



# FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Faculty Senate

## President's Report and Q&A

Fr. Joseph McShane's remarks addressed the following topics:

- *Covid-19* – The University has required universal re-entry testing after the Thanksgiving recess. In the first days of testing after the break, 13 Covid-19 cases among staff and students (not faculty) have been detected out of 4250+ tests performed (0.3% positivity rate). Universal re-entry testing will also be required after the upcoming holiday season and after spring break. Vaccination and testing will not be available during the University's holiday closing.
- *Admissions* – Notification of the University's admission decision on early action will be sent out on December 15. The "regular action" phase has now begun, with increased application activity expected in January. Fr. McShane will be travelling in California, an increasingly significant source of applications, in January. Undergraduate enrollment target for next year is 2400 students.
- *Fundraising* – The capital campaign "Cura Personalis" should reach the \$200 million benchmark by the end of this year.
- *Suspended Retirement Contributions* – The restoration of the retirement contributions that were suspended last year will be completed in February.

Fr. McShane ended by mentioning the importance of the curriculum for creating an inclusive, diverse and welcoming community.

## Provost's Report and Q&A

Dr. Dennis Jacobs' remarks addressed Covid-19 and related matters.

- *Testing* – Notwithstanding concerns about returning to campus after Thanksgiving, the low positivity rate in the first days of testing after break is encouraging and confirms the effectiveness of the mitigating measures the University has adopted, from universal vaccination to mandatory masking.
- *International Travel* – As of December 6, by Executive Order of President Biden, everyone will need to show proof of a negative Covid-19 test – taken no more than 1 day prior to travelling – or recovery from Covid-19 before boarding a flight for the U.S. Decisions at the federal level impact Fordham. According to the University's new policy on international travel established in July 2021 due to the pandemic, faculty members must request and be granted written permission for University-sponsored international travel in order to be reimbursed. In response to a Senator's question, Dr. Jacobs explained that the University has focused on international travel because returning to work for those who travel internationally may be affected more severely given federal travel policies, and that returning to a pre-Covid academic travel system will depend on the development of the pandemic and related CDC guidance, and federal and local regulations.
- *Study Abroad* – Given the current uncertainties due to the new variant and uptick of Covid-19 cases in several regions, the list of approved study abroad locations and programs may be revised.
- *Students in Difficulty and Distress* – Senators expressed deep concerns for the mental health conditions of undergraduate and graduate students (the latter in their onerous role as students and instructors) this semester, particularly as the term comes to an end, and made some suggestions to address them: instituting peer support and greater time-management support; creating an online venue for faculty to share tips and best practices; addressing mental health issues at the curricular level. Dr. Jacobs shared their concerns. A larger number of undergraduate students appear to have withdrawn from courses compared to past years, which may be a signal of students' distress. Academic advising, counseling and online tutoring services are in place to help them. Dr. Jonathan Crystal, Vice Provost, also noted that the undergraduate Deans have instituted workshops for students and that Assistant Deans for Student Success and Support are specifically addressing these matters at RH and LC. Dr. Jacobs agreed on the need for long-term planning, to develop better coordination and a more effective support system.

## Report on the Composition of the Faculty

Dr. Ben Crooker, Associate Vice President for Faculty Personnel, gave his annual presentation on the composition of the faculty and instructional staff. Dr. Crooker noted the impact of last year's hiring freeze on the number of

new full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty this year. He also observed that 33 searches were authorized this year, while uncertainties persist for next year. Because of this year's larger enrollment, the number of full-time non-tenure-stream faculty is larger than last year. In the ensuing discussion, Senators stressed the need for a more comprehensive picture of faculty composition, including data on part-time instructors, and added that in the context of an increasing student population, the continued and increasing overreliance on part-time and full-time non-tenure-stream faculty defies the University's strategic educational goals. Dr. Crooker indicated that the new adjunct contracts have helped improve the quality of teaching, and that while the hire of full-time tenure-stream faculty remains a priority, filling full-time positions has become increasingly difficult.

#### Updates on Teaching and Learning Center and IT Initiatives

- *Teaching and Learning Center* – Dr. Eva Badowska, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Associate Vice President, Arts and Sciences, and Mr. Anand Padmanabhan, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, overviewed the vision and planning for a new teaching and learning center. Since last July, a committee set up by the Provost has been at work on gathering and evaluating data. As currently envisioned, this center would be a space “by and for those who teach and learn,” a community of practice focused on peer support, teaching experimentation, and innovation, as well as a place where faculty could easily access resources. It will be founded on the principles of “transformative education” and “education for justice,” and in line with the Ignatian mission. Further planning is expected in the spring.
- *IT Initiatives* – Mr. Padmanabhan also overviewed IT's rich portfolio of recently implemented, ongoing and future initiatives, including the reorganization of IT, whose new structure will be shared with the community in the spring; technology upgrades for 21 classrooms; Fordham's participation in the Internet 2 consortium; the Laptop First initiative; the streamlining of undergraduate workflow across colleges and schools; and a tutoring platform for FCRH and FCLC. The Graduate School of Education has begun moving some of their online programs from 2U to Blackboard Ultra. The Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education and Arts & Sciences will also transition to this platform next year. Learning and Innovation Technology Environment (LITE) programming is also moving forward. Faculty have noted several issues with Fordham's new portal, including great fragmentation and redundancies. Improvement is ongoing based on faculty feedback.

#### Report from Faculty Members of the Budget Planning Committee

Faculty members provided a contextualized and detailed analysis of the data that the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer shared with the Committee and presented at the Budget Forum of November 17. They expressed grave concerns about decision-making processes, which undermine the Committee's statutory responsibilities and infringe on the key principle of shared governance.

#### Other Matters:

- The Senate elected to the University Tenure Review Committee (UTRC) the following faculty members: Dr. Glenn Hendler (A&S/RH), Dr. Grace Shen (A&S/RH), and Dr. Fuhua Zhai (GSSS).
- The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting of November 12, 2021.
- The Committee on Student Experience is seeking faculty's suggestions on the language and format of a practical faculty guide to avoid the recurrence of racially-biased behaviors and the resulting sense of harm that students perceived as reported on social media by Fordham students and alumni/ae in the summer of 2020. Faculty members should contact Senator Jones.