

MINUTES
Meeting of the Hunter College Senate
15 February 2006

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The 462^{3rd} meeting of the Hunter College Senate was convened at 4:15 PM in Room W714.

Presiding: Joan Tronto, Chair

Attendance: The elected members of the Senate with the exception of those listed in Appendix I.

Agenda: The revised agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Minutes: The Minutes of February 1st were approved by unanimous consent.

Report by the The Chair presented the report as follows:

Administrative

Committee: Special Election to fill vacant seats on the Senate

In accordance with Article IV, 2. H. i & ii of the *Charter for a Governance of Hunter College*, the Administrative Committee presented the names of all nominees received:

Students: (39 vacant seats)

Aubrie Dillon (Poli Sci/Women's Studies)

Heidi Boisvert (Graduate)

James Wagstaff (Graduate)

Simone Delgado (Graduate)

James S.Z. Gregg (Undergraduate)

Oluwatobi Jaiyesimi (Undeclared)

Jose Longo (Geography)

Anna Kouremenos (BA/MA)

Marina Matatov (BA/MA)

Andrea Callard (Graduate)

Lindsay Moran (Sociology)

Dorothy Wing In Ng (SEEK)

Andrew Gounardes (Political Sciences)

Faculty: (10 vacant seats)

Robert Koehl (Classical & Oriental Studies)

Rosalind Petchesky (Political Science)

Jennifer Gaboury (Political Science)

It was moved that the student nominees be declared elected. The motion was approved by voice vote without dissent.

It was moved that the faculty nominees be declared elected. The motion was approved by voice vote without dissent.

Clickers were distributed to the newly elected senators.

54 **Report by the Select Committee on Academic Freedom**

55 Professor Stuart Ewen, Chair of the Committee, presented a brief summary of the report by Power-Point.
56 The following Recommendations presented by the Committee as part of their report were on the floor:
57

- 58 1. The Hunter College Administration and the College's governing bodies should acknowledge the
59 dimensions of the problem of the perception of a climate of fear and engage in college-wide
60 discussions to address and remediate this problem. The CAF believes that only a public
61 discussion of these issues can lead to mutually satisfactory improvements.
62
- 63 2. Maintaining and expanding academic freedom, creating an environment in which all members of
64 the academic community feel welcome to participate, and fostering respect for a college's govern-
65 ance bodies are hallmarks of positive academic leadership. All administrators should provide
66 guidance and feedback on these issues to those whom they supervise.
67
- 68 3. In spite of the limits of our inquiry, the CAF is profoundly disturbed that the climate of fear
69 described to us burdens the college with conflicts that fester and sap energy. We encourage the
70 Senate, the Administration and the wider academic community to use existing channels of
71 communication and governance structures to better address these issues.
72
- 73 4. The AAUP is currently conducting an inquiry at CUNY, including Hunter College, and we recom-
74 mend that the Senate encourage the entire Hunter community to cooperate with this effort.
75

76 Professor Stanley Moses made the following statement. He said:
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78 "This report asserts that there is a climate of fear which is intimidating the moral fiber of this college. I
79 must say that I as a Chair of a Department for the last eight years I have not encountered such a
80 climate of fear. But I respect anyone who comes forward and states that he or she has experienced such
81 intimidation and such abuse. It should not be tolerated, it should not be allowed. However, Hunter is a
82 difficult place to work and get things done, always generating a lot of conflict under any President or
83 any Senate governance that I have experienced since 1971. And there are additional problems with this
84 report: The methodology being followed, the confidentiality of the twenty-one who are five percent
85 supposedly of tenured professors, the ways in which the report is asserted, and the conclusions that
86 were just described did not to me reflect an accurate and true representation of what exists at Hunter
87 College. In fact, the assertion of Edgar Murrow that that guy made mistakes makes me think of some-
88 one else: Joe McCarthy. And Joe McCarthy was an expert in the conduct of slander, in the conduct of
89 vilification in an environment of confidentiality to undermine the positions and viewpoints of others.
90 And I almost experienced this last week by two different members of this body who created their own
91 climate of fear here at the Senate against anyone who might disagree with them. And that is a
92 condition of McCarthyism that should not be tolerated here at the College. On the basis of my sense of
93 what has gone on until this point I would like to introduce an amendment to the existing amendment
94 which calls for an acceptance and endorsement of the five Recommendations submitted. The first
95 Recommendation is something we are doing now, but I propose an amendment that a motion to accept
96 the report should not mean that the Senate endorses this report as an accurate measure of the mood of
97 the College. And I submit the reason for my doing this is that I am concerned about the motivation of
98 some of the people, not all but of some of the people, involved in this measure. Basically, I believe it is
99 a 'get the President' measure, knowing that the President is up for renewal. After five years her term
100 expires, and I feel that people here are using this particular submission as an occasion to attack, to get
101 the President, so to speak. Lasso the President, if I may borrow a statement from another place. And I
102 therefore submit this measure that we certainly can receive this measure, we can adopt this measure,
103 this motion, but we should not imply in the adoption of this measure that we are agreeing with the
104 conclusions which I believe are subject to serious concerns regarding the methodology and manner in
105 which it is put forward."
106

