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Northeastern University

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Faculty Senate

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Northeastern University

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TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: CHARLES H. ELLIS, Jr., SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2003-2004 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 8 APRIL 2004

Present: (Professors) Alper, Blank, Brookins, Bruns, Ellis, Hansberry, Hunt, Khaw, Krishnamoorthy, Kruger, Lowndes, Margotta, Morrison, Peterfreund, Serafim, Vaughn
(Administrators) Abdelal, Finkelstein, Hill, Meservey, Onan, Soyster, Stellar, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Alverson, Aroian, Bannister, Bansil, Barnes, Bursey, Flym, Futrelle, Howlett, Metghalchi, Ondrechen,Shafai, Sherman, Sherwood, Wray
(Administrators) Greene, Weiss

Provost Abdelal re-convened the meeting, from recess, at 3:04 p.m.

VII. **Non-Tenure Track Research Faculty**. Discussion continued on the resolution, which read as follows:

> **BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate endorse the establishment of the faculty ranks of Research Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Assistant Professor, with the duties, rights and responsibilities detailed in the proposal from the Office of the Provost, and to be included in the revised *Faculty Handbook* among Special Academic Appointments (section VI.C).**

Vice Provost Meservey distributed the document, with the changes recommended to date.

Professor Herman liked the changes in the "Responsibilities" section and suggested deleting the reference to teaching overloads. Administrative staff contracts do not mention it; it is simply a policy that applies to all staff members, and they would have the same right to take on overload teaching once a year, as stated in the Administrative Manual.

Vice Provost Meservey suggested referencing the policy for professional staff. Professor Herman indicated that he would agree only if, to avoid confusion, it were done for all administrative staff contracts. Professor Ellis suggested deleting the two sentences relating to teaching and service.

Professor Ellis suggested that the last sentence in the paragraph under "Rank, Title and Status" be changed to read, "Appointments reside at the department (or equivalent 'unit') level." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Margotta asked whether these would be new positions. Provost Abdelal responded that these appointments cannot presently be made because they are not described anywhere. Vice Provost Meservey added that the addition of this category would provide opportunities for individuals currently in Research Scientist positions at the University who would qualify, and for others who might want to join the University.

Professor Alper asked the status of the research faculty who, as stated on page 2, would be able to participate as faculty in University-wide voting matters. Professor Ellis responded that the current Handbook has a large category called "Other Voting Faculty," many of whom are University staff with purely administrative positions.

Professor Peterfreund recalled that a retired Registrar does teach a class. He suggested revising the first sentence to read, "Research faculty are professional staff appointed to the professorial rank," and then to incorporate by reference all of the policies pertaining to professional staff.

Professor Peterfreund suggested revising the "Benefits" paragraph for the sake of transparency to reflect whether benefits would include retirement contributions from the University or the grant contract. Vice Provost Meservey replied that the grant would be charged for full benefits if the position were funded with full compensation.

Dean Soyster noted that the College of Engineering would be a prime employer of this category of faculty, which would comprise two types of researchers—junior-level individuals who would work on team projects for two or three years, and senior researchers with substantial grants who want to be located in the area but would not come for only a one-year appointment. He recommended having a maximum of three years or the duration of the project, whichever time period is shorter.

Vice Provost Meservey agreed with Dean Soyster's concern but hesitated to commit to longer than one year because, customarily, only faculty who are hired with tenure receive appointments of more than one year.

Provost Abdelal added that the Board of Trustees does not permit initial contracts longer than one year.

Professor Ellis noted that the insertion of this document in the Handbook would be consistent with the rights or lack thereof, for others in similar categories, such as lecturers. Research faculty should not have voting rights, even at the unit level, because in some large research programs, although they would not be part of the permanent fabric of the University, they might outnumber the regular professoriate in making decisions. He added that research faculty positions would not be parallel to the clinical and academic specialist faculty category (who are in a different section of the Handbook) because they are a permanent part of the University and are not dependent on bringing in external funds to provide their compensation and keep their jobs.

Motion. Professor Ellis moved to delete the first paragraph in the "Rights" section. The motion was seconded.

Vice Provost Meservey reported that research faculty have voting rights at Brandeis and Carnegie-Mellon except for tenure cases, and at Drexel with departmental permission.

Professor Herman recommended dealing with the issue of voting in an exclusionary way, leaving the decision to the unit rather than making it an institutional policy.

Professor Vaughn read from the paragraph in question, noting that the tenured and tenure-track faculty would determine the level of participation in their unit/college.

Dean Stellar recommended making the research faculty as comfortable as possible, whether they have voting rights or not.

Dean Finkelstein supported the language in the document. Research faculty might supervise doctoral students and may want some input with regard to governance procedures and recruiting.

Dean Zoloth noted that externally funded research faculty would not be brought in to affect the institution on a long-term basis.

Professor Lowndes cautioned against blurring the boundaries between non-tenured and tenure-track faculty.

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

Vote on Professor Ellis's amendment: PASSED, 13-7-1.

Professor Vaughn noted that, as semesters and half-semesters relate to teaching and the research faculty would have nothing to do with teaching, research faculty appointments should not be tied to academic semesters. He suggested deleting those references. He also thought distinction should be made between the words "appointment" and "contract." In the "Dismissal" section, the appointment is clearly based on external funding. He also thought that the language implied that a research faculty member could be dismissed without written notice.

Professor Bruns asked for assurance that the research faculty would not be people who might otherwise be

hired on a tenure track. Provost Abdelal responded that the title "research professor" would make us competitive in attracting people who are not interested in teaching, but are funded and interested in being part of a research group. It is common, especially in engineering, to have research assistant professors. To be competitive nationally, you need to give them a faculty title rather than a research scientist designation. The dean would have to weigh the value of providing space to a research faculty member, which might include indirect costs to support departmental activities.

Professor Khaw pointed out that Harvard hires researchers as Assistant and Associate Professors without tenure to attract scientists to research positions. We need to make our positions attractive to the people with funding and not restrict them to just one-year appointments.

Dean Soyster explained that funding agencies are looking increasingly toward teaming operations across goals and people who can spend full-time putting together proposals. The role of a senior research professor would include national stature and the means to bring other people along in projects funded by the Department of Energy or the NSF, among others.

Professor Lowndes suggested deleting the sentence, under "Appointment and Term," that read, "Appointments may be structured on an academic year (two or two and a half semesters) or a full- year basis." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Lowndes asked if there were a way to define a longer period for someone at the full professor level, since a senior research professor with a three- or four-year grant could not afford the disruption of coming here for only one year. Provost Abdelal responded that, although the trustee regulation is for appointment on a one-year basis, it might be possible to send a letter to the candidate stating the expectation that the appointment would continue beyond the year.

Dean Finkelstein pointed out that the issue is not only the disruption in terms of the work in progress. It is also that, if you bring in someone with a large grant, there is significant cost by the unit to accommodate that person. It is not in the best interest of the University to undertake that expense and have the researcher live with the uncertainty of being continued.

Professor Peterfreund suggested correcting the language in the second paragraph, first sentence, to read, "All members of the research faculty must be funded for 100% of their compensation (including the cost of benefits and appropriate University overhead) through external funding." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Vice Provost Meservey, in response to Professor Peterfreund's suggestion that research faculty are professional staff appointed to the professorial rank, pointed out that some of the institutions surveyed do treat it as a professional staff position. Her intent was that it be a faculty position. To put it in the professional staff category would incorporate the opportunity to teach and would mean that the person would serve at the pleasure of the President without the term length professional appointment. She wondered whether there would be drawbacks in having a professional position with professorial rank.

Professor Onan wondered if a contract for more than a year could go to the Trustees for approval without having the appointee endure the accompanying uncertainty.

Provost Abdelal's impression was that people seeking these positions are interested in the title rather than the technicalities.

Professor Peterfreund suggested that the letter of appointment or the contract reference this document.

Professor Lowndes wondered whether action by the Trustees would be swift enough, as they do not meet often. Professor Onan replied that members of the Board are sometimes polled. Professor Lowndes pointed out that the University's sizeable contributions to appointees would be evidence of its commitment as well as

its loss if the contract were curtailed.

Professor Ellis urged that research faculty not be defined as professional staff. As such, they would not be defined in the *Faculty Handbook* and therefore their defined duties, rights and responsibilities would not receive Senate oversight.

Vice Provost Meservey preferred that the language be clear about research faculty teaching because being silent could pose problems later. She suggested retaining the freedom to teach one course a year and that there be no expectation of University service.

Dean Finkelstein recalled the aftermath of 9/11, when all federal grants were unilaterally cut, and cautioned that funding could be cut without warning, which could incur a fair amount of costs to the University.

Dean Zoloth favored the notion of allowing research faculty with solid expertise to teach one course a year for extra compensation.

Professor Lowndes suggested that teaching would take research faculty away from their duty cycle. He asked whether, other than space, additional startup costs were provided to those who are fully compensated by their grants. Provost Abdelal responded that the research faculty would fit in with an existing research group and would not incur significant costs.

Professor Alper spoke in favor of giving research faculty the option to teach one course a year for extra compensation.

Professor Peterfreund cautioned against trying to legislate local options from a global perspective. He suggested that the fourth paragraph, third sentence, read as follows: "Research faculty may not be given regular teaching assignments", the rest of the sentence to be deleted.

Vice Provost Meservey was concerned about the spirit of this, noting that some professional staff end up teaching many courses in a year.

Professor Peterfreund pointed out that the letter of appointment and/or the contract could stipulate that research faculty could teach one course in a year, and that would be binding.

Vice Provost Meservey suggested that, under "Benefits," the fourth sentence be deleted, and, in the next sentence, the words, "whose appointments are on a 52 week base" be deleted. She also suggested substituting, in the next paragraph, "fewer" for "less."

Professor Lowndes asked about the change in appointment term from a maximum of one year to three years if the Trustees do not concur. Vice Provost Meservey replied that, although it might be problematic at the presidential level, there would be an opportunity to look at the terms again and that, since there was such desire for the longer appointment, to at least give it a try to see if we can move it through.

As amended, the document read as follows.

<u>Rank, Title and Status</u>
Research faculty are appointed to the professorial rank (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor) commensurate with their experience and credentials. All research faculty appointments are non-tenure track, and may not be converted to tenure-track status. Appointments reside at the department (or equivalent "unit") level.

Source and Level of Compensation
All members of the research faculty must be funded for 100% of their compensation (including the cost of benefits and appropriate University overhead) through external funding sources. The level of

compensation will be determined jointly by the dean, the department chairperson/director/group leader ("unit head") and the faculty member, and shall be consistent with applicable guidelines/limits of the funding organization and/or the specific grant/contract/award. Normally, research faculty salaries should be commensurate with salaries of tenure-track and tenured faculty of comparable rank in their discipline. Research faculty appointments may be renewed only if external funding continues.

Appointment and Term

Research faculty appointments are made by the Provost based on recommendations from the unit faculty and the dean. Every research faculty appointment/renewal must have the potential to further the University's research mission and advance the unit's and the University's current research goals. Research faculty must have earned a doctorate in the field in which they seek appointment or possess the equivalent terminal degree in their discipline. Initial Northeastern research faculty appointments at any level are made for a period of up to a maximum of three years or commensurate with the duration of the funding period, whichever is shorter. No research faculty appointment, reappointment or promotion carries a guarantee of future re-appointments or promotions. All appointments are also contingent upon maintaining the appropriate visa status and work authorization.

Responsibilities

Research faculty are responsible for establishing, conducting and managing original, independent research programs or other appropriate scholarly or artistic activities in their discipline at a high quality level commensurate with that which is expected of tenure-track or tenured faculty in their discipline at the same professorial rank. A research faculty member may supervise undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral research. Research faculty may not be given regular teaching assignments. They may not be required to engage in University service activities.

Research faculty will be considered "Principal Investigators" for the purpose of submitting grants proposals through Northeastern. Consistent with University applicable University policies and procedures, for the duration of all funded proposals, the University shall fulfill the space, personnel and other requirements outlined in the proposal and approved by the unit head and dean as necessary to fulfill the objectives of the grant.

Research faculty are not eligible for sabbatical, but may, with the approval of the Vice Provost for Research, take a leave of absence of up to one year, if the leave is unpaid or if any continuing compensation during the leave period is provided by external funds. Research faculty may participate in consulting activities only outside the University's regular working hours.

Reappointment

Research faculty appointments are renewable, contingent upon several factors in the sole discretion of the University, including satisfactory performance, unit and University need, and continued external funding. Upon the recommendations of the unit head and dean, renewals of research faculty appointments at the Associate Professor or Professor level may be made for a period of up to three years, concurrent with the current expected duration of outside funding. Research faculty appointments may not be used to extend the probationary period of a tenure-track faculty member. All reappointments are also contingent upon maintaining the appropriate visa status and work authorization.

Provisional Funding/Leave of Absence

A research faculty member expecting new or renewed funding may seek a leave of absence, available for three months (and renewable for up to one year or two successive submissions of the grant proposal/renewal). These leaves are subject to approval of the dean and the Vice Provost for Research. Research faculty may self-fund (through overhead return or other non-University sources) a contingency account to provide limited support on a monthly basis for no more than one year during lapses in external funding.

