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**Special Senate Meeting**

**Presidential Town Hall via Zoom**

**Tuesday, May 12, 2020, 3:30-5:00 pm**

**Senate Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

* **Allied Health:** Professors Ronette Shaw, Manny Livingston
* **Behavioral and Social Sciences:** Professors Ernest Ialongo (Chairperson), Hector Soto
* **Business:** Professors Sandy Figueroa, Claude Fernandez
* **CLT:** Mr. Marino Corniel
* **English:** Professors Tram Nguyen, Louis Bury, Krystyna Michael
* **Education:** Professors Jacqueline DiSanto, Elys Vasquez-Iscan, Michael Gosset, Iris Mercado
* **Gittelson:** Ms. Melanie Garcia
* **Humanities:** Professors Natasha Yannacañedo, Humberto Ballesteros, Weldon Williams, Catherine Lewis, Victor Torres-Velez
* **Language & Cognition:**Professors Thomas Mencher, Isabel Feliz
* **Library:**  Professor Jorge Matos
* **Mathematics:** Professors Alexander Vaninsky, Lauren Wolf
* **Natural Sciences:** Professors John Gillen, Roy Debasish
* **Higher Education Officers (HEO):** Ms. Safiya Faustin, Mr. Carlos Guevara, Ms. Yvette Luyando, Ms. Alba Lynch, Ms. Cynthia Morales-Delbrun, Ms. Mercedes Moscat, Ms. Daliz Perez Cabezas, Ms. Carmen Sosa, Mr. Fabian Wander, Ms. Elizabeth Wilson, Mr. Iber Poma
* **Public Safety/Maintenance:** PS Officer Clara Albino
* **University Faculty Senate (UFS):** Professors Julie Trachman, Gail August, Ana Ozuna
* **Professional Staff Congress**: Professor Lizette Colon
* **Senate At-Large Faculty Representatives:** Professors William Casari, Andrew Connolly, James Kennis, Sanjay Arya, Clara Nieto-Wire, Sherese Mitchell, Diana Macri, Nancy Genova, Thomas Beachdel, Mathew Moses
* **Adjunct Representatives:** Professors Ruben Worrell, Christopher Paskoff
* **Student Government Association Representatives (SGA):** President Kelvin Pineda, Vice President Academic Affairs Muiz Agbaje, Executive Secretary Rosina Asiamah, Campus Affairs Comm. Brian Carter, Campus Affairs Comm. Ev/PT Lusleidy Perez, Campus Affairs Comm Nicole Rodriguez, and Senators Somaya Nasher, Amdiya Kyemtore, Denisse Feliz, Saleh Nasser, Mohammed Nashir, Hatem Anaam.

**Excused Absences:**

* Prof. Sandra Castellanos, Allied Health
* Prof. Karen Steinmayer
* Prof. Terrence Brenner
* Ms. Leana Santana
* Ms. Brittany Lanzano
* Mr. Charles Dour

**Absent:**

**Vacant:**

* **Counseling (1)**

**Visitors:**

* Dr. David Gomez, President
* Dr. Christine Mangino, Provost
* Ms. Esther Rodriguez-Chardavoyne, SVP
* Mr. Eugene Sohn, Labor Designee
* Mr. Shmuel Gerber, Parliamentarian

**Attendees:** Approximately 180 attendees @3:35pm, 209 at 3:46pm; assumes we have requisite quorum, meeting moves forward.

**Town Hall structure:**

The structure of the town hall will be in two parts. Individuals who pre-submit questions by Monday, May 11 at noon, will have those questions answered by the President, and those individuals will be able to ask a follow-up question. Thereafter, making sure there is adequate time left, questions will be taken directly from the floor. In this fashion, it is hoped a balance is found between issues that require some preparation to fully address, as well as to provide a space for questions that emerge directly from the floor.

***1. Call to Order***

* Meeting began at 3:35 PM

***2. Chair’s Remarks***

The Chair welcomed everyone to this Special Senate Meeting hosting the Presidential Town Hall, and thanked President David Gómez for his support of the initiative. The Chair then laid out the origins of the town hall idea--based on the idea of increasing dialogue and communication as the College traversed the COVID crisis--and introduced a new Senate Task Force made up of key members from across the College that would provide recommendations to the President and the College on COVID crisis management.

***3. President’s Remarks:***

* “It’s a pleasure to see so many of you and reconnect with you in this form.” Thanked the Senate Executive Committee for convening this meeting.

***4. Questions for the President***

Prof. Colon**:** Hostos shows a very healthy projected end-of-year reserve: $3.3 million (as per 2019-20 Mid-Year Financial Report. That is more than all the other CC's except BMCC, and more than many of the senior colleges. Also, there are reports that some CUNY administrators are taking and/ or considering a pay cut.

**Question:** How is the college planning to spend the reserve funds and stimulus money to avoid premature cuts and layoffs? What percentage of the budget goes to salaries for staff on the Executive Compensation plan, and how much is the college planning to cut salaries for staff on the ECP to ensure all employees are maintained on payroll, and are able to keep their health insurance during the pandemic?

**Response:** All of the funds that are available, including funds from CARES Act, are on the table to cover the gap. What will the actual budget allocation be from city/state? We still don’t have those final budget numbers. The ECP: constitutes about 3% of the college’s operating budget. It’s been reduced by 12% because of two vacancies (OAA Dean and ECP position in student affairs). Cutting ECP salary: is the prerogative of the Board of Trustees, not the college. The college/admin are committed to do whatever is necessary to keep Hostos solvent and fiscally strong.

**Follow-up question**: Will top administrators at Hostos and CUNY pledge to reduce their salaries by 10-20% before eliminating people from payroll?

**Response**: “It would be hollow promise, at best” as the BOE has the authority to reduce salaries.

**Question**: How much did our College save by not being physically open for 3 months?

**Response**: We didn’t save anything because in April we received notification that we had to reduce our budget by $2million. So, all of the accruals went to cover that year-end cost.

Prof. Nguyen: **Question:** What funds have been re-allocated/retracted; how much has been diverted to pay back the 1 m; what are the plans to afford the 2.6 m cut in 20-21?

**Response:** Again, all accruals have gone towards reconciling budget and we still don’t know what our budget is. The CARES Act money is not within our control. We have to submit plan to University, showing we are in compliance with fed mandate for that money. The full amount is not guaranteed. Short answer: The Governor and Chancellor and Mayor are fighting hard to get fed money, to reduce budget deficits.

Prof. Pimentel: **Question:** Why is OAA cutting release time for Chairs/Coordinators?

**Response**: I’m fully aware these reductions, if they come to pass, will have a devastating effect on college operations. It’s a disincentive and will fall largely on admin to pick up the slack. The hope is that it never comes to pass. If it does, a broader discussion will have to take place in terms of how we’ll handle it.

**Question**: Would Hostos Community College be willing to give priority in hiring those adjunct faculty who depend on their jobs at Hostos to keep their health insurance coverage and not to the ones who have other full-time jobs outside of CUNY?

**Response:** We’d have to look at who those adjuncts are within scope of existing agreement and what we can and cannot prioritize. We hope we’ll be able to retain people, but I can’t say we’ll prioritize an adjunct not knowing specific circumstances of their appointment and what our contractual obligation are.

**Follow-up**: I understand the logic regarding the first question. Regarding the second question, memo was sent out anticipating 35% cut in adjunct labor, those on 3-year reappointments will be rehired, but the rest will lose their health insurance. We can make assignment of two courses, not three courses to ensure equity. Thank you.

**Response**: “I know we’re not in disagreement”, what the provost has confirmed is with our full-time faculty, if everything I have proposed has to come to pass, we will be able to cover approximately 700 sections of the 1200 sections we normally offer in the fall. So, who’s going to teach the other 500? If we have robust enrollment in the fall, then adjuncts will be needed.

Anonymous **question**: The college budget is approx. $80M w/ millions of discretionary dollars (+ incoming federal money). The college community should have a big picture of the budget and not just the cuts. $3M out of $85-$90M and not just $3M.

Will we get our July step? Will staff be furloughed?

**Response:** $80 million college budget includes $25 million in fringe benefits (ASAP and other initiatives)-those dollars are not available for reallocation/redistribution. So, there are really $55 mil available and 80% is made up of personnel salaries. I understand need for greater vision,

Steps involved for releasing contract faculty/HEOs: “In none of the meetings I’ve participated in…has the discussion arisen regarding furloughing.” However, there is a provision that exists as a result of last fiscal emergency. Policy 5.19 is very specific and there are steps involved in that process. It would take approx. two years before any person would actually be furloughed.

Ms. Cabezas-Perez: **Question:** What is the enrollment committee’s strategy for enrolling students for the summer and fall semesters?

What is the status of enrollment for the summer and fall? How many students have actually enrolled?

What’s the college’s engagement strategy for supporting students over the summer and into the fall?

**Response:** The numbers for new enrollment for fall and summer are within percentage points of what they were last year. However, I’ve asked staff to follow up with students regarding their intention to register. Many had indicated a reluctance to return. Knowing if we are doing distance learning in the fall is a big part of that what will be the student experience? We’re doing as much outreach as possible to encourage students to re-enroll in the fall, summer may be a challenge. We’ll be able to employ emergency dollars to support students in this transition. Reluctant to commit additional dollars to outreach, cannot “in good conscience” increase Hostos’ expenses at this time. Normal outreach strategies are being employed.

**Follow up**: how many students are enrolled at this point for the summer?

**Response**: Don’t have them right now, but will get them.

Chair Ialongo: Would it be fair to assume we’re doing everything possible to ensure enrollments?

**Response**: Yes, that’s our traditional strategy and we’re employing them. Usually community college students register very late.

Anonymous **question**: Hostos is concerned about declining student enrollment, and at the same time it is drastically reducing class offerings for students. How can we retain students if we reduce the options for them to take the classes they need to graduate?

**Response:** The goal is not to reduce our classes but to reduce classes that may not fill (or fill with few students). If the enrollment is there, the sections will be there. Other approaches: running up limits and splitting sections later (and classroom assignments). If we have to practice social distancing, how will be run a class with 30 students or more, considering our small classroom size?

Anonymous **question:** Why is the college pushing an asynchronous model of distance learning? Anecdotally, faculty who have held synchronous Collaborate meetings with students this semester are reporting stronger retention and student engagement. Statistically, we know that asynchronous courses have poor retention and completion rates. Why would the college discourage faculty from connecting with students with the limited tools we do have?

**Response:** We are not “pushing it”. Students who are working and those who have children or have to share their computers with their children, do better if classes are asynchronous. But it will up to faculty to decide.

Chair Ialongo: Face to face it critical in education, though we have to be understanding of our students’ circumstances.

Anonymous **question:** Why is the summer certification process for distance learning so cumbersome? Why is so much pressure being put on faculty to complete so many hours of training on top of teaching their spring 2020 courses online as well as other responsibilities? The curriculum itself does not model good pedagogy and frankly it is an insult to our experienced teaching faculty.

**Response:** The dilemma is that we did not expect this… we have competing concerns of providing professional development certification, with the looming prospect of the fall semester possibly requiring online delivery. Accepts that faculty have multiple responsibilities, and this is a challenge.

Chair Ialongo: Other colleges’ methods are more streamlined and ours are very rigorous. The taskforce being assembled will investigate this.

Prof. Dushenkov **question**: One of the major challenges for Distance Teaching is providing students with adequate hands-on experience usually reserved for in-class labs. The substitution of in-class labs with virtual labs requires a total reevaluation of lab curriculum, additional training of instructors, purchasing appropriate software and materials. In many cases, it is extremely difficult to substitute in-class experience with online training. It is especially applicable to Natural Sciences and Allied Health courses.

**Response:** Regarding resources: one of the permissible expenditures under CARES Act… we should be able to secure the resources for this. This is something I know Provost has been working on because we need to meet requirement of accreditation bodies. We will do whatever the Accreditors require of us. I cannot speak to specific actions required. “This is one of the rare cases where I’m less concerned about the resources

Prof. Bernardini: Junior faculty have expressed concerns about the reappointment and tenure process for Fall 2020. For newer faculty, time for acculturation to the college community has been severely impacted by the disruptions created by the coronavirus. For all junior faculty, new work expectations, together with the added stress of family obligations and student crises, have created major new challenges. Junior faculty’s ability to complete their portfolios this summer and fall will also be impacted by the lack of availability of documents; the absence of student evaluations (and for many, peer observations) for Spring 2020; and by the delays, postponements, and cancellations of conferences, peer review, and publication.

**Question:** How is the college planning to support and accommodate faculty seeking reappointment and tenure? What changes (e.g., reduction of expectations; flexibility about deadlines; replacement of the portfolio with another document) will the college be making to the faculty reappointment and tenure process?

**Response**: Those in local and CUNY-wide discussions regarding this have been consistent- all have agreed to provide maximum flexibility, providing alternate methods for scholarship and research. No reluctance has been expressed to help faculty.

Prof Vasquez Iscan **question**: I am concerned with the mental health of Hostos students who have experienced the loss of loved ones, illness, and or loss of employment; what is Hostos and CUNY Central planning to do to address the mental well-being of students?

Prof Kennis **question**: How is the administration dealing with the realities that many students are still having difficulty with getting access to Wi-Fi and are having trouble feeling successful about finishing their courses because of their lack of technical skills and their learning style? How is the administration going to respond to this, for example, is the President willing to spend money on tutors that can help students one on one, i.e. ARC students?

Mr. Pineda (SGA President) **question**: If the classes do continue to be online through the fall, what plans do we have in place to make sure that students have a fair chance at succeeding? For example, are we giving more laptops or hot spots.

Mr. Agbaje (incoming SGA President) **question**: How much money do we have access to in the reserves? The Student Activity Fee money should go to the students. Will students get discounts for taking classes over?

Prof. Ialongo makes a motion to extend meeting time to 5:30. Motion was seconded and voted upon. Motion passes.

**Response:** WiFi/technology difficulty-we recognize that this is a major problem. The Hostos Foundation allocated 20K to get WiFi hotspots out. Also, the Chancellor is working on expanding WiFi access. Student Activity Fees are not part of the college’s operating budgets.

**Follow up question**: Tuition hike… what is your opinion of that?

**Response:** Not aware of any proposals for tuition hike. If it is approved, and if a student has to repeat coursework because of this crisis, will they be subject to the increased cost?

Ms. Luyando **question**: What health and safety experts will the college engage to evaluate whether it’s safe enough for faculty and staff to return to work and how will the results of their evaluation be shared with the college community?

**Response:** University will be contracting with safety experts. However, we’re dealing with a virus that no one has any experience with. Availability of these experts is also a challenge, as all organizations are looking for their expertise.

**Follow up question:** Until it is safe for staff to return will you allow staff to continue working remotely?

**Response:** We would employ the same policies as the University. Protocols for reopening would be based on two principles: the certification that the environment is safe to return to and that we have clear protocols on how we’ll function with social distancing/screening/PPE.

Anonymous **question**: How will the college manage assessment of and reconfiguration of normally crowded public service spaces (in the library and other student support centers, or offices) to comply with best practices for public health? Who will conduct the assessment and planning, and how will the faculty and staff who work in these spaces be included in the process? How will the college seek out funding for the modification of spaces, if necessary?

**Response:** The funding for any intervention/reconfiguring or workspaces would be under CARES ACT funding. The physical layout of the campus is a more difficult situation, i.e. library, elevators.

Chair Ialongo: Consultation with other stakeholders is critical, i.e. faculty, staff, students, who would inhabit such spaces.

Prof. Bencivenni: As a coordinator, faculty and union representative I am deeply concerned about Hostos approach to the pandemic crisis and the process through which decisions are being made. As many faculty have testified in recent weeks to college Presidents, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees, CUNY should be poised to respond to the crisis by maximizing its appeal to current and potential future students. Instead colleges, including Hostos, are planning, among other things, to reduce class offerings, to lay off adjuncts, and to eliminate reassigned time for coordinators and program directors. I am particularly troubled by the fact that there has been little or no consultation with faculty members as well as the union that represents us, about new academic measures, such as online training and class scheduling, which clearly violate best governance practices and infringe upon chairs and coordinators' prerogatives.

A case in point is the Office of Academic Affairs decision to make Fall courses with multiple sections tentative (that is hidden to students) until all open courses reach full enrollment.

**Question:**

How can we retain and attract new students if we reduce the options for them to take the classes they need in the Fall, possibly delaying their graduation?

Also, why should we limit classes given that we will likely have to run smaller classes, either as a result of social distancing protocols or online teaching, and therefore will need more, not less, sections of the same courses?

**Response:** Apologizes for breakdown in communications. Moving very quickly without a blueprint for “how to do this”, always tried to act in the best interests of the college as expeditiously as possible. Takes full responsibility for any deficiencies. Has been in regular contact with Dr. De Filippis, who has lots of experience, will relay all concerns to her.

Prof. Ialongo: Motion to extend meeting to 5:45pm

Questions from the floor:

**Question:** Professors are forgetting we are in the midst of global pandemic and continue to overwork students. How are students to deal with professors not taking current conditions into consideration?

**Response:** Faculty at Hostos cannot be characterized as insensitive/inconsiderate. Bring concerns to faculty members. Express your concerns, know they will be heard. We’ll work to address these concerns and improve.

**Question:** Ms. Rasco: COA in Admissions Office: Is it possible to have a transfer of CUNY employees to the borough in which they live? I am concerned for my safety traveling to the Bronx daily.

**Response:** Not aware of any formal transfer initiative to realign staff. Can talk to Vice Chancellor to create realignment.

**Question:** Dr. Lois-Lang:What is administration doing in terms of creating physical distancing mandates for fall semester?

**Response:** This depends on the phase we are in. Phases are decided upon by Governor. Some options have been proposed which are being investigated. All CUNY campuses face these challenges.

**Question:** Linda Ridley: Is Hostos using any skillsets of SPS? Have streamlined certification for online teaching.

**Question:** Prof. August**:** Hostos has locked itself into a situation where we cannot teach in person in the fall. By putting sections on hold, limiting class sections, we cannot possibly have in-person smaller class sizes.

**Responses:** SPS and University Provost has issued open invitation to take their training. If we reduce class size to 12 students to observe social distancing, then we have to offer ~2400 sections. We don’t know if we can cover 1200 sections.

Chair Ialongo thanked all who attended and thanked the President for his time and efforts.

***6. Adjournment***

Meeting adjourned at 5:45pm***.***