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Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 02/26/2004

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TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: CHARLES H. ELLIS, Jr., SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2003-2004 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 26 FEBRUARY 2004

Present: (Professors) Alper, Aroian, Bannister, Bansil, Brookins, Bruns, Bursey, Ellis, Hunt, Khaw, Krishnamoorthy, Kruger, Lowndes, Margotta, Morrison, Serafim, Sherman, Vaughn
(Administrators) Abdelal, Finkelstein, Hill, Meservey, Onan, Stellar, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Alverson, Barnes, Blank, Flym, Futrelle, Hansberry, Howlett, Metghalchi, Ondrechen, Peterfreund, Shafai, Sherwood, Wray
(Administrators) Greene, Soyster, Weiss

Provost Abdelal re-convened the meeting, from recess, at 2:58 p.m.

V. **Workload Policy Resolution.** On the floor was Professor Peterfreund's substitute amendment, which read as follows:

Colleges shall establish their own time purchase policies, subject to approval by the Provost.

Policies for staffing interdisciplinary programs and other programs, such as the Honors Program, shall be established by the Colleges, subject to approval of the Provost.

The funds used by a faculty member for time purchase will remain in the faculty member's department or equivalent unit. All time purchases are subject to the approval of the Dean of the School or College.

Professor Bruns asked for clarification as to what problem needed to be solved by a specific guideline for the whole university, as she was not aware of any problems.

Dean Stellar explained that when faculty collaborate across disciplines and across units one faculty member might be released from a course at 1/4 salary, while another would receive 1/6. Homogeneity across the University would prevent these glitches.

Professor Lowndes did not favor Professor Peterfreund's ad hoc approach. He favored Professor Alper's amendment, which provided an appropriate rational structure.

Professor Alper pointed out that the idea of the workload policy was not to solve a particular extant problem but rather to develop a framework within which we can approach a variety of issues. With the new Provost and the change to a semester system, it seemed timely to develop a uniform policy across the University that would affect all the salary parameters and all faculty in the same way.

Dean Stellar noted that the current default is a stipend and that he would prefer a framework for handling interdisciplinary faculty activities.

Dean Zoloth recommended establishment of transparency and a common understanding about handling the boundaries of workload and time.

Provost Abdelal pointed out that the language was not formulaic yet it articulated factors to take into consideration that would be helpful to colleges as they apply them in context.

Professor Morrison did not see much flexibility in the amendment.

Professor Bannister asked if the University has a system for weighting teaching, research, and service. Provost Abdelal responded that this workload policy necessarily initiates that process, in the units.

Departments and colleges will have to define weightings for teaching, research, and service in ways that also correspond to merit assessment.

Dean Finkelstein cautioned against excluding overhead return as a means of buying out summer courses.

There being no further discussion, the Senate turned to a vote.

Vote on Professor Peterfreund's substitute motion: FAILED, 1-16-5.

The motion on the floor read as follows:

Faculty members with external grants or contracts may purchase course or credit hour releases. The buyout, whether in terms of courses or credit hours, will be proportional to the normal teaching load of the unit and the weight placed on teaching relative to service and research/scholarship/creative activities and will be based on the faculty member's salary (including fringe benefits). This rate of purchase assumes that the faculty member will carry his/her normal service responsibilities. The rate of purchase will be set at a proportionately higher level for faculty seeking to purchase released time from both teaching and service. A complete buyout of teaching responsibilities is possible but normally it should not be for more than one academic year at a time. The funds used by a faculty member for time purchase will remain in the faculty member's department or equivalent unit. All time purchases are subject to the approval of the Dean of the School or College.

The floor was yielded to Professor Herman who expressed concern that the wording was overly restrictive and would exclude RSDF and IDF grants from inside the University and situations in which a department could be recompensed for the use of a faculty member. He suggested that the Senate amend the motion to reflect that faculty can purchase time, course, or credit hour releases when the buyout is in terms of courses or credit hours proportional to the normal teaching hour. He also suggested that, in the last sentence, a complete buyout, while possible, should not be for more than one academic year. He added that, as the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies, the current wording was of no assistance to him.

Provost Abdelal noted that last year he became aware that, because RSDF grants provided course releases for supported faculty members, his office was contributing to the percentage of courses offered by part-time instructors. The meager stipend rate in the grants meant that the courses could only be covered by part-time faculty. The practice has been stopped.

Professor Herman cautioned against excluding all internally generated grants and urged the body to create the maximum degree of flexibility in order to encourage whole categories of activity in the system.

Professor Lowndes offered to withdraw his friendly amendment to add "external", but he was concerned that this allowed the possibility of self-funding to buy out of teaching.

Professor Ellis did not think that deleting "external" would satisfy Professor Herman's primary concern. He recommended that a separate section of the policy might be best to deal with interdisciplinary activity whose participants come from different units. For grant-supported buyouts, a single rate could be set for both participants.

Dean Finkelstein agreed with Professor Ellis and added that it would look ludicrous to granting agencies to have different buyout rates for different investigators on the same grant.

Professor Bansil perceived three issues: 1) having a uniform rate for the external granting agencies; 2) resolving the difficulties with internally funding research, which are complex and need collaboration from the Provost, the deans, and the faculty; and 3) phasing in a system to reimburse departments for faculty engaged in interdisciplinary activities.

Dean Stellar agreed with Professor Bansil and urged the body to pass the proposed motion without further amendment as a first step in developing a policy which will then serve as a guide to address the

interdisciplinary issues. He pointed out that journal entries would make it possible to recompense departments without money actually changing hands.

Professor Morrison pointed out that “at a time” in “. . . normally it should not be for more than one academic year at a time” might lead to a permanent complete buyout of teaching, year by year.

Professor Ellis explained that the intent was that buying out of all teaching should not be continuous for more than one academic year.

Vice Provost Meservey wanted the wording to indicate that the buyout would not be for two consecutive years.

Professor Lowndes suggested, “A complete buyout of teaching responsibilities is not normally possible . . .” This would leave the decision to the dean and the Provost.

Provost Abdelal noted that a complete buyout just does not happen.

Professor Ellis suggested, “A complete buyout of a full year’s teaching responsibilities is not normally possible”

Professor Alper preferred, “A complete buyout of teaching responsibilities is not normally possible for more than one academic year at a time.”

Dean Finkelstein suggested eliminating the sentence.

Professor Alper accepted the following wording as a friendly amendment: “A complete buyout of teaching responsibilities is not normally possible for more than one academic year at a time.”

Dean Finkelstein thought that much time was being devoted to a very infrequent occurrence. He strongly discourages his faculty from buying out for a couple of years because he philosophically believes that faculty need to have a presence in the classroom. Researchers who buy out usually have doctoral students and are heavily engaged in a non-classroom form of teaching, so such matters can be dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

Professor Bannister expressed concern that faculty who are more highly weighted in teaching would have to pay more to buy themselves out. Provost Abdelal responded that, proportionally, they would actually pay less.

Professor Bursey suggested a more positive approach, such as saying that a complete buyout of teaching responsibilities would be possible in clearly exceptional circumstances.

Motion. Professor Lowndes agreed with Dean Finkelstein’s suggestion and moved to delete that sentence and to add “and the Provost” in the last sentence.

Professor Kruger called the question. There being no objection, the Senate turned to a vote.

Vote on Professor Lowndes’ amendment: FAILED, 9-14-0.

Professor Kruger called the question.

Vote on cloture: PASSED by voice vote.

As amended, Item #4 read as follows:

Faculty members with grants or contracts may purchase course or credit hour releases. The buyout, whether in terms of courses or credit hours, will be proportional to the normal teaching

load of the unit and the weight placed on teaching relative to service and research/scholarship/creative activities and will be based on the faculty member's salary (including fringe benefits). This rate of purchase assumes that the faculty member will carry his/her normal service responsibilities. The rate of purchase will be set at a proportionately higher level for faculty seeking to purchase released time from both teaching and service. A complete buyout of teaching responsibilities is not normally possible for more than one academic year at a time. The funds used by a faculty member for time purchase will remain in the faculty member's department or equivalent unit. All time purchases are subject to the approval of the Dean of the School or College.

Vote on Item #4 as amended: PASSED, 21-1-2.

Item #5 read as follows:

The specific weighting of the components of a faculty member's workload must be followed in the determination of a merit or equity salary increase for the faculty member.

Professor Burse called the question. There being no objection, the Senate turned to a vote.

Vote: PASSED, 23-0-0.

Item #6 read as follows:

Every department or similar unit will establish in its bylaws a performance evaluation committee consisting of at least two members of the tenured faculty plus the department chair or unit head. The committee members will be chosen by a method agreed to by the unit. On a periodic basis of either three, four or five years, as determined by the bylaws of the department or equivalent unit, the Workload Evaluation Committee will review the contributions and effectiveness of each faculty member in teaching, research/scholarship/creative activities and service based on the matchmate data for workloads or teaching loads from comparable units and on information for each faculty member such as annual reviews, curriculum vitae, teaching evaluations, publication records, service activities and the like. After completing these reviews, the Workload Evaluation Committee will establish workloads for the faculty within the unit with respect to research/scholarship/creative activities, teaching and service. Each unit will also establish an appeals mechanism for faculty members who disagree with the workload profile established by the committee. Although the particular workloads may vary from person to person or from time to time, each faculty member is expected to contribute to some extent to each of the three areas.

Professor Bruns moved to amend by substituting “no more than” for “either three, four or” before “five years” in line 4, and this was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Herman distributed several amendments to Item #6. He explained that he was concerned about the critical mass issue in small departments whose faculty engage in a variety of activities because it becomes important for the Workload Evaluation Committee to think not only about the individual faculty member but also about the effectiveness of the unit. The amendments represent “an ounce of prevention” in order to avoid grievances from faculty whose chairs might unilaterally waive the workload policy.

Motion. Professor Lowndes moved Professor Herman's first amendment, which was seconded. The amendment by addition (after the 4th sentence) read as follows:

In making these individual determinations, the committee shall also take into account the cumulative impact of the individual assignments on the ability of the unit to fulfill its responsibilities to students and to the University, and identify any additional resources needed under the proposed assignments to carry out the unit's responsibilities.

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

Vote: PASSED by voice vote.

Motion. Professor Lowndes moved Professor Herman's second amendment, which was seconded. The amendment by addition (after the 5th sentence) read as follows:

Each determination shall be made after consulting with the individual faculty member involved.
Normally, this assignment shall be made with the consent of the faculty member.

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

Vote: PASSED by voice vote.

Motion. Professor Lowndes moved Professor Herman's third amendment, which was seconded. The amendment by addition (at the end of #6) read as follows:

The individual workload assignment is formally made upon approval of the unit head and/or Dean of the College or School to which the individual is assigned.

This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Dean Finkelstein asked whether the Workload Evaluation Committee would also establish the means to compute the specific weights. Professor Ellis responded that his assumption was that the weightings would be built into the workload. The department may need to devise a conversion table, but, if you are supposed to be devoting half of your time on research, the weighting would be 50%. He recalled that, in the 1980s, the Senate passed a policy to establish a flexible workload system; the resolution was approved by President Ryder, but the deans and colleges never got around to implementing it.

Dean Finkelstein noted that for a long time Computer Science has had a flexible workload policy with variable weightings. However, he does not let faculty reduce their scholarship to less than 20%, as this feeds directly into the merit component.

Provost Abdelal pointed out that figuring out the loading would be a collegial process, and the Provost's Office would take issue with people who are not being reasonable. Each college or department will have to go through some collegial discussion.

Professor Bruns asked for clarification as to whether, if a program needs to add a section, a faculty member who teaches four courses might be required to teach a fifth course. Professor Herman responded that the Senate had already passed the basic procedure for this part of the resolution, and that the baseline weighting (paragraph 3) is based on comparison to matchmates determined in a collegial manner within each college, subject to approval. In this section the Senate is dealing with how, within the unit, individuals' loads are weighted, not with how the norms are established. Dean Stellar added that another solution would be for the dean to hire another adjunct faculty member to teach the additional section.

Provost Abdelal noted that workload would be based on the matchmate comparisons as passed in Item #1.

Professor Lowndes pointed out that the needed resources might not be available to a unit and noted that he plans to address this by drafting additional wording for the preamble.

Professor Kruger noted that Item #6 was silent on how matchmates would be determined, and he would like to know how they would be determined. Professor Alper replied that this was covered in Item #1.

There being no further discussion, the Senate turned to a vote.

Vote on Item #6 as amended: PASSED, 23-0-0.

The floor was yielded to Professor Herman who explained that he had provided two alternatives for an additional seventh section that derive from a variety of discussions the Provost has been having with the chairs of CAS departments and other groups, which indicate that faculty members will need to consider the impact that a low-research formal workload might have on their career trajectories. If someone decided to more heavily weight teaching than scholarship over a long period of time, perhaps five years, then those weightings should be those considered when an associate professor seeks promotion to full professor. His alternative amendment was entitled *Caveat Emptor*, simply to warn of the potential consequences.

Motion. Professor Lowndes moved Professor Herman's first alternative as an amendment, to add Item #7, and the motion was seconded. The amendment read as follows:

7. Workload Impact on Promotion

Formal modifications to the workload of individual faculty made under the terms of this policy shall be used to determine the comparative weighting of the Promotion Criteria at all steps in any Promotion evaluation of that individual faculty member.

Professor Ellis noted that, while some do establish a national reputation for teaching, it is more difficult than it is for research. He suggested that the amendment should be consistent with that.

Dean Zoloth cautioned that to have the same process regarding promotion in several areas would invite confusion, and he urged that the workload policy be silent on the impact on promotion.

Provost Abdelal agreed and added that faculty could misunderstand this out of the context of the promotion policy, generating grievances.

Professor Herman read from the Promotion section in the current Handbook: "The University recognizes that every faculty member offers a unique combination of accomplishments relative to the criteria listed above, depending on academic field, specialized scholarly interests, varying professional opportunities, and contracted responsibilities for teaching, laboratory and field work, and research. Consequently, when a judgment is made of the total contribution of a faculty member, the criteria shall be weighted according to primary assignments during the period under consideration. Whenever possible, it is preferable that the specific criteria be established by mutual agreement."

Professor Lowndes thought inclusion in the workload policy would flag it for the readers, but the people interested in promotion would read the promotion section first.

Professor Herman explained that he was trying to foreclose the possibility of other interpretations being applied as a result of the application. As long as the legislative history shows that this is the intent, he would not object to omitting it.

Professor Vaughn urged that the Handbook statement remain in promotion process and that the workload policy be silent on it.

Dean Finkelstein pointed out that the purpose of the proposed Item #7 seemed to be to remind people that the weightings that are established have an impact in other contexts, but it does not need a formal statement, which would be over specifying or over-engineering.

Professor Herman read from the revised draft of the Handbook: "All faculty will be evaluated annually in each of the three areas of scholarship (including research and creative activity), teaching, and service. In addition, faculty members will be evaluated on contributions to the quality and effectiveness of their unit, their college, and the University in the light of Northeastern's mission (see Section I). The University recognizes that every faculty member offers a unique combination of accomplishments relative to the criteria listed above, depending on academic field, specialized scholarly interests, varying professional

opportunities, and responsibilities for teaching, laboratory and field work. However, while relative weights may vary, all faculty are expected to be productive in each of the three areas over time.”

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

Vote on Professor Herman’s amendment to add Item #7: FAILED, 1-20-1.

Provost Abdelal noted that salary matchmates are currently done in the same way as is stated in the resolution. The department recommends a list, the dean reviews it and makes his own recommendation, and then the Provost’s Office reviews those. While you do not always have agreement on the matchmates for every department, the process does begin in the department and requires review and approval by the dean and Provost.

Dean Zoloth referred to the CUPA process, which is used for financial matchmates, but our matchmates are beyond the CUPA list.

Professor Kruger recommended that faculty input be explicitly provided with regard to determining faculty workload and also merit. He asked whether the same matchmates would be used for merit as well as workload. Provost Abdelal responded that it is not just what the unit thinks the matchmates should be, since the dean must also support the list. He added that the process would continue to evolve.

Dean Finkelstein explained that the actual process of determining matchmates is somewhat hindered by the difficulty of obtaining accurate data. There is such a list of externalities that you might have to alter the matchmate list based on the difficulty of acquiring data.

Dean Stellar suggested adding, “the faculty of” before “each department” and this was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Vice Provost Meservey suggested, as a friendly amendment, that each section read, “The faculty of each department, school, or similar unit, in consultation with the dean of the college and the Provost, will establish matchmates for the academic unit. Based on a comparison with these matchmates, the faculty of each department, school, or similar unit, in consultation with the dean of the college and the Provost, will establish the metrics of its own workload policy for the academic unit.” She also wanted to include wording to indicate that matchmate data might identify the teaching load range in the average with each matchmate unit in order to have the same process for establishing matchmates and the metrics.

Professor Lowndes thought the body should vote on this amendment and, due to the lateness of the hour, suggested that the proposed amendment be put in writing for the next meeting.

Adjourned: 4:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles H. Ellis, Jr.
Senate Secretary