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Northeastern University
Office of the Faculty Senate

ACTIVITIES OF THE 2010-2011 FACULTY SENATE
STEPHEN W. MCKNIGHT, SECRETARY

The Secretary of the Faculty Senate is charged by the Faculty Handbook to make a report on the Senate's activities to the University faculty at the end of each academic year. Detailed minutes of each Senate meeting and charges and reports of the standing and ad-hoc Senate committees can be found on the Faculty Senate website at: http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/. The overarching theme of the 2010-2011 Senate was the nature of shared governance at Northeastern, including the role of the Faculty Senate and the form and content of the Faculty Handbook. These concerns will likely continue to be a major topic for the Senate in the coming year.

The Faculty Handbook is a critically important document at every university. The Northeastern Faculty Handbook specifies the terms and conditions of employment for faculty, including expectations for faculty activities and comportment and processes and criteria for tenure and dismissal, and spells out the process of shared faculty governance and involvement of the faculty in the management of the University. It is explicitly referenced in the employment contract signed by tenured and tenure-track faculty.

The Faculty Handbook at Northeastern was badly in need of updating. The Handbook on the Faculty Senate website which dates from 2000-2001 is the last full Handbook that was approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. In addition to significant changes in the University after 2001 (such as the transition from academic quarters to semesters), the available Handbook contained no record of modifications to the Handbook that had been passed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the Board of Trustees since 2001.

A complete rewrite of the Handbook had been completed by a Handbook Committee and approved by the Faculty Senate and a vote of the faculty in 2005. Changes to the Senate Bylaws, the first section of the Faculty Handbook, are specified to "automatically go into effect unless they have been disapproved by the Board of Trustees within 90 days after written notice of faculty ratification has been sent to the President by the Senate Agenda Committee." President Freeland, indicating that a review of the new Handbook could not be accomplished within 90 days, recommended to the Board of Trustees that they therefore disapprove the new Handbook. When the Board of Trustees complied, the effective Faculty Handbook reverted to the 2000-2001 Handbook. No further action had been taken on the full Handbook since that time.

The revision of the Faculty Handbook was first on the list of Senate priorities that Professor Louis Kruger, the chair of the Senate Agenda Committee (SAC), outlined for the Faculty Senate at the first Senate meeting on September 22, 2010. It was obviously a great concern to the faculty and to the institution to have an incomplete and out-of-date document as the last full compilation of faculty rules and procedures. In addition, in a report on the 2008 accreditation visit shared with SAC but not released to the faculty as whole, the New England Association of Schools and College (NEASC) had commented on the lack of an up-to-date Handbook and had called for an interim report to NEASC on the revisions to the Faculty Handbook and other matters.

In the next meeting, the Senate heard a report from the Ad Hoc Handbook Committee chaired by Professor Dennis Cokely that had been meeting since June with a charge to oversee the updating and approval of the 2005 Faculty Handbook draft. At the December 15 Senate meeting the Provost announced the composition of an administrative committee chaired by Vice Provost Loeffelholz to work with the Senate Ad Hoc Handbook Committee toward the goal of preparing a modular and updated version of the existing 2000-2001 Handbook — not the 2005 draft Handbook — as

requested by the Board of Trustees. The Senate approved 31-0-0 a resolution to develop a "modular and web-based Faculty Handbook [to] be maintained by the Faculty Senate on its website."

In November and December, the Senate considered the issue of Faculty Senate oversight of the comprehensive reviews of the colleges that the Provost had announced at the September meeting. Based on the function of the Senate specified in the Bylaws "[t]o act as a coordinating body to establish mutually satisfactory academic goals and standards among the various colleges and divisions," SAC proposed that an Academic Unit Review Committee be established with joint appointments from SAC and the Provost to advise the Provost in the design and implementation of college and academic unit reviews. By a vote of 32-2-0, the Senate approved the establishment of the Academic Unit Review Committee to oversee the reviews of colleges and other academic units.

At the December 1 Senate meeting, the Provost announced that he had recently met with SAC concerning the possible elimination of the two activities periods in the fall and spring semesters. The utilization of the activity period time slots for classes will allow for the scheduling of 220 new sections during the week and relieve the stress of Northeastern's exceptionally high classroom utilization rates. The transition of Northeastern to a residential campus has made evening meeting times more available for student groups. The Provost explained that in order to make the change for the fall 2011 semester, a decision needed to be made quickly. At its January 26 meeting, the Senate approved by 30-1-1 the elimination of the activities periods with the provision that accommodation should be made to Faculty Senators' teaching schedules to allow them to attend the Senate meetings currently held from 11:45-1:25 on Wednesdays. In addition, the Senate resolved that "the University and colleges provide the support and resources to enable students to continue to participate in student groups that used activity periods for meeting times."

In February, the Senate finished an extended consideration of resolutions from the Research Policy Oversight Committee (RPOC) about policy on overhead return on research grants in the transition to the unit-based hybrid financial management system. The Senate rejected the RPOC's recommendation to reinstate the Faculty Incentive Program for Principal Investigators to augment their academic year salaries from research funds and the recommendation that overhead return accounts lapse after two years. After hearing from faculty researchers both on the Senate and as visitors, the Senate recommended a reinstatement of the policy returning 10% of the indirect costs to principal investigators, a rate that could be "revised to vary by College based on discussions between the Dean and faculties of each college." The Senate also approved a resolution that clear guidelines be developed for indirect cost return involving interdisciplinary cross-college programs and proposals.

Also in February, the Senate heard the report of the Faculty Development Committee (FDC) on the recently established Provost's Tenure Advisory Committee (PTAC). Since no resolutions were presented, the Senate moved into a Committee of the Whole for discussion. The PTAC was established by Provost Director when he arrived to assist him in making decision on tenure cases. Professor Barberis, chair of the FDC, indicated that the PTAC is poorly understood and appears to be an extra stage in the tenure process which is not specified in the Faculty Handbook. The FDC had deep concerns about the appearance of non-transparency, the lack of discussion and consideration by the Senate, issues of confidentiality and access to dossiers, the possible involvement of faculty members of PTAC at more than one level of the process, and the fact that the membership and discussions of the PTAC were not reflected in any report and cannot be reviewed, responded to, or appealed by the candidate. The Provost explained that the PTAC consists of all the deans, all the vice provosts, and four members from the faculty as a whole – two chosen from a group nominated by SAC and two chosen by the Provost. The Committee meets for an entire day when all cases are presented and discussed; dossiers are available to all members. The Provost asks each member of the PTAC to indicate privately to him their support for the candidate on a four point scale. The Provost indicated that this process was permitted since the Provost is understood to seek advice on tenure cases from other individuals, such as the vice provosts or experts in the field. He indicated that the process was informative, useful, and resulted in better tenure decisions, a judgment echoed by deans and other Senators who had knowledge of the PTAC. Other Senators shared the concern

of the FDC that the PTAC appears to be a formal process rather than an informal sharing of advice, and, as such, should either be abandoned or be normalized by amending the Faculty Handbook.

In April, the Senate heard the report of the Ad Hoc Committee for Governance. Professor Gatley, chair of the Committee, described the results of a survey of the faculty on their satisfaction with the University's governance. A large number of faculty responded to the survey and indicated increasing dissatisfaction with faculty input into governance as they considered department level (34% dissatisfied), the college level (47% dissatisfied), and the university level (67% dissatisfied). Professor Gatley noted that 90 of the 289 respondents provided open-ended comments where the dominant theme was that decision-making in the last several years has moved away from the faculty and become concentrated in the upper level administration. Senators noted that faculty members who served in the Faculty Senate and are more familiar with university governance and those who have had experience at other universities are among the more dissatisfied. Others suggested that the results of the survey support their own perceptions of a sense of disenfranchisement and drop in faculty morale which could have a corrosive effect on the University's interactions with the public, students, parents of prospective students, and faculty candidates. As amended, the resolution of the Ad Hoc Committee for Governance passed by a vote of 34-0-1:

> *"WHEREAS Northeastern University has a long tradition of shared governance; and*
> *WHEREAS the recent survey on the faculty's role in university governance revealed a high level of dissatisfaction across all faculty ranks; and*
> *WHEREAS failure to resolve the serious issues identified in the report will significantly impede the upward trajectory of the University; therefore,*
> *BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate is deeply concerned about the lack of faculty input into University decision making and considers it imperative that the University community recommit itself to shared governance."*

The Provost indicated that he supported the motion and noted that shared governance is a core value of Northeastern and that there was a need to work for better communication and better involvement at all levels. He commented on the quality of the debate and noted that the passion of the discussion is a reflection of a shared commitment to the institution.