113 Professor Moses then moved that the motion be amended by adding the following:

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115 “Acceptance of the Recommendations does not mean that the Senate endorses this report as an
116 accurate measure of the climate of the College.”

117 Professor Wallach made the following statement. He said:
118

119 “I would like to speak in favor of the Committee’s Recommendations and against the amendment. I
120 think that people should focus on the language of the Recommendations and if they have objections,
121 object to specific aspects of the Recommendations. The first Recommendation simply affirmed what
122 the testimony was to the committee, namely that a certain number of faculty experience a climate of
123 fear or perceived a climate of fear. There were other violations of academic freedom which were also
124 noted in the report. The Recommendations also said that there should be efforts to address the climate
125 of fear, to respect academic freedom, to dispel the climate of fear, and to conduct the AAUP survey. Is
126 this what Professor Moses is objecting to? That these people were actually not telling the truth to the
127 committee? That we should not deal with serious issues of academic freedom if they are experienced
128 by a number of people in the community, or that we should not dispel the climate of fear, or that we
129 should not participate in the AAUP survey? That is what the Recommendations are saying. There is no
130 claim in the report that it represents the entire mood of the College. It is not a research project. It is
131 simply a record of testimony that the committee received. The committee was established over a year
132 ago with prior thought. So, it is hard to imagine that this is simply a personal vendetta, and it would be
133 useful it seems to me if, rather than reacting in what I see as a rather emotional and not very practical
134 way to the Recommendations of the Committee, that people pay attention to what is being said and not
135 make more out of this than what it says. In fact, it seems to me that insofar as the opposition to the
136 CAF Report and Recommendations has read them as a political attack, it only seems to confirm the
137 findings of the report.”
138

139 **Voting by clickers on Professor Moses amendment produced the following results: 33 in favor, 87**
140 **opposed, and 4 abstentions. The motion failed to achieve the required number of 102 votes.**

141
142 The Committee’s Recommendations were on the floor.

143
144 Mr. Charles Blumenthal made the following statement on behalf of the Student Caucus. He said:
145

146 “I am speaking on behalf of the Student Caucus. We would like to speak in favor of adopting the
147 Recommendations of the Report of the Select Committee on Academic Freedom. We feel that it is
148 essential for our professors to have the freedom to express their views in order to retain their
149 credibility as both teachers and scholars which in and of itself is essential to preserving a healthy
150 academic environment, particularly at a University that prides itself on diversity and access to
151 opportunity. Any perceived denial of this self-evident right creates a climate that burdens the College
152 as a whole. Specifically we feel it inhibits the free exchange of ideas and creates a hostile environment
153 for students whose interests this institution aims to serve. Only when professors have the freedom to
154 faithfully explore scholarly issues can students truly succeed. While some may trivialize the Report of
155 the Committee on Academic Freedom, we, the representatives of the student body whole heartedly
156 believe that its Recommendations are fundamental and a great big step in the right direction.”
157

158 Professor Ada Peluso made the following statement. She said:
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160 “I am the Chair of Mathematics and Statistics. As I have said on another occasion, I do not sense a
161 climate of fear at Hunter. If this alleged climate of fear is supposed to be “inhibiting the free exchange
162 of ideas” I can say with conviction that this is not true in the forum of elected chairs, the Faculty P& B
163 Committee, which meets regularly at least twice a month, and is chaired by President Raab, nor is it
164 true in the department that I chair. I have never sensed a fear of retaliation on the part of the faculty in
165 our department in spite of disagreements and differences of opinion. An earlier appendix of the Acade-

