

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES FACULTY MEETING OF MAY 7, 2014:

A DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT LEE BOLLINGER

Jack Snyder (Political Science), chair of the A&S Policy and Planning Committee, began the meeting shortly after 12:10 pm in 207 Low Library. About 100 people were present.

Prof. Snyder said that after a few introductory remarks, he would turn the meeting over to President Bollinger, and ask him to address any issues the faculty wanted to raise.

Prof. Snyder reported that Prof. Susan Pedersen, chair of the Educational Policy and Planning Committee, would be writing to the faculty to try to tie up some of the loose ends from the last meeting (on April 23), which had focused on an EPPC proposal to standardize point values for courses.

Turning to the present meeting, Prof. Snyder said there are now many accomplishments for the university to celebrate, including new highs in the reputation of Columbia College, the launch of the Northwest Corner building, and the completion of a \$6.1 billion capital campaign. But such successes mean there are ever higher standards to maintain, and more serious challenges to both the central administration and the Arts and Sciences to provide space, and keep up with better-endowed peer institutions in the financial aid race. Partly because of these pressures, Columbia has the highest term bill in the nation, and A&S struggles with stringent budgets to provide new labs, retain the best faculty, and repair decrepit buildings.

Prof. Snyder said there has been some help from Central, which provided funding for a Clean Room that was urgently needed by science departments. But recent difficulties in retaining and replacing faculty have hurt Columbia's prestige. Columbia seeks to provide competitive benefits to faculty, but schools have to pay in to make use of programs like the New Housing Assistance Plan, and A&S is unable to participate meaningfully in the new mortgage assistance program.

To overcome this situation of financial stringency, the central administration needs to coordinate its fundraising initiatives with A&S fundraising efforts, including the A&S Science Initiative, as well as prospective initiatives in the humanities and social sciences.

Prof. Snyder said President Bollinger told the PPC that it is much easier to raise funds for ideas to solve high-profile practical problems than for routine needs of basic scholarship. Prof. Snyder characterized the president's solution as pursuing splashy initiatives—in personalized medicine, or global issues—and then using them to spin off funds for core needs. Prof. Snyder said one reality of the spin-off strategy is that high-profile central initiatives tend to take on a life of their own and become difficult to coordinate with A&S objectives. Aspirations to spin off core A&S funding from a centrally devised research enterprise like the Mind Brain Behavior Institute have proven difficult to achieve in reality.

Prof. Snyder posed two questions:

1. How can central initiatives be synchronized with A&S core needs, both intellectually and institutionally?

2. How can A&S departments be sustained while waiting for longer-term fundraising initiatives to come to fruition?

Remarks from President Bollinger. The president said he hoped to avoid a discussion of the form “We need X,” focusing instead on such questions as “Where are we going?” and “How do things fit together?” and “What are the serious new areas of knowledge and how do we adjust to them?”

Dean searches. The president said Steve Coll, appointed a year a year ago to succeed Nicholas Lemann as Journalism dean, is trying to integrate his curriculum with the offerings of the Engineering School and A&S departments. Mary Boyce, the new dean of SEAS, is establishing connections with the Medical Center and Arts and Sciences. The president anticipated that the new focus on data science will have a major impact on A&S disciplines. SIPA dean Merit Janow is focusing on new initiatives in public policy and technology, central banking and finance. She has made an important appointment of a new faculty member from Tokyo. The new Law School dean, Gillian Lester from Berkeley, has several intellectual interests, but one priority will be to integrate the school more closely into the university and the Arts and Sciences, partly through more flexible cross-registration. Law will also be focusing on globalization and public interest initiatives.

The president said the search for a new Architecture School dean has been somewhat complex, but is now down to three finalists. He hoped to announce the new dean in May.

Sexual assault policy. The president said he had just come from a difficult, complex meeting on sexual assault policy. He said this is a troublesome, serious issue. Many aspects of current policies are under review, or in transition.

Affirmative action and the Supreme Court. The president said he has been monitoring recent Supreme Court deliberations on affirmative action in college admissions.

