



# FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Faculty Senate

Senators and guests (Dr. Shannon Magari, Principal and Vice President, Colden Corporation, Dr. Dennis Jacobs, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Mr. Marco Valera, Vice President for Administration & COVID-19 Coordinator) overviewed and discussed two main topics: the booster mandate and the University's decision for in-person teaching at the very start of the semester.

Evidence shows the waning of the immunological efficacy of Covid-19 vaccines over time. Boosters strengthen the body's immune response to Covid and as such help slow down transmission of the disease while preventing public and private health systems from being overwhelmed. From a public health perspective, boosters are a safe and effective tool against transmission and spread of new variants although more data is needed on the effects of overexposure to polyethylene glycol (PEG) through mRNA-based vaccines and the risks of over-vaccination.

Senators challenged the validity of the booster mandate as it is based on earlier or insufficient data rather than on more recent and current research, which shows the short-lived efficacy of boosters against Covid variants and their limits in the face of the greater contagiousness of the Omicron variant also in vaccinated individuals. It was pointed out, however, that institutions find themselves in the critical position of making decisions for the future based on the available data.

Some suggested that the booster mandate also raises ethical questions about respecting individuals' consent to procedures that have medical implications, and appears to be misaligned with Fordham's commitment to social justice since, as reported by the World Health Organization, many in the world still have no access to vaccines and have not been vaccinated.

The Administration's decision to immediately return to in-person teaching rather than transitioning to it through a period of online teaching was driven by consideration of Fordham's mission to provide quality education and commitment to creating a safe working and living environment for the community. The mitigating measures (including the booster mandate) that the University has adopted following CDC, NYS and NYC Departments of Health recommendations, and in dialogue with other institutions of higher education, serve these interconnected purposes. Moreover, current data shows that we may be coming out of the most recent surge of the pandemic.

Senators objected that the adopted policy for in-person teaching does not adequately consider faculty members' and students' concerns about their safety and needs dictated by personal and household circumstances.

Individuals can petition for a mandate exemption through Human Resources, but the process, which involves a third-party review of the provided documentation, is cumbersome, rigid and not at all clear. Senators underlined the need for a streamlined and clearer exemption and accommodation process, more flexible and attuned with individual household situations and cases, in addition to better communication and support.

The Senate extended the meeting to allow for further discussion. The Senate was in executive session from 2:48 p.m. to 3:12 p.m, during which time there was discussion of the status, openness, and process of the Presidential search and the booster mandate.

Upon exiting executive session, the Senate passed the following three resolutions:

*#1 In light of the data, comments and concerns discussed and expressed at the Special Senate meeting held on January 14, the Senate requests that the Administration retract the decision to mandate booster vaccinations for the Fordham community and replace it with a very strong recommendation to receive the booster shot. (12-3-2)*

*#2 In light of the data, comments and concerns discussed and expressed at the Special Senate meeting held on January 14, the Senate requests that the Administration permit faculty members to choose their teaching modality for the first two weeks of the spring semester. (16-0-0)*

*#3 The Senate requests that faculty representation on the committee that is involved in decisions regarding the University's planning to deal with the Covid pandemic be restored. (15-0-0)*