

**Faculty Senate
President's Report
March 7, 2025**

This will be our first Faculty Senate meeting of the year that isn't preceded by snowfall: a reason to celebrate!

Hello, and good afternoon, everyone. As always, it's a pleasure to join you with GW's spring break on the horizon and to share some university news and updates.

Before I begin, I want to thank Bruno Fernandes, Bill Elliott, and others for their work on matters related to the MFA. Bruno and Bill will be presenting in just a little while, and their presentation focuses on an operational update along with a discussion of some of the progress Bill has been making assessing options for adjustments to the work of the MFA.

GWPD Report

As I am sure you saw, earlier this week I released the summary of findings and recommendations resulting from the independent investigation into certain issues regarding the GW Police Department (GWPD).

My thanks to

- Timothy Heaphy, a partner at Willkie Farr and former University counsel at UVA, who led the investigation;
- Timothy Longo, Associate Vice President for Safety and Security and Chief of Police at the University of Virginia, who assisted Mr. Heaphy; and
- Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff Scott Mory, who was the executive lead.

I also want to take this moment to once again thank the members of the GWPD for their dedicated service to our community.

This investigation focused on the following questions:

- What is the validity of the issues raised in 2023 relating to the registration, carrying, and storage of guns, and compliance with training programs?
- Are GW's current procedures and training programs for officers who are carrying arms compliant with applicable legal requirements and reflective of best practices?
- What policy and process changes would assist GWPD, and other units, in achieving a greater level of community safety?

Over the course of the review, the Willkie team conducted 43 interviews with current and former GW personnel and reviewed over 820,000 documents. They completed the review in early 2025 and have since been working to summarize and explain their findings and to assist us with implementing certain recommendations.

Key findings:

1. There were serious issues in the early implementation of the decision to arm GWPD.
2. Since those early issues were identified and resolved, GWPD has been in compliance with all requirements regarding firearms, and the Office of Ethics, Compliance, and Risk independently tracks and verifies that compliance.
3. We need to ensure better engagement and communication with the campus community on issues of such importance.

There are a series of recommendations that are being reviewed right now for potential implementation by the administration.

We have, however, already:

- Integrated GWPD into a larger Campus Safety unit, along with other mission-aligned offices like Emergency Management and GWorld, under a new associate vice president.
- Prepared to launch national searches to identify both the next GWPD chief and a permanent associate vice president.

We are also looking for better way to establish consistent methods for engaging the community in decision-making, like the proposed policy development process currently under review.

Let me share a few next steps:

- A few select senior administrators have seen the full report and have been charged by me with responding to its recommendations.
- Members of GWPD and the Campus Safety Advisory Committee will be briefed on recommendations.
- With the committee's advice and counsel, university leaders will consider implementation of their recommendations to improve not only GW's arming program, but our community safety overall.

Federal Update: Keeping the Community Informed

In terms of all that is happening at the federal level, Provost Bracey and I have been fielding many questions and feeling a heightened sense of anxiety among GW faculty and staff members at the meetings we have been attending. To keep the community informed, we have been sending out email messages specific to researchers as well as to the broader community. We have launched websites, including one specific to our principal investigators, but with so many substantive policy changes happening so quickly, we felt that these steps weren't enough to keep the GW community up to speed.

With that in mind, we are launching a weekly federal update for the GW community that highlights the latest federal policy changes, including those about which the GW community has the most questions. This will provide a regularly scheduled, easily accessible mechanism for our faculty, staff, and students to track what is changing and how it does—or doesn't—affect our university community.

An example of the news we plan to share: This Wednesday, the federal district court in Massachusetts issued an order granting a nationwide preliminary injunction on the NIH limitation on indirect cost rates. The preliminary injunction replaces the temporary restraining order that had been in place and, unless and until this order is overturned on appeal, it will remain in place until a trial or until ordered by the court.

I realize that all of the news won't be this wonderful, but this is precisely the type of update our community needs on a regular basis. Community members will be able to submit questions by replying to these messages.

Department of Justice Visit to Campus

Late last week, the Department of Justice announced visits to university campuses related to antisemitism. By way of background, pursuant to Executive Order on Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism, a Federal Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism was created. GW is among 10 university campuses that task force members will be visiting as part of their investigation.

Leading task force member and Senior Counsel to Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Leo Terrell said he intends for the Task Force to meet with university leadership, impacted students and staff, local law enforcement, and community members as it gathers information about these incidents and considers whether remedial action is warranted. We have requested additional information about these visits and how best to prepare for them.

Position Management Review Process

As we navigate the evolving challenges and headwinds that all higher education institutions are facing, including uncertainty about the impact of recent federal government actions, it is more important than ever to take a prudent and proactive approach in stewarding our institutional resources to maintain GW's long-term resilience. To that end, earlier this month, Provost Chris Bracey, Executive Vice President Bruno Fernandes, and Senior Vice President Scott Mory announced a new position management review process.

The traditional annual faculty promotion process and associated salary increases are exempt from this process. All other hirings and promotions will require an additional level of review by university leadership before approval. Student hiring—including graduate student hiring—will be included in this review process. This careful evaluation is necessary to ensure that we are staying within our budget while fulfilling our core mission, and it allows us to make informed, strategic decisions that consider the impact and funding source of each position request.

This process is intended to be in effect through this fiscal year and could be extended. It is important to note that this is not a hiring freeze, and we expect to continue hiring staff and faculty critical to advancing our university.

Policy Transparency Process

Over the last year, the GW leadership team has been considering ways to improve our community's engagement in decision-making. One improvement opportunity we have identified is how we handle proposals for new policies or material changes to current policies. To that end, we are preparing a proposed new process, which we look forward to announcing in the coming weeks. The university is working with the Faculty Senate, the Student Government Association, and the Staff Council to finalize this approach.

In the meantime, our recent [voluntary settlement](#) with the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights requires us to review and amend certain GW policies by mid-May. So even though our new process isn't quite ready yet, we would still like to follow the spirit of it. To that end, yesterday, we sent an email to all faculty, students, and staff announcing the proposed revisions, and linking to a new website where those proposals can be reviewed and commented on.

Presidential Engagement

Since our February meeting, I have been busy, including engaging with our partners in the community. I'd like to highlight a few particularly special events and engagements.

Since our last Faculty Senate meeting, I had the pleasure of speaking at a set of events around a GW Revs women's basketball game at the Charles E. Smith Center, and one of those events included a visit to GW by 65 middle school girls from the District from Ward 7 and 8. We partnered with the Mayor's Office as well as with the DC Department of Parks and Recreation on this visit. I am especially proud of the GW student-athletes representing the GW Black Student-Athlete Alliance who engaged with the visiting students, sharing their experiences balancing academics and athletics, leading activities, and helping our guests feel welcome and like they belong here at GW.

That same day, I joined a lunch with Foggy Bottom community members at the game. It's always a pleasure to spend time with members of the community so that I can help reinforce GW's commitment to being engaged in the neighborhoods surrounding campus and to set the foundation for future GW initiatives with our partners in the District, including with colleagues in the Mayor's Office.

I have continued my visits to classes across campus, sitting in on Mark Reeves's SCALE UP Physics class where they were mapping electrical fields and potential. I loved watching the teams work together in this interactive lab.

I've also had the pleasure of hosting early career faculty members for coffee at the F Street House. The conversations around the table reinforced my belief that GW faculty—who bring passion, dedication and heart to the classroom, to the lab, and to other teaching and learning spaces as well as to their research—are exactly what our students need at this time of uncertainty and radical change.

I'll be adding to this type of engagement with faculty lunches starting this month and will continue to look for ways to strengthen my connection to faculty and staff and make sure that their voices are heard.

And just last week, I had the pleasure of speaking with the Society of the Emeriti, sharing updates and fielding their questions. I am so grateful to this group for their continuing engagement on campus and their strong desire to find ways to share their expertise, help our students, and to carry forward the mission, values, and institutional memory that define GW.

Finally, I've also participated in a steady series of donor and alumni events and meetings that provide opportunities to open lines of communication with our alumni, responding to their questions about what's happening on campus, the impact of changes at the federal level, and filling them in on what they can do to help. I hear that question again and again, and it reinforces my belief in the generosity of our alumni and their strong desire to help our students and our campus as we navigate the changes that are affecting everyone across higher education.

All of these gatherings mark our continuing work to build community and share GW success stories with donors and alumni across the country and around the world, and they are helping to lay the groundwork as we prepare to implement our strategic framework.

SJT Day

I want to close on another up note.

Yesterday I joined a team that criss-crossed the District to surprise 10 students at 7 schools in 8 hours. It was SJT Day at GW, the day we visit high schools across the District and surprise the latest cohort of our Stephen Joel Trachtenberg Scholars, and it is a pure joy.

This is a four-year, full ride scholarship for the best of the best among high school students who live in the District of Columbia. If you've taught, worked with, or mentored an SJT student, you know that they are special. I can't wait to see what this year's cohort will bring to our campus.

Thank you very much. That concludes my report. I would be happy to take questions.