Faculty Senate
Provost Bracey Remarks
September 8, 2023

Summer Updates

So, what happened over the summer?

Of course, the biggest piece of news was President Granberg joining us on July 1 as the 19th president of the George Washington University. I know many of you have had a chance to speak with her already, and if you haven’t, you likely will soon, as she is in the midst of many meetings with stakeholders across the university community.

In early June, we announced our invitation to join 70 other universities as a member of the prestigious AAU, a clear acknowledgment of our leading research, education, and innovation. We are the only university in the District of Columbia with this distinction. This means that we will need to continue to accelerate the progress of our research enterprise by continuing to focus our efforts on tackling the world’s biggest challenges and amplifying our impact locally, nationally, and globally.

One of the ways we will advance the research enterprise is through innovative achievements like the Global Food Institute, which we launched just after Commencement. In partnership with Jose Andres, GFI will draw upon interdisciplinary research and teaching across policy, innovation, and the humanities to transform lives and the health of our planet. We truly believe this institute will change the world, and we look forward to sharing additional updates with the community this semester as we prepare to launch a search for the Carbonell Family Executive Director, announce other leadership appointments, and continue to identify faculty who may be interested in affiliating.

Guidance on Student Retention and AI

Also, it would not be a new academic year without some provost guidance to the faculty. Near the end of the summer, we offered guidance to the faculty based upon the recommendations of the Provost’s Task Force on Retention and Student Success. Recall that we wanted to address concerns around residential undergraduate student performance in certain subjects. The task force issued its report, and guidance on how to engage students this fall was sent out to all faculty who interact with residential undergraduates.

In addition, we offered some supplemental faculty guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence in course assignments and graded work. Here, it was important to highlight the range of resources available to faculty and share best practices. This guidance is available on the Provost website.

Start of Semester

Now, some updates on the start of the semester.

Move-In and New Student Orientation

By all reports, the move-in process went smoothly this year. President Granberg and I met new students and families at first-year residence halls here in Foggy Bottom and at the Mount Vernon Campus.
Paired with move-in has been a series of New Student Orientation activities for 2,800 registered first year and transfer students.

Our orientation was comprehensive, including pre-orientation programs with various organizations, a resource fair, the Buff and Blue Kick-Off in the Smith Center, sessions with academic schools, international student orientation, and District Connections, when students had the opportunity to explore D.C.

Student Affairs and the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement partnered to conduct an Intercultural Dialogue Series. These panel discussions touched on race and racism in higher education, antisemitism and Islamophobia, gender and sexuality, living across identities at GW, and more. New students learned from leaders, faculty, staff and students, and each panel presented a variety of perspectives, offered resources, and invited students to contemplate and determine how they will show up as active, caring, and inclusive community members.

We held the second annual New Families Orientation event on August 20, which 2,400 family members attended. We did a smaller version of this program a few days earlier for families of students with early move-in dates. These were extremely important events, as our students’ loved ones – many of whom are paying tuition – are essential partners for the success of our students and need to feel connected to the GW community. New Families Orientation connects families to the university resources that assist in their students’ transition to GW. Early reports are showing that we have already forged better relationships with parents and families than in past years.

We have Colette Coleman’s incredible Student Affairs team to thank for both the move-in and orientation success.

Normally we would have held Convocation and the Welcome Day of Service as part of this schedule, but because of Smith Center renovations, these events have been postponed until September 23. Please encourage your colleagues to attend. I will be sending out a reminder to faculty sometime next week encouraging them to register.

Graduate Student Reception and Fair

New graduate students also enjoyed a welcome event. Approximately 1,800 new graduate students attended a welcome reception and graduate student fair in the University Student Center on August 21. The new students represent the DMV area, states across the nation, and countries around the world. GW international graduate students represent more than 123 countries. Some of our online students took the opportunity to visit campus and meet their new colleagues in person.

New Faculty/New Academic Leaders Orientation

And, of course, we held orientation for our new faculty and new academic leaders as well on August 21 and 22. Day 1 included welcome remarks from myself and President Granberg, followed by a shared governance panel with the president, trustee Madeleine Jacobs, and Professor Ilana Feldman. Then, there was a series of sessions on critical community information, including campus safety, ethics and compliance, and Title IX. The day ended with a reception at the F Street House.

