

FAS-SEAS Senate Meeting

April 17, 2025

3:30 pm – 5:30 pm

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

APPROVED

Attendance:

Mark Solomon, Chair; Marijeta Bozovic, Deputy Chair; Dinny Aletheiani, Neta Alexander, Michael Fischer, Beverly Gage, Alessandro Gomez, John Hall, Michael Loewenberg, Maria Piñango, Constance Sherak, Julia Titus, Rebecca Toseland, Paul Van Tassel, Robert Wooster, Jing Yan, Mimi Yiengpruksawan

Senators Absent:, Andrea Aldrich, Valerie Horsley, Gerald Jaynes, Mordechai Levy Eichel, Kathryn Slanski, Jason Stanley, Alison Sweeney, Meg Urry

Guests: Sybil Alexandrov, Yoram Alhassid, Richard Aslin, Tim Barron, Alexia Belperron, Lauren Benton, David Bercovici, Centanin Bertho, Edyga Bojanowska, Jeffrey Brock, Katie Chang, Cynthia DeRoma, Kevin Ennis, Michael Fotos, Paul Franks, John Geanakoplos, Marion Gehlker, Fadila Habchi, Karsten Heeger, Harry Jain, Maria Kaliambou, Elka Kristo-Nagy, John Kao, Al Klevorik, , Roy Lederman, Jane Lynch, Swathi Nachiar Manivannan, Reina Maruyama, Elisa Morrison, Chin Yuan Ong, Chara Papamantou, Anushka Potdar, Katherine Profeta, Ana Ramos-Zayas, Manisha Skaria, Deborah Strehle, Mariana Nathan Suri, Ian Russell, Deborah Strehle, Steven Wilkinson, Fanmei Xia

FAS-SEAS Senate chair **Mark Solomon** called the meeting to order at 3:35 PM.

Mr. Solomon noted that the work of the Family and Childcare Committee has been tabled until next year.

Mr. Solomon said that the two letters he sent to FAS and SEAS faculty using *Yale Messaging* regarding the faculty letter to the administration were not in keeping with the guidelines and was advised by the FAS Dean's Office that *Yale Messaging* cannot be used for advocacy.

Mr. Solomon reported that the Senate's Executive Council (EC) had a productive meeting with **Provost Scott Strobel**. Regarding implementing background checks for incoming faculty, the Provost agreed this is not the right time for such a policy, which has been put on hold. We asked to be notified when such a policy change is considered again in the future. Regarding changes to the *Faculty Handbook*, **Mr. Strobel** agrees with the Senate's request for tracking changes. Regarding the request for an Ombuds Office at Yale, **Mr. Solomon** said the Provost is concerned about the cost and does not support an Ombuds Office himself, but discussions will continue next year.

Regarding the letter the Senate wrote with the AAUP, **Mr. Solomon** reported that to date it has over 990 signatures. He noted the positive press coverage and that the Provost also liked the letter, which he referred to as helpful. **Mr. Solomon** also said that the Provost noted that the letter was discussed during a recent meeting with the trustees, who are meeting every

weekend because of the current climate. The EC also discussed their upcoming meeting with the trustees, and **Mr. Solomon** noted that they will talk about supporting Yale's values, standing together with other universities, and the possibility of a short-term dip into the endowment.

Update on Elections:

Paul Van Tassel and **Rebecca Toseland** spoke on the upcoming Senate election, which has 16 confirmed nominees. The election will begin the morning of April 22, 2025 and end at midnight on April 30, 2025.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Solomon suggested a format change to meeting minutes, trimmed to 4 or 5 pages. **Ms. Bozovic** said that the EC discussed shortening the minutes to provide a summary of what was said without extensive detail, and that we may also choose to allow senators and faculty to comment anonymously on sensitive topics as minutes are posted online. **Mr. Solomon** asked for edits or comments regarding the minutes of the February 20th and March 27th meetings. **Dinny Aletheiana** noted that she was marked absent but was present at both meetings. With these changes, the minutes from the February 20th and March 27th FAS-SEAS Senate meetings were approved unanimously.

Committee on Trust in Higher Education:

Beverly Gage talked about the newly created 10-member Committee on Trust in Higher Education charged by **President McGuinness** to address this question, outside of the immediate news cycle, and its history. **Ms. Gage** noted that this is an important moment for faculty to weigh in on, not only understanding why we are where we are, but thinking about how to move forward in the future. **Mimi Yiengpruksawan** asked who the audience is for this committee. **Ms. Gage** said this is to be determined, and any thoughts and questions will be welcomed and that there is an on-line form to use to make suggestions and comments.

Role of the Senate in the Current Climate:

Mr. Solomon said we all feel the need to do something, however we also need to be sure that what we do is helpful. He noted the letter the Senate co-wrote with the AAUP was helpful, but making demands at this time might not be. He noted that other universities and former presidents of universities have come out in support of Harvard. Yale has not. He noted the threats to funding support, grants and contracts, medical payments, student support, endowment taxes, tax exempt status, the ability to receive international students, higher educational values, and constitutional freedom. **Ms. Bozovic** said the Senate can try to be a unifying voice. She noted that faculty from different divisions may be experiencing the situation differently: getting to hear one another is one way to build solidarity. **Jing Yan** noted that not attracting too much attention is a good strategy for now. **Mr. Solomon** noted that when Princeton and Cornell made statements, they were targeted soon after. **Mimi Yiengpruksawan** noted that no matter what strategy a university takes, we will be targeted. She noted an expectation in the media that universities will unite. **Ms. Gage** agreed with **Ms.**

Yiengpruksawan that we need to plan for when it happens because it is very unlikely that it won't happen.

