



# Faculty Senate

## MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SENATE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 16, 2026 HYBRID: 805 21<sup>st</sup> STREET NW/MPA 309 & ZOOM

Present: President Granberg; Interim Provost Lach; Parliamentarian Binder; Registrar Cloud; Senate Office Staff Liz Carlson and Jenna Chaojareon; Deans Ayres, Bass, Gebo, Henry, Riddle, Wahlbeck, and Yeltekin; Interim Deans Howard and Zara; Professors Akman, Badie, Belenky, Briggs, Brinkerhoff, Callier, Cheh, Cohen-Cole, Core, Crandall, Cseh, Eakle, El-Ghazawi, Engel, Fagan, Feldman, Gore, Hernandez, Kay, Kieff, Kulp, Liu, Markus, McAlister Mendelowitz, Merluzzi, Mylonas, Ortí, Rain, Rigg, Sarkar, Schultheiss, Trangsrud, Vyas, Warren, White, Wilson, and Wirtz.

Absent: Deans Kelly-Weeder and Matthew; Professors Bamford, Borum, Cottrol, and Schwindt.

### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:04p.m. President Granberg welcomed the group back to the Senate's temporary home while the State Room is under renovation. As MPA 309 is an active classroom, she asked that attendees be sure to remove any trash when leaving. She also reiterated the monthly request that in-person attendees be extremely careful about sidebar conversations. The ceiling microphones will pick up all audio and transmit it over Zoom. Those needing to communicate with a neighbor during the meeting are asked to either text or pass notes. Barring any unexpected delays, the Senate will return to the State Room next month.

### MINUTES APPROVAL

The minutes of the December 12, 2025, Senate meeting were approved without objection.

RESOLUTION 26/6: Of Appreciation for Professor Katrin Schultheiss (Professor Tarek El-Ghazawi, Faculty Senate Executive Committee)

Professor El-Ghazawi read the resolution into the record; the resolution was adopted by unanimous consent.

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES MEMBERSHIP TERM REALIGNMENT (Professor John Warren)

Professor Warren made the following statement:

The Faculty Organization Plan (FOP) Section II.c. c)/Terms of Office states that “the term of office for faculty members of the Senate shall be two years beginning on May 1 of the year in which they are elected. If necessary, the terms shall be adjusted by the Executive Committee, with the consent of the Senate, so as to elect approximately one-half of the faculty members each year.”

The current balance of the College of Professional Studies (CPS) Senate membership terms results in two CPS Senate delegates being elected in one year (the upcoming election) and none in the other. The CPS Senate delegates feel that a one/one split would be a more optimal balance. To that end, the CPS Senate delegates would like to take advantage of the above-mentioned FOP provision permitting an adjustment in terms. This would result in, this year, one CPS delegate being elected to a two-year term and the other to a one-year term. Following the one-year term, that seat would return to a two-year election cycle.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) has approved this request to adjust the terms of the CPS delegates, and I'd like to ask unanimous consent for the Senate's adoption as well.

The Senate approved the proposed term alignment by unanimous consent.

#### PRESIDENT'S & PROVOST'S REPORTS (Ellen Granberg, President, & John Lach, Interim Provost)

The [President's report](#) and [Interim Provost's report](#) were provided with the posted agenda for today's meeting.

President Granberg offered the following additional remarks:

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful Winter Break and that the first week of classes has gone well. We are continuing to test the pre-read approach to Faculty Senate meetings, and you'll see my pre-read topics as well as the Provost's on the screen. I would like to add several updates.

#### Department of Justice Meeting

You all know that the university met with the Department of Justice (DOJ) early last week. Vice President for Student Affairs Colette Coleman, GWPD Chief Victor Brito, and General Counsel Charles Barber along with outside counsel joined me at the meeting. The significant take-away is that we had a fulsome opportunity to share our facts with the administration in the hope that it might inform DOJ's assessment.

I understand the natural desire to know more details about the meeting, but this is one of those instances where there are legal and business reasons that preclude me from sharing more. Nevertheless, please know that our commitment to share what we can as soon as we can remains.

#### Charles Barber Stepping Down

Earlier this week, GW shared the news that Charles Barber, vice president and general counsel, will be stepping down at the end of the fiscal year. We will be announcing the search for his successor

next week. On behalf of the university, I want to thank Charles for his outstanding work and deep commitment to GW over the course of many decades. Charles will be staying on in a short-term advisory role after June 30, and I appreciate his willingness to stay and support the transition to a new general counsel. We will announce details of the search for Charles's successor next week.

### Provost Search

The search committee is now reviewing the completed application files and will determine which candidates to invite to Zoom interviews in the first half of February.

### Planning for the FY27 Budget

As we start the spring semester, I want to share one topic that is on my mind, which is the securing the financial stability of the university in FY27 and beyond. As you all know, we are in the process of working through a structural deficit; while we have made progress this year, it will take a few years to fully work through that deficit. We are now at the point in enrollment recruiting where we have our first sense of the shape of the fall 2026 incoming classes. Residential undergraduate applications are on track with our initial planning goals, and the domestic application numbers are slightly ahead of last year.