172 mic Freedom Report was a message from Chancellor Goldstein and there it is stated that Academic
173 Freedom has to do with the right of free expression in teaching, research, writing, or political
174 activities. Unfortunately, the term academic freedom seems lately to be applied incorrectly. If I submit
175 a proposal to the college administration for travel funds and am denied the funds, does this mean that I
176 am being retaliated against? If I submit a proposal for funding a College NOW program and it is
177 rejected, is this retaliation? The current senior administration at Hunter is seriously committed to
178 addressing and transforming many matters of concern to the entire College community, improving the
179 student retention rate and graduation rate, providing increased scholarship opportunities for students in
180 need, recruiting and retaining superior high school students, recruiting and retaining superior faculty,
181 providing increased funding for faculty research and travel, increasing the number of half-year full-
182 pay faculty sabbaticals, vastly increasing generous gifts to the College by alumni, making every effort
183 to secure additional classroom and studio space off campus, and the list continues. Could all these
184 advances take place in a climate of fear? It is to be expected that given that the college is in a period of
185 transition of phenomenal advancement, that administrators at all levels are also in transition in a sense.
186 Yes, many changes have taken place in administrators over the last several years, but also many
187 changes for the better have taken place in the college's functions and programs. I do agree that there
188 should be college- wide discussions to address the concerns expressed in the academic freedom report.
189 The Hunter College administration and the governing bodies should engage in college-wide
190 discussions to address the concerns addressed in the CAF Report, but I do not agree that a
191 recommendation to have such discussions should be tied to an acknowledgement by the College
192 administration that there is a problem at Hunter in the area of academic freedom.”
193

194 Professor Peluso then moved that Recommendation #1 be amended by substituting the following wording:

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196 “The Hunter College Administration and the College governing bodies should engage in college-wide
197 discussions to address the concerns included in the Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom,
198 with particular emphasis on attempting to clarify what actually constitutes a violation of academic
199 freedom.”
200

201 Professor Shahn moved that the amendment be amended by deleting the words “with particular emphasis
202 on attempting to clarify what actually constitutes a violation of academic freedom.”
203

204 **Voting by clickers on Professor Shahn's amendment produced the following results: 55 in favor, 48**
205 **opposed, and 16 abstentions. The motion failed to achieve the required number of 102 votes.**
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207 **Voting by clickers on Professor Peluso's amendment produced the following results: 34 in favor, 81**
208 **opposed, and 2 abstentions. The motion failed to achieve the required number of 102 votes**
209

210 The Committee's Recommendations were on the floor.
211

212 Professor Pamela Mills made the following statement. She said:
213

214 “I would like to speak in favor of the report by making the following comments. I actually did prepare
215 something, but I actually don't want to use it. I thought that one case of academic freedom would get
216 everyone in the College upset from the President on down, and I was thinking I am a little too old to
217 be shocked. I have actually been shocked, particularly at the end of the meeting last week when I
218 spoke to one of the administrators who said to me, “Pam, there will always be cases of violations of
219 academic freedom in the College. It is a question of a climate.” I find that frightening, because that is
220 almost an acknowledgement that there is at least one case at least that we believe has happened. Now
221 we are debating about whether or not there might be a climate, and I think that this is really
222 frightening.
223

230 I want to relate to you, in case you wondering if there is really one case, something I was very
231 reluctant to do. But now I am going to do it. After I spoke in the Senate about two years ago and raised
232 an academic freedom issue, I was told by an administrator that I was a pariah and would never receive
233 support from this College. If that is not a link between free speech and academic freedom, then I really
234 don't know what is. And I am not saying that it is widespread. I am not saying this is a climate. I am
235 not saying that everyone experienced it, and I am not saying it happened at a rational moment. It might
236 have happened at a moment of incredible anger, but it happened. It made me question whether deci-
237 sions that clearly went against me, were being done because of what I said in this body. So it scares
238 me. There might be just one case and that might be the only case. So, what is this report asking? This
239 was a