Ms. Gage suggested that we think of how we will, as faculty and as a university, come through this and remain as strong as possible. She said one thought is to convene small groups of 6-8 faculty from across the University to meet together over the summer to strategize and to get to know each other, to know who to call when the crisis comes, and to know how to understand each other's experiences.

Ms. Bozovic agreed with **Ms. Gage's** suggestion of forming groups and suggested that going forward the Senate should invite representatives from other schools (Medical and Law Schools) to attend meetings and offer their perspectives and information. **Michael Loewenberg** suggested adding all schools and the administration to this list, and invite open discussion to promote unification. **Mr. Solomon** said that the consortium of senates representing different universities is working on a collective letter from university senates. He will give more information as it develops.

Richard Aslin, and a member of the *National Academy of Sciences*, shared that the Academy has kept their head down, noted that 67% of their budget comes from Federal agencies and they've all been frozen. He said this is an example where not saying something does not offer protect. He said it might be risky to comment on Harvard, however it's inevitable that something will happen at Yale. He believes that there are four issues that are common for all: freezing of grants; overhead costs; tax on the endowment; students being targeted. He asked if in the Senate's discussions with the Provost, there was any discussion on collective legal action – a class action suit perhaps by the top 20 private research institutions? **Mr. Solomon** replied that nothing was mentioned at meetings he has attended. He agreed that it would be good to have collective legal action and said this is something that he will bring up in the EC's meeting with members of the Yale Corporation.

Mr. Fischer said he feels it's important for us to stand together now and not wait. **Elisa Morrison** said that she appreciates the efforts that the Senate is making in promoting community, unity, and a sense of solidarity. She asked how information, if a letter is received by Yale from the government, would be communicated to the Senate and to faculty. **Alexia Belperron** said she feels the only way the schools can get through these difficult times is to stand together and overcome the fear of being the next to be targeted, and thanked the Senate for their role in helping to do this. Talking and preparing FAS and other parts of the University for what is inevitable will help people be better prepared. **Lauren Benton** stated that Yale should stand with Harvard and join in a legal fight and noted that there is another letter circulating asking Yale to join in solidarity with Harvard that now has 300 signatures. She asked if the Senate would consider signing on and even take part in circulating the letter. She noted that we as faculty can speak out even if the leadership of the University does not. **Mr. Solomon** said the Senate will take this into consideration. **Mr. Fischer** remarked that we all have the choice to sign the letter.

David Bercovici made the point that ducking and waiting to see what happens makes us look intimidated by the powers that be. He also said that history will not look kindly on Yale if we make no stand. He noted that the Senate can ask for a response to the letter that was sent to the administration and especially the point where it asks for Yale to stand with other universities. **Mr. Bercovici** said that every day that goes by that Yale is silent fills him with shame. **One faculty member** said she would like the Senate to ask for more transparency regarding contingency plans. She also asked, in the event that there is an international student, postdoc, or affiliate being detained or arrested, what to do and what plans are in place for these situations.

John Geanakoplos said he agreed with almost everything that has been said. He said that having specificity in our actions is more powerful than just embracing vague principles. If we are attacked, as he feels we will be, there will be many things that Trump will demand that we do, and a letter we write objecting to them will be much more powerful than just vaguely embracing Harvard. He agrees with coordinating with other University Senates, having our administration coordinate with other universities, other collective strategies. Also, he said, it is safer because Trump is not going to attack 50-100 universities at the same time. **Mr. Geanakoplos** suggested that we get together with other faculty senates to write a letter in solidarity. **Ms. Gage** agreed with **Mr. Geanakoplos's** point on being strategic in how often we make statements, how many letters go out, and thoughtful timing. She noted that we had much success in having 1,000 people sign our joint letter with the AAUP, and another letter at this time would not add to the impact. She pointed out that writing letters is only one of the mechanisms that we have, and we should think more broadly as we go forward.

Discussion with members of the Graduate Student Assembly on issues of concern to international students:

Mr. Solomon introduced **Katie Chang, Swathi Nachiar Manivannan, Chin Yuan Ong, Anushka Potdar, Nathan Suri, and Fanmei Xia**, members of the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), to discuss issues concerning international students. They talked about general anxiety, not knowing what is going to happen and not knowing what the administration will do in response. They said they invited **Kimberly Goff-Cruz** to a GSA meeting for insight into how her office has been responding. They are also aware of many resources from OISS and the Law School, and would like to hear more from the University. The six students spoke passionately about the anxiety among students due to the uncertainty of the university's response to federal developments, the need for academic flexibility, and the importance of ensuring the safety of international students. The students shared stories of students who have been targeted and how these incidents have created a general atmosphere of fear among all students. The GSA members also suggested the need for training on how to respond to immigration emergencies and the importance of disseminating information about the University's support for international students. The faculty members present asked questions, and agreed to work on these issues to provide more concrete support to the students.

Mr. Solomon recapped the conversation and noted:

- Students are getting good information on certain big picture things from OISS, with uncertainty on other things.
- Students want to know if they can finish their degree requirements if something happens to them.
- Students sent out a letter in support of the faculty letter and already have 300 signatures.
- Students want to know the contingency plans if something happens and want to understand what faculty and the administration are doing in response, even though they realize that some details cannot be shared publicly for security reasons.
- Students are relieved to hear that the faculty and administration are working for them, and know that they can reach out to faculty and the administration with their concerns.
- Students know there will be emergency funding available. Knowing it's there without it being a last resort is important.
- The Senate is likely to prepare a statement directed to faculty and departments in support of international graduate student.

Ms. Bozovic commented that the FAS-SEAS Senate could write a statement recommending information sessions for students and faculty to provide information to combat misinformation –possibly something to consider over the summer as well.

Mr. Solomon adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM