University Senate, in Final Session, Passes Six Resolutions With Little Debate

By Thomas Mathewson

The University Senate staged to the finish line of its 2003-04 session under the weight of its last agenda on April 30, broaching several issues, skimming over others, and passing half a dozen resolutions with minimal discussion in the course of a two-hour meeting. The chairman, President Lee C. Bollinger, left a half-hour meeting. The chairman, President Lee C. Bollinger, left a half-hour meeting. The chairman, President Lee C. Bollinger, left a half-hour meeting. The chairman, President Lee C. Bollinger, left a half-hour meeting. The chairman, President Lee C. Bollinger, left a half-hour meeting.

Bollinger summarized the work of a faculty committee that he had created last year to think about issues of academic freedom in the wake of the controversy over remarks by a Columbia assistant professor at a teach-in on the Iraq war. Bollinger had taken the position that the principle of academic freedom protects statements by faculty outside the classroom on public issues, but not faculty bias or intimidation inside the classroom. He said the committee, chaired by law professor Vincent Blasi, weighed and generally endorsed these views. Bollinger said recent press accounts that the committee was set up to investigate anti-Semitic bias in Columbia classrooms were inaccurate, but added that the committee, in the course of conversations this year with deans, faculty and students, heard no evidence of systematic political bias in the classroom.

Bollinger also reported on the strike by graduate teaching and research assistants, which had been going on for two weeks. He announced his own view that grad- uate students, on balance, are better off without a union acting as an intermediary, but added that his administration does not consider this a life-or-death issue for the University. After the national NLRB has decided on Columbia's appeal of a regional administration's ruling that graduate students are employees, Bollinger said he would like to consult broadly with faculty in setting the University's future course on this issue.

He said Columbia has made a major commitment over the past decade to graduate students, who were previously too large a population, often left to fend for themselves, with insufficient support or mentoring. "If you believe that over time the University act properly in the spirit and right values toward this incredibly important group of people—that is, graduate students, who are equal to anyone in being the life blood of the institution—I think that's where the relationship you want," Bollinger said. "You want a personal relationship, not one with an intermediary, a Bolinger, a lawyer, expressed relatedness to add lawyers to the relationship."

Sen. Colin Parsons (Stu., GSAS/Rum), a striking TA, and an idea of a union as an outside intermediary, stressing that graduate students are employees, Bollinger said he would like to consult broadly with faculty in setting the University's future course on this issue.

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Despite a Senate task force to study retaining ROTC to Colum- bia, it has yet been formed, there was preliminary discussion of the idea, following a presentation by a Sen. Michael Adler (Ten., Bus.), a proponent. Discussion focused on the conflict between the Universi- ty's antitrust policies and military policies excluding homo- sexuals. With minimal discussion and in the call-and-response rhythm of a congregation, the Senate passed resolutions authorizing summer powers for the Executive Commit- tee, extending the life of the Com- mittee on Online Learning and Digital Media Initiatives for one year, establishing an M.S. in Fundraising Management in Non- profit Administration in the School of Continuing Education and a dual J.D./M.F.H. degree, rededicating lecturers in the Arts and Sci- ences, and endorsing efforts to cluster General Studies students who live in Columbia apartment buildings.

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The Senate did well at a student resolution recommending specific design changes in Columbia dormi- tories that many senators had never seen. But it accepted a less binding version, suggested by Bollinger, stating that "the Committee and the Trustees seriously consider changes in Columbia dormitories." The redesign initiative, led by Sen. Matan Arieli (Stu., GS), had reached the Senate after a Univer- sity-wide-only vote in which more than 6,000 students particip- ated.

The Senate also heard oral reports from Student campus co- chair Nathan Walker (TC, Stu., Obv.), a Research Officers’ Com- mittee co-chair Daniel Savin, and Commission on the Status of Women co-chair Susan Norsen on the historic, and the Trustee seriously consider changes in Columbia dormitories.” The redesign initiative, led by Sen. Matan Arieli (Stu., GS), had reached the Senate after a University-wide-only vote in which more than 6,000 students participated.

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Documents distributed at Senate meetings are available on the web at www.columbia.edu/cu/senate.