RESOLUTION CLARIFYING SHARED GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY SENATE ON THE OCCASION OF A NEW PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY (24/3)

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate is the agency to which the President initially presents information and which they consult concerning proposed changes in existing policies or promulgation of new policies¹;

WHEREAS, the functions of the Faculty Senate are to formulate principles and objectives and find facts, so as to recommend policies to the President and also provide the President and the Board of Trustees with advice and counsel on such matters as they may request¹;

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) shall serve as a channel through which any member of the Assembly may introduce matters for the consideration of the Senate²;

WHEREAS, FSEC shall receive reports prepared by or in any college, school, or division of the University that may be of concern or interest to any or all other colleges, schools, or divisions, or to the faculty generally, and arrange for distribution of copies thereof to such other college, school, or division or the faculty²;

WHEREAS, FSEC shall serve as the committee on committees for the Faculty Senate and in that capacity nominate the members and chairmen of the standing and special committees, each with specific areas of expertise enumerated in the bylaws of the Faculty Senate and established by the senate for that purpose²;

WHEREAS, FSEC members do not have universal knowledge across all topics that may concern the university, but they do have knowledge of which faculty bodies have expertise in which particular area, therefore their function is to convey information to other such faculty bodies and determine the appropriate faculty body for consultation;

WHEREAS, the Senate (SR 22/13) recommends that future discussions of shared governance appreciate the vital importance of Senate committees, where faculty and staff collaboratively bring their expertise to bear in policymaking and problem solving, and that providing these committees with meaningful opportunities to participate in policymaking and strategic planning in their respective areas, as mandated by the FOP, is essential for the success of our mission as a university;

WHEREAS, direct interpretation of the Faculty Organization Plan (FOP III.5.b) indicates that FSEC exceeds its authority if it keeps information secret from other faculty bodies, especially Senate Committees, other than information related to personnel decisions such as non-concurrence cases, grievance procedures, and procedures for dismissal of faculty for a cause described in the Procedures for the Implementation of the Faculty Code; and

WHEREAS, FSEC has exceeded its authority by holding confidential deliberations with the Administration in the past, for example in the case of a new policy on arming GW Police Officers³;

1 Faculty Organization Plan (FOP), Article III, Section 1.
2 FOP, Article III, Section 5(b)
3 Minutes of the Regular Senate Meeting held on April 14, 2023: https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.gwu.edu/dist/0/196/files/2023/04/April-2023-minutes-attachments.pdf
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

(1) That the FSEC is not empowered to receive any non-emergency communications, information, or notifications with a request to act on behalf of the faculty or the Faculty Senate on a confidential basis, except for personnel issues described in the Procedures for the Implementation of the Faculty Code;

(2) That in light of the principles and procedures outlined in the FOP (III.5.b.5 and III.5.b.6), future requests by the Administration that FSEC or any of its members hold some matter secret rather than forwarding it to the proper faculty body (including those nominated by FSEC) shall be understood as inconsistent with the FOP;

(3) That communication of any matter (other than personnel issues) with FSEC or any of its members (including the chair) and no other faculty shall not constitute effective consultation with the Faculty Senate, even if FSEC has taken action by commenting on, or responding to, or advising in either written or oral form on the matter;

(4) That any recommendation made by FSEC to the Administration or Board of Trustees shall be understood as an action of FSEC controlled by the provisions of the FOP (III.5.b.6) whereby FSEC actions may be taken only in emergencies and they must be reported to the Faculty Senate for confirmation by vote at the next meeting;

(5) That the Faculty Senate reminds the university that transparency is a central principle of shared governance. Confidentiality deprives students, staff and faculty of the ability to form their own judgments about university policies and procedures, and other considerations of weight, and makes community members feel as if the University Leadership and the Board of Trustees does not respect their views or judgments; and

(6) That the Faculty Senate urges the FSEC to enhance transparency by publicly posting its minutes and agendas to the fullest extent feasible, consistent with the need to protect confidential personnel matters.

Respectfully submitted to the FSEC and endorsed by:
Guillermo Ortí, Biological Sciences, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Eric Grynaviski, Political Sciences, CCAS (24 April, 2023)*
Sarah Wagner, Anthropology, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Murli Gupta, Mathematics, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Katrin Schultheiss, History, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Heather Bamford, Romance, German & Slavic Languages/Literatures, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Alexa Alice Joubin, English, CCAS (24 April, 2023)*
Barbara Von Barghahn, Art History, CCAS (24 April, 2023)
Donald Clarke, GW Law School (25 April, 2023)
David Rain, Geography, CCAS (25 April, 2023)
Harris Mylonas, Political Science and International Affairs, ESIA (25 April, 2023)

*Senate members whose terms ended on May 1, 2023. All others are in the Senate Roster for 2023-2024; date they signed the resolution in parenthesis.