

FAS-SEAS Senate Meeting

May 5, 2026

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM: Closed Meeting – Senators Only

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM: Open meeting

Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue,

And on Zoom

Minutes

APPROVED

Present:

Chair Marijeta Bozovic and Deputy Chair Maria Piñango, Dinny Aletheiana, Casey Dunn, Michael Farina, Michael Fischer, Beverly Gage, Amir Haji-Akbari, Sonam Kachru, Michael Loewenberg, Rourke O'Brien, David Post, Claire Roosien, Stephen Slade, Kathryn Slanski, Brett Smith, Mark Solomon, Meg Urry, Robert Wooster, Jing Yan

Absent:

Cynthia DeRoma, Alessandro Giammei, Alison Sweeney

Guests: Ghazia Abbas, Phil Acimovic, Neta Alexander, Tarren Andrews, Mansi Bajai, Sean Barrett, Tim Barron, Kate Battle Horgen, Lucas Bender, Beth Bennett, Christian Cammarota, Emily Coates, Vanetta Dayal, Kevin Ennis, Alessandro Gomez, Roy Lederman, Megann Licskai, Mark Mooseker, Laura Nasrallah, Hiroyo Nishimura, Patrick Reilly, Julia Titus, Tony Smith, Lisa Voigt, Steven Wilkinson, Jonathan Wyrzten, Mo Wu, Orit Yeret

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM: Closed Session

FAS-SEAS Senate Chair **Marijeta Bozovic** called the closed portion of the FAS-SEAS Senate meeting to order at 3:30 PM. There was a discussion on proposed changes for the FAS-SEAS Senate By-laws regarding the election process and the make-up of the Executive Council.

Regarding the upcoming Senate election, **Ms. Bozovic** noted that we have the right number of candidates that fit the open slots, and that there may not be a need to hold a formal election.

Robert Wooster, Chair of the Elections Committee and Outreach Committee explained that if we hold a formal election, the outcome would be the same as if we did not hold a formal election. The meeting focused on discussing the Senate election process and results and it was noted that there were 10 outgoing senators and 10 incoming senators, with 4 seeking another term and 6 nominees accepting the nomination. The group debated whether to hold a formal election given the predictable outcome, **David Post** noted that the Senate is an elected body and therefore needs to follow the procedures stated in the By-laws regarding elections. **Meg Urry** and **Beverly Gage** agreed. **Mark Solomon** made a motion to proceed with the normal election process, which was seconded, and the Senate will proceed with its formal election. The discussion highlighted the importance of following bylaws and maintaining the legitimacy of the elected body, even in uncontested races.

Ms. Bozovic led a discussion on the section of the By-laws regarding the make-up of the Executive Council (EC). The group discussed proposed changes to the EC structure, including making EC positions two-year terms instead of one-year terms. They debated different options for implementing these changes, including staggering terms and having the deputy chair transition to chair. **Mr. Solomon** suggested aligning the turnover dates for EC and Senate

positions to July 1st. The group agreed to form a subcommittee to draft proposed EC changes for the next Senate meeting, formalizing longer terms for EC positions to provide better stability and continuity suggesting a proposal for 2-year terms. **Beverly Gage** raised the point that the Senate chair should be treated like a department chair position with course release and stipend and **Ms. Bozovic** said she will investigate this.

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM: FAS-SEAS Senate meeting Open Session

FAS-SEAS Senate Chair **Marijeta Bozovic** called the open session of the FAS-SEAS Senate meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Topics discussed were:

- Report from Academic Freedom Committee
- Possible elimination of the *Yale Sustainable Food Program*
- Instructional Faculty Hiring letter
- Instructional Faculty Report

Gregory Huber, member of the Committee on the Principles of Academic Freedom talked about the committee's ongoing work to assess and protect academic freedom across the university, including their plans to survey faculty and conduct town halls.

There was an urgent presentation regarding the College Dean's Office's plans to eliminate the *Yale Sustainable Food Program's* academic mission and terminate its director, **Mark Bomford**, despite the possibility of a loyal donor's offering to cover the director's salary for five years (it was disclosed that the donor did not follow through with this offer.) The faculty committee requested Senate support through an open letter to the provost highlighting the program's academic value and calling for faculty consultation in budget-cutting decisions.

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Academic Freedom Committee Progress Update

The Academic Freedom Committee, chaired by **Gregory Huber**, provided an update on their progress in reviewing university policies and procedures that impact academic freedom. The committee has been conducting research, seeking input through surveys, and identifying potential areas of concern, including gift restrictions, human subjects' regulations, syllabus review committees, and faculty discipline processes. While the committee was specifically tasked not to write new faculty handbook language, they are considering highlighting existing areas in the handbook that raise concerns about academic freedom. The discussion included input from **Kathryn Slanski** about the vulnerability of contingent faculty regarding academic freedom protections, and **Alessandro Gomez** raised concerns about the committee's mandate restrictions, suggesting they could still propose faculty handbook revisions despite their charge. The committee plans to conduct surveys and interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators to gather insights on academic freedom challenges, including both internal and external threats. They aim to produce a report by December 2026 that will provide strong recommendations on protecting academic freedom, potentially influencing university policies and decision-making processes. The committee acknowledged the importance of including various perspectives, including those of graduate students, undergraduates, and staff, in their work.

