

November 19, 2003

## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 11/19/2003

Charles H. Ellis Jr.  
*Northeastern University*

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TO: FACULTY SENATE  
FROM: CHARLES H. ELLIS, Jr., SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE  
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2003-2004 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 19 NOVEMBER 2003

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Present: (Professors) Alper, Aroian, Bansil, Barnes, Blank, Brookins, Bruns, Bursey, Ellis, Hansberry, Howlett, Hunt, Khaw, Krishnamoorthy, Lowndes, Margotta, Peterfreund, Serafim, Shafai, Sherman, Sherwood, Vaughn, Wray  
(Administrators) Meservey

Absent: (Professors) Alverson, Bannister, Flym, Futrelle, Kruger, Metghalchi, Morrison, Ondrechen  
(Administrators) Abdelal, Finkelstein, Greene, Hill, Onan, Soyster, Stellar, Weiss, Zoloth

Professor Lowndes convened the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

I. **Minutes.** The minutes of the 29 October meeting were approved.

II. **SAC Report.** Professor Lowndes reported the following.

A. **Meetings.** The Agenda Committee met once since the last Senate meeting in regular session and on 14 November with the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

The discussion with the Trustees centered on the goal of both the University and the Senate to achieve top 100 status. SAC presented the details of the charges to the Senate standing committees and stressed the importance of improving the academic environment and attracting still higher caliber students. SAC specifically called attention to the urgent need for a significant investment in the colleges, especially to increase the size of the professoriate, and to now move forward with a more balanced investment strategy.

B. **CBA Dean Search.** The Agenda Committee has been working to complete staffing of the College of Business Administration Dean Search Committee. The process used to select the Committee is consistent with recent practice concerning the Handbook rules, but also includes aspects of the proposed new procedures being discussed between SAC and the President and Provost. The composition will be thirteen members, with seven elected faculty, and the remaining members selected from slates presented by SAC to the Provost for faculty appointments, and by the Provost to SAC for an administrative appointment. The SGA presented a slate of two students from which SAC selected one. The President will appoint a Trustee. Thus far, Dean Zoloth, Professor Sheila Puffer, and SGA Vice President Peter Antonellis have been appointed. The Trustee, the graduate student, and one more faculty member are still to be added. The elected faculty representatives are

Professor Gloria J. Barczak  
Professor Thomas M. Begley  
Professor Bruce H. Clark  
Professor Mario Maletta  
Professor Ravi Ramamurti  
Professor Don R. Rich  
Professor Marius Solomon

C. **Next Meeting:** 10 December in Raytheon Amphitheater (240 Egan).

III. **Question and Discussion Time**

Vice Provost Meservey announced that a meeting with Provost Abdelal and tenured and tenure-track faculty would be held on Thursday, 20 November, from 3:00 to 4:30 in Blackman Auditorium. The meeting will have a town-meeting format.

Professor Blank pointed out that the meeting would be in conflict with the colloquium on peace in the Middle East scheduled jointly by the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict and the Jewish Studies Program.

Vice Provost Meservey apologized for the short notice of the Provost's faculty meeting and noted that another will be held in the spring, with ample advance notice.

- IV. ***Ad Hoc Faculty Handbook Committee Report.*** Before moving the first resolution, Professor Ellis pointed out that Section V of the draft Handbook now includes portions of the Academic Operations Manual (AOM) which will cease to exist when the new Handbook goes into effect.

Professor Ellis announced that Section V.B.8 in the first resolution should read, "Section V.B.7." He then moved Resolution #1, and the motion was seconded. Resolution #1 read as follows:

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate approves Section V.B.7 (Conference Hours) presented in the Revised Draft (4/16/03) from the *ad hoc* Committee to Review the Faculty Handbook, to go into effect when published in the revised edition of the *Faculty Handbook*.**

Professor Ellis explained that this was basically the same conference hours rule that appears in the AOM. The required minimum of three one-hour periods per week has been in effect for at least thirty-two years. The reference to the specific times for activity hours when conference hours were prohibited has been deleted because they are different under the semester calendar.

The section read as follows:

Faculty must schedule a minimum of three one-hour periods per week and such additional hours as may be required by their instructional, advising, and other service assignments. Conference hours should be scheduled at periods when the students are most likely to be able to utilize them. They should not be scheduled during student activities periods.

Motion. Professor Peterfreund suggested substituting "times" for "periods" in the second sentence, as a conference hour might overlap between class periods. This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Vaughn suggested allowing two 1½ hour periods for flexibility. Professor Ellis did not think the resolution would preclude this.

Professor Herman suggested indicating a total of three hours in order to encompass various arrangements.

Motion. Professor Ellis suggested language for the revision of the first sentence: "Faculty must schedule a minimum of three hours per week for student conferences and such additional hours as may be required by their instructional advising and other service assignments." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Alper wondered whether a faculty member who has release time to do research and is not teaching would be required to have conference hours. The floor was yielded to Professor Herman who responded that teaching is not a finite activity that begins and ends with a term. Situations arise in which students seek out faculty for advice or to complete courses because of an "I" grade, or to engage in other curricular-related activities. Except in those instances where a faculty member is away from campus, it is the minimum responsibility of faculty members to make themselves available to students at some point during every semester. Professor Alper considered this too restrictive because it does not allow for other alternatives.