There are, however, two signs that concern me. First, international applications are down overall for both undergraduate and graduate programs. This has potential implications for the mix of new students enrolled this fall and, consequently, net tuition revenue. And second, some graduate programs are seeing significant declines in applications from specific countries. These trends impact certain degree programs more than others. Recent federal actions, including limitations on visas and other immigration actions and changes to the eligibility of certain graduate programs for federal funding may be impacting this shift in new student application volume.

We have a long way to go before we understand the full shape of our incoming classes, but I am concerned enough about these early indications that all schools and divisions will be doing a budget scenario exercise as a part of the process for building the FY27 budget. The reason for this is that graduate admissions, in particular, doesn't tend to take shape until over the summer, and that is too late to make adjustments in the event they are needed.

These planning exercises are being jointly led by Interim Provost John Lach and CFO Bruno Fernandes. All parts of GW will participate in this exercise. Working together, I am confident we will be able to better future proof GW as we navigate these shifting headwinds. It is important and valuable to do this work now while there is time to plan in the event we need it.

Dr. Lach offered the following additional remarks:

Thank you, President Granberg, and good afternoon, everyone. I hope your semester is off to a strong start. You all received a brief pre-read from me before the meeting, so I have just a few short updates today.

### Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Search Update

You will recall that before winter break, I sent a message to faculty that included an update on the vice provost for faculty affairs search. It referenced that we would be soliciting from the Faculty Senate nominations of faculty for the search committee, which will be chaired by Forrest Maltzman. Since then, the Senate has nominated a list of faculty members, and FSEC voted to forward all names for consideration. After making my selections, I will form a committee comprising faculty and administrators and will launch the search in the coming weeks. I really appreciate your engagement in that process.

#### Russia Designates GW an “Undesirable Organization”

Over the winter break, you may have seen that Russia designated GW an “undesirable organization,” alleging that GW promotes anti-Russian sentiment and spreads false claims about the war in Ukraine. While we have not received formal notification, the designation was posted on the Russian General Prosecutor’s website and reported in the Russian press. Many organizations, including universities, have received similar designations, including Yale University back in July.

The university is conducting a careful review of the situation and its impact on our community and programs. We will also be assessing any potential implications to academics, research, and programs and will provide updated information as we go forward. For now, we urge individuals to follow the U.S. State Department warning not to travel to Russia for any reason. Russian nationals at GW are encouraged to contact the International Services Office and/or their personal immigration counsel; faculty and staff conducting research in Russia are encouraged to contact the Office of the Vice President for Research.

#### KACIF Stewardship Event

Finally, on Wednesday evening, I had the wonderful opportunity to stop by an event with the Knowledge in Action Career Internship Fund (KACIF), established by the GW Career Services Council and is generally supported by many donors. KACIF enables undergraduate and graduate students to pursue unpaid internships by reducing associated financial challenges through grants. I spent time with students and donors at the event, and everyone was so inspired by the experiences that students shared. KACIF is just one example of the amazing things our students are able to do when supported by philanthropy.

### BRIEF STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS/PRESIDENT’S & PROVOST’S REPORTS

Professor Wirtz noted that the budget situation the President referenced has stirred a lot of interest among his constituents. He recalled the report on the FY26 budget, presented at the December Senate meeting, suggesting a \$1.3 billion revenue stream and about the same amount in expenses. He hoped the President might put to rest rumors about the university being in an extremely adverse position, to the point where deans are being asked to prepare for a variety of contingencies (e.g., cuts at 5%, 10%, and 15%). In light of cuts already made, it is not clear where this money would come from or whether the university is in fact in a position to require further cuts at these levels. As the Senate has received forecast but not actual numbers for the university’s FY26 position, he asked if the President might calm the campus on this point.

President Granberg responded that the goal for FY26 is to close the gap present at the beginning of the year and to make some progress on closing a piece of the structural deficit; these goals are on track. However,

she noted that there are warning signs, particularly around international graduate applications, which make up a significant part of the university's revenue stream. The reason for the scenario planning she mentioned in her report is to have all units at the university think about what actions the university would take if things stay as they are pointing or become worse. She confirmed that the university is not planning to make these cuts but needs to have the conversation when there is plenty of time to be deliberative. Waiting until summer, when faculty are largely not on campus, there is very little time to do this work.

Dr. Lach added that the inputs for the FY26 Q2 forecast are due today, which will provide a better sense for how FY26 is going. The approved budget for FY26 was for a \$1 million margin across the whole university on a \$1.4 billion budget, which is not where the university wants to be. This is without merit budgeted for this year, and the \$25 million gap the CFO referenced last month that needs to be closed this year as well. The Q2 forecast will provide more information about how this is going; even with this, there are other goals the university wants to work toward (e.g., reliably provide merit, have a reasonable margin, make strategic investments, etc.) to feel as though it is working from a position of financial strength. Some of the scenario planning is centered on graduate application data, which hits different schools differently. If, going into FY27, the university wants to be able to fund a merit pool and has to account for potential revenue hits due to drops in enrollment, then thinking about those scenarios is important. He noted that he had a very positive meeting yesterday with all of the deans and finance leaders to talk about how they would work together and with their communities to explore a variety of options. Part of that messaging, he added, is that planning can't be entirely about cuts; the university also needs to be looking for opportunities for additional revenue, including recognizing that some of that will require some investment and some time to build up programs.

Understanding that there are limits on what can be said about the Medical Faculty Associates (MFA) during active deliberations, Professor Wirtz noted that one of the first questions he gets when faculty hear about potential cuts is how much of this is attributable to the MFA. In addition, it is not clear to those in the schools what the breakdown of expenses is in the central administration and how much of the hit they are absorbing. He noted that it would be helpful to see this kind of details as confirmation that all the units are in this together.

President Granberg noted that, when talking about the FY26 budget gap, the contribution from the schools as opposed to the other units was modest (a \$1 million margin increase on a consolidated basis from FY25 to FY26). She added that she has been very clear with the leadership team that if cuts have to be made, they must be shared across the entire university and that there is an effort to protect the schools, who are delivering the curriculum and doing research. Everyone will participate in the budget scenarios because everyone will be asked to contribute.

On the MFA side, the President confirmed that the university is working very hard on completing an agreement. Her hope is that FY27 will be a clean-up year that puts the situation to rest; she added that CFO Fernandes can speak to this in the near future. Professor Wirtz asked if the university would be on the hook for a potential \$100 million loss at the MFA this year; the President responded that this would not be the case given the co-funding arrangement with University Health Services (UHS). Professor Wirtz followed up to ask if that meant the university would be responsible for a \$50 million loss. The President responded that this is possible, and while no one likes that idea, it is far better than being responsible for the full amount.

Professor Crandall asked whether the planning scenarios will be happening under the new or the old budget model and, given that many of those involved with the exercise do not know how the new budget model works, how the planning scenarios will be conducted. Dr. Lach responded that, in FY27, the old and new

budget models will run in parallel. The primary model for FY27 will be the legacy model with the new one running alongside to see how it performs. The planning scenarios are centered on expense cuts, so the budget model does not come into play as a primary factor.

Professor Brinkerhoff expressed deep concern about both the fact of what the university may be facing as well as how it will be approached. Agreeing that planning scenarios are important, she observed that some schools are already down to skeleton budgets after previous cuts. Given that the only way to meet cuts now in some cases would involve the wholesale elimination of programs, she asked what guidance is being provided to the deans and what the plan is to engage faculty on which programs or units need to be looked at closely for reduction or elimination as well as how consolidations can be undertaken that make sense to the academic enterprise.

President Granberg responded that any decisions along those lines would absolutely be consultative. Dr. Lach noted that Professor Brinkerhoff's question was the agenda for the meeting he held last night with the deans. Part of that discussion was his recognition that the charge to the schools to do 5/10/15% scenarios was too much in a vacuum; last night's meeting centered on how to work on this together, and in particular how to work with the various communities.

Following up on Professor Wirtz's earlier point, Dr. Lach noted that the budget update the Senate received in December was factual and accurate at the time it was presented. In looking at the new application numbers, however, it is important for the community to understand the trends and impacts are because the community needs to be fully involved in these conversations. Starting now is key as there is a lot of uncertainty in how enrollment (especially graduate) will shake out over the next few months; early indicators are concerning and, the picture changes day to day. Just this week brought new announcements about visa restrictions from certain countries; some of the countries that were recently placed on those lists are ones that were strategic growth areas for GW in recent years that may now be cut off from the university. Part of the process is also recognizing that some of the schools have been dealing with enrollment challenges for a while and have already had to make cuts; the solution cannot be to keep cutting while still trying to do everything the way it has been done all along. Determining the process for exploring other options has to be a collaborative approach.

President Granberg added that this reinforces how important it is that the university also look for every opportunity to bring new revenue into the university, because GW cannot cut its way out of the structural deficit. CFO Fernandes and his team are working on identifying what resources can be made available to make investments that would lead to new revenue generating opportunities. Dr. Lach agreed, noting that revenue stream additions were not part of the initial focus but that the meeting with the deans last night made it clear that the university needs to create some additional degrees of freedom while exploring its options.

Professor Brinkerhoff appreciated hearing that the Provost has talked with deans and that the group knows it needs to engage GW's communities; she expressed concern both that there is not a concrete plan for doing so and that the university is very decentralized and does not have good mechanisms whereby one area can benefit from work and ideas in another area. Her hope was that the leadership would implement procedures and ways to share information for collective learning that goes beyond the deans' meetings. The faculty have experience they can contribute to these processes, especially when discussing decisions that have a direct impact on the programming they can effectively deliver.

Dr. Lach agreed completely and recognized the Graduate School of Education & Human Development (GSEHD) faculty and interim dean and their collaborative work on very difficult issues. Their community is in the best position to determine what will be best for their future. The work they are doing is an example of what Professor Brinkerhoff pointed to as being so necessary, namely, a community effort.

The President added that, earlier this year, CFO Fernandes convened a budget matters working group that has been working throughout this time, meeting regularly and getting educated on the university budget and what some of the pressures are. This is another body that includes faculty, staff, and students, and the CFO's intention is for this group to continue its work and help with the structural deficit.