Discussion. Stefan Andriopoulos (Germanic Languages) emphasized the importance of supporting the core needs of A&S. Taking up Professor Snyder's introductory remarks on the challenge of sustaining A&S until the revenue from longer-term fundraising materializes, he suggested that fundraising is important, but that it cannot be the only answer to the precarious budget situation of A&S. At the heart of that problem is the balanced budget that has been negotiated between the central university and A&S. Strikingly, this agreement provides for a fixed level of central support for A&S year after year, at the same time that costs paid by A&S to the central university are growing by 5 percent annually. The fixed budget of A&S is therefore actually shrinking, and rethinking that agreement may be as important as fundraising.

The president said he wanted to make a clear statement: fundraising for large thematic initiatives is not the only fundraising that the university does; such efforts are built on a commitment to meet fundamental needs. He said the \$6.1 billion raised in the last nine years in the Campaign for Columbia are a stunning result, a phenomenal number for Columbia, which has not had that kind of relationship with its alumni in years past. He said the Campaign was centered on basic needs, with some 600 professorships, and a large proportion for financial aid.

But he added that the big gifts tend to support big thematic initiatives. He said the current effort in personalized medicine will be shaped in such a way as to help enormously in meeting basic needs.

The president said that new fundraising efforts are pooling the resources of Columbia College and the Arts and Sciences for the first time, building on cooperative efforts in recent years by former CC Dean Austin Quigley and former A&S EVP Nick Dirks.

The president said that in past years a difficult issue was what was sometimes called the structural A&S deficit. There was a feeling among the A&S faculty that the deficit was a way for Central to control A&S. This situation was ended a few years ago with a regular annual transfer from Central to A&S designed to provide a stable budget. There are also ways to supplement these transfers, with new revenue streams. In addition, Central stands ready to help in critical situations, as with the \$9.1 million Clean Room.

Ann McDermott (Chemistry) thanked the PPC for convening the faculty to address the issue of the A&S budget. She said our shared sense of excellence at Columbia of course includes excellence in science. However, in the science departments there has been a great deal of worry recently about the problem of replacing faculty, because there has been ambiguity and delay in approving replacement positions.

Science faculty worry about the capacity of the budget to support their enterprise, Prof. McDermott said. Part of the problem is the operating budget, where there is almost no margin. But capital projects (with the added problem of deferred maintenance) may be equally important, and unresolved. To solve that problem, the central administration needs to authorize A&S to take on debt.

The president said the central administration will take care of the debt capacity problem. Central has also spoken with A&S about helping with recruitments. He said the provost had helped out with recent retention efforts; when that didn't work out, the provost made a commitment to help with the next recruitment effort. He said this is a new development for A&S, and for the sciences.

Provost John Coatsworth confirmed that he is working together with EVP Madigan on a financial plan that would provide Arts and Sciences with the additional debt capacity to invest in science facilities and recruiting. He cited central administration support for recent science hiring and retentions as well as the recent \$9.1 million commitment to complete and equip the new nanoscience Clean Room, mentioned by the president.

Victoria de Grazia (History) said there has been a great deal of talk of a crisis in the humanities. She said it would be difficult to address that, given the president's fundraising model. She said the big initiatives sound like the trickle-down approach. And how would the humanities and social sciences benefit?

She said faculty in the humanities and social sciences have worked hard to win outside funding. But the result is typically a "boutique" operation, not a large-scale, corporate-style initiative. Grand initiatives may not be the best way to pursue research in these fields. She asked the president how he saw this problem, and how the current system could be reformed.

The president said he did not want to focus only on big fundraising initiatives. The university has to have such projects. The globalization and genomics efforts are genuinely important, and it is his

responsibility to anticipate and organize such opportunities. But it is crucial to retain the university's fundamental priorities.

As for the humanities, the president said he envied them, because faculty in these fields get to ask the most interesting questions. When he thinks of globalization, the key disciplines are in the humanities and social sciences, and he is always trying to incorporate them. He is always ready—in fact, eager—to raise money for such projects. But that said, it is necessary to integrate the core activities with the larger thematic initiatives.