On Day 2, new faculty and new academic leaders split into their respective groups. Faculty received additional information about teaching and research at GW, while new academic leaders heard presentations about academic planning (from me), leadership behaviors, supervising and developing staff, and mentorship. These orientation sessions are a key activity in new faculty transition to the university, and they also help set up our new academic leaders for success in their new roles.
**Enrollment**

Jay Goff, our Vice Provost for Enrollment and Student Success, will provide a report on the enrollment dashboard in November. What I am happy to share now is that we are seeing a strong uptick in new graduate student enrollments, driven by increased number of international graduate students. The new undergraduate student class profile is strong and diverse as well. It is clear that prospective students recognize our strong value proposition. I look forward to Vice Provost Goff’s full report. Special thanks to him and his team for bringing in another benchmark class of students.

**School of Business Dean Search**

A note on the School of Business dean search. We are in the process of interviewing search firms to identify one to manage this search. The School of Business faculty voted on full-time faculty search committee members at today’s faculty meeting. The rest of the committee will include a provost office representative, two students (one undergraduate and one graduate), and representation from staff, alumni, and trustees. Once the committee is formed, we will hit the ground running on the search.

In the meantime, we are fortunate that Dean Mehrotra has agreed to stay with us through the fall semester to facilitate a smooth transition in leadership.

I am aware that business faculty would like to have the opportunity to nominate candidates for an interim dean appointment that would begin in January 2024. I encourage faculty to contact me with informal nominations for this position – I am happy to meet for a conversation to discuss this topic as well. In the coming months, I will formally solicit applicants for the interim dean position.

**COVID Guidance**

Members of the GW community should continue to follow COVID-19 guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding isolation, testing, masking, vaccination, and symptom monitoring, especially in cases of a positive COVID-19 test. Following this guidance helps to protect all members of our community, including those who may be at higher risk for complications. Information is available on the coronavirus.gwu.edu website.

Some guidance regarding COVID-19 is as follows:

- The university strongly recommends but does not require vaccination for all community members. We urge everyone to stay up to date with the latest booster or new vaccination recommendations from the CDC. Community members do not need to upload vaccine documentation.

- COVID-19 testing and tracing services have concluded at the university, but PCR testing is available through physicians’ offices and local pharmacies; antigen test kits can be purchased at local pharmacies and retail stores.

- Masks remain optional but may be required in some spaces, such as health care facilities, at the discretion of each facility’s leadership. Even where not required, anyone is free to wear a mask if they wish. Academic departments may request masks for free through the iBuy system while supplies last. We can provide guidance on the steps for this process should you need it. Masks also can be purchased at local grocery stores, pharmacies, and online.
• Students should continue to visit the Student Health Center for their medical needs, and faculty and staff should consult with their physicians. The CDC provides guidance on steps to take if exposed to COVID-19 as well as isolation and precautions for individuals with COVID-19.

• If a student tests positive for COVID-19, we encourage faculty to work with them regarding submitting assignments, taking exams, etc. while they remain isolated.

• We continue to monitor the incidence of COVID-19 and will make adjustments as needed to support the health and safety of our community.

GW Response to SCOTUS Decision on Affirmative Action

Over the summer, following the SCOTUS decision prohibiting the use of race-based affirmative action practices in the college admissions process, I convened an Admission Policy Task Force to make recommendations regarding possible future practices that encourage diversity in student enrollments in ways that are consistent with the Supreme Court decision. This process is still underway. You will hear more from me on this as I receive recommendations from the task force.

Diversity Summit

Hopefully you saw today’s infomail announcing the 9th annual Diversity Summit, which will take place in two parts this year. This year’s theme is “Defining Revolutionary: A Call for Justice, Liberation & Empathy.” Part I will take place from October 25-27, 2023, and registration is now open at diversitysummit.gwu.edu. Part II will take place from February 20-22, 2024. The Diversity Summit is an opportunity for us to work together and define ourselves as a community, so I encourage you to participate. More information about October’s schedule will be released in the near future.

New Policy on Outside Interests, Relationships, and Professional Activities

Finally, a word about the new draft Policy on Outside Interests, Relationships, and Professional Activities. This policy establishes general principles that apply to all GW Employees and subsequent role-specific addendums that outline expectations and requirements specific to a university role (Faculty, Investigators, and Executives). This is a change from our previous model, which had four unique population-specific policies.

This policy has been fully reviewed and approved by all key stakeholders, including the Provost, OVPR, OGC, Faculty Affairs and Faculty Senate Professional Ethics & Academic Freedom committee, and will be included in upcoming Board of Trustees materials for approval by the Committee on Audit and Compliance and the Executive Committee.

I would like to thank Dorinda Tucker, Ashley Fountaine, and all other colleagues who have worked on developing this policy update.