



Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate Standing Committee on University Urban Affairs (UUA) Annual Report 2020-2021

Submitted by: David Rain, Associate Professor of Geography
and International Affairs (CCAS)

In Summer 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing and the campus largely shut down to most students and faculty, UUA was reconstituted with several new members under a new chair, David Rain from CCAS. Some new members were added to the roster.

Current UUA Members include:

- David Rain, Chair (CCAS)*
- Shaista Khilji (GSEHD), Faculty Senate Executive Committee Liaison*
- Oluwatomi Adetunji (SEAS)
- Sonal Batra (SMHS)
- Linda Cassar (SON)
- Jillian Catalanotti (SMHS)
- Amy Cohen (CCAS)
- Bagmi Das (GSEHD)
- Karen Dawn (SON)
- Ina Gjikondi (CPA staff)
- Matthew Hess (SON staff)
- Karen Kesten (SON)
- Samantha Luna (CPA staff)
- Emily Morrison (CCAS)
- Anne-Marie O'Brien (SON)
- Yannik Omictin (Student Representative)
- Chavon Onumah (SMHS)
- Joel Teitelbaum (GWSPH)
- Rebecca Thessin (GSEDH)
- Margaret Venzke (SON)
- Christy Zink (CCAS)

*Faculty Senators

Committee Mission states:

The Committee on University and Urban Affairs helps foster continued good citizenship between The George Washington University and the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area. The University and Urban Affairs Committee serves as an ongoing catalyst for maximum efficiency in this area and prevents the duplication of effort between GW and the community itself. By affirmatively tracking GW's already allocated resources and initiatives, the

University and Urban Affairs Committee "paints the big picture" of GW's community relationship and subsequently provides the University with a valuable source of advice on continuous improvement and possible future endeavors.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) identified the following goals for UUA:

1. Continue annual planning of programs to bring university faculty and administrators together with DC Government, citizen groups, and members of the Foggy Bottom community.
2. Explore ways for the university community to address the rising problem of income inequity and its effects on low-income housing and homelessness in DC.
3. Continue to work to improve the university's relationship with our Foggy Bottom neighbors in order to raise issues and develop solutions to issues of mutual concern.

Committee Actions (2020-21):

Due to the ongoing pandemic, all meetings of the UUA committee were done virtually via WebEx or Zoom. Members met on August 4, October 5, November 16, December 14, and February 1.

Below is a summary of the ongoing activities that relate to aforementioned Committee Mission and goals:

- *Tracking GW's resources and initiatives to paint the big picture (Committee Mission):* Committee members were involved in ongoing campus plans vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic as it affected the renovation of Thurston Residence Hall, which took approximate 1,100 beds out of circulation for the duration of the 24-month project. GW had negotiated a voluntary agreement with Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2A to allow some students to be moved to other housing (Aston Hall and 1 Washington Circle) where necessary. Due to the pandemic and the use of virtual instruction, the agreement's 24-month clock was not started.
- *Planning of programs to bring GW faculty, administrators with DC government, citizen groups and members of the Foggy Bottom community (Goal 1). Explore ways for the University community to address the rising problem of income inequality and its effects on low-income housing and homelessness in DC (Goal 2).*
 - Based on member discussions and interests and a review of Goals 1 and 2, UUA participated in two projects for 2020-2021:
 - **Project 1 – Housing Summit** at GW (led by Amy Cohen of CCAS and Ina Gjikondi of the College of Professional Studies: The UUA committee will co-host a virtual summit in partnership with the DC Department of Housing and Community Development on their Fair Housing Month Symposium to be held in late April 2021. The sessions will be fully virtual and may include GW faculty member Greg Squires. The committee is also working with Nashman Center and Office of Government and Community Relations to develop a process to collect comprehensive information about GW's engagement with the District of Columbia.

- **Project 2 – University Seminar on “Addressing Income Inequality and Creating a Coalition for Action.”** Committee member Anne-Marie O’Brien and Shaista Khilji led this effort, with an inaugural planning meeting on November 13 and a second meeting on December 4. Turnout for the first planning meeting was extremely strong. Attendees discussed the strengths of the University and the multiple overlapping communities and coalitions addressing inequities in health, wealth, and power in DC. GWU will be opening a new hospital in Ward 8 in 2024 that will be an opportunity to help increase awareness of health and economic equity issues in DC and the greater metropolitan area. The group also addressed the need to increase diversity at GWU through increases in hiring and retaining staff and faculty and increases in need-based scholarships for underrepresented students.

The second meeting of the Income Inequality Seminar Series on December 4 was well attended as well. Discussion centered on working with DC youth to learn how GW can partner with community members to improve health and wealth equity in DC. There was also recognition that many in the seminar as well as many in the GW community don’t know the full history of the Black DC community and factors that contributed to these disparities in wealth, health and power. Some suggestions included working with youth on policy literacy, and eventually creating a graduate seminar where the youth could co-learn with GW students in a critical service learning course. Consensus was that the group start small and meet its goals. Among the short-term goals were a January 22 meeting to invite some youth members to help plan a ‘History of Black DC’ event, and to develop a more cohesive network of GW faculty, students, and staff committed to promoting equity at GW and in the DC community. A long-term goal is to develop a seminar course (GW students and youth) on addressing income inequality in DC.

On Feb 22, 2021, in celebration of Black History Month, GW hosted a talk with Prof John Eason, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Professor Eason discussed one of the most pressing social problems of our times, the widespread expansion of prisons, by linking the legacy of slavery and racial violence of Jim Crow to the modern political economy of underdevelopment in the rural South.

University Seminar Series will conclude the year with a final meeting in April.

Looking ahead to post-pandemic times, the UUA committee will be energized by the continuation of the above projects and with implementation of a hopeful return to campus by students, faculty, and staff. Due to another pressing campus commitment, David Rain will step down from his chair duties, so new leadership will be needed.

Please direct all inquires to UUA Chair, Professor David Rain at drain@gwu.edu.

Reviewed by: UUA Members