

February 25, 2002

## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 02/25/2002

John G. Flyn  
*Northeastern University*

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TO: FACULTY SENATE  
FROM: JOHN G. FLYM, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE  
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2001-2002 FACULTY SENATE, 25 FEBRUARY 2002

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Present: (Professors) Aroian, Baclawski, Barnes, Boisse, Bruns, Flym, Fox, Giessen, Gilmore, Herman, Hope, Kane, Levine, Lowndes, Metghalchi, Naylor, Platt, Powers-Lee, Rotella, Rupert, Shafai, Sullivan, Vaughn, Wallin, Wertheim, Willey, Wray  
(Administrators) Hall, Meservey, Onan, Pantalone, Pendergast, Putnam, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Bobcean, Gilbert, Hall, Kelleher  
(Administrators) Greene, Mantella, Rigg

Convened by Provost Hall at 11:56 a.m.

I. **Minutes.** The minutes of 28 January and 11 February were in progress.

II. **SAC Report.** Professor Lowndes gave the following report.

A. **Meetings.**

SAC met twice since the last Senate meeting. One of these meetings was devoted in part to a discussion of the semester conversion with Executive Vice Provost Pantalone. She expects to have a preliminary report ready to discuss with SAC on 5 March, and then to send it to all faculty by mid-March, prior to discussion with the Senate.

SAC had a productive meeting with the semester conversion consultants. They have not submitted their report as yet.

SAC also had a productive dialogue with the Provost Search Committee consultants.

B. **Next Senate meeting: 11 March (Exam Week) in 240 Egan.**

III. **Provost's Report.**

A. **Semester Conversion.**

The peer review team was comprised of individual from institutions that went through semester conversion and have experience in enrollment management and systems management. Their sense was that we that people in the colleges have accomplished an overwhelming amount of work, and they praised the efforts of all who participated. They urged that decisions be made soon on the four-year option, summer salaries, and the beginning and end of the academic year. They did not identify anything to delay the fall 2003 start of the semester system.

IV. **Question and Discussion Time.**

A. Professor Fox asked when the curricula across the University would be shared, since it will impact the colleges that depend on what students take in Arts and Sciences. Executive Vice Provost Pantalone responded that most of the core curriculum has been approved, and the Registrar's Office has course data it can share.

B. Professor Levine asked what would happen with students who have nine quarters and enter their senior year under the semester system. Executive Vice Provost Pantalone replied that each unit will have a model transition plan to accommodate individual students.

V. **Provost Restructuring.**

Provost Hall indicated that he and Professor Lowndes were in agreement if there was no objection that the agenda be reordered so that President Freeland might clarify his position on administrative restructuring before. After President Freeland had spoken, the resolution on the Provost restructuring would be moved ahead of the equity resolution. There was no objection.

President Freeland explained that he had come to the Senate meeting to present his rationale for the restructuring because he was scheduled to bring the proposal to the Trustees on 1 March. The proposed reorganization of the administrative responsibilities of the University would remove two functions from the direct responsibility of the Provost and create a new division focused on those responsibilities. Because Provost Hall will be stepping down at the end of the year, it seemed a natural time to think about administrative changes.

President Freeland pointed out that the typical form of academic organization has a greater distribution of responsibility than does Northeastern. Instead of two senior vice presidents, the norm is to have five vice presidents and a senior vice president. At this time, when the University's strategic goals require fairly rapid change in the areas of academic reputation, selectivity of the freshman class, the success of graduates, and resources, two of the critical areas that need to be addressed are enrollment management and student life, yet they are embedded in the central organization supervised by the Provost, whose responsibilities encompass the libraries and all the colleges and their deans. This level of responsibility makes it difficult to focus on improving the quality of student life at every point where a student interacts with us, from pre-admission contact to graduation. Therefore, this seems a good time to create a student-centered vision, so that those advising the vice president in those functions could be the clear focus of someone at the highest level with executive responsibilities.

After checking with colleagues at Northeastern and around the country, the President concluded that his proposal--to get enrollment management and student life on the radar screen for the president and the senior vice president--is within the framework of the way other academic institutions are organized. President Freeland explained that he had not invited discussion by the university community because, historically, a vice president's responsibilities have not been a topic of public debate or Senate deliberation. The Senate's resolution had raised his concern, however, and he expressed his willingness to answer questions from the floor.

Professor Vaughn recalled that in the 1980s the Senate had urged that admissions policy be brought under the aegis of the Provost. Since then, the Senate has had a standing committee on enrollment and admissions policy. Input from that committee as well as from the Provost is critical to the quality of student life, and to diminish that input is a matter of great concern to faculty. Much of student life is not in the classroom, nevertheless students are paying for the classroom experience. President Freeland responded that the role of the Senate committee would be unchanged in the new structure. He pointed out that in the past the administration was perceived as being willing to open the floodgates on admissions while the faculty supported quality control. That is no longer the case. The administration, from the Board of Trustees down through the administrative ranks, are committed to keeping the freshman class size on target and to raising the level of academic selectivity.

