



FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS, SALARY AND PROMOTION POLICIES (ASPP)

Interim Report (2020-2021)

The ASPP committee has been very busy this year, including the summer months of 2020. We worked on the following issues:

Interim guidance to the faculty: In May 2020, when GW was considering whether to go face-to-face in the fall, Vice Provost Bracey asked for our feedback on advice on a proposed document. The initial administration position was that faculty may need to request a waiver from teaching face-to-face (F2F) in the fall semester if either they or the members of their households were immunocompromised and thus needed to teach their courses remotely. There was a quick review process where the faculty could submit a request to provost's office without disclosing any medical information and the turnaround was expected to be quick. We urged the administration to be more inclusive and mindful of faculty who didn't wish to divulge their personal situations and also didn't wish to get infected with Covid-19 while teaching F2F in the fall semester. This document was subsequently released by the Provost's office on June 5, 2020.

Budget Austerity Principles: This issue was a carryover from previous year. We drafted a resolution (**Resolution 21/4**) that came up for discussion at the Faculty Senate meeting on May 20, and was approved as amended. This resolution was cited in the framing of a subsequent resolution (**21/6**, approved June 18, 2020) on distinguishing short term fiscal adjustments from long term structural changes.

On June 20, we considered the draft **COVID-19 Campus Health and Wellbeing Policy** that was circulated by VP Bracey and the administration wanted to receive the faculty feedback. There was a substantial discussion by committee members and guests and VP Bracey planned to take this feedback into account in reaching the final draft. The subsequent events, making the fall semester to be completely remote, made this policy discussion somewhat moot.

Resolution on Intellectual Property: Once the university had announced that the fall semester was to be online and all courses were to be recorded for synchronous as well as asynchronous use by the students, a question arose about the ownership and intellectual property (IP) of the course recordings and other course materials. The ASPP committee, in collaboration with Educational Policy and Technology committee (EPT) and Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom committee (PEAF), formed a joint taskforce that studied all the issues related to the intellectual property (IP). This group was very ably chaired by Phil Wirtz and authored **Resolution 21/9** on IP. The resolution draft went through multiple revisions in a very short time-span (all through electronic means) and was approved by the Senate by a unanimous vote on August 14.

Resolution on salary increases on promotion (Resolution 21/11): The ASPP committee heard from several faculty members that they had received tenure/promotion letters though they were told that their salaries were not going to be increased as is the norm on promotions. We created a brief resolution that was submitted to the Faculty Senate for its consideration on August 14. Unfortunately this resolution got bogged down in the Senate which then decided to send it back to the committee for further work. The revised version was unanimously approved by the Senate at its September 11 meeting. The provost announced on November 16 that “faculty members tenured or promoted in Spring 2020 will receive the customary promotion-related salary increases, non-retroactive and subject to school budgetary constraints, effective January 1, 2021.”

Heather Swain affair: On August 28, we discussed the hiring and subsequent not-hiring of Heather Swain as VP for Communications and Marketing. The members agreed that we need to send a strong message to the administration that such hires need to be properly vetted and the faculty needs to be involved in reaching any future high-level administrative officer hiring decisions. A resolution (**Resolution 21/13: A RESOLUTION OF CENSURE OF PRESIDENT THOMAS J. LEBLANC REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF HEATHER SWAIN**) was drafted and came up for discussion at the Senate on September 11. This resolution was debated for more than an hour and then was sent back to the committee with instructions to invite the president in a non-public forum where he could provide some of the confidential information. Such a meeting was held on September 25. In accordance with the Senate’s stipulation that our advice to the Senate concerning information regarding the events leading up to Ms. Swain’s appointment be provided “without any further need to make public the basis on which the ASPP Committee has reached [its] conclusion,” the Committee reached the following conclusions:

1. President LeBlanc has “satisfactorily addressed” Resolving Clause 2 (viz., “to provide a full and complete accounting of the vetting process that resulted in the appointment of Ms. Swain”) of Resolution 21/13 as originally debated by the Faculty Senate;
2. The ASPP Committee endorses the Protocols for Hiring Vice Presidents Who Report to the President, and recommends the endorsement of these Protocols by the Faculty Senate;
3. The ASPP Committee appreciates President LeBlanc’s forthright and full accounting of the events leading up to the announcement of Ms. Swain’s appointment;
4. The ASPP Committee recommends censure. It does so after evaluating the explanation provided by President LeBlanc regarding the events, timeline, and decision-making process leading to the announcement of Ms. Swain’s appointment. Specifically, a majority of the ASPP Committee concluded that President LeBlanc’s actions reflected a significant error in judgment and failure of leadership regarding a matter of critical importance to the University. The Committee deliberated extensively on whether the term “censure” was appropriately applied here. In recognition of the definition provided by Robert’s Rules of Order (Chapter XX, page 643) that censure is “an expression of strong disapproval or harsh criticism,” the Committee concluded, after consideration of alternatives, that “censure” is appropriately applied in this case.

The committee concluded that, even though the President was earnest and truthful, we could not accept the matter to be finished. We worked on a revised resolution 21/13 which came up for discussion at the October 9 meeting of the Senate and garnered substantial discussion about the use of the word “censor”. Some senators applauded the fact that the President had “come clean” and that was enough. Some senators even thought that he had already been censured at the September 11 meeting even though the issue was only discussed and the resolution was recommitted to ASPP. In the end, the Senate decided to amend our resolution by changing the word “**censure**” to “**severe disapproval**” (by a 20-13 vote) which, according to dictionaries, means the same but looks better

due to optics. This was the only amendment and the revised resolution was approved by the Senate by an overwhelming 33-3 vote.

Equity and diversity in appointments, retentions and promotions: In response to **Resolution 21/7** adopted by the Senate on July 17, we invited Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement Caroline Laguerre-Brown on October 30 to facilitate discussions on equity and diversity in appointments, retentions and promotions at GW. The question remains: what we can and should do in order to get this moving forward? It was thought that we need to have some kind of university wide activity and we might consider drafting a faculty senate resolution. We formed a subcommittee to study the issues in detail and propose a plan of action. Sarah Wagner was appointed Chair of this subcommittee with other volunteers being Susan LeLacheur, Shaista Khilji, Carol Hayes and Abe Takleselassie. This is a work in progress and we expect to hear from the subcommittee at our next meeting on December 4.

On August 28, Joe Cordes gave a report on the **financial situation** of the university. With the university going online for the fall semester, we anticipate a loss of \$212.6m of which \$115m is already covered through university actions during the spring/summer. There is less uncertainty about the next year and there is a possibility that we may be 100% online for the whole year. The good news is that we may not be going to the previously-anticipated scenario 3 loss of \$300m. Salary freeze has already been announced and GW will suspend retirement match starting October 2020. Possibilities of layoffs and furloughs were still on the horizon at that time.

Health care costs: On August 28, Murli Gupta gave a summer update from the **benefits advisory committee** (BAC). The health insurance premiums for 2021 are projected to increase by 5.5% next year. The participant contributions will increase by 1.5%, approximately \$1 to \$12 per month depending upon the coverage tier and salary band of the employee. The university's share of health care premiums in 2021 will increase from 76% to 77%.

Respectfully Submitted

Murli M. Gupta, Chair, ASPP Committee
November 18, 2020
