

November 30, 2011

Letter from the PPC

Dear Colleagues:

Many thanks to those of you who attended the Arts and Sciences Faculty meeting on November 14. The impressive turnout alone spoke volumes about the extent of faculty commitment to the future of our academic programs and concerns about the erosion of our quality of life. The potent statements from the floor about rising health- and child-care costs, untenable housing policies, poorly structured pension plans, and cuts in retiree medical subsidies underscored the urgency of the faculty's concerns.

Indeed, in his own remarks, Interim Provost John Coatsworth's acknowledged his uneasiness with a number of the recommendations of the Benefits Task Force, agreed that the recent changes in housing policy do not withstand scrutiny, and lucidly articulated the problems raised by the whole complex of issues related to retirement. Nevertheless, while the Interim Provost's responsiveness is good news, and while we appreciate his frank summary of the problems involved, we have been asked to wait until spring for solutions. It was bracing to learn that no one will be asked to move into a smaller apartment as long as John Coatsworth is Interim Provost, for instance, yet the University has no plans to build or acquire additional housing stock to relieve the very real shortage of apartments in Morningside Heights. Neither does there appear to be any intention of restructuring the mortgage assistance program to make it a more realistic option. And while we might be relieved that this year's predicted increase in health-insurance premiums was mitigated by the unanticipated discovery of \$30 million that could help close the gap, a one-time windfall is hardly a long-term plan.

In the wake of that meeting, the PPC has received numerous letters from the faculty about the importance of these unresolved issues and about the process of faculty involvement in key decisions. Many have also suggested that we hold a meeting for faculty alone in order to discuss these issues amongst ourselves and to facilitate greater input from the faculty at large. We have scheduled this meeting for Friday, December 9, 12:00 – 1:15 in 309 Havemeyer.

In order to construct an agenda for the meeting—and to make the session as substantive and as productive as possible—we ask for your input in advance in the form of specific proposals and points for discussion. These may be sent via email to PPCASCU@gmail.com. For your reference, we expect that the minutes of the November 14th meeting (which addressed a number of issues besides benefits) will soon be available on the A&S website.

Sincerely,

Faculty Members of PPC
Ann McDermott, Chair
Teodolinda Barolini
Peter Bearman
Robert Friedman
Cathy Popkin
Michael Riordan
Jack Snyder
Philip Watts
William Zajc