



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Faculty Senate

Summary of Meeting • February 28, 2020

Presentation from the President: Joseph M. McShane, S.J., addressed the Senate. He acknowledged the passing of Rosemary Santana Cooney, who served for many years as associate dean of Fordham College at Rose Hill, and Richard Regan, S.J., a former member of the Spellman Hall Jesuit community. Fr. McShane reported on his recent work in Albany as chair of the Commission of Independent Colleges and Universities. Approximately a third of independent higher education institutions in New York State are feeling financial distress. The governor has proposed an extension of the Excelsior scholarship program, and budget negotiations are ongoing. Fr. McShane noted that Fordham's fundraising has been particularly strong this year and that numbers of undergraduate applications are in general holding steady.

University Response to Coronavirus

Both Fr. McShane and Dennis C. Jacobs spoke about Fordham's preparations in connection with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. No cases have been reported in New York State, but several study-abroad programs in which Fordham students were enrolled have been closed; the University has made arrangements for affected students, either placing them in other programs or facilitating their return to campus. Summer and fall admissions to some study abroad programs have also been halted.

- Dr. Jacobs commented that the University is planning for the worst but hoping for the best. He observed that it is realistic to expect that the Centers for Disease Control and local health departments may at some point instruct Fordham and other schools and universities to discontinue classes on campus. The provost's office is developing an instructional continuity plan and will equip all instructors with the tools and training necessary to migrate classes online or develop other substitutes for face-to-face contact.
- Both Fr. McShane and Dr. Jacobs noted the potential impact of the coronavirus on future enrollments, especially graduate and undergraduate students from mainland China, as well as on budgets and revenue.

A robust conversation ensued. Senators expressed a variety of points of view about the virus outbreak and possible contingencies for Fordham. Senators asked Dr. Jacobs to ensure that all instructors, including graduate students and part-time instructors, are kept informed of developments. Dr. Jacobs welcomed suggestions of tools that would help faculty ensure instructional continuity. The situation is fluid, indeed changing by the day.

Provost's Report: In addition to his remarks about the coronavirus, Dr. Jacobs commented on two further issues:

- **Phased Retirement:** The current phased retirement agreement expires this academic year, and a new agreement will need to be presented to the Board in September 2020. Dr. Jacobs does not predict changes to the substance of the agreement and will seek the Senate's feedback.
- **Strategic Planning:** A survey will soon be distributed to faculty, seeking input on expectations for a new center for teaching, learning, and pedagogy. Dr. Jacobs encouraged faculty to participate. He also sought nominations for a committee that he will charge to develop a long-term vision for Fordham's work in the sciences. At the same time, he is working with Facilities on refreshing the overall campus master plan.

Key Conversation: Salary and Benefits Negotiated Agreement

Senate President Keller introduced John Drummond and Ralf Hepp, who along with Senators Mozes and Rubin and Ida Bastiens, constitute the faculty negotiating team. Since fall 2019, the faculty team has been working with its counterparts from the administration on a three-year agreement concerning salary and benefits. Senate President Keller described the two goals that guided the faculty team's work: maintaining current levels of health insurance coverage and providing "money in the pocket," that is, a net increase in take-home pay after accounting for inflation and any increase in health insurance costs. She outlined the key provisions of the agreement:

- Annual increases of 3.25% to the total non-Law continuing faculty salary pool (the distribution of the increase to be recommended by the Faculty Salary and Benefits Committee to the Senate in April)
- A new Academic Pursuits Fund to reimburse each tenured/tenure-track faculty member for expenses related to teaching, research and service: \$500, \$525, and \$575 for the three years of the agreement

- A written commitment to a feasibility study with regard to childcare with full Senate participation
- Maintenance of the current Certificate of Coverage for health insurance
- A gradual increase in health insurance premium cost-sharing, from 15% to 16% and then 16.5%
- Continuation of the Medical Assistance Fund and Health Savings Accounts currently in place
- Decreased co-pays for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and chiropractic visits

Senate President Keller proposed two questions to evaluate the agreement: is it what the faculty ideally deserves, and does it offer an improvement over the current salary and benefits package? She noted that the Salary and Benefits Committee recommended it to the Senate by a split vote (9–4–0), which both acknowledges the agreement’s shortfalls, but also recognizes the real improvements it makes over the current package. She commended members of the administrative negotiating team, especially Kay Turner, Vice President for Human Resources, for their unfailing collegiality even at moments of significant disagreement over faculty compensation.

Dr. Hepp presented a series of detailed comparisons between the proposed agreement and the three-year agreement made in 2017. In real-dollar terms, and accounting for likely increases in health insurance premiums, the new agreement is expected to result in moderately higher take-home pay over the next three years.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Salary and Benefits Committee’s recommendation. A vibrant conversation ensued, which included the following points and observations:

- Senators applauded the faculty negotiating team’s work. Senators singled out the new Academic Pursuits Fund for particular praise and were assured that it does not replace existing forms of support for faculty.
- Members of the Salary and Benefits Committee spoke on behalf of colleagues who had voted against the agreement in the committee. The increase in cost-sharing for health insurance is not insubstantial, and increases in health insurance costs could consume gains in salary, especially if premiums continue to significantly outpace inflation. Committee members noted that Fordham’s overall benefits do not compare to those of many competitor institutions, including support for housing and childcare.
- In addition, members of Salary and Benefits noted, the faculty had lost significant ground in the 2017 negotiations, and while the new agreement is an improvement over its predecessor, it does not make up for years of less generous arrangements.
- Senators observed that faculty members’ workloads have increased greatly in proportion to compensation, especially in the context of new teaching methods, increased enrollments, and administrative duties.
- Senators asked about the implementation of several provisions of the agreement, especially with regard to the feasibility study on childcare. Next steps will include setting up a joint administration-faculty committee to choose the consultant to be hired on childcare, as well as establishing an overall University Healthcare Committee.

The question was called (18–0–0), and the resolution to accept the Salary and Benefits Committee’s recommendation was adopted (13–4–0, with one Law Senator not voting).

Senators thanked Senate President Keller and the members of the faculty negotiating team, and Senate President Keller observed that the negotiations had proceeded with mutual respect and clear communication on both sides.

Approval of Minutes: The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting held on January 24, 2020 (13–0–2).

Amended Revised Statute: Committee on Student Experience

Senator Jones, as chair of the Student Life Committee, presented a minor adjustment to a recently approved revision to the statute governing the committee. The Senate approved the amended statute (15–0–0).

Announcements: Senate President Keller indicated that the follow-up conversation on procedures for promotion applications after tenure would be postponed to the Senate’s March meeting. Several announcements were made.