Annual Evaluation and Merit Adjustments

Research faculty will be evaluated annually according to the same procedures utilized for tenured and tenure-track faculty in the unit. However, the evaluation of research faculty shall be based only on an evaluation of their scholarship; it shall not be based on teaching and/or service. Evaluators will examine the research faculty member's ability to secure/sustain external funding, and assess his/her potential for continued independence, autonomy and excellence in research. Annual evaluations will be an important factor in evaluating whether a research faculty member will be considered for reappointment. Any merit salary adjustments based on favorable annual evaluations must be provided by external funds and the adjustment amount will be determined independent of the University raise pool.

Non-Reappointment

Non-reappointment of a research faculty member may be based on several factors in the sole discretion of the University, including but not limited to: elimination of the research position due to insufficient external funding or lack of need; unsatisfactory performance; or for cause.

Northeastern will make reasonable efforts to provide the research faculty member with written notice of the University's intent not to renew within the following guidelines: three months notice for one- and two-year appointments, and six months notice for three-year appointments. In circumstances in which it is not possible to satisfy these notice guidelines, the University will endeavor to give the research faculty member notice of the reappointment decision as early as possible.

Dismissal

Dismissal of a research faculty member before the end of an appointment period may occur for cause or elimination or reduction of external funding. Personal misconduct, neglect of duty, or unfitness in one's professional capacity as a researcher/scholar may each constitute cause for dismissal. Dismissal for cause will normally be preceded by written notice of the performance or other issue(s) which form the basis for the dismissal, an opportunity to address the concern(s), and/or prior disciplinary action. However, in an unusually sudden or serious case, a research faculty member may be dismissed without prior notice.

Promotion

Research faculty may request consideration for promotion to the next research faculty rank. The primary criterion for promotion of research faculty will be a superior level of professional achievement in scholarship. Key factors in the promotion consideration process may include, but are not limited to, the candidate's: scholarly contributions to the goals of the unit and the University; continued ability to obtain/sustain outside funding; and attainment of a national/international reputation in research.

A member of the research faculty may request to be considered for promotion after he/she has completed at last three full years of service at his/her current research faculty rank. The candidacy shall be considered, in turn, by the unit promotion committee (which shall include the unit head), the Dean and the Provost. The unit promotion committee shall obtain 3-5 external reviews of the candidate's scholarship from experts in the candidate's field.

The candidate shall prepare and submit to the promotion committee a research promotion portfolio. The portfolio shall include the candidate's updated CV; annual evaluations; copies of publications achieved since the candidate has held his/her current NU rank; a list of external funds received/pending since the candidate has held his/her current NU rank; and a list of no more than six suggested external reviewers. Denial of promotion does not preclude reappointment at the current research faculty rank, nor does it preclude reconsideration for promotion at a later date. A research faculty member may not be reconsidered for promotion until two years after the original promotion consideration.

Benefits

Full-time research faculty are eligible to receive University benefits under the same terms and conditions as other full-time faculty and staff. The prevailing University fringe benefit rate is charged to the sponsored account that provides the research faculty member's salary. Any reduction in effort to less than full-time will impact the availability and contribution rates for benefits. Benefits-eligible research

faculty will accrue vacation days at the rate which applies to administrative/professionals Grade 12 or higher.

Conversion to/from Tenure-track Status

Research faculty may not convert to tenure-track status. However, if the unit in which a research faculty member is employed is currently searching for a tenure-track faculty member, the research faculty member may apply. He/she may be considered for the tenure-track position under the same terms/conditions as all other applicants for the tenure-track appointment. If, at the conclusion of the search, the unit recommends offering the tenure-track appointment to the research faculty member, the unit must be able to demonstrate that it conducted a broad, national search which met all guidelines established by the Office of Affirmative Action and that the research faculty member was the best candidate for the tenure-track position. Under no circumstances will time spent as a research faculty member at Northeastern be credited toward the tenure-track probationary period.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the unit faculty and unit head, the dean and the Provost, a tenure-track faculty member who has completed fewer than four years of full-time tenure-track service at Northeastern, may convert to a research faculty appointment (at the same rank as his/her current tenure-track appointment). Under these circumstances the research faculty member may never be considered for tenure in the future.

Development of Unit Procedures Consistent with Research Faculty Policy

Prior to employing a research faculty member, faculty in the hiring unit shall develop merit and promotion procedures consistent with this policy. These procedures are subject to review and approval by the Provost before they are final.

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

Vote: PASSED, 21-0-0.

Adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles H. Ellis, Jr.
Senate Secretary