., President of the University, would not be attending the meeting due to official travel.

1. Invocation

Senator Baumgarth delivered the Invocation.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the January 23, 2015, Meeting of the Faculty Senate

The Senate approved as amended the minutes of the meeting of January 23, 2015 (Vernon/Jones, 14–0–2). The Senate requested that data provided by the Provost’s Office on the numbers of credit hours taught by different types of instructional staff members be annexed to the minutes.

3. Matters Presented by Dr. Stephen Freedman, Provost

Dr. Stephen Freedman, Provost of the University, wished Senators continued success in the spring semester and provided a series of updates.

First, with regard to the report of the Blended Learning Task Force, which had been discussed by the Senate at its previous meeting, Dr. Freedman commented that the report received by the Senate was not
the final word on this topic. He described the report as an important and useful step in the process of determining how Fordham can become more effective with regard to pedagogy and teaching. Since receiving the report, Dr. Freedman and his colleagues have thought more deeply about the University’s technological infrastructure and are examining more thoroughly a series of models for teaching, including online and hybrid teaching. Dr. Freedman indicated that he is pleased that the Online Learning Group, co-chaired by Dr. Steven D’Agustino and Dr. Fleur Eshghi, has invited the Senate Technology Committee and all interested faculty members to attend a series of presentations by online learning vendors that will take place the week of March 9th. Dr. Freedman also indicated that Dr. Joel Reidenberg, Professor of Law and a former President of the Faculty Senate, was asked to work with the Senate, Dr. Ronald Jacobson, Associate Vice President in the Office of the Provost, and others on the intellectual property issues associated with online and blended learning.

Next, Dr. Freedman provided an update with regard to the University’s strategic planning process. He indicated that a one-day retreat (shortened from two days because of inclement weather) of the vice presidents and deans took place. Over the course of the next several months, Dr. Freedman will work to set up a Provost’s Office strategic planning group, which will coordinate the work of strategic planning committees to be established within the schools and colleges.

Third, Dr. Freedman provided updates on decanal searches and the restructuring of existing academic units. He noted that an announcement would shortly be made about the restructuring of the leadership of the Arts and Sciences Faculty. Two searches in Arts and Sciences are currently in process, those for the deans of Fordham College at Rose Hill and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Freedman hopes that both will be complete by April.

Finally, Dr. Freedman said that he had forwarded to the deans a request from Fr. McShane that all schools and colleges of the University engage in the upcoming Week of Reflection on race relations.

Dr. Freedman responded to questions from Senators. One Senator asked when faculty could expect to hear about plans to make up class meetings that had been lost due to inclement weather. Dr. Freedman said that his office had been engaged in ongoing planning. Dr. Jonathan Crystal, Associate Vice President and Associate Chief Academic Officer, added that a complicating factor this year was that different schools and campuses lost different numbers of days to the poor weather and that he and the Provost were seeking to establish a coordinated plan for make-up classes.

A Senator asked Dr. Freedman why the search for the next director of the Fordham College at Rose Hill Honors Program was proceeding when a new dean of the college had not yet been identified. Dr. Freedman responded that the Arts and Sciences Deans as a whole are involved in the process of identifying the next director of Honors, along with Dr. Freedman himself. He expressed confidence that the process would move forward in an effective way.

Another Senator expressed concern that it appeared that a large number of strategic planning committees were being created. Dr. Freedman responded that some schools may wish to use existing committees for the purpose of strategic planning, although other schools will want to create new committees.

With regard to the loss of classes to inclement weather, another Senator asked Dr. Freedman why the University’s access to the “virtual classroom” feature of Blackboard had been suspended. Dr. Freedman indicated that Dr. Crystal would follow up to identify possible replacements for this valuable feature.

Another Senator asked Dr. Freedman when he expected that the search for a permanent Chief Research
Officer would commence. He responded that with so many searches taking place throughout the University, he had decided to postpone the Chief Research Officer search until fall 2015. Dr. Freedman indicated that the interim Chief Research Officer would serve through at least January 2016.

4. Presentation by Dr. Peter Stace, Vice President for Enrollment: Enrollment and Financial Aid

Dr. Peter Stace, Vice President for Enrollment, addressed the Senate. He began by thanking Senators and the faculty at large for all the ways in which faculty members are involved in the process of recruiting students for Fordham’s undergraduate colleges. Dr. Stace delivered a presentation in response to questions by Senators that he had been provided in advance.

