

Baruch Faculty  
Senate Plenary  
September 2nd, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

A total of 110 members of the faculty senate, general faculty, staff, and students logged into the Zoom meeting.

Professor Terry Martell, Chair, Baruch College Faculty Senate, convenes the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

- I. Approval of the Agenda:** The agenda is approved by assent without additions
- II. Approval of the Minutes:** The minutes of the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting is approved by assent and without additions
- III. Report from the Chair, Professor Terry Martell:**

Professor Martell welcomes everyone to the first meeting of the Baruch Faculty Senate for this Academic year. While he has chaired many meetings over the years, this is his first large Zoom meeting. He asks for patience as Richard Wilkins, the BFS Secretary, and he negotiate this process. The goal is to have an orderly process where all of us have the ability to raise issues and share ideas. Professor Martell notes that the reopening of the campus went reasonably well and given the extremely fluid nature of the Covid virus coupled with the challenging nature of the Delta variant, information flows between CUNY and Baruch and within Baruch were a challenge. What was heard by some in the spring did not turn out to be fact in the fall. President Wu will discuss this in his remarks. One take away from this experience is the importance of access and input as decisions evolve. Towards that end, the BFS Executive Committee will meet no fewer than twice a semester separately with the President and the Provost. Professor Martell hopes that these meetings will be in person. This will be in addition to Professor Martell's participation as a member of the President's Cabinet which also gives us a faculty voice at the table.

At our last Plenary meeting in May we passed two resolutions: one thanking Barbara Bowen upon her retirement as President of the PSC and the second one requesting redress from the percentage of our total operating budget (including CUNY control funds) paid for by student tuition and fees (70%) against an average of 54% for the senior colleges overall. Baruch gets the least amount of State Aid as a percentage of the operating budget than any other Senior College. This was communicated to Matt Sapienza and Chancellor Matos Rodriguez. We received a promise to review the Senior College Budget Allocation model but with no assurance of what the outcome would be. Professor Martell also met individually with Chancellor Matos Rodriguez to further discuss this issue. Because of a number of issues, the CUNY budget numbers were not released until March of 2021 for a budget year that expired on June 30 2021. The FY22 budget was released in June of 2021 and the percentage of Baruch's operating budget funded by Baruch student tuition and fees increased to 73%. The FY22 Budget was finished before the receipt of our resolution. President Wu has also been working hard to change the funding formula has some good news to share in this regard. This will continue to be a priority for the Baruch Faculty Senate. Professor Martell is meeting with the USG later in September with the hope of their support for this resolution. He is also meeting with current and former CUNY Trustees to help better understand the context for improving Baruch position in this regard.

Under Professor Sam Johnson's leadership, the *Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility* chaired by Elliott Axelrod examined the Intellectual Property (IP) Policy at CUNY. Professor Axelrod will continue this effort at Baruch and Martin Burke will also make this a priority at the University Faculty Senate. The committee's report will be shared with the Council of Governance Leaders to generate interest in this issue across CUNY.

At the October meeting we will have a more specific agenda for the BFS this year with reports from each of the standing committees. One additional bit of good news is Baruch's enrollment for fall 2021 increased

1.3% over fall 2020. There was only one other senior college (possibly Hunter) with an increase. Overall CUNY enrollment was down 7%, with the Senior Colleges down 3.9%, the Comprehensive Colleges down 11% and the Community Colleges down 10.9%. These numbers were as of September 1<sup>st</sup>. Please note that there have now been a number of years with significant declines in enrollment at many CUNY Colleges. VP Gorman will provide a detailed report at a future senate plenary.

#### *Question and Answer*

Professor Glenn Peterson notes that the PSC chapter at Baruch did a lot of work with oversight and the campus reopening and that it should be acknowledged also that CTL and Technology center have done an extraordinary service both to faculty and students and they are all owed our depth of gratitude. Professor Peterson also expresses his dismay that others have chosen not to step into leadership roles and asks that Professor Martell encourage faculty to take an interest in matters related to the faculty senate and beyond. Professor Martell acknowledges the work of CTL and the Technology Center especially as it relates to the migration to distance learning and the task of uploading vaccine information into Cunyfirst and onto ID cards that are used to get into the campus building. He also notes that it was not his intention to take this leadership position but recognizes that there has to be the appropriate training in order to take such an important seat at the table.

