



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Faculty Senate

Joseph M. McShane, S.J., Hon. President	Gregory Acevedo	Margo Jackson	Aditya Saharia
John Drummond, President	Andrew Albin	Judith Jones	Falguni Sen
Dana Alonzo, Vice President	Ida Bastiaens	Mark Mattson	Henry Schwalbenberg
Francesca Parmeggiani, Secretary	Thomas Beaudoin	Matthew McGowan	Grace Shen
	Jeffrey Colon	Alesia Moldavan	Grace M. Vernon
	Stephen Grimm	Haim Mozes	Ian Weinstein
	Ralf Hepp	Giorgio Pini	
	Amir Idris	Berish Rubin	

Present: Senate President Drummond; Senators Acevedo, Albin, Alonzo, Beaudoin, Colon, Grimm, Hepp, Jackson, Jones, Mattson, Moldavan, Mozes, Parmeggiani, Pini, Rubin, Saharia, Schwalbenberg, Sen, Vernon, Weinstein

Excused: Senators Bastiaens, Idris, McGowan, Shen

Guests: Dr. Dennis Jacobs, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Jonathan Crystal, Vice Provost; Fr. John J. Cecero, S.J., Vice President for Mission Integration and Ministry; Mr. Rafael Zapata, Chief Diversity Officer

Call to Order

At 11:30 a.m., Senate President Drummond called the meeting to order.

Invocation

Senator Mozes delivered the invocation.

Provost's Report and Q&A

Dr. Jacobs' remarks addressed the following topics:

1) *Covid-19* – The University has as of late recorded an uptick in the number of infections among students over a 14-day period due to off-campus activities. No transmission appears to be occurring on campus. Most infected people in isolation remain off campus. Fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with infected individuals do not need to quarantine but should monitor their symptoms and be tested in 5-7 days. Dr. Jacobs reviewed where the University stands based on national and local trends and CDC metrics and data. According to CDC transmission levels, Fordham still classifies in the “High Transmission” range along with New York State and the U.S., whereas New York City is in the “Substantial” range. The mask mandate cannot be relaxed yet. Dr. Jacobs shared concerns about the upcoming holidays and potential for increased Covid infections, stressing the need for all to act responsibly. He also noted that all three vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) are available on campus. Eligible individuals can make online appointments; even if appointments are listed for the Pfizer vaccine, individuals can select the vaccine of their choice at the time of their appointment. By virtue of their occupation, all faculty (“education staff” in the CDC language) are eligible for booster shots provided they have completed their vaccination cycle at least 6 months earlier for Pfizer or Moderna, or 2 months earlier for Johnson & Johnson.

In response to a Senator's concerns about delays in contact tracing, including instances where a faculty member had to inquire about the status of the tracing process, Dr. Jacobs responded that he was unaware

of these cases and would look into them. With regard to Covid, one Senator asked whether all infected students were fully vaccinated. The Provost responded that he did not know the vaccination status of each infected person. This Senator also expressed concerns about the risks for unvaccinated faculty in the classroom, and added that in regard to data about boosters and individuals' vulnerability, the situation is still unfolding and the larger picture is still unclear. Another Senator, wondering about the current masking policy, noted that if local and CDC data were read differently, placing emphasis for example on demographics, Fordham's mask mandate would appear to be an unnecessary mitigating measure.

2) *Budget and Authorizations* – In reflecting on the challenges of accommodating an exceptionally large student population this year, and the late budgetary adjustments after the Fall census, Dr. Jacobs acknowledged that authorizations to address students' academic needs came late. He is working on instituting a better process to authorize tenure-track faculty searches, which would begin in mid-to-late March with Departments submitting their hiring requests to the Deans, who will in turn prioritize them for the Provost. A first authorization cycle would occur in May. Some approvals would need to wait until later in the summer, but the hope is that all authorizations would be in place before the start of Fall classes, to ensure departments have ample time to prepare for the search. Dr. Jacobs clarified that this new time frame for the authorization process would go into effect in the spring of this academic year.

One Senator asked if there was any update on this year's adjustments to departmental budgets. Dr. Jacobs responded that his office had just received authorizations for a number of accounts that will be communicated to the Deans; however, he also stressed that budgets will not return to pre-Covid levels this year.

3) *Study Abroad* – The University has carefully considered on-site conditions. The London program was the only authorized study abroad program in Fall 2021. Mitigating measures adopted on site (i.e., weekly rapid testing and required masking) worked very effectively. For Spring 2022, twelve study abroad locations have been approved and students have been informed.