First, Dr. Stace noted that the strategic goals with which his office works are those set out in the Toward 2016 strategic plan: improving the University’s profile, preserving key elements of Fordham’s mission, and reducing the discount rate to improve revenue.

Dr. Stace discussed a series of academic metrics that can be used to measure the quality of incoming undergraduate students, including high school grade point averages and standardized test scores. He noted that in the admissions process, no one factor is solely responsible for a decision to admit or not admit. Dr. Stace indicated that all applicants to Fordham are rated on a nine-point scale based on a holistic consideration of all information in the applicant’s file; almost all those admitted score 5 or better. Studies of the performance of students once admitted appear to confirm the value of the rating system, and ratings correlate closely with other indicators of quality.

Dr. Stace presented data with regard to enrollment by students from underrepresented groups. He noted that the proportion of students from these groups has increased over time and that in this regard Fordham is as good as many peer and aspirant institutions. Over time, white enrollment has dropped from 66% to 62%. Approximately 30% of students are from minority groups or report belonging to two or more races. Approximately 7% of students are international. The percentage of minority students varies from campus to campus: at Lincoln Center the class is approximately 45% white, whereas at Rose Hill it is approximately 70% white. In general, minority students tend to have greater need and therefore tend to receive more generous financial aid packages.

With regard to the University’s enrollment and pricing strategies, Dr. Stace noted that Fordham has multiple goals. The stronger the University is perceived externally, the better we are able to recruit the students we would most like to attract. Current goals include to preserve diversity; increase net revenue; meet targets by school, program, and residence status; broaden our geographic reach; ensure high rates of retention and graduation; and keep family debt manageable.

Two kinds of financial aid are available: need-based aid seeks to make Fordham accessible to students for whom it would otherwise be out of reach, and merit-based aid seeks to improve the profile of the incoming class. Dr. Stace noted that as Fordham’s profile continues to improve, our reliance on merit aid may decrease. With regard to pricing, Dr. Stace noted that the University’s recruiting practices shape the applicant pool; our market position guides the determination of the “sticker price” for tuition; differential pricing among applicants shapes the incoming class; and merit aid increases overall net revenue. With regard to tuition, Dr. Stace said that Fordham’s “sticker price” is comparable to other institutions our applicants consider and that the University provides financial aid to a greater proportion of students than do many of our peer and aspirant institutions. The calculation of net price by the federal government suggests that those institutions are more generous with aid. This is misleading because the government’s calculations exclude students who receive no aid at all and they are a much larger share of the population.
at aspirant institutions than at Fordham.

In response to a question from a Senator, Dr. Stace indicated that the rate of default on student loans taken out by Fordham students is approximately 3%, which compares favorably with many other institutions. Several Senators wondered why the University does not share more widely the good news about the high proportion of Fordham students who receive aid. In response, Dr. Stace said that this information was something of a double-edged sword: those who do pay the sticker price might not wish to learn that they are relatively few in number.

Another Senator asked Dr. Stace about the proportion of students who are first-generation college students. Dr. Stace responded that approximately 20% to 25% of incoming students fall into this category and that their share of the incoming class has been consistent over time.

Several Senators asked what Fordham does to ensure that we retain students who come here for their first year of undergraduate studies. Dr. Stace noted that the bigger the gap between the net price and a family’s ability to pay, the less likely it is that we will retain any particular student. He said that Fordham’s first- to second-year retention rate is approximately 90%; our aspirant institutions are closer to 94%. Retention of students from underrepresented groups is within a percentage point of retention overall.

Another Senator asked how important amenities like residence halls and recreation centers are in the process of recruiting students. Dr. Stace responded that while some facilities are currently perceived to be inadequate, student surveys do not reveal serious dissatisfaction. He also noted that students who are choosing a college on the basis of amenities may not be as interested in Fordham as those who are making their choice on the basis of academic quality.

With regard to financial aid packages, one Senator asked about the amount of money provided to international students. Dr. Stace responded that the average international aid package is approximately $3,000, versus $21,000 for other students.

Currently, Dr. Stace reported, net tuition revenue per student is $24,428. The main reason that students do not come to Fordham when admitted is that we are too expensive. There is a substantial gap between the financial aid packages offered to students with need versus those without need. For “no need” students, net tuition revenue has been increasing over the past several years, and these students now represent 20% more than their proportional share of revenue. The University’s discount rate stands at 45% for first-year students, approximately the national average. The overall discount rate is between 25% and 30%.

Finally, Dr. Stace reported on the challenges that face the University in the future. The first is families’ diminished ability and/or willingness to pay, which requires the University to consider ways to lower the cost of education. More broadly in society, there is an assault on the values of liberal arts education; the implications of the Fisher ruling concerning affirmative action remain unclear; and the demographics of students interested in and qualified to attend Fordham continue to be in flux.

Senate President Forgey thanked Dr. Stace for his time and his presentation.

5. Presentation by Senator Berish Rubin (continued)

Senate President Forgey next introduced Senator Berish Rubin, asking him to continue his presentation
from the January meeting. Responding to a request made by the Senate, Dr. Rubin presented an analysis of University budgets for the period of 2007 through the projected budget for 2015. Below are some of the highlights of the presentation:

Salaries of tenured and tenure-track faculty as a percentage of tuition revenue:
In 2014, the University’s tuition and fee revenue was $541,419,857 and the salaries of the tenured and tenure-track faculty was approximately $80,000,000, or 14.8% of the revenue generated from tuition and fees.

Salaries of tenured and tenure-track faculty – a historical perspective:
In 2007 and 2008, the percentage of tuition and fee revenue that was expended on the salaries of tenured and tenure-track faculty was approximately 16%, and in 2013 and 2014, the salaries of tenured and tenure-track faculty represented approximately 14.8% of the University’s tuition and fee revenue.

Non-instructional salaries – a historical perspective:
During the period of 2007 through 2014, the percentage of tuition and fee revenue that was expended on non-instructional salaries has held steady at approximately 23.1%. During this period, the expense associated with the non-instructional salaries has grown from $82,304,269 (in 2007) to $124,834,619 (in 2014).

Financial aid expenditures – a historical perspective:
In the period of 2007 through 2014, the financial aid expenditure went from $78,064,024 (2007) to $137,789,969 (2014). As a percentage of the University’s tuition and fee revenue, the financial aid expenditure has gone from 21.9% (in 2007) to 25.4% (in 2014). In 2015, the financial aid expense is projected to be $158,993,501, which represents 27.5% of the projected tuition and fee revenue.

Further budgetary details were presented in the form of a spreadsheet, which is attached as Appendix A.

6. Dr. Jeannine Hill Fletcher: Undoing Racism Collective

Senate President Forgey next introduced Dr. Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Professor of Theology and Director of the Service-Learning Program. Senate President Forgey noted that Dr. Hill Fletcher would speak about an upcoming event that would take place at the beginning of the University’s week of reflection on race relations in America.

Dr. Hill Fletcher thanked Senators for their service. She began by describing the work of the Undoing Racism Collective, a group of faculty members, administrators, and students who have gone through the Undoing Racism training provided by the People’s Institute. Fordham’s participation in this training began in the Graduate School of Social Service, then expanded, after a series of bias-related incidents in 2012, to include students, administrators, and other faculty members. Currently, the Collective includes 13 faculty members as well as administrators and students.

Dr. Hill Fletcher said that the Collective had already been planning to meet on March 2 but chose to open its meeting to the University community at large at the beginning of the President’s week of reflection. She asked the Senate whether Senators would be willing to attend the meeting, whether the Senate has any resources to support the Undoing Racism training, and how the Senate is currently modeling racial justice. She said that all members of the University are welcome to attend the March 2 meeting, which
would be videoconferenced between the Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses.

One Senator said that all Senators should encourage faculty colleagues to attend this important meeting. Dr. Hill Fletcher said that it is important not only for faculty to attend this event but to consider the ongoing question of how the Senate can keep issues of racial justice in the consciousness of the University community. Responding to a question from a Senator about the relationship between the March 2 meeting of the Collective and the University’s week of reflection, Dr. Hill Fletcher said that the Collective does not have specific information about the week of reflection and that she is not certain whether the President of the University knows that the Collective exists.

Senate President Forgey suggested that perhaps the Senate could support an institutional self-study with regard to racial justice.

7. Announcements

Senate President Forgey announced several upcoming events, sponsored by the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies, that focus on issues of labor relations and justice. She encouraged Senators to attend.

Senate President Forgey also announced that Fr. McShane had invited her to be present at the April meeting of the Board of Trustees, as well as to address the Board. She indicated that Fr. McShane is envisioning an annual address to the Board by the President of the Faculty Senate.

8. Committee Reports

(a) Salary and Benefits Committee

Senator Andrew H. Clark, in his capacity as Chair of the Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee, delivered the committee’s report. He began by speaking of steps that had been taken to ensure that faculty members are aware of resources available to help them with the transition to the University’s new medical insurance provider, UnitedHealthcare. He indicated that a communication would soon be sent to faculty by Human Resources.

Senator Clark also said that the Salary and Benefits Committee had recently begun conversations about next year’s salary increases and would shortly develop figures to present to the Administration. He noted that Fr. McShane had asked the committee to consider establishing a second pool of merit pay to reward outstanding teaching and service. The committee’s consensus was that departments already have the right to include teaching and service in their merit norms. Senator Clark reported that the committee had heard that some deans were misusing their power to decide where on each department’s merit list the line should be drawn between those who are to receive merit and those who are not. Several Senators responded that the statutes on merit should be changed to eliminate this work-around and that, if deans had manipulated the system, faculty members should bring their concerns to the Faculty Hearing Committee. Other Senators said that the Senate as a whole should take up the issue of how teaching and service are rewarded in terms of merit. Senate President Forgey said that she would include this as an agenda item for a future meeting of the Senate.

(b) Student Life Committee

Senator Judith Jones, in her capacity as Chair of the Student Life Committee, reported that the committee
has been considering several issues connected to Title IX enforcement. The committee is recommending that a group of faculty liaisons be appointed between academic units and the Title IX coordinator, in order to improve communications on these important issues between faculty members and the Title IX office. Senator Jones had explored the legal ramifications of this recommendation with University Counsel and was advised that so long as faculty liaisons have an official status within the University, they would be indemnified against damages that might result from their work. Senator Jones suggested that perhaps the liaisons could be appointed as a subcommittee of the Student Life Committee.

In response to questions, Senate President Forgey and Senator Jones said that the role of the proposed liaisons would not be to involve themselves in any specific cases, but only to facilitate communications between the faculty and the Title IX office about the responsibilities of faculty.

One Senator asked who decides whether faculty are mandatory reporters of Title IX complaints, since not every institution treats faculty members in this way. Another Senator proposed that all members of the faculty be mandated to undergo training on Title IX. Senator Jones said that her committee had explored that possibility, but that the products available on the commercial market are not a good match for Fordham institutionally. She said that mandatory online training might be perceived by faculty as draconian.

Senate President Forgey concluded this discussion by indicating that she would be asking the Student Life Committee to prepare a new plan in light of the Senate’s feedback.

At 3:37 p.m., the Senate, having reached the allotted time for this meeting, agreed unanimously to extend the meeting to 3:45 p.m.

(c) Contingent Faculty ad hoc Committee

Senator Anne Fernald, in her capacity as chair of the ad hoc committee on contingent faculty, delivered the committee’s report. She began by indicating that February 25 had been designated National Adjunct Walk-Out Day. She indicated that the committee was considering several strategies, including proposed changes to the University Statutes. Strategies under discussion included requests for additional compensation for contingent faculty members, studies of the effectiveness of contingent faculty by means of student evaluations, and efforts to enforce existing statutes concerning lecturers and clinical faculty members. Senator Fernald said that the committee believed that there are different ethical obligations with regard to each category of contingent faculty: adjuncts, lecturers, and clinical faculty.

(d) Technology Committee

Senator Grace Vernon, in her capacity as chair of the Technology Committee, delivered the committee’s report. She indicated that the committee had met with the University’s web manager, Ms. Donna Lehmann, concerning problems about migration and communication. Senator Vernon said that the committee was keeping an eye on the implementation of the University’s new website, as well as considering issues about online learning and instructional technology.

One Senator suggested that the University’s website should carry the disclaimer “Beta Site”. Senate President Forgey indicated that in response to the Senate’s resolution concerning the transition in the website, Ms. Lehmann was to send a series of communications to the University community, although these had not yet been sent.
Due to the pressure of time, and with the consent of the Senate, Senate President Forgey deferred consideration of the remaining items on the agenda to the March meeting of the Senate.

By unanimous consent, the Senate adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Secretary