Professor Cohen-Cole observed that today's conversation is reminiscent of the one that took place in the early months of COVID-19. At that time, FSEC sent a memo to the Board of Trustees with a list of suggestions for cuts as well as opportunities for new revenue. Professor Cohen-Cole mentioned one such suggestion—the recommendation that the university end its 457(f) contributions—noting that the University of Southern California (USC) recently ended their 457(f) contributions in recognition of its budget pressures. The student-led [Annenberg Media article](#) noted that this would create a savings of about \$10 million over three years. He wondered if this was the kind of thing that GW might also consider. The President responded that she would appreciate seeing this memo (the Senate office will send this to the President—the memo is also [attached](#) to these minutes). She added that, moving into the planning scenarios, everything needs to be on the table. Whether this specific item would be implemented is not possible to say at the moment, but the university needs to be willing to look at everything.

#### FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (FSEC Chair)

The [Faculty Senate Executive Committee \(FSEC\)](#) report was circulated with the agenda of today's meeting. Professor Ortí noted that FSEC met with several standing committee chairs over the past week (Fiscal Planning & Budgeting, Educational Policy & Technology, Professional Ethics & Academic Freedom, Appointments, Salary, & Promotion Policies, and Research). The purpose of these meetings was to touch base with the chairs mid-year and learn about the important issues being raised in these committees and the discussions they're having as well as to offer FSEC's support on any particularly challenging issues. Professor Ortí noted that many common topics arose that will help FSEC to focus and organize its work more precisely.

#### BRIEF STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS/FSEC REPORT

None.

#### REPORT: Research (Bob Miller, Interim Vice President for Research)

Interim Vice President Miller shared a [pre-read of his update](#) to the Senate and reviewed a [summary of that report](#) before turning to questions.

Dr. Miller noted that the federal government is now focused less on terminating grants as a way to regulate research and more on other tactics. First, while the cut to indirect cost recoveries to 15% will almost certainly not be implemented, universities can expect heightened scrutiny into how they spend these funds.

Second, “forward funding” is being implemented for federal grants; this means that the total allocation for a multi-year grant is transmitted in the grant’s first year as opposed to being transmitted proportionately over the years of the grant. This will have the effect of quickly drying up the pool of funding available for the broad spectrum of ongoing research. Finally, changes are being implemented in the way federal grant proposals are being reviewed. Previously, a group of proposals would go to a study section, and a selected group would then be moved forward. The selection of proposals to be reviewed has dropped from around 50% to 25% in some institutes with a reduction in the peer review component.

GW has maintained a robust research portfolio, and Dr. Miller noted that the university should be very proud of the fact that it is essentially holding steady. Research expenditures are a little down this year, but GW is doing very well in its peer environment. This reflects the fact that GW has a broad spectrum of research activity; it will be important to maintain this diversity. Dr. Miller noted that he is especially proud of the number of books and inventions coming out of work done at GW.

Internally, Dr. Miller noted that the university needs to think about how it achieves the maximum benefit from the work it is supporting. Part of this is ensuring that the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) works very closely with other areas of GW (e.g., human resources, information technology, and faculty partners). He noted a benefit this year of working closely with the Faculty Senate Research Committee (FSRC); this work entails significant advances on thinking together about how to advance research (e.g., advancing the Allegations of Research Misconduct Policy). Looking ahead, it will be important to think about how research activity can be linked to the teaching and education aspect of the university.

Professor Wirtz noted that GW is currently under enormous pressure in terms of accepting doctoral candidates, with most schools experiencing a big cutback in the number of PhD students they are able to support. He asked how much this threatens GW’s AAU participation and whether this is reflective of the particular moment or if GW’s decision to admit fewer doctoral students (which could result in losing faculty) is essentially cutting off its nose to spite its face. Noting that he can’t foresee the future, Dr. Miller responded that, if, over a long period of time, GW were to significantly reduce the number of graduate students, that would have an impact on the research enterprise. However, he noted, there are two schools of thought to consider here: 1) this is a temporary reduction that will rebound without much impact; and 2) it is unlikely that the university will return entirely to its previous levels, as the world is changing. He affirmed that the research enterprise needs to be supported through graduate and post-graduate research activities. Dr. Miller did not perceive a threat to GW’s AAU membership in particular, noting that the current climate threatens the national research enterprise more than any one institution specifically.

Professor McAlister asked about the research landscape for the humanities and social sciences, noting that available funding is down by 30-50% in past year with many funding organizations cutting back or not offering funds. She asked how OVPR is thinking about research decimation for these fields. Dr. Miller acknowledged that there is not a good answer for this question but stressed the need to look for alternative strategies, adding that he has talked with Deputy Provost Murphy about opportunities for targeted support in areas that have been particularly challenged. Professor McAlister pointed out that the pie chart Dr. Miller shared showing the allocation of research funding across the disciplines indicates that funding could be doubled for the humanities and still be just over half a percent of GW’s funding. Dr. Miller agreed, adding that the question is where that funding can be sourced.

