To conclude the day of town hall meetings in Foggy Bottom, Chair Carbonell reviewed the charge given to him by Board of Trustees in May of 2013 to create a task force to assess the alignment of Faculty Code with the Strategic Plan of the University. Chair Carbonell then recapped the work of the task force in meeting with the faculty of most of the University’s ten schools, noting that the meetings with the two remaining schools we be conducted within the next few weeks. Throughout these meetings, the task force received substantial feedback from faculty members, with several recurring themes surfacing in each meeting. The task force then composed five guiding principles to bring to town hall meetings for additional input from faculty. These principles include: participation; academic freedom; appointment, promotion and tenure; appointment, review and retention of administrators; and school, departmental, center and institute rules and procedures. Chair Carbonell noted that this meeting was the fourth town hall meeting of five initial town halls that were scheduled to take place on the Foggy Bottom, Mount Vernon and Virginia Campuses to gain additional input from faculty. Additionally, a survey will be sent to faculty to gain their input on the draft guiding principles. Finally, the task force will issue recommendations to the Board of Trustees concerning the alignment of the Faculty Code with the Strategic Plan. Chair Carbonell stated that the task force has been in communication with the Faculty Senate’s Executive Committee and Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom Committee throughout the process and will meet with the full Faculty Senate in late March.

First, the task force introduced the draft guiding principle of “participation.” With respect to participation, the task force received resounding feedback from faculty across the University that they would like to see increased participation in governance issues for non-tenured faculty, including faculty that only conduct research and teach. The task force noted that some areas for these faculty to have a voice would not be prudent, e.g. non-tenured faculty having a role in granting tenure. Faculty members supported the idea of granting expanded participation to non-tenured faculty.

Second, the task force introduced the draft guiding principle of “academic freedom.” Under this principle, Chair Carbonell underscored the need to ensure that academic freedom was preserved for all types of faculty, regardless of their status at the University, as the University expands online and overseas. A faculty member noted that with respect to academic freedom, there are issues with accreditation. While all faculty members should have academic freedom to research and teach the way they want, they must still teach within the confines of curricula developed by their department. Another faculty member supported the notion of protecting academic freedom for faculty members at all levels of seniority and position within departments. Finally, a faculty member stated that a part-time faculty member cannot be a PI, which is a violation of their academic freedom.

Third, the task force introduced the draft guiding principle of “appointment, promotion and tenure.” Under this principle, the task force has heard from faculty that it is often difficult to grant tenure to faculty that conduct cross disciplinary research because their work does not neatly fit into the mission of a single department. This problem can be compounded based on the size of a department. A faculty member noted that within SMHS, three departments do not have enough tenured faculty to oversee their own APT committee. Because of this, the Provost’s office helped these departments create a unit that works well for them in granting tenure. Another faculty member stated that it is difficult to grant tenure for multidisciplinary faculty because these faculty are often recruited for university institutes and centers without consultation with schools and departments where their tenure may ultimately be
housed. This statement provoked a conversation on whether or not the University should have a larger mechanism for granting tenure to avoid this problem.

Fourth, the task force introduced the draft guiding principle of “appointment, review and retention of administrators.” A recurring theme within school-based meetings was the desire to have input from not just tenured faculty, but contract, research, and clinical faculty during searches. In addition, a faculty member noted that they would like to have a more consistent mechanism to evaluate senior members of their school’s administration. Finally, a faculty member said that they would like to learn more about the dean’s exact duties and responsibilities in fundraising and running the school.

Fifth, “school, departmental, center and institute rules and procedures” was introduced as the concluding draft guiding principle. Chair Carbonell stated that the task force had heard from faculty that the different definitions of faculty types between schools was very confusing. Under this section, a faculty member stated that they would like to see a unified classification of different types of faculty throughout the University, e.g. definition of research professor. Chair Carbonell noted that the task force wants to create consistency within schools, departments, centers and institutes while retaining the uniqueness of each at the University. Faculty members in attendance supported the further exploration of this notion.

Chair Carbonell ended the meeting by reviewing the next steps for the task force. Next, the task force will conclude its final two school-based meetings and hold a rescheduled town hall meeting on the Mount Vernon Campus. Additionally, a survey will also be available to faculty to gain their input on draft guiding principles within the next few weeks. Further, the task force will meet with the Faculty Senate on March 21st to gain their thoughts on the draft guiding principles brought before town hall meetings.