The president said his sense is that economics is the leading public discipline of the current period, with a dominant influence on the structuring of organizations around the world. He said he admires economics, but considers this prominent placement somewhat out of balance. His own view, acknowledging his professional bias, is that much more is needed from law as an intellectual discipline—a message he has conveyed to Columbia's law faculty. However Columbia decides to go forward, it must achieve greater integration among its intellectual disciplines.

Page Fortna (Political Science) asked two questions:

1. Columbia just completed a \$6.1 billion capital campaign, but Arts and Sciences seems to be broke. What explains the discrepancy?
2. Recent developments on the issue of sexual abuse, or assault, are of deep concern to the faculty. What is being done about this?

The president recognized a basic incongruity between the image of bins of money received through the capital campaign and the reality of constrained budgets. He explained that a good deal of the \$6.1 billion total is in pledges, estate plans, and endowments. But he said there has also been enormous development success over the last 10 years in Arts and Sciences and Columbia College, with many new professorships and centers. Some \$400 million have been raised for Morningside campus sciences in the last 7-8 years.

The president said Columbia had to start from a much lower base than top peer institutions. He recalled the basic fact that in 1950 Columbia and Harvard had roughly the same amount of endowment. But Columbia was essentially bankrupt in 1980, and a few years later sold the land under Rockefeller Center, partly to create a \$300 million endowment. That endowment is now about \$8 billion; Harvard's is now about \$38 billion.

The president said Columbia competes now at the highest level, among the top five or six universities. But it is always scrambling to catch up, and it always feels as if Columbia is behind.

On sexual assault policy, the president said many improvements are needed, and are currently under consideration.

1. The administration is now responding to calls for the release of additional aggregate data on complaints of sexual assault and other kinds of misconduct at Columbia. It is critical to maintain the privacy of individuals—both accusers and accused—and there are a number of legal and ethical issues. But the president planned to release as much data as possible. He had just received a report from the Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault (PACSA) on this issue. There will be a data release after the end of the academic year.

2. Reforms in the composition and deliberations of PACSA itself. The University Senate had approved a resolution reducing the membership of PACSA but increasing the fraction of faculty and student members, and requiring more transparency in its deliberations, with regular reports to the Senate.
3. The location and availability of the Rape Crisis Center, which is now in a Barnard building that requires students to swipe a CUID. There are also calls for professional staffing of the center and additional hours of availability.
4. Education and prevention programs. Current discussion is focusing on strengthening prevention training during the New Student Orientation Program in August and throughout the year.
5. Adjudication. Are investigators and hearing panelists sufficiently trained for their roles? There are also discussions about sanctions, as well as the appeals process, particularly the question of who should make final decisions on appeals.

The president said the question of sexual misconduct policy reform is conceptually difficult, particularly because many complaints involve crimes, which require a significant burden of proof in the criminal justice system. The reality is that Columbia has a situation in which crimes or near-crimes are occurring in significant quantities year in and year out. Sexual assault incidents are much graver than other kinds of misconduct that Columbia's disciplinary system has to address.

How should a university deal with such a situation? The president noted that some have said the university should just get out of adjudication altogether, confining itself to a support role for the participants in the process. The president said he does not share this view. He said the university will continue to adjudicate allegations of sexual misconduct, but will think through this role more carefully than before. He said a more professionalized system may be needed.

The president said more thought must also be devoted to questions of prevention, education, and campus culture—particularly the role of alcohol abuse in sexual misconduct. In a recent conversation with student leaders he heard that the administration has waged a kind of “war on fun” in recent years, effectively inhibiting customary student drinking patterns and pushing students toward out-of-control binge drinking. The president said he has to think about this issue, and talk to students more.

The president said sexual assault seems to be most prevalent among undergraduates. He said orientation programs need to be rethought.

The president said there is now a federal complaint against Columbia, and there may be Congressional hearings on campus sexual assault. He said the university will do everything it can on this issue every week. It will not be deterred by legal issues over the pitfalls of admitting fault.

Colin Nuckolls (Chemistry) said he was on a committee on the sciences led by former provost Claude Steele in 2010-11. Its report, which offered recommendations for raising the stature of the sciences at Columbia, was largely ignored. Since then, important faculty members in condensed-

matter physics and in chemistry have left Columbia. Prof. Nuckolls asked the president what his aspirations are for basic sciences, and what his plans are for funding them.

