



Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate
Seton Hall University

From: Katia Passerini, Ph.D.
Katia Passerini
Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: Memo re: University Club
2021-FS-33 (FINAL)

Date: December 15, 2021

We are in receipt of 2021-FS-33, University Club Resolution, approved by the Faculty Senate at its November 19 meeting.

The renovations of the University Center are not yet complete, although it is proceeding in accordance with the plans that were shown to the Faculty Senate last Spring that the Faculty Senate endorsed in June 2021. When the renovations are complete, the building will contain a space where faculty and staff can gather at any time of day, as requested by the Faculty Senate. It will also have an additional space that the faculty can reserve for a myriad of uses that can include catered lunches for socialization, faculty development or other events, or for entertaining distinguished guests including speakers and faculty job candidates, as also requested by the Faculty Senate. These spaces will augment the faculty-and-staff area that has been provided as part of the Galleon Room. We hope all three spaces together will provide environments to allow socialization among faculty and to nurture the collegial bonds that have been challenging to maintain during the renovation of the University Center and the pandemic.

Please recall that the new third-floor Faculty and Staff space will include all the appropriate amenities in a completely renovated area with both tables and chairs and soft seating. Additionally, faculty will still have access to the former faculty lounge as a new multi-purpose room. This space will operate as it has in the past on a reservation system, importantly, priority will be given to the faculty. When the renovations are complete, the University will of course consider reasonable and sustainable recommendations for small adjustments via the Academic Facilities Committee.

A review of the timeline of the University Center renovation reveals no intent to end faculty and staff dining, but rather shows the administration endeavoring to encourage a sense of community among faculty and staff by increasing the volume, quality, selection, and space for dining. In February 2021, the University

sent a university-wide communication about the proposed renovations. Shortly thereafter, the Faculty Senate charged the Academic Facilities Committee (AFC) to: “Investigate and discuss matters of importance to Faculty work inherent in the pending renovation of the Bishop Dougherty University Center.” The AFC met regularly to gather information and communicated to the faculty in regular, detailed reports housed on the Faculty Senate blog and distributed through the Faculty Senate Newsletter. Prior to the March 2021 Faculty Senate meeting, where the AFC presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the planned renovations to the building including the University Club, the AFC “openly welcome[d] feedback and comments from the body of the Faculty Senate and all our fellow Faculty colleagues.” The University Center design was developed, proposed, and worked through between May and October 2021. Facilities Engineering worked closely with Dr. Jose Lopez as a representative of the Academic Facilities Committee (AFC) of the Faculty Senate to answer all questions, to respond to requests, and to offer options for consideration.

Please note this Office and Facilities Engineering offered to change the plan so that the University Club could remain on the second floor, but the faculty’s own Academic Facilities Committee responded it “highly endorsed” the execution of the current plan on May 20. The Faculty Senate, acting through the Facilities Committee also confirmed on May 20 that they accepted the permanent relocation of the University Club dining function to the Galleon Room, citing the larger seating, greater food options with continuing low price. The final plan was agreed upon by the Faculty Senate in June 2021 in resolution 2021-FS-19, which accepts the current plan for the location of faculty dining and presents several recommendations for improvements:

Whereas the numerical size of the University Faculty has increased over the last over fifty (50) years since the Bishop Dougherty University Center was built on the South Orange main campus;

Whereas there are University Faculty are now located on three (3) separate campuses;

Whereas Interprofessional Health Sciences (IHS - Nutley) and Law (Newark) Faculty when visiting the South Orange main campus do not have temporary work and/or meeting space;

Whereas many of our Adjunct Faculty do not have temporary work and/or meeting space while on the main campus;

Whereas the Faculty Senate does not have any allocated permanent work and/or meeting space for the work of its Senators, the Executive Committee, and its various Committees;

Whereas the Center for Faculty Development does not have a permanent home location for its workshops and developmental activities;

Whereas the physical space allocated for Faculty usage in the current University Center is restricted to the University Club lunch dining room and the non-exclusive, (open to all SHU community) Faculty Lounge multipurpose room;

Whereas the University Center is undergoing a major renovation starting in late May 2021 and ending in early 2023;

Whereas the new University Center renovation plan should allow for better allocation of physical space for Faculty needs;

It is therefore resolved that the Provost and the Division of Academic Affairs work where appropriate with the University's Facilities Engineering, Division of Finance, and the Division of Student Services to:

1. Permanently relocate the University Club dining space to the Galleon Room cafeteria. The University Faculty (and Staff) would benefit from the larger seating capacity that doubles the current space. Further, there will be enhanced food selections and choices while retaining the current \$5.25 reduced price lunch meal plan.
2. Create a new Faculty Lounge (Club) on the UC's second (2nd) floor to allow for a true lounge/break/private meeting space for Faculty (and Staff) with comfortable furniture and other appropriate amenities. This new Faculty Lounge / Faculty Club in the University Center would provide enhanced work break space for main campus Faculty and provide needed meeting and/or work space for Adjunct Faculty along with some temporary accommodations to Nutley (IHS) or Newark (Law) campuses Faculty when on the South Orange main campus.
3. Create a dedicated multipurpose 'Academics Room' adjacent to the new Faculty Lounge that would be assigned for faculty work and academic matters. The Faculty Senate, which has currently no allocated physical space on any campus, would use this new room for its committee meetings and work on behalf of the Faculty and University community. The co-location of Faculty Senate as neighbors next to the Student Government Associate (SGA) is seen as a beneficial situation. Further, this dedicated space would co-serve as the permanent home of the Center for Faculty Development to allow for its many workshops and faculty seminars throughout the academic year and its potential future collaborations with the newly created and neighboring Inclusion and Community Center (ICC) of the Division of Student Services. Finally, to allow for fuller utilization, optimization and accommodation of the entire physical space, a movable partition wall should be installed between the new Faculty Lounge and the multipurpose room to allow for possible bigger academic meeting or full Faculty Senate meetings.

The Provost responded to the above on August 24, 2021. The appropriate time for faculty feedback on what the design entailed was at or before its June 4 meeting, when the Faculty Senate specifically affirmed these recommendations set forth by the AFC almost entirely. The purpose of the close collaboration with the Faculty Senate and the AFC in the design development process was to avoid just this sort of misunderstanding occurring when construction is well underway.

Notably the University Club has not been replaced, but the food service function of the University Club was replaced by a private dining area within the Galleon Room. In implementing these plans, Facilities worked with our Office to consider the recommendations set forth in the June 2021 resolution. The private dining area in the Galleon Room allows for more space with increased seating capacity. Whereas the existing dining area allowed 40 people to sit for a two-hour lunch span, the current space allows 71 people to eat during the extended hours of operation, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. As opposed to the very limited food offerings of the University Club, faculty enjoy what they requested: greatly enhanced food selections all at the same reduced-

price cost of \$5.25. Additional offerings now include a station providing allergy-friendly food options, a smoothie station, a new larger Asian concept server, and a coffee bar complete with a fireplace and an expansive view of the University Green. By locating faculty dining on the first floor, we were able to meet the faculty request for more food options at the same reduced price in a way that other arrangements could not have achieved both aims. In June 2021, the Faculty Senate agreed to try out the partitions. After trying out the partitions provided, the Facilities Committee requested higher room dividers; after a short delay based on a materials shortage, the partition extensions were installed to create more privacy.

In response to the contention that the alternative space provided in the student cafeteria is inadequate with regard to convenience, that has not been the experience of many on campus. In fact, the several members of the administration currently have a weekly practice of dining together in this area, and we have found that it provides an opportunity to get to know one another informally while also meeting students and choosing among the many meal options. We could all agree that increased ability to see and to interact with students is a great opportunity for all at the University. And we have of course noticed many faculty and staff enjoying the new location and dining options.

Meanwhile, the former University Club is being renovated and converted into the new Faculty and Staff Lounge on the second floor of the University Center and some shared space where faculty will have priority. As we have said, either of these spaces can be used for working lunches, provided that food is brought in by catering, from the retail dining spaces on campus, or in the form of individually packed traditional brown bag lunches. When occasions arise that demand a more private space, it could be possible, one of these approaches may be taken. When choosing where to entertain faculty candidates, we agree that privacy is one important value that might lead to a decision to reserve a room and to order food for that occasion. But for a faculty candidate whose visit spans more than one meal, one cannot underestimate the importance of showing our prospective candidates that we are a university focused on students, and even have a possibility to test that same commitment in our prospective colleague.

To encourage smoother decision-making processes going forward, faculty are encouraged to attend Faculty Senate Meetings, communicate regularly with their Faculty Senators, and read the reports filed by the various committees of the Faculty Senate, available in the Faculty Senate Newsletter, which is distributed monthly via email, and on the Faculty Senate website. We are unable to identify any record of objections or concerns that would show a lack of support for an expanded dining room space. Moreover, when the Provost Office was invited to visit the spaces to address issues connected to the use of the multi-purpose room reservation system (which will continue to work as it worked seamlessly in the past), it was quickly clarified that there was no concern about the Galleon room. The main concern was unilateral access to the multi-purpose room, an issue that was resolved with the understanding that priority reservation was in the hands of the faculty, who are encouraged to use the reservation system as early as possible within the academic year. It was also understood that typical hours of usage of the multi-purpose room may in fact differ among the various stakeholders.

Moreover, this issue draws attention to the value of engaging in committee work. As part of the implementation of our Strategic Plan, several important committees have been charged with significant work which will lead to important changes. You are encouraged to communicate with the faculty representatives on those committees and with your Deans on a regular basis.

Finally, however, we must all accept that no meaningful decisions will please so large and diverse a group as our entire faculty. The Faculty Senate is the representative body elected to make such decisions based on its

majority opinions. For effective and credible governance, the Faculty Senate needs to be able to bring resolutions forward and adhere to them even when they do not please everybody, completing the due diligence process based on data, communication, and information. This resolution contradicts its own committee actions and the process set forth for governance, asserting that space has been removed, when it is still in place and accessible when completed, and the dining function has been expanded as desired by many. Changes to capital projects in progress would have significant short and long-term costs that cannot be subsidized.

There is limited evidence that the Galleon space has reduced usage, albeit the composition might have shifted temporarily based on teaching schedule, availability of online courses, including COVID-restrictions, and lower recruiting traffic due to limited hiring during the past years. The fully remodeled student center will ultimately offer faculty superior options for dining, collegial socialization, and meeting, continuing to add to the many local spaces available to faculty across the campus. When the renovations are complete, the University will of course consider reasonable and sustainable recommendations for small adjustments via the Academic Facilities Committee.