Professor Aroian asked whether conflict might arise between what the provost might say about a faculty member, who is an excellent teacher but does not publish, and what the senior vice president of enrollment management, who is looking at retention, might say. President Freeland replied that differences in perspectives can occur under any administrative structure. He would assume that under our current structure someone playing an enormously valuable role in helping students succeed would be recognized by all concerned parties, and this would continue under the new structure.

Professor Aroian asked whether the President's research on other universities, specifically the top 100, indicated that those institutions had undergone successful changes such as what he was proposing. President Freeland responded that he was unable to obtain data specifically on the top 100, but the data he had generally indicate that it is unusual to have a vice president for student affairs reporting to a provost. Enrollment management functions vary. MIT recently divided the provost's responsibilities and created a chancellorship that oversees all student affairs functions, and

they report that the change has been positive. Brandeis has adopted similar models, as have other institutions around the country, all of which indicate a trend in consolidation of enrollment management and student affairs under a single vice president. He added that he was a contextualist with regard to organization, and Northeastern right now is positioned for this kind of change.

Professor Wertheim asked whether the existing structure is preventing us from focusing effectively on the areas cited by President Freeland. Provost Hall replied that, while he would not go so far as to say he was unable to focus on student affairs or enrollment management, the reality is that the deans and the colleges have consumed the vast majority of his time on issues of tenure, resources for the colleges, and faculty recruitment. His concern was for good communication between the provost and the senior vice president because, although the areas can be separated, they are still linked and cannot be uncoupled.

Professor Wallin noted that students were upset. President Freeland responded that he had not had a chance to meet with them.

SGA President Dayharsh indicated that she had concerns about Enrollment Management and Student Affairs being removed from the Provost's Office and the effect on students. President Freeland replied that he did not see any adverse effect on the interactions with students.

Professor Wallin asked whether the new vice president would have experience with both enrollment management and student affairs. President Freeland replied that experience in those areas, as well as broad experience in data management, administration and finance, budget and human resources, and building programs, would be optimal.

Professor Aroian asked whether, as the provost position is unfilled as yet, it might be better to wait and ensure good communication between the new provost and vice president. President Freeland thought the vice president issue should be resolved before the appointment of the new provost, whose position would be clearly focused on the scholarly and educational environment of the institution. Also, the Board of Trustees does not meet again until June.

Professor Fox asked whether the Athletics Department would report to the new vice president or, as at present, to the President. President Freeland replied that, beyond aggregating what is currently under Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, he had no plan to change any other reporting relationships.

Professor Sullivan asked if the new provost would be fully in place before the search begins for the new senior vice president. President Freeland replied that that would not necessarily be the case.

Professor Lowndes noted that, in the President's charge to the Provost Search Committee, President Freeland had indicated a desire to be less involved with day to day operations in order to focus more time on the upcoming campaign. By creating a new senior vice president position that would report to the president instead of the provost, this might free up the provost but would add more responsibility to the president. President Freeland replied that he presently meets regularly with the Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs because of the importance he attaches to keeping the president aware of student issues. While it is a consideration to have an additional person reporting to him, it is overridden by the benefit of having a senior vice president fully focused on student-related issues and freeing the provost to focus on education and scholarship.

Provost Hall thanked the President for coming.

Professor Lowndes moved the resolution. The motion was seconded, and the resolution read as follows.

**WHEREAS, the Faculty Handbook declares (Section I A1) that "...the Faculty Senate which, together with the Administration of the University, has the responsibility of maintaining and improving the academic standards of the University and making the functioning of the University more effective and harmonious"; and**

**WHEREAS, the Provost as the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Enrollment Management play critical roles in shaping these academic standards;**

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate express its deep concern about the process, the timing, and the outcome of the proposed restructuring of the Provost position, and respectfully request that the President and the Board of Trustees postpone any further action on this proposed restructuring so that the merits of the proposal can be fully assessed by the students, the faculty, and the Administration.**

Professor Lowndes spoke to the motion, citing an anecdote about the then President of Columbia University who, at a faculty convocation, commented that the university would be even stronger if the faculty would refrain from meddling in university affairs. A very respected member of the faculty stood up and said, "With all respect, Mr. President, the faculty are the university." The faculty member's name is not remembered, but the President was Dwight D Eisenhower.

Professor Lowndes stated that the motion on the floor was about collegiality, and that means discussion, not announcements of actions to be taken.

He stated that for the last thirty years or so collegiality has been the prevailing sense at Northeastern and has been a treasure for the University. The current Faculty Handbook mandates that the Faculty Senate, jointly with the Administration, has responsibility for academic standards. This is a very important statement. Professor Lowndes noted however that this joint responsibility statement has been removed from the draft of the proposed new Handbook that could lead to a much-diminished role for full faculty participation. Nevertheless, this joint responsibility is currently in effect while the existing Handbook is the operational one. As a result, the faculty at Northeastern have had a very much stronger participation and involvement in academic matters than at many other universities. This is not always well understood or appreciated by outsiders to Northeastern. This is especially true of public universities where the presence of faculty unions frequently leads to a diminished overall participation by faculty in faculty governance. This should not be viewed as a problem by administrators at Northeastern but rather as an advantage.

About ten years ago in a markedly more collegial approach, Presidents Ryder and Curry worked constructively to address faculty concerns seeking a considerable strengthening of the position of Provost. One outcome of this was the moving of Admissions, Cooperative Education, the Library and Student Affairs to report to the Provost in order to provide the Provost with the ability to coordinate the entire educational experience and to insure its integration.

Given this background, therefore, Professor Lowndes said that it was with considerable surprise that we learned on 11 February, by e-mail, that the Provost position was being restructured and that a new Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management was being created and two related vice president positions would no longer report to the Provost. There were no discussions with the faculty or the Senate Agenda Committee prior to the announcement. Moreover, incredulously, given the spin articulating this as student centered, there were no discussions with the students or the Student Government Association prior to the announcement.

Last week, to highlight their deep concerns about this matter, the SGA took the resolution before the Senate today and passed it unanimously.

Professor Lowndes stated that the purpose of the resolution was threefold. First, it was to place on record our concern with the lack of process and consultation with faculty and students on this matter. Second, it was to place on record our concern that the position of Provost will be a lesser position in terms of responsibilities and clearly marginalized in an overall manner, and which many believe will make it more difficult to manage the entire educational experience for students. The combined budgetary impact alone is close to \$100 million moving away from the Provost's jurisdiction. And third, the purpose of the resolution is to try to slow down this precipitous process so that the merits of the case can be more carefully considered. No suggestion has been made nor has

any evidence been presented that the current structure is not working well. Professor Lowndes reported that he had contacted some national leaders in education to ask them where vice presidents for enrollment management report. The answer was that some report to the president, others to the provost, and still others to the vice president for student affairs, so that no single trend exists. However, when asked how frequently a vice president for student affairs or enrollment management is a senior vice president at the same level as the provost, the answer was, "Very few." He urged the Senate to view the resolution as an attempt to slow the process so as to permit discussion among the faculty, not just the Senate, and with the students.

Professor Vaughn pointed out that the Senate's Admissions Policy Committee had initiated the creation of a position for enrollment management. Since then, the admissions process has been upgraded fairly consistently. He was concerned about how the structure would handle student affairs and the admissions process.

Professor Barnes suggested separating the issues of process and outcome in the resolution. Professor Lowndes did not accept it as a friendly amendment.

Motion. Professor Barnes moved to divide the question, and the motion was seconded. The amendment would have the resolution read as follows:

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate express its deep concern about the process and timing of the proposed restructuring of the Provost position.**

Professor Barnes, as Parliamentarian, raised a point of order, which was that an abstention is not a vote. He asked that abstentions not be recorded on this vote.

Motion. Professor Lowndes suggested that it might be simpler to remove the words, "**the outcome**", and he would accept that change as a friendly amendment.

Discussion ensued as to the best way to proceed. Professor Herman suggested voting down Professor Barnes's amendment and then proposing a friendly amendment to delete "**the outcome**". It was decided to vote on Professor Barnes's amendment as a substitute motion.

Vote on Professor Barnes's amendment: FAILED, 8-16.

Motion. Professor Herman moved to delete "**the outcome**", which was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Rotella spoke to the motion, which troubled him in its present form. While he shared the general concern about the process, that the proposed restructuring was careless in excluding input from faculty and students, he considered the resolution inappropriate. He thought that it would be possible to strengthen the Provost's Office by subtraction and that the Provost, as chief academic officer, should have a more clearly academic focus. He accepted the pressing need for the President to be able to go to the Trustees on Friday for their approval because it makes good academic sense to make such a decision before hiring a new provost.

Professor Vaughn noted that the intent of the resolution was to express concern and to request more discussion before a final decision is made, adding that the Trustees could make such a decision anyway.

Professor Giessen called the question on the original motion, as amended. There being no objection, the Senate turned to a vote.

The resolution, as amended, read as follows:

**WHEREAS, the Faculty Handbook declares (Section I A1) that "...the Faculty Senate which, together with the Administration of the University, has the responsibility of**

**maintaining and improving the academic standards of the University and making the functioning of the University more effective and harmonious"; and**

**WHEREAS, the Provost as the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Enrollment Management play critical roles in shaping these academic standards;**

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate express its deep concern about the process and timing of the proposed restructuring of the Provost position, and respectfully request that the President and the Board of Trustees postpone any further action on this proposed restructuring so that the merits of the proposal can be fully assessed by the students, the faculty, and the Administration.**

Vote: PASSED, 16-9.

Adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John G. Flym  
Secretary, Faculty Senate