

## FAS-SEAS Senate Meeting

February 20, 2025

3:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Dow Hall, room 100 (370 Temple Street) and on Zoom

Minutes

APPROVED

### **Attendance:**

Mark Solomon, Chair; Marijeta Bozovic, Deputy Chair, Dinny Aletheiani, Neta Alexander, Michael Fischer, Alessandro Gomez, John Hall, Valerie Horsley, Michael Loewenberg, Maria Piñango, Constance Sherak, Kathryn Slanski, Jason Stanley, Alison Sweeney, Julia Titus, Rebecca Toseland, Meg Urry, Paul Van Tassel, Robert Wooster, Jing Yan, Mimi Yiengpruksawan

**Senators Absent:** Andrea Aldrich, Beverly Gage, Gerald Jaynes, Mordechai Levy Eichel

**Guests:** Sybil Alexandrov, Felicia Baynes-Ross, Jill Campbell, Hal Brooks, Gordon Geballe, Luna Nájera, Julian Posada, Bill Rankin, Julia Silvestri, Stephen Slade, Steven Wilkinson, and others.

### Chair's Comments:

**Mark Solomon**, chair of the FAS-SEAS Senate, called the meeting to order at 3:37 PM. **Mr. Solomon** reported that the Senate's Executive Council (EC) looked into the Senate's By-laws and determined, together with the Executive Council, that final draft documents should be shared to the Senate's website and available for all faculty prior to discussion. He explained that earlier drafts, however, are still subject to the Public Work of the Senate document which states "a report should not be communicated outside of the Senate" (draft documents that are still being worked on, not final drafts).

**Mr. Solomon** reported that the EC met with the AAUP Executive Council to discuss current priorities of each group. One common issue is the *Faculty Handbook*, and especially the idea that it should include a specific statement on academic freedom (as distinct from freedom of expression, which the *Handbook* does touch on). The two ECs will meet again in March.

**Mr. Solomon** asked Senate committees to consider goals for the rest of the academic year, and possibly include topics of current national concern such as threats to the University.

**Mr. Solomon** then presented the minutes for the January 17, 2024, FAS-SEAS Senate meeting, which were approved unanimously.

**Mr. Solomon** announced the Governance Committee plan to hold a faculty panel on March 3, 2025, to gather faculty to stand together in solidarity and to share fears and concerns about the changing national situation and its impact on Yale and other institutions of higher learning.

**Marijeta Bozovic** added that **Beverly Gage** will moderate the event, which will include speakers from different divisions and schools, to share how other faculty are experiencing or

imagining threats. **Ms. Bozovic** said the forum is for faculty to share information and strategize together across divisions and disciplines as we confront a moment of uncertainty and attack. The four confirmed speakers are **Roderick Ferguson**, Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; **Megan King**, Associate Professor of Cell Biology and of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology; **Anthony Leiserowitz**, Professor of Climate Communication at the School of the Environment; and **William Nordhaus**, Professor of Economics. It will be held in Luce Hall Auditorium and **Ms. Bozovic** urged everyone to attend.

#### Author Rights Policy discussion:

**Mr. Solomon** asked **Ms. Bozovic** to speak about the *Authors Rights Policy*. **Ms. Bozovic** noted that the *Authors Rights Policy* was introduced to the Senate by representatives of the Library who shared their sample draft for the Senate. She said that we have now drafted our statement, suggesting an author rights policy for Yale. **Paul Van Tassel** asked what the process would be beyond our recommendation. **Ms. Bozovic** said that the Library and Administration would likely take the next steps, but that the Senate's recommendation indicated faculty approval. **Mr. Solomon** asked for a vote, and the statement was unanimously accepted.

#### FAS Dean's Office and the Future of FAS Draft Report:

**Mr. Solomon** opened a discussion on the Governance Committee's report on the *FAS Dean's Office and the Future of FAS*. He noted that the comments of 40-50 colleagues were merged and categorized into constructive suggestions. He also mentioned that the FAS Dean's Office will conduct a self-study sometime in the coming year. **Mr. Solomon** shared the report, noting its three main points: 1) Centralization vs. decentralization regarding hierarchy, paperwork, speed of decision-making, unit culture, departmental autonomy, and excessive caution in matters of hiring and retention. 2) Salary, leave, and working conditions including the leave policy, salary differentials, perverse incentives to threaten to leave the institution to obtain a raise, issues with administrative support, and the need for more graduate student support. 3) Communication and governance issues including institutional culture, communication, us vs. them views of the faculty and administration's relationship, and the need for physical space for faculty interaction. **Mr. Solomon** noted **Rebecca Toseland** suggested changing the phrase "both junior and senior faculty" to something like "instructional and ladder faculty of all ranks." **Mr. Solomon** said this change could be made as a friendly amendment.

**Mr. Van Tassel** spoke to the graduate student funding situation following the Graduate Student Union formation and noted that it seems to have been largely resolved by the increase in the tuition return going from 35% to about 50%. **Michael Fischer** said he views this report as a historical document trying to describe the first 10 years of the FAS Dean's Office and what problems were encountered. Several other senators debated what should be said about graduate student funding following unionization. **Ms. Bozovic** suggested amended language that discusses ongoing issues of graduate student funding but that doesn't causally link it to "unionization." **Ms. Urry** said that unionization was mentioned because we had zero input and zero visibility into that process and then we're presented with a huge bill which the University fumbled in its response for nearly a full year. So, she feels that this is a big problem that we should think about it and come back with a thoughtful amendment.