#### **IV. Reports from College Officers** **a. President David Wu**

President Wu thanks the faculty and staff for their resilience and hard work. The beginning of the fall semester has been challenging and required a great deal of mental and physical adjustments. Everything considered however, the return to campus has been remarkably smooth.

President Wu takes the opportunity to introduce one of the two senior hires at the college, Elliot Dawes, the new Chief Diversity Officer. He has been teaching in the classroom in his previous position and will continue here in addition to his responsibilities.

Baruch, again has the largest enrollment increase among all CUNY institutions:

As of 8/31/21

**Total enrollment:** **19,946** (up 1.3% over same time last year)

**Undergraduate:** **15,842** (up 0.6%)

New freshmen 2,541 (up 23.5%)

New transfers 1,504 (down 17.9%)

**Graduate** **4,089** (up 4.3%)

New graduate 1,246

Baruch has the highest percentage of in-person and hybrid classes; and there is likely a strong correlation across our enrollment numbers and the desire of students to access in-person learning in some form. This is something we should be proud of.

The president expresses a concern as to what this all means from the resource point of view: Are we simply doing more for less? The president takes this issue very seriously, and has started a personal campaign since the spring to talk to many members of the chancellery, including the chancellor himself about the funding inequality that has persisted for a long time.

**Budget Allocation:** After many iterations of conversations, the president is happy to report that CUNY central has agreed to adjust Baruch's base budget allocation by \$1.5M. If we are to raise this funding through BCF, we would have had to raise an additional \$75M in endowment to generate that annual funding. Overall, our voices have been heard.

**Campus Reopening:** Thanks to the hard work of many of you, and many staff from student facing offices, campus facility, public safety, and more, the campus reopening was extremely smooth. Student facing staff were starting to come back beginning August 2<sup>nd</sup>, and many volunteers were helping with ID pop up centers, one-stop shop, vaccination and testing, etc. The plaza was completed at the right time ready for the students' return. We have been implementing the vaccination and testing mandate in the most rigorous way possible. Our campus access system ensures that no one will be able to access campus without verified vaccination or testing information.

Our students have expressed the desire to be physically on campus. Only about 20% of students are online only, the rest have at least one hybrid or face-to-face class. Of those with in-person and hybrid classes, as of end of day yesterday, in-person seats are 82.7% verified vaccinated. Hybrid seats are 75.8% verified vaccinated. These numbers are rising every day. The president urges us to reiterate the message to the students that unvaccinated students should not stay in in-person and hybrid classes as they are subject academic withdraw when the deadline comes.

The president moves to discuss the communication issues that have emerged over the past few months. There has been a great deal of anxiety among the faculty due to the mixture of vaccinated and unvaccinated (but tested) students. Our communication back in the spring was not standardized across the schools, and understandably this fact resulted in a number of interpretations on what message was being communicated. The president owns up to this fact and we will want to address two specific issues from this inconsistency in communication.

- First, there is a narrative out there that we scheduled the class modality based on the assumption that COVID will be mostly behind us. The interpretation was that we will always have the option to roll back to online or hybrid teaching. There is the feeling that has emerged that that we did not honor that commitment.
- Second, back in July we communicated that all students taking in-person or hybrid classes will be vaccinated. This was the best information we had from CUNY Central at that time. However, this turned out to be not the case, given the slow rate students uploaded their vaccination information, and the 45-day compliance period since the FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine.

To the first point, the president acknowledges that the communication on the issue was neither unified nor concise and caused a great deal of confusion. The reality is that the “roll back” from in-person to hybrid, or hybrid to online is much more complex. The president notes however that our intention of maximizing the in-person classroom experience for our students while exercising an abundance of caution for the health and safety of the campus remain the same.

The CUNY policy on this issue has evolved as well.

- EVC and the university Provost sent out a memo in August concerning modality change policies
- *Regarding the dynamic short-term adjustment:* The campus provost is given some flexibility to change the modality of class, for instance, if there is not sufficient classroom capacity to accommodate proper social distancing. This is calculated based on the number of students with unknown vaccination status.
- *Regarding a Roll-Back protocol:* CUNY has now specified system-wide “reclosing” criteria (or trigger), which supersedes all previous language in campus reopening plans. It outlines the following:
  - CUNY Central and campuses must monitor community spread and adhere to the latest CDC guidance in determining safety protocols required for safe, in-person operations.
  - CUNY Central will continue to monitor campus infection rates using the shutdown thresholds previously set by the State.
  - Campuses should utilize NYS COVID-19 infection rate metrics and local testing metrics that will determine the need to scale back or shut down campus operations.
  - Campuses should have a plan to detect early warnings of an infection surge and must have a shutdown plan in place to respond rapidly.

