

Faculty Senate: President's Report March 1, 2024

It's been a busy couple of weeks since we last met, and I've had some great opportunities to meet with our GW community and talk with several of our university partners.

Last month, I made two trips to Florida. The first involved a Milken Institute session on the future of higher education that was held at a home in palm Beach and included the presidents of Brandeis University, Miami University, and the University of Utah, as well as myself, and one of the founders of the University of Austin. It was a lively conversation and very interesting to listen to the community's questions. My perception is that there is still broad recognition of the importance of higher education as well as questions around how we can make sure we are maintaining an environment of free and open discussion.

The second trip involved meeting with alumni and donors across the state, including Sarasota, Naples, Palm Beach, and Miami. This trip included two more of our GW Together events, where I was joined by Chair Speights, Trustees Ali Kolaghassi and Judith Rodgers, Dean Matthew, Donna Arbide, and many other university leaders for several intimate conversations with our robust alumni, donor, and family networks in the area. These meetings continue to be a good source of input and feedback from our broader alumni and parent community, and I have appreciated the opportunities to share some of the great work you all continue to do with them. Now, it's a short turnaround before I am off to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle for the year's final three domestic GW Together events.

Over the last month, I was also able to attend some wonderful events on and around our campuses.

On Friday, February 9, I joined many from our GW community in celebrating the 2024 GW Athletics Hall of Fame inductees; former Board of Trustees Chair Russ Ramsey was inducted as part of the 1979 baseball team.

I also recently joined several students at the Mount Vernon estate to commemorate George Washington's birthday with a wreath-laying ceremony and to participate in a tribute to the enslaved community who were held there in bondage before, during, and after President Washington's lifetime.

Last month, our university was also recognized by the U.S. State Department and Secretary of State Antony Blinken as a top producer of Fulbright Scholars and students for the 2023-2024 academic year. Congratulations and thank you to all of you who were involved in applying for or receiving an award and those who supported student and colleague applicants.

Strengthening and enhancing our partnerships with the local community remains a key priority for me, and last week, I was pleased to join the ANC 2A meeting to introduce myself and discuss potential collaboration opportunities. Tomorrow, I will host several neighborhood partners at the GW Revs women's basketball game for a special Community Day event.

Earlier this week, I joined the Greater Washington Partnership annual CoLab meeting. This series of meetings brings together business and academic leaders to discuss how to collaborate better to meet the regional talent opportunities and develop the talent pipeline for today's and tomorrow's jobs.

Finally, I'm getting to know key partners in DC's academic and research ecosystem. Most recently, I've spent 1:1 time with the CEO of Phi Beta Kappa, Fred Lawrence, and the CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sudip Parikh.

Next, it's been just over a month since we released GW's Plan to Strengthen our Community in Challenging Times, and I want to give you all a few updates on its implementation. As I mentioned when we launched the current plan, we intended for it to serve as a starting point, and it remains a work in progress. To that end, we have added a new intake form to the [plan website](#) to collect community suggestions and feedback. This input will be reviewed and vetted by the leadership working group that developed the plan and will be critical in supporting, expanding, and improving it. I encourage you all to submit your thoughts and feedback there.

We have also already hosted two of the plan's featured events. On February 12, the Law School hosted their panel discussion titled "Free Speech v. Hate Speech," in which First Amendment scholars debated where to draw the line in the context of all higher education. And on February 21, we hosted the second Sesno Series event titled "Disagree Better: How Politicians, the Public, and the Press Can Turn Down the Heat." This conversation featured Utah Governor Spencer J. Cox and media voices Jonah Goldberg and Michel Martin discussing how to bring healthy conflict back to politics and the media. A wonderful feature of both of the Sesno series talks is that the conversation is directed by video clips from interviews done with our students where they talk about how they see these issues. Frank Sesno then uses their comments to drive the interview with excellent results. We are always looking for new suggestions of events, topics, and ways to engage, and again, I encourage you to submit this on the website.

I know that many are curious to know what's happening with our review and harmonization of the university's policies and protocols. I can share today that Colette Coleman, our Dean of Students, and Charles Barber, our General Counsel, have already gathered a leadership working group and are developing a set of initial recommendations to clarify the existing policies that will soon go through a thorough review process that will include the relevant committees of the Faculty Senate.

We have some other new activities and initiatives planned around the various spring holidays, including our rescheduled interfaith dinner, and we look forward to sharing more details on these events in the coming days.

Next, you may recall that Aristide Collins departed the university last fall and is doing very well at Strada. I have been engaging in a search for a new Chief of Staff; I am getting close to making an offer and look forward to sharing with the Senate soon details about who will be taking that role.

Finally, as I mentioned at the last meeting, we are continuing to take the next steps in developing a strategic framework for the university, which will start with several future-focused conversations. We started these conversations last week, and I want to thank everyone who has attended so far and encourage those who have not to visit the Provost's website and [register for a session](#). I will let Provost Bracey tell you more about how this is progressing in just a moment.

Thank you, everyone. That concludes my report today, and I will open the floor to questions.