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Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 04/06/2005

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TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: CHARLES H. ELLIS, Jr., SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2004-05 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 6 APRIL 2005

Present: (Professors) Alper, De Ritis, Ellis, Futrelle, Glod, Hansberry, Herman, Krishnamoorthy, Kruger, Lowndes, Margotta, McKnight, Melachrinoudis, Morrison, Peterfreund, Powers-Lee, Reynolds, Robinson, Schaffer, Shafai, Sherman, Sherwood, Vaughn, Wray
(Administrators) Abdelal, Falcon, Finkelstein, Hill, Moore, Onan, Soyster, Spieler, Stellar, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Bansil, Bannister, Blank, Bobcean, Heiman, Marshall, Wiseman
(Administrators) None

Provost Abdelal convened the meeting at 11:52 a.m.

- I. **Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of 23 March and 31 March were not ready for distribution.
- II. **SAC Report.** Professor Lowndes reported the following.
 - A. **Meetings.** SAC met once in regular session since the last Senate meeting.
 - B. **Faculty Senate Bylaws.** The faculty referendum on the Senate Bylaws has been completed. Of the 167 ballots returned, 165 approved the amendments to the Bylaws and 2 were opposed. Ratification of amendments to the Senate Bylaws requires approval by at least a two-thirds vote and participation by at least 25% of the faculty. Hence, since both conditions were met, the amendments to the Senate Bylaws have been ratified.
 - C. **Information Systems Policy Committee.** Professor Arun Bansil, Chair of the Information Systems Policy Committee, has indicated to SAC that the Committee will not be able to complete its report this semester. Given the comprehensive nature of the charge to the Committee, and our understanding at the outset that several of the issues might take some time for the Committee to address, this is not unexpected and is quite understandable. SAC's understanding is that the Committee report will be submitted by late summer or early fall at the latest. If Senate consideration can take place in the early fall, then this will allow any recommendations requiring budgetary action to be factored into the 2007 budget discussions.
 - D. **Next Meeting(s): Thursday, April 14 at 2:50 p.m. in Raytheon Amphitheater (240 EC). As has been announced, today's meeting, if necessary, will be continued tomorrow in 308 SN at @ 2:50 p.m.**
- III. **Library Policies and Operations Committee Report.** The following resolutions were on the floor.

WHEREAS the University is committed to a course of rising to become a top-100 research university through a policy of academic investment; and

WHEREAS the University Library plays a crucial role in the teaching, learning, and research mission of the University; and

WHEREAS the recent history of flat or erratic funding for the Library's collections will be viewed with disapproval by the NEASC accreditors in 2008; and

WHEREAS the Library now fails to meet both the standards for admission to the Boston Library Consortium, and the benchmarks set by its main comparator groups; and

WHEREAS the Library has pursued a prudent and cost-effective course of action in its use of funds to date; and

WHEREAS the collections of books, journals, and electronic databases available in the University Library already fall short of the needs of the academic community and are inadequate to support its research and teaching activities and aspirations; now, therefore,

1. **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate, endorsing both the goal of becoming a top-100 research university and the tactic of enhanced investment in the University's academic mission, supports the clear imperative to develop a robust operating budget for the Library during and beyond the period of the Academic Investment Plan.
2. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate supports, as part of this robust operating budget, the recommendation of the Library Policies and Operations Committee that the Library shall receive sufficient additional funding for that period specifically to offset the phenomenon of journal price inflation, thereby exempting it from the need for any additional reductions in the size of the collection of journal subscription base.
3. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate supports the recommendation of the Library Policies and Operations Committee that funding to improve the range and quality of the collections as a whole be made available in accordance with the Committee's proposed budget plan, including funding to enable access to the Web of Science citation database.
4. **WHEREAS** the Library is currently understaffed; cannot support the additional requests for research instruction by the English, writing, and honors programs and the expanding research needs of the academic community; and cannot provide peer tutoring for large numbers of students requesting such services;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate supports the recommendation of the Library Policies and Operations Committee that there be no reductions in Library staffing, and that additional funding to address the Library's additional staffing needs be made available as detailed in the proposed budget plan.

5. **WHEREAS** the cost of technology to access information is increasing, and the complexity of the information environment requires that the Library increase its investment in the hardware and software necessary to provide that access;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate supports the recommendation of the Library Policies and Operations Committee that additional funding be made available to meet the Library technology requirements detailed in the proposed budget plan.

6. **WHEREAS** the Library does not provide adequate spaces for group learning, the use of digital media, and undergraduate research and instruction;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate supports the recommendation of the Library Policies and Operations Committee that additional funding be made available to address the Library facilities needs detailed in the proposed budget plan.

Professor Lowndes moved to amend the above resolutions by substitution of the following, and the motion was seconded. The substitute motion read as follows.