There was applause.

The president said the funding commitment to the natural sciences is huge. He added that he should have noted in previous remarks that transfers from the central administration to A&S are substantial, and have drawn objections or expressions of concern from other Columbia schools. In recent retention cases, the president said the administration did get involved, assembling a package of support. It has also supported recent efforts to recruit two scientists from Cornell. A fund-raising position dedicated to the natural sciences has also been allocated. Meetings with donors have been arranged.

EVP Madigan added his view that the current A&S Science Initiative is a more coherent and focused version of the proposal of three years ago, with better prospects for success.

Ruben Gonzalez (Chemistry) understood that part of the idea behind the fundraising initiative in personalized medicine was to use it to fund some of the basic sciences. But what happens to the rest of the sciences?

The president repeated his earlier statement that a fundraiser has been assigned specifically to the A&S science initiative. He said fundraising for the sciences can be a particular challenge. Prospects sometimes feel too ignorant to understand the problem that a major gift could address. But Columbia is committed to new fields. A university-wide initiative can be exciting for donors. In just the previous 24 hours, in different meetings, he had asked for gifts of \$50 million and \$100 million.

William Zajc (Physics) appreciated the help of the central administration in recent retention cases. But he added that the horse had left the barn by that point. He said the underlying issue is decades of under-investment in the sciences. What would be particularly helpful for future retentions would be a personal commitment from the president to the A&S science initiative, of the kind he had made to the initiative in personalized medicine.

The president said that he was just as committed to the science initiative as he was to personalized medicine. He said he began helping with the A&S Science Initiative a year ago, when the project's co-leaders, A&S sciences dean Amber Miller and EVP for Research Michael Purdy, reported a loss of momentum to him. He said this kind of fundraising can take time. One never knows when the gift is coming.

Christia Mercer (Philosophy) said with such enormous funds at Columbia's disposal, it is disconcerting that faculty have to raise money just to do their jobs. As she looked around her, she saw colleagues who do excellent research and teaching in philosophy, Slavic literature, British history, but they aren't doing anything that might be considered splashy. Why should they need to do splashy things to get funding? They should be supported for doing their jobs well.

Prof. Mercer said faculty are so stretched that it's becoming harder and harder to get them to teach in the Core Curriculum. As chair of Literature Humanities, she has had to resort to hiring adjuncts, who are paid \$6000. This creates a real appearance-reality problem for the Core.

Prof. Mercer said the situation is so dire some that some people in the room were looking for jobs elsewhere. A good example of the difficulty for faculty at Columbia is that other major institutions—including state schools like the Universities of Virginia or Tennessee—top up major grants. Columbia does not top up prestigious awards like Guggenheim or National Humanities Center grants, or others. Prof. Mercer said it is not a professor's job to seek the additional funding necessary to bring a grant up to the level of his or her salary.

There was applause.

The president said Prof. Snyder and others had characterized his model of fundraising as driven by splashy ideas and a trickle-down approach. He had already said several times that the needs to be addressed first are basic academic needs. The university is committed to this priority.

Provost Coatsworth said that he thought Arts and Sciences did have a policy of topping off major awards such as Guggenheim fellowships; EVP Madigan agreed, but said he needed to look further into the matter.

Prof. Mercer said faculty are not seeing the results. She recalled that while she was on a Guggenheim recently she had no money from Columbia and even had to fight to retain her health benefits.

EVP Madigan said the problem of supporting the work of faculty has to be better addressed.

Julie Crawford (English) addressed the questions of governance and transparency, and financial support for faculty projects. She said people in the humanities have ideas, not necessarily ones tied to extant fundraising initiatives. She referred to Prof. de Grazia's earlier remarks about a faculty-driven process of developing support for a project, and the administrative burdens of making it work. She called for a better way to pursue faculty members' ideas.

The president said he wanted to meet more often with faculty in the humanities. He said there are fundraisers available to help with their initiatives. He said some people in the room with ideas have communicated them to him. He has helped with some of these, and stands ready to help now.

The president said that it is his responsibility to articulate an overall fundraising vision and strategy, but that he sees the process of developing the strategy as fully participatory.