Professor Schultheiss noted Dr. Miller’s point that, with the drying up and shifting of federal funds, there are new partnership possibilities with industry. She asked how these might shape the kind of research faculty

can do, thinking in particular about AI projects and whether GW's research enterprise is being shaped by outside forces in new ways. Dr. Miller responded that the university prides itself on doing research with impact, and impact can have multiple facets. As funding becomes available through other sponsors and support sources, with different expectations and returns, researchers will follow that funding in order to support research activities. He did not think that this would shift GW's research portfolio dramatically, given that GW is a research university and not an applied college; these new sources are likely an addition and not a replacement. Professor Schultheiss followed up, noting that a lot of the funding being cut at the federal level would likely affect the basic science research being done at GW. She asked whether this might affect research on basic science as opposed to, for example, applications for the drug market. Dr. Miller responded that, thus far, fundamental science research still seems to be moving ahead, with the reductions coming in specific areas that the administration says it does not want to support.

Professor Akman, thinking internally about the MFA and clinical research going forward, asked about the complexity of the research ecosystem and where the MFA fits into that, not only in terms of potential collaborations with other schools but also with MFA faculty serving as mentors for medical students, residents, etc. Dr. Miller noted that, on the clinical research side, OVPR already manages the School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) Office of Clinical Research. His proposal is to move that office to a central office under OVPR that would support all clinical activity across the university; this would represent an efficiency as there are currently several offices engaged in this work at GW. As to supporting and being mentors for medical students as well as supporting research endeavors, as OVPR sees where the clinical faculty's strengths lie, certain areas of existing strength can continue, while others may be more dependent on the faculty portfolio.

Professor Ortí offered the following remarks and questions:

Thank you, Vice President Miller, for this detailed report and your leadership in this critical area for GW.

First, recognizing this important function and the fact that you are on an interim appointment, is GW planning to conduct a formal search to make a definitive appointment for the VP of Research Position?

Second, I have a question related to the budget (and the new budget model). I would like to emphasize the critical importance of intramural funding in these times of political turmoil and uncertainty about federal funding. GW has a very generous policy to return some of the indirect (F&A) funds collected from external grants to PIs, departments, and schools. This important contribution comes from the Research Enhancement Incentive Awards (REIA). Quoting the OVPR website on REIA:

*(REIA) provides intramural awards to recognize the research achievements of principal investigators (PIs). The awards are intended to help defray the costs associated with research and provide incentives for faculty to expand their sponsored research programs. (These apply to all schools except Law, The Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH), and SMHS, as I understand.)*

*The amount of REIA provided to PIs and academic units is determined annually through a formula based on expenditures incurred by faculty in the previous fiscal year as well as consultation between the Vice Provost for Research and Deans. The REIA program is funded by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR)...*

*PIs and Department Chairs may expend RELA funds to enhance research capabilities. There are no specific restrictions on the use of RELA funds, except that PIs may not use the funds to increase their base salary or pay themselves a bonus.*

*The following points should be kept in mind in deciding how to use RELA funds:*

- *Goods and services procured with RELA funds should be used to promote research and must not be intended for personal use unrelated to work.*
- *Expenditures of RELA funds (including reimbursements) must be consistent with university procurement policies and procedures*
- *RELA funds are institutional funds, not personal funds.*
- *Any equipment, furniture or other goods purchased with RELA funds are the property of the university.*

Not surprisingly, successful PIs with active grants do not use these awards immediately but rather save them to fund future research opportunities, for bridge funding between grants, or to recruit more students or postdocs in the future. As described, these are funds that exist in perpetuity (no term limits are attached to these awards).

The Director of Research Finance (OVPR) transfers REIA funds to academic units, with appropriate notification of funding amounts for individual PIs, usually toward November/December of each year. The PIs work in conjunction with their department chair, Associate Dean for Research, and School Finance Director in using their allocations.

But the problem is that these funds are treated as operating funds and not separated into a discrete account as other research funds, donations, or endowments. In times of budgetary constraints as we are currently experiencing, allocations for use of these funds are now being constrained to the inflow of REIA funds for each particular year. Since many PIs have been accumulating REIA funds for several years, their free use at any point in time is restricted and may be severely reduced, turning the idea that these “savings” are available to fund their new projects and research needs into a delusion because those funds do not really exist anymore; they have been spent in the regular annual budget cycle to cover other operational expenses of their academic units.

My question is whether the new budget model addresses this budgeting issue for REIA funds and other so-called R-funds that suffer the same problem?

Dr. Lach responded to Professor Ortí's first question, confirming that a search for a permanent Vice President for Research will launch later this spring.

Dr. Miller first noted that he did not anticipate a reduction in IDC but rather that there would be additional scrutiny on how the funds are used. He agreed completely that REIA system sounds good but encounters challenges when time and financial constraints are applied. He stated that he is working with the new budget model to provide a more effective and efficient system; he indicated that he would bring a model for how to operate REIA in the future to the Senate.

Professor Warren asked about student research and specifically undergraduate research, referencing a conversation earlier today about student journals. He noted there is potential for encouraging more undergrad research at GW and suggested that OVPR look into the Council on Undergraduate Research to strengthen this at GW. Dr. Miller responded that he, Deputy Provost Murphy, and Dean Henry have discussed this in the past and that it is time to reactivate GW's work in this area.

Following up on Professor Ortí's comments, Professor El-Ghazawi noted his understanding that, some years ago, there was had special treatment of REIA and similar funds in the form of R and C fund separation. Of late, REIA has slipped into operational (C) funds. Understand the pressures that led to this, he stated that returning to a separated model would be optimal, in part because it would provide incentives for faculty to get more grants and be more productive. Even in an environment with declining funds due to federal cuts, the return of a percentage of awarded funds is still valuable. Dr. Miller noted that the goal is to create incentives for more research and research that would not be immediately fundable by external sources; the university needs funds to support this. The previous system may not be the right answer, but some system is necessary to maintain this support stream.

Professor Cohen-Cole noted that intramural funds are a fraction of what GW spends on research support at the institutional level. On slide 14 of the pre-read, he noted, the university is spending \$100 million on research. He asked whether this number might be broken out to show how these funds are expended, noting that slide 15 shows this by field (likely matching the Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey categories). He also asked whether leadership has considered whether the ways it spends these funds is helping to maintain GW's position in the AAU. Dr. Miller responded that he would be happy to look at such an analysis with Professor Cohen-Cole. On Professor Cohen-Cole's first question, Dr. Lach noted that a large piece of the \$100 million is contributed effort from faculty as opposed to actual additional cash. Professor Cohen-Cole noted that this is key to showing how important time is to the university's research output. Dr. Lach clarified that REIA is funded from the indirect cost recoveries as opposed to from institutional funds.

Professor Crandall observed that this is critical information as, otherwise, the university can't align its return on investment correctly and assess the impact of its spending on research. Dr. Lach responded that this is exactly right but that it is also important to know how the institution defines return on investment—it is not just research dollars but also measures such as books and reputation. Professor Crandall noted that, from a data analytics perspective, a metadata file could include all of these variables and look at them with respect to expenditures to see where the outliers are and where investments are making a solid impact. Dr. Miller agreed that more analytics on the money coming in, its utilization, and the return is a great idea; the university will need to be increasingly efficient, and more data will help.

Professor El-Ghazawi acknowledged that REIA is generous and helps recruit faculty. Professor Crandall pointed out that two-thirds of the research income doesn't participate in REIA; Dr. Miller responded that, while that is true that those areas don't use formulaic REIA but does have other mechanisms. Dr. Lach noted that this discussion points to the need for GW to be intentional about how it uses its resources. REIA provides some support, but many faculty would appreciate better institutional infrastructure and support that helps all faculty; the question is finding the right balance. He appreciated the idea of providing incentives for research but noted that GW is an AAU institution and by definition does research; the real question is how to support that.

Professor McAlister noted that faculty in the humanities and social sciences mostly get funds for fellowships. She noted that, last year, her fellowship paid a portion of her salary to GW, which did not replace her teaching. Those funds went somewhere, but the individual faculty member doesn't see any of that for their research purposes. She noted that there is a lot of inequality built into the system, noting that her graduate student receives more than her annual research allotment when they are on a fellowship.

## INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None.

## GENERAL BUSINESS

### I. Nominations for Senate Standing Committee Membership

The following committee nomination was approved by unanimous consent:

- Research
  - Jorge Walter (GWSB Associate Dean for Research)/nonvoting

Professor Wirtz asked why a faculty member was being nominated to a Senate standing committee in a non-voting capacity. The Senate office confirmed that the Associate Deans of Research for each school are non-voting members of the Research committee regardless of their faculty status as they serve on this committee in their administrative capacity. If they are faculty members, they may serve as voting members of other Senate standing committees.

### II. Senate Standing Committee Reports

The following interim reports were received by the Senate office and have been posted to the Senate website:

- [Libraries interim report](#)
- [University & Urban Affairs interim report](#)

## BRIEF STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Professor Schultheiss raised the issue of how donations are accounted for on an annual basis. She noted that, if her department received a \$10K donation, they would have to spend the funds that year or lose them; this results in poor spending decisions. President Granberg responded that this very issue came up in a Board of Trustees budget working group meeting this morning. Vice President Unruh specifically mentioned this issue as something that needs adjustment.

Professor El-Ghazawi thanked Professors Orti and Vyas for helping to transition FSEC this fall and noted that working with them has been a great experience.

Following on the earlier questions about the MFA, Professor Crandall relayed an administratively terrible clinical experience he had at the MFA that resulted in his being sent away from a confirmed vaccine appointment without receiving the vaccine. His experience made it very clear that operational and administrative issues remain a major problem at the practice.

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm.

## Board of Trustees Executive and Finance & Investments Committee members

Grace E. Speights, Chair  
Ellen Zane, Vice Chair  
Ave Tucker, Secretary  
Christine Barth  
Roslyn Brock  
Mark Chichester

Amr ElSawy  
A. Michael Hoffman  
Madeleine Jacobs  
Todd Klein  
George Wellde  
Thomas LeBlanc, President

June 4, 2020

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees Executive Committee and Finance Committee, and President LeBlanc,

This letter is prompted by the current and expanding financial difficulties faced by the university and the letter from Board Chair Speights to the George Washington University on May 18, 2020.

In her letter, Chair Speights called for “transformational thinking and best practices” in order to “safeguard the future and continue to promote the excellence of the George Washington University for generations to come.” To that end, Chair Speights asked for a framework that includes changes to operations as well as “permanent measures that have a lasting impact and sustain our course to preeminence in full recognition that the future will look very different from the past.” In looking at permanent measures, Chair Speights asked that they include “materially improving the operations and financial efficiency beyond minor changes that would normally be implemented in a less severe financial downturn.”

Recognizing that to date there have been no substantive proposals for structural changes communicated from the administration to us, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has developed a range of possible short- and long-term changes, which are contained in the two attached documents.

We want to emphasize that ordinarily, before sending the Board such proposals, we would have engaged in a robust substantive discussion with members of the Senate, committee chairs, and other interested faculty. However, because of the gravity of the situation and the urgent need to begin taking steps to maintain GW’s financial health, we decided to convey the attached proposals based solely upon the consent of the members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

We share these with the hope that the items listed can be on the table for discussion as the Board considers the FY21 budget it will adopt for GW in the coming days and weeks.

The enumeration below arises from three principles:

1. The university should protect its core missions of world class research and education. GW’s central mission is promoting the expansion and transmission of knowledge. As framed by Chair Speights in her email of May 18, 2020, GW’s mission is to “educate and increase knowledge through research and scholarship.” Therefore, cuts in the current situation should begin in areas outside of the core mission. Structural changes should occur first to non-core areas and to areas that are not revenue-generating.

2. It is important to distinguish between what may be a short-term adverse financial situation and longer-term changes in revenue and expenditures.
3. Budget revisions that require structural changes in the university's research and educational activities should not be made on a hasty basis and should not be done without the joint consultations of the trustees, administration, and faculty. Therefore, plans—budgetary or otherwise—for reacting to COVID-19 should be circulated and discussed by trustees, faculty, and administration for at least two weeks prior to finalization.

To this end, we would like to offer to the Board of Trustees and the administration some suggestions for a range of operational improvements, cost savings, and even methods of new revenue generation. Collectively, these changes can secure GW's long-term health and position as a globally recognized center of research and education.

In their letter of March 4, 2020, Grace Speights and Thomas LeBlanc committed to "meaningful communication and consultation with the faculty before making important academic decisions of shared governance." It is in that spirit of consultation that the following are offered. Members of the faculty would be pleased and prepared to discuss these directly with Board at any time.

Below, please find two documents:

**Attachment I** – A list of possible savings of \$21.5M in one-time savings, and an additional \$33.2M in structural, yearly savings.

**Attachment II** – New possible sources of revenue of \$94M per year.

Sincerely,

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

## Attachment I. Savings

### 1. Direct and deferred compensation.

#### 1.a. Eliminate all university bonuses for both FY20 and FY21.

Rationale: The announced cuts to administrative compensation have a duration only from July 1 2020 to the end of 2020. Announced cuts do not include any cuts to bonuses, deferred, and non-salary compensation in FY 2020 or FY21.

*Estimated savings (one time): \$1.5M.*

#### 1.b. Permanently end university contribution to [457\(f\) plans](#). For executives, key, and highest compensated employees, also terminate all university payments for benefits not regularly available to faculty and staff, including but not limited to retention bonuses, severance packages, supplemental annuities, supplemental differed compensation, gross up payments, additional insurance, tax and legal services, tickets to athletic and cultural events, membership fees, first class air fare, travel expenses for family members, car allowance, and any post-employment benefits or payments not generally available to GWU employees.

Rationale: Equity and Efficiency. Core programs should be protected above maintaining special compensation for the most highly paid. [The 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act assesses a 21 percent excise tax on the compensation of nonprofit executives in excess of \\$1 million.](#)

*Estimated structural savings: \$700K/year*

#### 1.c. Reset downward, on a permanent basis, executive and administrative compensation within central administration and colleges. Establish cuts to headcount, to salary base, to deferred compensation, and to bonuses. Ensure that GWU pays zero in excise tax for compensation.

Rationale:

- If there is fat to be cut in compensation, it is not in faculty salaries or staffing levels. Indeed, while GW is almost the most efficient of its peers in this regard,<sup>1</sup> administration has grown in both headcount and per-person compensation.<sup>2</sup>
- At many higher education institutions, the ratio of the President's salary to Full Professor salaries is approximately 5:1. Is it higher or lower at GW and, if higher, what savings would be achieved by setting the GW President's compensation to 5x the national average Full Professor salary?
- What effects would cutting the President's compensation have on the compensation of other administrators at GW, and what collective long-term savings would be achieved?
- There has been some inflation of central administration in both headcount and salaries, whereas it is unclear that recent hiring was done on a competitive basis, given that a number of executives were previously connected with President LeBlanc. Indeed, the university hired an associate provost even after the COVID-19 imposed hiring freeze. Using 2015 as baseline, in real dollars, how are our expenditures now vs then? How much would be saved

<sup>1</sup> [https://provost.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs626/f/Core%20indicators\\_2019.pdf](https://provost.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs626/f/Core%20indicators_2019.pdf), p.17-18.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 990 forms, in FY2015 the GWU Provost had compensation of [\\$1,050,411 plus \\$159,732](#) in deferred compensation. In the same fiscal year, the Harvard Provost had total compensation of [\\$867,080](#).

if the university started by reducing executive and central payroll, but by using the 2015 costs as a baseline?

*Estimated structural savings: \$1.5M/year*

**1.d. Pause merit increases for one year**

Rationale: already announced.

*Estimated savings (one time): \$20M*

**2. Elimination of Costs outside of Core Mission**

**2.a. Eliminate competitive athletics**

Rationale:

- Some schools like Notre Dame and University of Miami draw students because of their athletics program. GWU is not like those schools. GWU is like schools such as NYU where the competitive advantage in drawing students is its location, not its athletics. Students who care much about competitive athletics will seek to attend schools in the conferences like Big 10, SEC, or ACC, but not GWU. Additionally, competitive athletics is a money loser, even from the perspective of donations. Further, elimination of competitive athletics would also eliminate the need for the new aquatics and athletics facility proposed in the [new campus master plan](#).
- The effective cost per student of competitive athletics of more than \$1,500/year serves a small portion of the student body and would be better spent on core educational and research mission that address a larger group of the undergraduates.

*Estimated structural savings: \$20M/year*

**2.b. End expenditures for events outside of GW space**

Rationale: Off-campus space rental (including departmental retreats) and on-campus tents for special events lead to under-utilization of GW facilities. Currently, costs are out of control because of the inefficient structure of GW budget practices. GW units are charged to use GW spaces, effectively encouraging them to seek outside rentals and therefore transfer funds outside the university.

*Estimated structural savings: \$1M/year*

**2.c. Scale back expenditures on consulting activities**

Rationale: GW purchased services are currently around \$180M/year. According to the Educational Advisory Board (EAB), high-end consultancy engagements have small impact and unclear ROI. The problem of wasted consultancy fees seems to apply especially for general consulting firms (e.g., Disney) which do not have a deep and longer-term knowledge of the higher education sector and therefore seem to provide generic advice.<sup>3</sup> President LeBlanc already informed the Faculty Senate that the Disney Institute contract had reached its conclusion this spring.

*Estimated structural savings: \$9M/year*

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<sup>3</sup> EAB “Efficiency and Effectiveness Initiatives: What Business Leaders Should Know About Higher Education’s Million-Dollar Consulting Engagements”, 2019.

**2.d. Scale back expenditures on campus beautification**

Rationale: Beautification is not necessary for maintenance and should be scaled back or eliminated before any cuts to core activities are considered.

*Estimated structural savings: \$1M/year*

**Sum of potential structural savings: \$33.2M/year**

**Sum of one-time savings** (freeze in merit increases for faculty and staff and elimination of executive bonuses in both FY20 and FY21) = **\$20M+\$1.5M = \$21.5M**

**One-year savings** (structural savings from first year = \$33.2M + one-time savings) = **\$54.7M**

## Attachment II. New Structural Revenues

### 1. Tuition Income

#### 1.a. Increase summer tuition revenue for grad and undergrad, consider requiring undergraduates to spend a summer in DC.

Rationale: The single most important distinguishing factor of a GW education is its DC location. There could be a strategic educational value in having a summer program. Increased emphasis on a summer in-residence program would offer many good curricular and co-curricular opportunities not normally available during term time, especially if undergraduates are taking only one class at a time. One of the lessons from COVID-19 is that there is great demand for summer enrollment. So too might summer enrollments for grad students be increased.

*Expected new yearly revenue: \$10M/year*

#### 1.b. Permanently abandon the plan to cut enrollment.

Rationale: President LeBlanc wisely recognized the emergency posed by COVID-19. Therefore, he announced to faculty in early April 2020 that all efforts to reduce undergraduate enrollment would be on hold and would not be considered again until the university had the chance to relaunch the strategic planning process. Given that Chair Speights now calls for structural changes, one such change would be to permanently abandon the enrollment reduction efforts. According to President LeBlanc, the cut to enrollment will cost about \$64M over 4 years. Taking the reduced revenue as a baseline implies that abandoning the 20% enrollment cut is new revenue.

*Expected new revenue: \$64M/year*

### 2. Efficiency

#### 2.a. Make Development Office and its activities more efficient.

Rationale: President LeBlanc has announced that development activities should be justified based on their ROI. Faculty support this reorientation. However, [GWU fundraising is falling behind its peers](#). According to its 2017 Form 990, GWU spent \$22.6 M and brought in \$68M. This a 30% expense ratio. [The national standard is closer to 15%](#). The university might increase the ROI and effectiveness of the development office and thereby decrease its expense ratio from 30% to 25%.

*Estimated New revenue: \$20M/year*

**Sum of new structural revenues: \$94M / year**

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Approved by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.  
June 4, 2020