**Ms. Bozovic** asked whether we could deal with the friendly amendments now, or if we need to postpone consideration of this report until our next meeting. **Alison Sweeney** suggested that we clarify that we don't oppose unionization but that we were not involved in the unionization deal and the increased costs that were not covered by grants. She said that we could further that point by including postdocs in this clause. **Mimi Yiengpruksawan** suggested that revisions be revisited by the committee to make the decision on how to change the language and resubmit the report to the Senate for consideration. **Mr. Fischer** said he agrees with **Ms. Yiengpruksawan** and that there has been good discussion and points raised. However, he noted, without **Ms. Gage** present, who was the major writer of this report, it seems best if these suggestions go to her to make the revisions and present a new draft of the report. **Ms. Bozovic** shared potential language to consider for the next draft: “*faculty in the sciences at times struggle to accommodate salaries and expenses for graduate researchers and postdocs who are paid by outside faculty research grants rather than by the university itself, as in the humanities and social sciences.*” She and **Mr. Solomon** agreed to close the discussion, asking anyone with input to contact the Governance Committee.

#### Report for an Ombuds Office at Yale:

**Mr. Solomon** introduced **Maria Piñango** to present the *Report for an Ombuds Office at Yale*. **Ms. Piñango** noted that this conversation between faculty and administration has been ongoing since 2011. In 2019 the Faculty Senate passed a resolution in support of the creation of an Ombuds Office. She said today's report documents some of that history and advances the proposal by making explicit the specific need for such an office. An Ombuds Office supports university members in conflict resolution and provides a centralized point of access for navigating Yale's highly distributed system of grievances. It supports conflict mitigation and early detection that will lead to more effective resolution and better outcomes for all, and it supports the identification of patterns of conflict across the university that can in turn inform university policy. She said we are asking for a full-time professional trained in conflict mediation, and full administrative support. She said the scope will be university-wide, encompassing faculty and staff researchers, students, postdoctoral associates, teaching fellows and research assistants, will guarantee confidentiality, impartiality, and independence, and will report directly to the President's office. **Mr. Solomon** asked for a vote to approve the report and it was unanimous in favor to approve the *Report for an Ombuds Office at Yale*.

#### Committee Updates:

**Mr. Solomon** called on **Mr. Van Tassel** for an update on the Science and Engineering Committee. **Mr. Van Tassel** said that the committee has been addressing underfunded graduate students. He noted that the University is increasing the amount of money given back on grants that is paid to tuition. He sees this as a big win for Yale and the Senate, noting that many voices contributed to this win. He mentioned that the committee is anticipating other and ongoing challenges, including the new issue regarding overhead on NIH grants. **Mr. Gomez** noted that teaching fellow stipends are treated very differently at our peer institutions. Usually, he said, when you run out of money on a grant, you can shift a student to a TA position fully supported

by the university. Yale operates under a totally different system, and, given the current crisis, perhaps it's time to table this issue and raise it in due time when the dust settles.

Outreach and Elections Committee:

**Mr. Solomon** asked for a report from the Outreach and Elections Committee. **Mr. Van Tassel** noted that the Senate election this year is scheduled for April 21<sup>st</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup> and will be online. We currently have 24 Senators and should have 25, and this year we will have at least 14 open seats. Nominations are open until March 28<sup>th</sup> and **Mr. Van Tassel** encouraged people to nominate a colleague. **Mr. Gomez** noted it is up to us to help **Mr. Van Tassel** and **Ms. Toseland** in their recruiting efforts. He said that successful nominations come with one-on-one discussions, and each current senator should reach out to possible candidates to discuss serving in the Senate. **Ms. Yiengpruksawan** seconded **Mr. Gomez's** suggestion and added that in this political climate, we need to build a community and have a voice. **Ms. Bozovic** noted that the Senate needs more junior faculty and by the bylaws should have at least one in each division. She noted she served on the Senate for the first time as a junior faculty member and found it extremely useful in coming to understand the institution as well as meeting people from different departments and programs for advice. She said there are many ways in which being a member of the Senate is not onerous for junior ladder faculty and can be an opportunity for invaluable mentoring and networking. **Jing Yan** commented that as a junior faculty member, being a senator adds additional work, but that he also has benefited from the experience. **Ms. Toseland** suggested that senators who are junior faculty might be allowed to choose whether to serve on certain committees, and to avoid committees with the heaviest workloads.

Report on the Analysis of Changes to the Faculty Handbook – 2021-2024 – With Recommendations:

**Mr. Solomon** presented the Report on the Analysis of Changes to the Faculty Handbook – 2021-2024 – With Recommendations for discussion. He noted this is part I of a larger effort and is mainly about how changes are communicated to faculty, and if changes are made with sufficient transparency. He said Part II will be about substantive things like academic freedom. **Mr. Solomon** reviewed how he and **Mr. Yan** went through changes to the handbook highlighted by the Provost's office and found that the summaries were insufficient. The committee recommended that a tracked changes version of the Handbook was necessary. **Mr. Solomon** gave examples of how different institutions handle track changes. **Mr. Gomez** commented that we also want to see certain important changes made to the Handbook, including the issue of academic freedom. The Senate vote was then taken and was unanimous, approving the Report on the Analysis of Changes to the Faculty Handbook – 2021-2024 – With Recommendations.

**Mr. Solomon** asked if there were any other comments or questions. With none, **Ms. Bozovic** adjourned the FAS-SEAS Senate meeting at 5:30 PM.