Elizabeth Wood, co-director of the Program in Agrarian Studies, spoke of concerns about the potential loss of academic components of the *Yale Sustainable Food Program* and Yale Farm due to budget constraints. **Ms. Wood** explained how the *Sustainable Food Program*

complements graduate-level agrarian studies through undergraduate education and interdisciplinary collaboration and highlighted the program's unique value, particularly for Indigenous students and students of color. Participants discussed the urgency of the situation, as the program director's termination is scheduled for June 1st, and emphasized the need for an open letter to the provost as a fast action item particularly given its value in providing experiential learning opportunities for students and its potential impact on agriculture studies at the university. **Ms. Wood** emphasized the lack of communication from administrative authorities about the proposed changes and faculty expressed support for the program and discussed potential responses, including an open letter to the Yale College Dean's Office and emphasized the importance of faculty consultation in major budgetary decisions. Regarding the instructional faculty contract concerns, there was a discussion of two potential approaches to addressing instructional faculty and curriculum cuts. The first approach involved signing an existing AAUP open letter addressing specific cuts and requesting reversal of non-renewal decisions. The second approach focused on improving the process for future contract renewals and budget cuts, including early communication with chairs and providing clear guidelines for non-renewal decisions. Several participants expressed concerns about the process-heavy nature of the proposed approach and suggested involving faculty more directly in decision-making. The group considered whether to address these issues in a timely response or as part of a larger, multi-year shared governance report.

Regarding faculty cuts and union negotiations a discussion on concerns were made about faculty cuts, particularly in FAS where 37.5 positions were cut representing approximately 10% of instructional faculty. The group agreed on the need for an urgent open letter opposing additional cuts to faculty, while also planning a more comprehensive long-term report on instructional faculty that would include detailed data on terminated positions and cost savings. The discussion also covered upcoming postdoctoral union negotiations, with **Mark Solomon** proposing the creation of a faculty advisory committee to provide input on key negotiation points.

The meeting focused on planning three open letters addressing different university issues and scheduling upcoming Senate meetings. The group decided to hold a voting meeting on Zoom on Tuesday, May 12th from 3-4:30 PM to review drafts of open letters regarding the sustainable food program, instructional faculty non-renewals, and postdoctoral associations. The following is a list of next steps:

Next steps

Marijeta Bozovic:

- Send email to *Yale Sustainable Food Program* faculty contacts to coordinate information and support for the open letter.
- Schedule and announce a Senate Zoom meeting for Tuesday, May 12th, 3-4:30pm, to vote on three open letters and, if ready, proposed bylaw changes.
- Invite newly elected senators to the upcoming Zoom meeting (informational, non-voting).

Collaboration

- **Marijeta Bozovic** (and team): Draft and send out an open letter regarding the *Yale Sustainable Food Program* to the Provost and relevant administrators, incorporating input and data from faculty supporters, and coordinate with faculty for additional statistics/testimonials as needed.

- **David Post and Marijeta Bozovic:** Draft and circulate an open letter addressing instructional faculty cuts, incorporating suggestions for improved process and data on impact, and invite feedback from senators.
- **Mark Solomon and Jing Yan:** Draft and circulate an open letter regarding the postdoctoral union negotiations, suggesting the formation of a faculty advisory committee, and invite input from relevant faculty.
- **All senators:** Review the three draft open letters and provide feedback to the respective drafting leads by end of week.
- **All drafting leads:** Circulate final drafts of open letters and any proposed By-law changes to all senators by end of Friday, May 8th.
- All senators interested in running for Executive Council positions (Chair, Deputy Chair, etc.): Contact **Marijeta Bozovic** and the Executive Council to express interest.
- **Executive Council** (or designated subcommittee): Draft proposed bylaw changes regarding EC terms, structure, and transition dates, for review at upcoming meeting.
- **Senators:** At next meeting, discuss and vote on issuing the three open letters and any proposed By-law changes.
- **Marijeta Bozovic:** Plan for an end-of-year dinner party for Thursday, May 21st, 6pm, and coordinate with new senators for invitation.
- **Senate:** Consider scheduling an additional summer Zoom meeting if needed for By-laws votes or urgent business.
- **Senate:** Continue to collect and analyze data on instructional faculty cuts for a future, more comprehensive instructional faculty report.
- **Senate:** At next meeting, discuss formation and membership of a faculty advisory committee for postdoc union negotiations.

The FAS-SEAS Senate meeting was adjourned by Chair **Marijeta Bozovic** at 5:30 PM.