

Franklin College Faculty Senate Agenda Items

FACTUAL ACCOUNT of Zoombombing/Hate Crime/Death Threats

On the evening of October 27, 2020, a virtual talk given by the distinguished scholar Lorgia García-Peña, Roy Clause Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University, was “Zoom-bombed,” complete with hate speech and pointed death threats. At about three quarters through her talk, titled “Against Death: Afro-Dominican Feminist Counterdiscourse in the Diaspora,” a cacophony of menacing voices began to spew racist, sexist, and homophobic vitriol. The perpetrators, who numbered between four and five people, invoked the KKK as they said they were coming for “ni#ners,” “sp#cs,” and “fa#ots.” The chat bar then filled with a social security number and the home addresses of two UGA faculty members, both women and one untenured. A voice read aloud the addresses and said, “we’re coming for you b#tch.” The chat bar also included what was, in effect, a mercenary note: “\$4000 in unmarked bills.” Despite the fact that the event hosts had not allowed screen sharing, the perpetrators were able to take over the screen. They showed a video of a hooded man holding a severed human head, with the bloodied decapitated body on the floor.

The organizers muted mics, regained control of the screen, and purged the participant roll as swiftly as could be expected. Some faculty and students stayed on afterwards to collectively process the traumatic and terrifying event.

On the evening of November 5, 2020, one of the targeted faculty members and her partner (also a faculty member at UGA) were followed home by an unfamiliar car with dark tinted windows. The car inexplicably pulled into her driveway and crept to within inches of theirs (leaving no exit, except through the lawn). They sat in their car calling (by phone) for help and, after a couple minutes, confronted the car/driver, asking “Who are you? What do you want?” It was already nightfall, and all was dark. A man’s voice with a southern accent said something to the effect of “I’m in the wrong place” and raced away, screeching his tires. The faculty member called colleagues who waited with her and her partner until the ACC police arrived for a full report.

Please note that this was the first time that said faculty member had returned to campus since the October 27 Zoom hate crime.

PROPOSALS

I.

Whereas recent hate crime incident(s) at UGA have placed supervisors in roles that require some specialized knowledge of how to competently interact with traumatized individuals, we resolve that:

Franklin College require **yearly “trauma-informed” training** for all college and department Heads and supervisors when it comes to the reporting and handling of hate crimes and the victims of hate crime. Faculty of UGA’s School of Social Work at UGA have offered their expertise to help design such training.

II.

Whereas knowledge of recent hate crime incident(s) at UGA has been sporadic, partial, or non-existent amongst UGA community members, we resolve that:

Franklin College institute a **mechanism for publicly reporting and documenting the incidents of hate crimes** at the university or against any members of the university. This mechanism’s primary functions would be to promote awareness and safety and undertake data collection and analysis of hate crimes and terrorism. We all have a right and responsibility to know.

III.

Whereas to prevent zoom-bombing to the extent possible a protocol must be established and followed, we resolve that:

Franklin College release faculty, students, or organizers of public events – particularly those that receive funding from Franklin College or any of Franklin College units – from the responsibility to operate Zoom in those events and create a **technical position in charge of operating Zoom special events**. This technician would also be in charge of securing any links from all non-UGA affiliated social media accounts to give an extra layer of protection to organizers and participants.

IV.

Whereas two faculty members’ lives were explicitly threatened, and especially in light of the rise of white nationalist terrorism in the US and the many populations at risk (including but not limited to our Black, Latinx, indigenous, Muslim, women, and/or LGBTQ+ university members), we resolve that:

Franklin College create an explicit and robust **Safety Protocol** on how it will ensure the safety of its faculty, staff, and students. This would include a designated point person or office that ensures that the safety protocol and an investigation are immediately initiated.

V.

Whereas the recent hate crime incident exposes the troubling and persistent existence of misogyny and homophobia in our culture (and on our college campuses), and whereas women continue to be underrepresented in positions of executive, legislative, judicial, economic, and intellectual power, we resolve that:

Franklin College institute a “**Gender and Sexuality Studies**” requirement for all its majors. This requirement would be modeled after the “multicultural” requirement and in the spirit of its mission to promote greater understanding, appreciation, and equity amongst our educated citizens and our republic. Please note that the recent hate crime and death threats targeted a talk on violence against women of color, given by an Afro-Latina scholar, organized by women faculty at UGA, and attended mostly by women faculty and students. This is a long overdue reform to our curriculum.

VI.

Whereas university members beyond Franklin College are at risk, we resolve that:

Franklin College pass a **Resolution** that calls on the President, Provost, and Deans across campus to pursue similar reforms as university-wide policy.

Franklin Senate co-sponsors:

Chris Pizzino, English

Cassia Roth, History and Latin American & Caribbean Studies Institute

Signatories:

Kelly Happe, Communication Studies and Institute for Women’s Studies

Betina Kaplan, Romance Languages

Sharina Maillo-Pozo, Romance Languages

Eric Morales-Franceschini, English and Latin American & Caribbean Studies Institute

Patricia Richards, Sociology and Institute for Women’s Studies

Amy Ross, Geography and Latin American & Caribbean Studies Institute