3) *Commencement* – In contrast to last year when various types of ceremonies (in person, online and hybrid) were organized, the University is moving forward with the planning of in-person events.

During the Q&A, one Senator noted that this seems to be a timely moment to reflect on the University's commitment to sustainability and the environment. Dr. Jacobs noted that this is indeed a timely and "timeless" topic, which should have a greater part in the University's life, including the curriculum. He mentioned that it is a central topic in Gabelli's curriculum and will be a priority in the sciences moving forward. He also relayed that Fordham has been invited to join a group of institutions of higher education working on a proposal for the use of Governors Island as the site of a center for climate solutions. Fordham remains committed to a responsible use of resources, and planning is ongoing for implementing sustainable and renewable energy projects on campus.

Challenges and Opportunities for Fordham's Mission and Mission Integration

Senate President Drummond welcomed Fr. John Cecero, S.J. As a tenured member of the Psychology Department, Fr. Cecero also served as Rector of the Jesuit Community at Spellman Hall and served two terms as a member of Fordham's Board of Trustees. He took a leave from Fordham to become Father Provincial of the USA Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus. After a sabbatical year, Fr. Cecero has returned to Fordham as Vice President for Mission Integration and Ministry.

Fr. Cecero shared with the Senate his vision on mission and mission integration noting three "polarities" at work in and around the University's life and mission:

- i) Between the Catholic and Jesuit identity of the institution, committed both to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff while preserving an identifiable Catholic culture;
- ii) Between the value of learning for learning's sake and the instrumental value of education in our society; and
- iii) Between students' need for space to reflect and the call to engage with and in the world.

He does not view these polarities as unresolvable conflicts, but rather as an opportunity for the institution and the community to develop by creatively addressing them.

Fr. Cecero noted a main threat to Fordham's mission, namely a sense of isolation. Drawing on conversations with pre-tenured faculty members, he observed that this sense of isolation, causing stress and confusion, appears to result in part from institutional emphasis on specialization. Faculty's sense of community and interest in interdisciplinarity are undermined. This in turn has an emotional effect, impacting faculty's energy and creativity.

Fr. Cecero also identified "fruitful directions" for mission integration in addition to established initiatives:

- a) The revision of the undergraduate core curriculum – This offers an opportunity to address polarities and tensions by promoting a holistic education, both reflective and contributing to the wider community. He also noted faculty's collaboration with the Center for Community Engaged Learning and the interest among donors and trustees in community-engaged learning, which, in his view, should be a requirement rather than an option in the new core.
- b) Reserving time in departmental meetings to discuss and reflect on mission – He spoke with Dean Badowska and hopes to speak with the A&S Department Chairs on how to engage the faculty in this type of conversation.
- c) Hiring – He has reached out to Kay Turner, Vice President for Human Resources, about creating protocols, or preparing at least a working document, available to all leaders.
- d) Personal development through faculty seminars, workshops and retreats fostering conversation and reflection.

In the ensuing Q&A, Senators drew attention to other tensions and challenges: between the university as an institution of higher education and the university as a financial institution; the risk of engaging the community as the "other"; Catholic and Jesuit values in opposition to tenets of "meritocracy" that emphasize productivity and grant success over service and community-building as university citizens. Fr. Cecero acknowledged how financial pressure is perceived as a threat, and that service to the community should be a mutually enriching undertaking. He also recalled from his years on the faculty that a sense of community was not emphasized at all, and service was viewed as something to do but not rewarded. In response to a Senator's question on whether Fordham was considering participating in prison education programs, Fr. Cecero confirmed institutional interest in establishing a more explicit alliance with Thrive For Life and the Ignacio House of Studies in the Bronx.

On behalf of the Senate, Senate President Drummond thanked Fr. Cecero for his presentation.

President's Report and Q&A

Fr. McShane's remarks addressed the following topics:

1) *Covid-19* – While the overall number of cases remains low, there has been a higher number of reported infections in the past 14 days. Infections have been traced back to off-campus events and circumstances. The University continues to be vigilant. In addition to monitoring the present situation on

campus, the University is also considering measures following the upcoming holidays (Thanksgiving and winter break), and spring break next semester. Fr. McShane reiterated that all three vaccine boosters are available on campus.

2) *Admissions* – Fr. McShane reviewed previously circulated data on early decision and early action programs for Fall 2022. He noted variations in LC and RH admissions from previous years (more students at LC than RH in the past, more at RH and fewer at LC this year so far); variations in the number of applicants from various U.S. states and regions; and solid numbers as regards international students, although lower numbers from China are concerning. Looking at the SAT and ACT scores, the University is doing well in terms of quality. The data on ethnicity is also encouraging. Overall, based on this first report, the expectation is that AY 2022-23 will be another strong year.