- Campuses shall be prepared to initiate a transition to remote learning or to limit on-campus activities if the greater of 100 individuals or 5% of the total on-campus population test positive using a 14-day rolling average.
- Campuses should rely on previously developed shutdown plans.
  - The final decision regarding a scaling back or shut down of operations will be made by the Chancellor in consultation with City and State officials.

### ***Outlook for Fall 2021 and Spring 2022***

CUNY is not going to “blink” on the vaccination mandate. There is a high likelihood that all students, faculty, and staff will be required to be vaccinated in order to access campus, i.e., no more access via testing.

CUNY’s system-wide instructional target for the spring is 30% in-person, 30% hybrid, and 40% online. [Correction from the time of the senate plenary: Upon further instruction from Provost Lemons, the CUNY system-wide target for spring 2022 is 70% in-person or Hyflex and 30% hybrid or online].

### ***Question and Answer***

Professor Thomas Heinrich notes of the damage to morale in his department over the poor communication issues especially as they relate to the rolling back of face-to-face instructional modalities to online. The president reiterates the August memo from Provost Lemons and the policies that emerged concerning the modality change. We were unable to switch the modality as it violates terms upon which students had registered for classes. By September 27<sup>th</sup> all of us entering the campus will be vaccinated. Once again however, the president takes ownership over the communication of these policies and understands that this caused problems. It remains challenging also to make room arrangements that are large enough to accommodate the remaining unvaccinated students. We will enforce the policy that they will be withdrawn when the vaccination mandate comes down. The vaccine mandate will put the college in a much stronger position. Vice President Kathy Cobb adds that there were months of pre-planning that went into reopening the campus. This was done over several phases and we are currently in the phase of *Safe Campus Operations*. The CDC is no longer behind social distancing in elevators as those that ride the elevator are not in it long enough to pose a risk to communicating the virus. Nor are the fully vaccinated required to socially distance. That said we have public safety officers monitoring elevator usage. The ventilation systems have been assessed by our staff and CUNY and our consultants has been deemed it to be in compliance with CDC recommendations. The President also notes that a system wide trigger supersedes all previous documents and policies and any reclosing guidelines can be found here:

[To the Baruch Community | Office of the President Archive - Office of the President \(cuny.edu\)](#)

Professor Eliot Axelrod asks about the definition of hybrid learning as he has noted that some classes are running entirely online and only holding exams in-person. Provost Essig suggests that hybrid teaching involves 33% to 67% of the class would be delivered in person and the remaining 33% to 67% will be online. The Provost also notes that there has been established a working committee—Hybrid Online at the Baruch Advisory Council—and one of their first charges is to define hybrid learning at Baruch and within the context of CUNY. This will be chaired by Professor Allison Lehr Samuels at CTL. Professor Kevin Frank asks what the plan is if a particular student tests positive in a particular classroom setting: What happens given that scenario? VP Cobb notes that in March 2020 protocols were put in place regarding both the reporting of cases and contact tracing. These have remained the same. If students are reporting a positive test result for Covid-19 they are blocked from campus and contact tracing goes into effect. Professor Ryan Ronan asks is faculty should be communicating to their students the vaccine mandate and if they are not in compliance they will be subject to withdrawal. The Presidents notes that all communication about virus protocols and policies are firmly vetted by CUNY and notes that while we would like to use much stronger language. The language that is currently in place is a product of that approval process through CUNY. It is good practice however, to warn the students and to encourage them to comply with the vaccine mandate. Professor Bellamy asks about the availability of reports on ventilation and whether or not they can be shared and also whether or not we can mandate the N95 mask. VP Cobb notes that we have not specified to any degree what kind of mask is required and that CUNY updating the report on ventilation.

### **b. Provost Linda Essig**

Provost Essig introduced herself to the Faculty Senate with an overview of her professional experience, administrative philosophy, and a few personal details, including a multi-generational commitment to public higher education.

She then proceeded to discuss issues related to campus re-opening. This includes:

- Layered approach to achieving a “risk minimal” level, including mask mandate, vaccination or test requirement, and accommodations for physical distancing if needed.
- The vast majority of students are fully vaccinated.
- More and more students upload vaccination documentation every day.
- Students have 45 days from the date of FDA approval to be fully vaccinated and noted that our current (albeit temporary) “mixed status” environment was thus unexpected.
- Classroom reassignments have been made in order to accommodate social distancing space for students who may not yet be fully vaccinated.
- The vaccination requirement, universal mask mandate, combined with individual distancing by unvaccinated individuals is the best way to minimize risk at this time, while providing our students with the in-person college experience that they have chosen.
- Room capacities are assessed by looking at each in-person or hybrid class and its number of not-yet vaccinated students. We are holding off on filling requests for changes based on *preference* until we can complete changes based on spacing *needs*.
- Some faculty may be teaching in 17 Lex for the first time. This is an admittedly older building. Some faculty have asked about the noise of the window a/c units – these units are adequate for ventilation purposes and airflow but we are nevertheless researching whether there might be quieter units available. If there is no microphone in the room, one can be requested through BCTC.
- Reminder: if you feel ill, STAY HOME. Do not come to campus if you have symptoms. Second, get tested. If the test, whether yours or your students, is positive, report that to Covid coordinator Andrea Caviness and Dean of Students Art King.

Provost Essig also shared how Academic Affairs is engaged with some of the college goals outlined by President Wu last year. This includes:

- Multifaceted approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In collaboration with our new Executive Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) Elliot Dawes and the three school deans, and informed by the excellent work done in the past year by school-level DEI task groups, looking at the faculty hiring process and adding guidance about advertising and proactive recruitment to help ensure both diverse and excellent candidate pools.
- Looking at faculty mentoring to make sure that *every* faculty member, both continuing and new, feels like they *belong* at Baruch
- Examining student success differentials, also known as “achievement gaps,” to identify courses and programs where students struggle.
- The College Academic Council in Collaboration with VPs Mary Gorman and Art King are looking at holistic models for integrated student services.

- One area the provost will certainly be asking for significant faculty input is on a team looking at First Year Seminar.
- Another is in the area of experiential or *engaged learning* – and teaching, an effort which will be led by one of the new faculty fellows.
- Innovation and leveraging faculty knowledge and expertise:
  - Faculty Innovation Fellows
  - Faculty Innovation Seed Grants
  - “Focus on Funding” newsletter coming soon to help you identify funding opportunities for your research and creative activity and/or innovation in teaching
- Advancing hybrid and online education at Baruch. See 9/1/21 announcement
- Various process improvements and supports for department chairs are

forthcoming

Provost Essig closed her remarks with a note of appreciation.

### **c. Vice President for Administration and Finance Katharine Cobb**

As noted above in her earlier comments there has been months of pre-planning that went into the campus reopening operation. The current phase is *Safe Campus Operations*. Some of the main elements for this phase include: one stop services for issuing ID cards; fielding student questions; assistance with uploading vaccination information; providing information on securing a test for covid-19; and where to get vaccinated.

#### *Campus Access*

In order for anyone (faculty/staff/student/visitors) to access the campus they must be in compliance with the CUNY mandate for vaccination and testing. This was achieved through uploading this information into the ID cards where initially the ID cards were inactivated and reactivated once vaccine information and testing status was uploaded into the account of the ID card holder. It is hoped that visitor access will be secured through a mobile app.

#### *Space for students study/online*

Study spaces have been posted and include times and whether or not reservation are needed. Most are walk-ins.

#### *Reporting/Managing Positive Cases*

FAQs on reporting and managing positive cases are posted on the Baruch Forward web page. There is both a duty to report a positive test case and a duty to not come to campus if test-positive. If the college learns of a test-positive case that individual is blocked from campus. There is a 10-day quarantine and that individual is only allowed back on campus with a negative test and medical clearance. If individuals are found to be exposed to someone with covid 19 any unvaccinated person is quarantined for 10 days and any vaccinated person is quarantined for 3-5 days and cleared after a test-negative or medical clearance. We currently have 2 staff testing positive for covid 19 and 5 students.

## **V. Adjournment at 2.30pm**

Respectfully submitted  
Richard Wilkins, PhD  
Faculty Senate Secretary