240 Report by a committee of highly respected people who said that there might be problems in the
241 College and we should begin to discuss them. And all we are doing is asking the administration to
242 affirm that and believe it. I believe that some of us have experienced problems, and it is really difficult
243 to be public and say this in front of everyone here.
244

245 I want to leave with one thought. A few years ago, I was the Chair of this body and President Caputo
246 was President. There were two things that happened then. One was retrenchment; the other was the
247 creation of the School of the Arts and Science. I think any of you who were here then know that both
248 of those issues were highly contentious. The level of discourse in this body now is very measured
249 compared to what happened then, and yet not once as Senate Chair did a single member of the commu-
250 nity come to me and say that they are worried about their academic freedom. Not once. I now have a
251 question for the person who said to me at the end of the last meeting "there are always issues of
252 academic freedom in the college". How many issues are okay, three, four, six, or twenty-five? I think
253 this is a very measured Report, and we should send a very clear message that we want discussion, we
254 want discourse, we want this open."
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257 Professor Jason Young made the following statement. He said:
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259 "First off I take very much to heart what my colleague, Professor Mills, just said. But the bigger
260 picture is that we are being asked to consider a number of things which might be framed as malice in
261 Hunter-land. Basically, we have a set of Recommendations that we are being asked to consider. And at
262 one level they are all very important and very common sensical. The biggest problem that I and many
263 folks that I have spoken with have about them is that they come from a rather flawed and overly
264 distilled document. And it is flawed not because we denigrate or question the validity of claims in fact
265 that you are making. The question is the extent in which the conclusion made in that report genuinely
266 and generally describes the tenor of the campus. So, yes to Pam's comment "are we quibbling over
267 'climate of fear'"? Yea, in its very essence we are questioning if there is such a climate of fear. Would
268 I question the general tenor of these Recommendations? Absolutely not, and as a result of that what I
269 would encourage my fellow senators to do, although I think people are beginning to realize that it is
270 going to be highly unlikely that we are going to pass anything in here without a major quorum, is to
271 vote down these Recommendations and immediately substitute in their place recommendations that cut
272 to the heart of what is most needed--a re-affirmation of the need for open, fair, unthreatening dialogue
273 on all sides, from the Senate, from the faculty, from the administration, for the good of all members of
274 the Hunter community."
275

276 Professor Sarah Chinn made the following statement. She said:
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278 "I will make this very quick. First of all, I would like to say that several senior members of the faculty
279 have come up me and said, Sarah, you are so brave. I mean, why? And they say, well you are not
280 tenured and you are speaking up. And I thought, well, that in itself seems to me something of a prob-
281 lem. But I would like to say something in response to what Pam said. While I don't want this to turn

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282 into a sort of testimonial, I know of several departments, including my own, in which hiring decisions
283 were countermanded by the administration, and an example in my department in which, rather than

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290 taking a hire through the process, P&B voted and within two hours a senior member of the administra-
291 tion came up to our department and insisted that the P&B reverse their vote. That seems to me one of
292 the most severe abrogations of academic freedom that a department may not make its own hiring deci-
293 sions, and that a senior member of the administration rather than allowing the hire to go through the
294 process and then bulldoze it, insisted that the P&B, which had been unanimously re-elected by the
295 department two hours earlier and it was wholly trusted by our department, sit there and reverse their
296 vote. I kept quiet about this and I would sort of gossip with my friends, but I just feel if that happens
297 once, that is appalling. But when I start talking to my friends, they are like, "Oh, yes, I know about
298 that. It happened in our department too." With all due respect to my colleagues who say "oh, no, we
299 don't have a problem," when this kind of thing seems to be actually common knowledge, and that the
300 administration now is doing their best to slow down the vote, to stall, to keep us talking, rather than to
301 make a decision, and to challenge the methodology of this report which seems to me an advocacy
302 report, is that not in itself a symptom of the very problem that this report is addressing?"
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304 Dean Laura Schachter made the following statement. She said:

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306 "I want to again raise a point like the one I made last time. It relates not to the methodology but to an
307 early point made by Professor Moses. Statements have been made in this room, and I can't because I
308 am bound by confidentiality rules go into many specifics, but statements have been made in this room
309 about people who left this college or decisions that were made or changes that were made with the
310 conclusion, based on no actual knowledge, being made that they were due to inappropriate administra-
311 tive reasons. I will tell you that there are things that happen at this College, and reasons changes are
312 made in this College that have to do with things like search procedures being violated by faculty
313 members, that have to do with inappropriate behavior by faculty members, that cause their careers here
314 not to continue the way they were before, and I cannot stand on this floor and talk about what those
315 things are, but therefore I don't think it would be appropriate for me to issue a report generally speak-
316 ing about inappropriate behavior by faculty members any more than it is appropriate for a report to be
317 issued about inappropriate behavior by administrators based on a lack of knowledge, and I think that is
318 the concern about the methodology. I do not think it is quibbling to say that there is a distinction
319 between there being a reality that individuals may feel that there is some fear here, that they believe
320 correctly or not that they have been retaliated against, and some of them may be correct, I don't know,
321 versus the language of this report and the Recommendations which ask for an acknowledgement of a
322 reality that there is a pervasive, it seems to me from the totality of this report, that is what is being
323 asked for, an acknowledgement of a pervasive climate of fear and I think that the concern in that and
324 perhaps the reason for Professor Peluso's proposed amendment, is that the actual language of the
325 report that is being asked to be approved does not reflect the reality of what is happening. And there is
326 a concern about having that out there."
327

328 Professor Makram Talih made the following statement. He said:

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330 "I would just like to say to the community that I don't see how there could be an open discussion about
331 the perception of a climate of fear if that problem is not even acknowledged. The first
332 Recommendation actually does not ask the administration to address and alleviate the actual factual
333 climate of fear, but the perception of a climate of fear. And I think a comprehensive resolution to this
334 issue cannot be achieved if even that perception is not acknowledged. Any psychologist can tell you
335 that."
336

337 **Voting by clickers on the Committee's Recommendations produced the following results: 92 in**
338 **favor, 20 opposed, and 4 abstentions. The motion failed to achieve the required number of 102 votes.**
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340 The Chair announced that the Report by Vic President Zinnanti would be postponed to the next meeting
341 because of insufficient time left.
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349 Professor William Sweeney moved the following resolution:

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351 “BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the sense of the Hunter College Senate that no climate of fear exists at
352 Hunter College, and that there have been no significant infringements of academic integrity at Hunter
353 College.”
354

355 The question was called. Voting by clickers produced the following results: 85 in favor, 18 opposed, and
356 6 abstentions. The motion failed to achieve the required number of 102 votes.
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358 Professor Sweeney’s motion carried over to the next meeting because of the late hour.
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360 The meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM.
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364 Respectfully submitted,

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367 Stuart Ewen
368 Secretary
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APPENDIX 1

The following members were noted as absent from the meeting:

Faculty

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|--------------------------|---|
| Computer Science | Virginnia Teller "E" William Sakas |
| Curriculum & Teaching | Frank Gardella |
| Educational Foundations | Tamara Buckley |
| English | Sylvia Roshkow |
| Film & Media | Michael Gitlin |
| Geography | William Solecki Haydee Salmun |
| German | Douglas McBride |
| History | Michael Turner |
| Library | Clay Williams |
| Mathematics & Statistics | Bill Willaims "E" |
| Nursing | Stephen Holzemer Leighsa Sharoff "E" |
| Psychology | Jeffrey Parsons Sosimo Fabian |
| Religion | Barbara Sproul |
| Romance Languages | Virginia Santos Rivero Monica Calabritto "E" |
| SEEK | Denise Simmons Willie Wimberly "E" |
| School of Social Work | Annette Mahoney |
| Student Services | Sudi Shayesteh |
| Theatre | Alan Sikes |
| Administration | Paul Kurzman "E" |

Ex-Officio

Pierce Varous
Michael Delfauuse
Sarah Jeninsky
Jason Ares

Students

Annie Thermidor
Caroline Erb
Pierre Hypolite
Laura Dillon
Sean Kivlehan "E"
Alicia Canary
Dora Romo
Colleen Boris

Ezra Serrar
Mikolaj Lis
Dilini Kasturiarachchi
Diane Young
Jasmine Olmo
Julia Daly
Emmanuel Palatulan
Yi Hao Wu