Motion. Professor Alper moved to recommit this section for revision by the committee. There being no second, discussion continued.

Professor Herman pointed out that the proposed language is less restrictive than what appears in the AOM (p. 14).

Professor Lowndes suggested that it would be appropriate to indicate pro-rating for faculty teaching one or more courses. Professor Ellis responded that the committee had concluded that every faculty member should be available for a minimum of three hours a week for student conferences, and even someone who is doing full-time research is likely to have graduate students who might avail themselves of those hours.

Professor Bruns noted that she teaches at the Burlington campus, which makes it nearly impossible to have office hours convenient for students, so she has widely available electronic mail office hours and telephone office hours. She asked if the language covered this. Professor Ellis replied that the wording did not cover virtual office hours, however virtuous.

Professor Sherwood wondered if course buyouts extended to office hours, committee work, or other activities.

Professor Peterfreund suggested adding, “who are teaching” after “faculty”, and then an additional sentence at the end, to read, “Faculty who are not teaching should also make themselves available at regular, publicly posted intervals.”

Discussion ensued on the potential for a “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy for faculty with RSDFs or buyouts who do not post office hours.

Motion. Professor Blank moved Professor Peterfreund’s suggested changes, to add, “who are teaching” after “faculty”, and then an additional sentence at the end, to read, “Faculty who are not teaching should also make themselves available at regular, publicly posted intervals.” The motion was seconded.

Discussion followed on the amendment.

Professor Peterfreund explained that his intent was to make the number of hours quantitatively smaller, or to at least hold open that number for faculty who are not teaching, without getting into lists of infinite variations and exceptions.

Professor Sherman asked that the record show that the legislative intent was not zero but must be some finite quantity.

Motion. Professor Ellis suggested rephrasing Professor Peterfreund’s amendment to read, “Faculty who are not teaching any courses should make themselves available at regular intervals that are publicly posted.” The motion was seconded.

Motion. Professor Blank suggested, “faculty schedule a minimum of three one-hour periods per week during the times they are teaching.” This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

In response to a concern about the difference between residence during buyouts and sabbaticals, Professor Sherwood felt that faculty with buyouts should observe the minimum office hour requirement but faculty on sabbatical need not. Professor Ellis added that when faculty are officially on leave such duties do not pertain. Professor Herman reported that he had received calls from four department chairs in recent months asking whether faculty are required to hold office hours at all. The problem is that some students cannot find faculty and not that faculty are in their offices for any more hours than they need to be.

Professor Khaw expressed concern that some faculty might interpret the three-hour minimum as a maximum.

Motion. Professor Aroian called the question, and the motion was seconded.

Vote on cloture: PASSED, 18-3-0.

The amendment read as follows:

During the terms that they are teaching, faculty must schedule a minimum of three hours per week for student conferences and such additional hours as may be required by their instructional advising and other

service assignments . . . Faculty who are not teaching any courses should make themselves available at regular intervals that are publicly posted.

Vote on the amendment: PASSED, 16-6-0.

Motion. Professor Alper moved to substitute “may not . . .” for “should not” be in the last sentence (on scheduling during activities periods). Professor Ellis agreed to accept this as a friendly amendment, with “shall not” instead of “may not”.

Professor Blank expressed concern that the wording would prohibit him from scheduling a fourth conference hour if it were to be during activities period. He explained that some students have conflicts with all his office hours and the only solution is to schedule an appointment during activities period when both he and the student can meet.

Professor Vaughn pointed out that when faculty schedule a conference hour during activities period it can hurt the department because department meetings are often held at those times. Professor Sherwood added that we want to encourage students to participate in campus organizations and therefore should not interfere with activity periods.

Professor Peterfreund noted that he posts his office hours on his syllabus and adds that additional times may be scheduled by appointment.

Professor Ellis explained that there is no prohibition against meeting during activities period if it is mutually acceptable to the student and the faculty member.

Motion. Professor Vaughn called the question.

Vote on cloture: PASSED, 17-3-2.

The amended text proposed by the main motion read as follows:

During the terms in which they teach, faculty must schedule a minimum of three hours per week for student conferences and such additional hours as may be required by their instructional, advising, and other service assignments. Conference hours should be scheduled at times when the students are most likely to be able to utilize them. They shall not be scheduled during student activities periods. Faculty who are not teaching any courses should make themselves available at regular intervals that are publicly posted.

Vote on Resolution #1, as amended: PASSED, 19-0-2.

Professor Ellis moved Resolution #2, and the motion was seconded. The resolution read as follows:

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate approves Section V.G (Examination Policies) presented in the Revised Draft (4/16/03) from the *ad hoc* Committee to Review the Faculty Handbook, to go into effect when published in the revised edition of the *Faculty Handbook*.**

The section read as follows:

All examinations, except final examinations, are scheduled at the faculty member’s discretion within regularly scheduled class hours. Any change in regularly scheduled classes or examinations must have the unanimous consent of all class students, unless other arrangements for students to attend the alternative class or examination are agreed to by the faculty member and the student(s) involved. No examination longer than one half- hour may be given during the week prior to final examination week.

The final examination in any undergraduate course may not be more than two hours in duration and must be given at the time scheduled during examination week at the end of the term. Exceptions may be made in specific courses for educationally sound reasons only with the prior approval of the college dean.

The final examination schedule is published by the Registrar at the beginning of the term. A student who wishes to resolve an examination schedule conflict (three examinations in one day or two examinations scheduled at the same time) must file a final examination conflict verification form at the Registrar's Office by the end of the second week of the term. The Registrar's Office works with the faculty members to resolve the conflict.

Motion. Professor Alper moved to substitute, in paragraph 3, "prior to the beginning" for "at the beginning" in line 1. This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Motion. Professor Peterfreund moved to delete the compound adjectives in paragraph 1 by striking the hyphens, to read "regularly scheduled" and this was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Peterfreund asked how students find out about exam conflicts. Professor Ellis responded that before the beginning of the term the Registrar published the course schedule book that has the room numbers and exam schedule. Students and faculty can also find that information on the NU home page.

Professor Vaughn noted that the original schedules are often revised due to students changing courses during the first two weeks of a term. Professor Herman responded that conflicts are handled on an individual basis.

Professor Blank thought paragraph 3 too restrictive. Professor Ellis explained that this is not a new policy; it is the current policy, and a date early in the term is specified for the student to have filed the exam conflict. He added that the policy is to protect the student because the Registrar has the authority to mediate and impose a resolution.

Professor Lowndes suggested that, in paragraph 3, sentence 2, "seventh week" be substituted for "second week" and this was accepted.

Professor Bruns asked for clarification. The second paragraph did not preclude not giving a final exam and assigning a paper or take-home exam instead, noting that the latter might take more than two hours. It was Vice Provost Meservey's understanding that the longer exam or some other method than the regular final would require the dean's approval.

Professor Herman read the current regulation from the AOM (p. 27): "Final examinations in any course must not be more than two hours in duration and must be given in the scheduled examination week at the end of the quarter. Exceptions to the rule will be made with regard to graduating seniors in the Spring and Summer quarters. Other exceptions may be made in specific individual cases and for educationally sound reasons only with the prior approval of the dean of the college concerned."

Vice Provost Meservey asked if the intent were to mandate a final exam in undergraduate courses. Professor Vaughn replied that this would be the case, unless approved by a college dean, or perhaps the department chair.

Professor Alper did not favor obtaining the approval of the dean in a large college. He also questioned, in paragraph 2, what constitutes an examination week.

Professor Blank suggested that the last sentence in paragraph 3 stipulate that no exam longer than a half-hour be given during the seven days, rather than the week preceding, the final exam.

Motion. Professor Bursey moved to substitute, in paragraph 1, last sentence, "the seven days prior" for "the week prior" and the motion was seconded.

Motion. Professor Vaughn moved to add, after "seven days prior to", "the first day of", and this was accepted as a friendly amendment.

There being no objection, the Senate turned to a vote.

Vote on Professor Burse's amendment: PASSED, 22-2-0.

As amended, the section then read as follows:

All examinations, except final examinations, are scheduled at the faculty member's discretion within regularly scheduled class hours. Any change in regularly scheduled classes or examinations must have the unanimous consent of all class students, unless other arrangements for students to attend the alternative class or examination are agreed to by the faculty member and the student(s) involved. No examination longer than one half-hour may be given during the seven days prior to the first day of final examination week.

The final examination in any undergraduate course may not be more than two hours in duration and must be given at the time scheduled during examination week at the end of the term. Exceptions may be made in specific courses for educationally sound reasons only with the prior approval of the unit head or college dean.

The final examination schedule is published by the Registrar prior to the beginning of the term. A student who wishes to resolve an examination schedule conflict (three examinations in one day or two examinations scheduled at the same time) must file a final examination conflict verification form at the Registrar's Office by the end of the seventh week of the term. The Registrar's Office works with the faculty members to resolve the conflict.

Vice Provost Meservey wondered whether the body might be more comfortable with the approval coming from the department chair or group leader.

Motion. Professor Ellis suggested adding "only with the prior approval of the unit head or college dean." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Discussion followed on the need for a control mechanism, especially in multi-section courses.

Professor Peterfreund noted that in his department multi-section courses are supervised not by the chair by the people who direct a given program. He did not believe that competent faculty should have to seek approval from someone who may be less aware of the pedagogical needs of that instructional delivery. In his opinion, the regulation was a "dinosaur."

Professor Blank recommended that there be some level of uniformity.

Professor Sherman noted that in his department some courses are taught by part-time faculty and graduate students. The mandatory final exam is drawn up by the course coordinator and is group-graded as a monitoring device.

Professor Ellis pointed out that exceptions may be made in specific courses and that a department may establish a policy by which courses do not have to give final exams.

As time was running out, Professor Ellis moved to adjourn.

Adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles H. Ellis, Jr.  
Secretary