3) *Development* – The public phase of the new capital campaign “Cura Personalis” was officially launched on Monday, at the Founder’s Dinner. Fr. McShane will soon be back on the road for more fundraising.

4) *Diversity Equity Inclusion Action Plan* – Fr. McShane noted that the University is doing well as regards admissions, training and representation. More needs to be done about hiring. He has also been speaking with the Chief Diversity Officer about initiatives to welcome new students and initiate them to the culture of the community.

In response to a Senator’s question, Fr. McShane said that he believed that innovation in the advising system for the undergraduate colleges and a new center for teaching and learning would fall under the fundraising efforts of the current capital campaign. In considering the greater percentage of female students and a broadening gender gap in the report on admissions, one Senator noted that this trend is less than ideal, while another Senator remarked that this may indicate effective ways inequities may continue to be addressed in the careers arising from a college education. Fr. McShane observed that Fordham’s numbers are in line with national and disciplinary trends, but imbalances are undesirable.

Update on DEI Initiatives and the Anti-Racism Action Plan

Mr. Zapata reported on past and ongoing activities and future initiatives of his office and the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council. In AY 2020-21, initiatives focused on students’ access and success. This year’s entering class shows significantly greater diversity with higher percentages of Black/African American, Hispanic Latinx and two-race students from the previous year. Mr. Zapata acknowledged that although enrollment data is encouraging, more needs to be done to help students achieve success. A primary goal in AY 2021-22 and beyond is to enhance the campus climate and broaden engagement and participation from students, faculty and staff and from the Bronx. Ongoing and new initiatives to achieve this goal include, among several others: racial justice workshops for staff; the first post-doc fellowship in Critical Race Studies; the TRAC grant program; the Urban Justice Scholar program; collaboration with the Bronx Book Festival; the Equity Advisors Program; and the “Bronx Is My Campus” lecture series. Mr. Zapata recognized the excellent DEI-related work by Dr. Eve Keller and the Honors Program.

In response to Senators’ questions, Mr. Zapata indicated that he is in conversation with many people and units on campus on various projects; the Center for Community Engaged Learning is working on expanding local partnerships; through the TRAC program and other initiatives some departments and programs have been revising their curricula and refocusing them around social justice issues. Past and future initiatives also targeted other areas of the university, for example, faculty recruiting and hiring process, and retention strategies. The Equity Advisors Program, to be piloted in the spring, intends precisely to enable and facilitate equitable practices. Sustainability of resources and practices are key for the retention of a diverse student population. With regards to transfer students, transfer pathways, grants

and other resources are in the planning. One Senator shared his concern about admitting a very high number of students when the University does not have the infrastructure and proper support for them. Another Senator called attention to the need to help and support graduate students, as students and as instructors. Senators finally stressed the need for faculty to be educated on what they can do to help and support students. Mr. Zapata recognized that, as Senators also pointed out, the challenges are real and while much has been accomplished, more needs to be done to work intentionally and collaboratively on these matters.

On behalf of the Senate, Senate President Drummond thanked Mr. Zapata for his tireless and extensive work.

Recommendation from the Handbook Committee

The Handbook Committee is currently working on ensuring that an up-to-date copy of the Statutes is readily accessible. In the process, the Committee noted that its name is outdated and recommended a name change, reflecting its role more closely. The Senate passed a seconded motion to accept the Committee's recommendation to change its name to the University Statutes Committee by a vote of 19-0-0.

Approval of Minutes

The Senate approved (19-0-0) the minutes of the meeting of October 22, 2021.

New Business

Senate President Drummond noted that the restoration of the retirement contributions began with the November 5 paycheck, and informed the Senate that he is continuing to press the University to complete the restitution before the end of AY 2021-22, in order to resolve the issue of faculty retiring in June 2022 and to clear the deck for the next president.

One Senator pointed out that the Budget Planning Committee met and that the Chief Financial Officer has shared with the Committee data that she will present at the upcoming Town Hall. This Senator recommended extending an invitation to faculty members on the Committee to speak at the December meeting of the Senate.

Senate President Drummond will circulate the announcement of an event organized by the Office of Academic Advising for Student-Athletes encouraging the faculty to meet Fordham's student-athletes. These are academically very strong students in the face of the many extensive demands on their time. Mentioning their exceptional statistics in terms of degree completion and academic performance, one Senator stressed the need for the faculty to recognize and support them.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Francesca Parmeggiani, Secretary