Jean Howard (English) said the question for her was, Is the faculty being supported in its daily work? Her answer was that time spent in research and teaching is not sufficiently supported. She said there has been a rhetorical shift over the last decade, from speaking of the Arts and Sciences as the core of the university to speaking of it as a Columbia school like any other, a tub on its own bottom. But the Arts and Sciences is not just another school. It is the carrier of the university's core values: it expresses Columbia's commitment to diversity through its generous financial aid policies; it nurtures the liberal arts ideal through its small classes for incoming freshmen and sophomores, and it is responsible for sustaining a world-class graduate school. These activities are expensive and require sustained subsidies. These subsidies are justified if, indeed, the president and provost believe the Arts and Sciences is the heart of the university.

There was applause.

The president said that he believes that, and that he thought Prof. Howard knew he believes it. He said he had never said that A&S is just another school. On the contrary, he has always affirmed the centrality of A&S. He repeated his earlier statement that the idea of an autonomous A&S budget was not to send A&S off on its own, but to correct the longstanding perception of a chronic budget deficit as a way to keep A&S under the thumb of the central administration. The president said he believes in the importance of self-governance for A&S, particularly in curricular matters.

Robert Pollack (Biology) said the annual term bill in the College 30 years ago was about \$20K. Now it's \$60K. What is the business plan for preserving full-need, need-blind admissions? He asked how Columbia can justify the core if students must incur such massive debt in order to study it here.

The president said he is committed to need-blind financial aid for Columbia College students. He supports the same goal for international students, for GS students, for School of the Arts students. He said he works on this problem every week. He noted that in 2008 he increased the commitment to financial aid to a level that has stretched the resources of the university and its schools. Particularly troublesome is the predicament of middle-income families, for which he does not now have a solution.

Cathy Popkin (Slavic Languages) noted a pattern in meetings with the president—faculty raise concerns, and he says comforting things. But she worried that outside of the room, the Arts and Sciences is in free fall. She expressed dissatisfaction with some recent explanations of A&S budget troubles, which sounded to her like blaming the victim—that the School of Continuing Education is failing to meet its revenue targets, and that there is infighting between the College and A&S, a problem they have to work out before more support is warranted.

The president said he had never said that. He had said that the cultural rift between A&S and the College must be addressed. It's a complex problem, unique to Columbia. He said there has been important progress on this issue, with good cooperation among Deans Valentini and Alonso and EVP Madigan. He said these relationships have entered a new era. Former College dean Austin Quigley had done much work to convince alumni to support the broader needs of the A&S faculty. The president himself had met many times with the College Board of Visitors, and was confident that things were now moving in the right direction.

The president said longstanding conflicts between the College and A&S had been deeply distressing to him. He thought internal governance was working well in A&S, particularly with the Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) and the Educational Policy and Planning Committee (EPPC). A lot of work had gone into this.

The president said the School of Continuing Education (SCE) certainly is not foundering, but has enormous potential. He said EVP Madigan is the most knowledgeable person on the capacity and future of SCE. He said Columbia is committed to bringing the most gifted faculty and students together for the best possible educational experience, but only fully reaches that goal a fraction of the time.

The president said Columbia also has an obligation to share its knowledge with the world, without undermining its basic disciplines. It also needs the revenue streams to support that enterprise. The potential for revenue growth from SCE is enormous.

Michele Moody-Adams (Philosophy) asked the president how he envisions the future of the core curriculum.

The president said he had been working on the Core since his arrival at Columbia. He said the Core is here, and he has no plans to undermine it in any way. One way to assure its future is to endow it.

The president said he also favors the idea of an active, continuing debate about the content of the Core—perhaps every year—to assure its vitality over time. He resists the idea that such a discussion would somehow damage the Core.

The allotted time having been exceeded, the discussion concluded before all those with questions could be recognized. The discussion was followed by applause.

Thanks to PPC members. Prof. Snyder thanked outgoing PPC members Robert Friedman and Cathy Popkin for their service and added that he would be rotating off the committee as well. He also explained that there would be three new representatives from among the department chairs and three more new members elected from among the tenured faculty.

He adjourned the meeting shortly after 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson