Facility Senate Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 (Closed Session)

In Attendance:
Alexandra Chasin, Lang (Co-Chair)
Ken Stevens, Parsons (Co-Chair)
Nidhi Srinivas, Milano (Co-Chair)
Nargis Virani, NSGS (Secretary)
Bhawani Venkataraman, Lang
Shoshannah Goldberg, Milano
Rose Rejouis, Lang
Paula Stuttman, NSGS
David Loeb, Mannes
Aleksandra Wagner, NSGS
Susan Yelavich, Parsons
Barbara Siegel, Parsons
Katarzyna Gruda, Parsons
Mara Kurtz, Patsons
Arien Mack, NSSR
Paul Hardart, NSGS
Warren Spielberg, NSGS
Howard Steele, NSSR
Gary Vena, Drama
Richard Boukas, Jazz
David J. Lewis, Parsons
Chris Stover, Jazz
Jeffrey Goldfarb, NSSR
Welcome:
Ken Stevens opened the meeting at 8:30 am requesting approval of minutes of the March 1, 2011 meeting. Susan Yelavich clarified that the remarks attributed to her in the minutes with regards to the Ombudsperson were in fact with regards to the Healthcare Committee. Nargis Virani agreed to amend the minutes accordingly. Mara Kurtz made a motion to approve the minutes. None opposed, except David Loeb, who abstained from the vote, as he was not present at the March 1, meeting.

Updates from the Divisions:

NSSR
Jeffery Goldfarb, Howard Steele, Arien Mack
Jeffrey Goldfarb began his Divisional report with a story about a 1980 meeting of the University Administration with the Graduate Faculty, which at the time was informed that the University would save money by eliminating the Sociology and Philosophy Departments. The students and the Division protested in order to save the departments-at-risk. It resulted in the University recommitting to the Graduate Faculty. His current assessment of the NSSR is that it is disciplined but is constantly trying to please the larger public, and now the larger University. The research done at NSSR is intelligible, and that is an important part of the NSSR, because it can be applied. By working with Lang, they are substantiating their tradition of working with the undergraduates, while still doing cutting edge research. What they need to work on, is maintaining their identity. They are working at being more a part of the University as a whole. He further reminisced about the initial creation of Lang. Howard Steele spoke to the stability and growth at the NSSR. Many new appointments in the Division are equally part of the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs. Arien Mack edited the prestigious NSSR Journal. She has also contributed to the establishment of a Center for Public Scholarship. The Center is involved with all the University events that have to do with Public Scholarship. She invited all senators to attend an event on April 8th that the Center is promoting. It is part of the Endangered Scholar Series, in which the New School brings scholars-in-exile to the New School.

Parsons
David Lewis, Susan Yelavich, Katarzynia Gruda, Ken Stevens:
David Lewis reported that Parsons was involved in several projects, particularly cross-disciplinary collaborations. For example, Parsons is building a solar house with the Stevens institute and also collaborating with Milano. It will be displayed in Washington, DC, in December and in Hoboken before then. They are considering sending it by water because it is a more energy efficient mode of transportation. Parsons is also working with Habitat for Humanity. The project is ongoing and collaborative.

Katarzyna Gruda
Parsons Faculty Assembly and Faculty Council are the two bodies that unite and facilitate the workings of the 5 Schools of Parsons. Many additional committees are established to
help govern Parsons. There is a Benefits Committee, which is chaired by former senator David Brody. This committee is mainly concerned with full time faculty, who do not receive retirement benefits. In addition, it has also attempted to address issues related to gender policy and faculty participation in critical issues. Surveys show that each of the 5 schools has very different opinions on policies for faculty members. Susan will give further details about the upcoming Parsons Festival. The new design experience will take place in March 2012. This will be an annual event where students come from abroad, mainly from the UK. This event also attracts well-known speakers, who address students in different settings.

Susan Yelavich

The 5 Schools of Parsons are: The School of Art, Design, History and Theory, School of Constructed Environments, Design Strategies, Art, Media and Technology and Fashion. Instead of having the usual senior shows, there will be a Parsons Festival this year. A firm is working with Parsons to plan the festival. There will be at least 12 senior theses on display, 25 different workshops and seminars, open and closed reviews, a fashion benefit, and other shows by non-seniors. It will culminate in a block party; they are working on closing 13th street for this block party. There will be several satellite events around New York City. Most will be visible and accessible to the public, on the first floor. It will be in the 15th week in place of classes, i.e. between May 7th and May 14th.

Ken Stevens

There are 5 new Graduate Programs at Parsons: MA in Design Studies; Fashion Design and Society; Trans-disciplinary Design; Design and Urban Ecology; and Fashion Studies. The Parsons Festival hopes to bring the 5 schools to work together.

Graphic Design is developing online programs. This is in response to an increase in enrollment without the physical space needed to accommodate all enrolled students.

The New Division

Aleksandra Wagner

Aleksandra conferred with Dean Scobey prior to presenting her report. The NSGS is choosing a new name encompassing its several departments: Media Studies, Writing, Foreign Languages, School of Undergraduate Studies and Management and International Affairs. The School has an enrollment of 3000 students. The School is committed to non-traditional students. Interdisciplinary collaboration is very important so are jointly held events. All these endeavors have the support of the new President, David Van Zandt. Urban, Environmental, and Global Studies are working with Parsons. There are important joint projects between Media Studies and Milano. There are 2 grants for faculty for interdivisional and divisional projects.

Nidhi Srinivas

The Division is still a work-in-progress, integrating with GPIA (Milano) as well as the rest of the Division. There is a new Dean, Neil Grabois. Most efforts at the moment are directed at strengthening the various program offerings.
Reports from Chairs of Standing Committees

Infrastructure, David Lewis, Chair
The Committee met on March 22, next meeting is scheduled for April 19th. The Committee aims to provide some clarity and input into the New School’s mobile technology policies. They are looking to other institutions’ policies to help decide what to recommend. By the end of the semester they hope to have a complete report. By the next meeting they expect to have talked to individuals in Academic Technology. He asked for senate members to share with him policies of other universities they know of. The other issue is the liaison to the University Services Committee. On March 8th there was an emergency meeting of the University Services Committee with regards to budget issues. They were given 45 minutes to weigh in on the new budget. This was due to the Middle states urging more transparency.

The Infrastructure Committee does not know what exactly its role will be going forward. A master plan for University Services should be put in place. The next issue is the size of faculty offices. There are many concerns about space, from many divisions. David Loeb reminded everyone that with regards to faculty offices there cannot be one-size-fits all approach. Between the divisions there are different uses for offices, e.g. sometimes faculty offices may be used for small or individual instructions as well. David Lewis clarified that his committee will certainly recommend that faculty offices not be tackled with a cookie cutter approach. Barbara Siegel brought up the point that tuition has been revised upwards to make up for budget deficits, which will obviously affect our ability to attract students. This is an issue where the faculty needs to have a say. There should be two faculty representatives to serve on the University Services Committee.

Nidhi Srinivas asked about Blackboard’s future and policies. The Learning Management Committee is also dealing with Blackboard. Ken Stevens brought up having archives for the Senate in order to look back on these meetings.

Susan Yelavich reported on the University’s healthcare initiatives (attached to these minutes). The last meeting she attended as Senate representative discussed wellness initiatives. A group called Gallagher Benefits Services was hired to give input on wellness initiatives. High on their list is preventative care coupled with incentives for all employees. They were told that healthcare after retirement was not feasible. There was a spike in healthcare claims in the last couple of years, which led to changing healthcare providers.

Faculty Affairs, Aleksandra Wagner, Chair
The Committee has contacted Human Resources to discuss benefits and has also communicated with the Provost’s office in this regard. The people who deal with benefits are understaffed. The benefits part of the website is difficult to find and follow. The Committee would like to work with the Benefits office and make a shorter document with benefits clearly listed and who to contact for specific questions. The academic issues include addressing workload issues, which the University Handbook Committee is
currently reviewing. The present proposal will be distributed to divisions soon for approval. She suggested the Chair of the Handbook Committee come to the next Senate meeting in order to speak to talk to everyone. Aleksandra Chasin said we may not have enough time in the next meeting because of the open session and other previously invited guests already crowding the agenda. Aleksandra Wagner asked for more suggestions to be added to the Handbook. Nidhi Srinivas asked further clarification about extended employment. Clarification of this matter is needed for existing and particularly for new hires.

**Governance, Paula Stuttman, Chair**
The Governance Committee met on the 24th to understand and interpret the by-laws as they had been given the charge to figure out the number of Senators that would henceforth represent the New Division. This Committee had now prepared two resolutions to be put forth to the Senate. The first issue was to simplify the language referring to Senate membership as stipulated in the by-laws. It was hoped that the clarification would aid in interpreting the by-laws more readily. Howard Steele said that the formula that was used to arrive at the numbers was confusing. Paul Hardart explained the formula and the Governance Committee recommended incorporating this language directly into the by-laws. Though the formula has already been in use, it has not yet formally appeared in the by-laws According to this formula the New Division would lose three members as earlier Milano had three elected Senators and the NSGS had five elected Senators. Alexandra Chasin clarified the reference to the individual Deans would now be interpreted as referring to the Deans’ Council in this provision. Barbara Siegel asked how the representation of part-time faculty fits into this. Alexandra Chasin responded that each Division is expected to come up with its own policy for its part time faculty representation on the Senate. Paula Stuttman called for a vote to approve the clarification of the membership based on the formula in the by-laws, which would also write into the by-laws that changes in divisional structure would automatically trigger a recalculation in the future, but that we would recalculate every five years regardless. As the number of FTEs changes, such recalculation will produce new numbers of representatives. Nidhi Srinivas reiterated that only the language was changed and not the by-laws. David Loeb suggested that the word “new” should be taken out of the NEW division. The Committee explained the formula presented in the article once again. A vote was taken to clarify the language and the formula for electing representative based on the formula. The vote was unanimous.

Another piece of resolution was distributed clarifying the position of the secretary of the Senate as stated in the by-laws. The by-laws simply refer to the three co-chairs and the secretary as officers of the University Faculty Senate. The question was asked about what would actually change. Paula Stuttman responded that the secretarial position is equal to that of the co-chairs, only that they must prepare the minutes of the meetings as well. Thus, there is more responsibility placed on the secretary. In practice, it would be like having four co-chairs. The statement in the previous by-laws was clear, but it was not followed exactly in practice. Several senators expressed concern with the proposal amounting in reality to having a 4th co-chair. It was agreed that the vote on this resolution be postponed until further discussion time was allocated to this matter at the
next meeting. Alexandra Chasin said that having a 4th co-chair-equivalent would make it more difficult to have weekly meetings as well as meetings with other people including with the President and the Provost. She added that, in her opinion, there was value in having distinct roles for the secretary and the co-chairs. Nidhi Srinivas proposed an alternative that would eliminate the secretarial position altogether with the three co-chairs rotating secretarial duties among themselves. After conferring with his co-chairs Ken Stevens declared that this resolution will be discussed again in the next meeting.

Nidhi Srinivas reminded all that the next meeting would be the last meeting for the academic year 2010-11. Two of the current co-chairs will be stepping down, therefore it is important that other senators should consider running for the co-chairs’ and the secretary’s positions for 2011-12.

Ken Stevens made the motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by several senators. The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 am.