At the final meeting on April 27, the Senate considered the resolutions of the Ad Hoc Handbook Committee. The Committee presented a complete modular Handbook that had been extensively checked by the Ad Hoc Committee, by the Provost's Handbook Committee, and by SAC to include changes that been approved by the Faculty Senate, the administration, and the Board of Trustees (BOT) since 2001. Five changes were identified which had been passed by the Senate, approved by the President, and either noted by University Counsel as not requiring BOT approval or had been approved by the BOT without specifically indicating their inclusion in the Handbook. The Senate considered two separate sets of resolutions: to approve the new modular version of the updated Handbook and then to approve for inclusion in the new Handbook the five resolutions which had not been explicitly approved by the BOT for inclusion in the Handbook. The Senate voted 31-0-0 to approve the new modular Handbook to be posted on the Faculty Senate website, and for the Faculty Senate to retain responsibility for archiving and updating the Handbook.

The Senate then turned its attention to the five previously-approved resolutions that were to be included in the Handbook. These resolutions included the establishment of Senate Standing Committees on Research Policy Oversight (RPOC) and Library Policy and Operations (LPOC) and the Senate resolutions on Workload Policy, Merit Review, and Faculty Compensation Outside of Base Salary. It was noted that, while they did not contain language specifically adding them to the Handbook, these resolutions modified or replaced existing Handbook language and the intent was clear that they be added when they were passed by the Senate and approved by the President. As a part of the Handbook updating and modularization process, SAC had been assured by the Provost that he would recommend these five resolutions for BOTs approval and incorporation into the new Handbook. In response to a question from a Senator, Provost Director confirmed that he would bring

the five resolutions to the BOT and urge their approval. By a vote of 31-0-0, the Senate approved the motion to add the five previously approved resolutions to the new modular Handbook.

On June 23, the Provost in a letter to the Faculty announced that the BOT, at the recommendation of the Academic Affairs Committee, approved the new modularized 2000-2001 Faculty Handbook as Northeastern's authorized Faculty Handbook. The BOT actions differed in two significant ways from the resolutions passed by the Senate, however. First, the Academic Affairs Committee voted not to take any action on the five previously approved resolutions presented for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook and indicated that "if the Senate wishes to have these resolutions considered for inclusion in the Handbook, they may be presented at that same time as all other proposed revisions to the modules in which they reside." Second, the BOT overruled the language of the Senate's resolution that the "Faculty Senate retain responsibility for updating the Faculty Handbook and its downloadable equivalent on the Faculty Senate website." Instead, the BOT, reversing a long-standing tradition that the Faculty Senate is the custodian of the Faculty Handbook, specified that the Faculty Handbook will reside on a website maintained by the Office of Provost. The BOT actions appear to weaken the role of the Faculty Senate as an agent of the faculty in the governance of the institution.

In addition to the activities described above, the 2010-2011 Faculty Senate approved six new degree programs, suspended three existing degree programs, approved a name change of one program, and adopted a limit of 32 semester hours on the amount of advanced standing credit that undergraduates could apply toward a Northeastern bachelor's degree. The Senate Agenda Committee staffed six dean and chair search committees, and the Senate's Administrator Evaluation Oversight Committee completed evaluations of the Provost, one dean, and six department chairs. The Senate heard reports from President Joseph Aoun on the state of the University, from Provost Stephen Director on the state of the academic enterprise, from Provost Director and Vice President for Administration and Finance Jack McCarthy on the financial status of the University, from Vice President McCarthy on the plans for a new residence hall, from Vice President for Enrollment Philomena Mantella on the status and trends in enrollment and admissions, from Director of Athletics Peter Roby on the athletic program and the NCAA recertification process, from Vice Provost for Research Mel Bernstein on Indirect Costs and Indirect Cost Return, and from Vice Provost for Honors & First Year Programs Susan Powers-Lee on Dual/Combined Majors.

The Senate Agenda Committee for 2011-2012 was elected at a special meeting of the new Senate on April 27. The Chair for 2011-2012 will be Professor Louis Kruger, the Secretary will be Professor Arun Bansil, and the other members of SAC will be Professor George Adams, Professor Richard Daynard, Professor Neil Alper, and Professor Hilary Poriss.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen McKnight
Secretary of the 2010-2011 Faculty Senate