

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to describe some of the actions that the Faculty Senate has been taking to address issues of racism and social injustice on campus. We have been deeply disturbed by the recent acts of racism and antisemitism as well as by the story these actions seem to tell about deeper problems in our community. We wanted to know more.

To that end, six undergraduate students (identified to us via the The Gender and Race Equity and Faculty Diversity and Retention Committee as well as ASILI, Fordham's Black Student Alliance) came and spoke to the Senators, the President and Provost of the University at our meeting on Friday, November 13th. The students spoke for half an hour and shared painful truths about what it is like to be Black at Fordham. The stories they shared, both personal and gathered from their peers, highlighted enormous challenges. They spoke of malicious language and even an online death threat that came in response to their attempt to gather stories for the Senate. They spoke of professors admitting a lack of interest in African-American history and culture in a class that aimed to instruct students on these very topics and of professors who lacked competence in responding to student's racially insensitive comments. They spoke of roommates making offensive "jokes" about lynching. And more. The students asked us, too, to acknowledge the privilege that is at the foundation of our campuses: the African-American and Latino/a neighborhoods that once stood where our Lincoln Center campus now stands, and the ways in which the Rose Hill campus can seem more of an enclave of privilege than a part of the diverse neighborhood in which it sits.

These students did not simply testify to the broken places in our community, they also made suggestions about ways in which we can improve our Fordham community, from the moment students arrive on campus through graduation and beyond. Their comments were brave, eloquent, and demonstrated their powerful desire to work towards a better Fordham. We have asked them for their written remarks and will include them with the formal minutes of the meeting, which will be distributed after our December 18th meeting. The enclosed Action Minutes include, in the meantime, the Senate's unanimous concurrence with Fr. McShane's recent letter to the University community condemning the most recent bias incidents.

After the students left, the Senate spent the majority of our time discussing what we as a faculty and Fordham as a university might do next. For instance, the students encouraged faculty, who often appear to lack training in how to address or discuss racism in class, to participate in training like that offered by the Undoing Racism Collective, a suggestion supported by several Senators. Some actions like this will come in the near term; some will take much longer. Some solutions are personal and relational; others are structural.

Regarding structural change, I have charged four bodies--the Senate as a whole, plus three committees reporting to the Senate: the Gender and Race Equity Committee, the Faculty Life Committee, and the Student Life Committee--with developing concrete recommendations and to bring to the Senate at our February meeting.

These are but four bodies of many. At the opening of Friday's meeting, both the President and Provost spoke about initiatives, current and future, that will enhance the diversity of our students and faculty. The CUSP Committee and the Middle States Report have both identified diversity as an issue of interest. While we spoke in the Senate, hundreds of other members of our community gathered on Robert

Moses Plaza for a #blackout in solidarity with the students of Mizzou and Yale. We have been in touch with members of the Undoing Racism Collective and the Dorothy Day Center for Service and Justice. ASILI has been working with many of the student organizations who share an interest in combating racism and working toward a Fordham that more fully embraces and benefits from our diversity. In short: many among us see this as a moment of opportunity.

Each of us must do the best we can to work for a better Fordham: we need to each look within and root out unconscious biases and we need to have difficult conversations with each other. As we strive for a better future, we undoubtedly will make mistakes. However, I hope that, as we discover our mistakes, we learn from them, strive to work harder and continue to fight for racial justice at Fordham and beyond.

It is my hope that everyone in our community will work with us toward identifying and achieving these goals, short and long term, personal, relational, and structural. Please be in touch with me, the Senate, or any of the groups mentioned here to work towards an even stronger, more diverse, and more inclusive community.

Sincerely yours,

Anne E. Fernald

Anne E. Fernald

Professor of English and Women's Studies

President of the Faculty Senate

Fordham University

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212-636-7613 (Department office, Lincoln Center)

Mrs. Dalloway, now available from Cambridge UP



REPORT OF ACTION BY THE FACULTY SENATE
November 13, 2015

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Senate President Anne E. Fernald at 12:37 p.m. in the Hill Faculty Conference Room of the School of Law, Lincoln Center Campus.

Approval of the Minutes of the October 2, 2015, Meeting of the Faculty Senate

The Senate approved (14-0-1) the minutes of its October 2, 2015, meeting (Vernon/Balestra).

Student Journalists at the Senate

After the Senate emerged from Executive Session, Senate President Fernald reported that the Senate had adopted (10-5-1) a motion permitting student journalists to attend meetings of the Senate. She noted that the Senate had also agreed to revisit this issue by the end of the current academic year.

Bias Incidents

The Senate approved (18-0-0; Cohen/Cox) a motion endorsing the comments that University President Joseph M. McShane, S.J., had made in his campus-wide communication earlier this week concerning hate speech and bias incidents.

Race and Diversity

Six undergraduate students addressed the Senate with regard to their experiences as members of underrepresented groups at Fordham. The Senate applauded them for their candor and courage.

Matters Presented by the University Research Council

The Senate approved (14-0-0; Gyug/Baumgarth) revisions to the statute on the Faculty Research Expense Program (formerly Grants-in-Aid) recommended by the University Research Council.

The Senate approved (13-0-1; Gyug/Baumgrath) revisions to the statute on Faculty Fellowships recommended by the University Research Council, with the effect of permitting faculty members to "bank" their eligibility for Faculty Fellowships and to receive Fellowships in a more flexible way than was previously possible.

New Business

The Senate approved (14-0-0; Cohen/Vernon) revisions to the statute on the procedures of the Tenure and Reappointment Appeals Committee recommended by the members of that Committee, with the effect of making the intent of the changes previously introduced by the Senate clearer.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.