Whereas the overarching vision for Northeastern is to be ranked in the *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the top 100 institutions; and

Whereas Northeastern strives to become increasingly recognized as a national research university; and

Whereas the current library budget remains below the benchmarks set by Northeastern peer groups and significantly below institutions ranked among the top 100; and

Whereas the past history of library funding has precluded development of an adequate serials and monographs collection; therefore,

- 1. BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges that the recurring library budget be increased over the next three years (FY 2007-09) to reach at least the median of library budgets for institutions that are currently ranked between 50 and 100 in the *U.S. News and World Report*, and that the highest priority for the use of these new resources be monographs, serials, and database subscriptions.**
- 2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the provision of one-time and development funding to bring the serials and monograph collection to a level comparable with said institutions.**
- 3. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the immediate upgrading of technology to ensure full electronic access from library facilities as well as from remote stations in the academic units.**

Professor Lowndes explained that both Provost Abdelal and Dean Warro have expressed their strong support for this motion. In addition, the motion was shared with the Library Policies and Operations Committee, and the four members who responded indicated their support. The goal of the substitute motion was to build on the Library Policies and Operations Committee's excellent report with a succinct, focused motion that Professor Lowndes hopes all constituencies in the Senate can harmoniously support and that then can be used effectively with the President and the Trustees to secure the resources needed. The motion had two central themes. It focused on the collection, which is the common thread of widespread concern, and it sought to benchmark against the 50-100th ranked institutions in *U.S. News and World Report*, which was chosen because neither of the comparison groups of the Library Policies and Operations Committee's report is quite right for Northeastern to use as a benchmark. Neither in terms of sponsored research nor of research libraries, are we close to being a top-100 institution. Many of the so-called Lucky 13 institutions are not really research universities (hence the reason why our periodicals appear to be better supported than their mean numbers), and so these also are not a reasonable benchmark comparison group. He thanked Associate Dean William Wakeling for preparing, at very short notice, the attached Appendix Table 2, which provides comparison data for the institutions ranked 50-100 in *U.S. News and World Report*.

Dean Warro added that the committee had originally felt the need to protect or augment every area of the library, but he was agreeable to focusing on the collections and on access needs.

Provost Abdelal supported the emphasis on the collection and bringing it to levels competitive with the 50-100 rankings. He expressed his willingness to figure out the priorities for the collections and the balance between electronic and print items.

In response to a question about how NU's expenditures fit into the metric for the top 100, Dean Warro explained that *U.S. News* does not give specific points for a library budget. The library budget is one component of institutional spending per student, which is the rated category.

Dean Zoloth suggested adding "print and full-text electronic" before "serials" in item 1, and "print and electronic" before "serials" in item 2, and these changes were accepted as a friendly amendment.

Dean Warro noted that in terms of volume equivalency he would be happy to supplement the number of volumes by electronic means.

Professor Peterfreund urged the library, in addition to adding volumes, to also undertake a census of what is currently on the shelves and remove volumes that are obsolete or no longer of value.

Professor Herman recommended that the print and electronic materials be in balance.

Professor Heiman asked why NU fails to meet the standards for admission to the Boston Library Consortium. Dean Warro responded that the application requires a good many facts and figures to be sure that a member will contribute to as well as take from the consortium. One requirement is for a five-year steady increase in the acquisition budget; another is a collection that would be of interest to users in other consortium libraries.

Professor Herman called the question, and there was no objection.

As amended, the substitute motion read as follows:

Whereas the overarching vision for Northeastern is to be ranked in the *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the top 100 institutions; and

Whereas Northeastern strives to become increasingly recognized as a national research university; and

Whereas the current library budget remains below the benchmarks set by Northeastern peer groups and significantly below institutions ranked among the top 100; and

Whereas the past history of library funding has precluded development of an adequate serials and monographs collection; therefore,

- 1. BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges that the recurring library budget be increased over the next three years (FY 2007-09) to reach at least the median of library budgets for institutions that are currently ranked between 50 and 100 in the *U.S. News and World Report*, and that the highest priority for the use of these new resources be monographs, print and full-text electronic serials, and database subscriptions.**
- 2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the provision of one-time and development funding to bring the print and electronic serials and monograph collection to a level comparable with said institutions.**
- 3. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the immediate upgrading of technology to ensure full electronic access from library facilities as well as from remote stations in the academic units.**

Vote on the substitute motion as amended: PASSED, 29-0-0.

Vote on the main motion: PASSED, 31-0-0.

- IV. **Stage 2 Final Report of the Special Committee on Academic Policy Committee 2004-05 University-wide General Education Proposal.** Professor Herman moved the following resolution, and the motion was seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate authorize that the Special Academic Policy Committee's Stage 2 General Education Report be sent to the Colleges with full-time undergraduate programs with a request that all Units with Undergraduate majors review the proposal, work out how their major programs might fulfill the proposed General Education requirements, and report back to the Senate's Academic Policy Committee on their solutions, problems, and implementation funding needs by the January 15th 2006. Based on this information, the Special Academic Policy Committee will make final adoption recommendations to the Senate for its consideration by the end of the Spring Semester 2006. If the General Education Requirements are then adopted (with appropriate resources provided) by the University, roll-out will begin with the class of 2012, entering the University as freshmen in September, 2007.

Professor Herman reported that the committee had been working on the issue of general education requirements for two years and the resolution requested that the Stage 2 report be transmitted to the colleges and departments, asking that they evaluate their ability to achieve the general education requirements within the scope of their existing majors and report back to the Academic Policy Committee by 15 January 2006. At that point the committee will begin to develop a final recommendation for the Senate's approval. The present Senate approval would grant the committee the authority to proceed.

Professor Herman explained that the committee's intent was to create a set of requirements to establish general education throughout the five undergraduate years and to ensure that all the elements could be integrated without students losing the flexibility they have now. The committee asked that departments seriously consider allowing places, where possible, for integrated learning in their curricula. The committee had looked at national and international models and accreditation standards. It had tried to be as inclusive as possible in order to create a general education requirement that is not simply for freshmen but that carries over the whole extent of each student's education, integrating all of the elements that we think are important, so that they will leave Northeastern with an education that actually makes sense in all those respects.

Professor Peterfreund supported the plan and suggested a development loop to train faculty to deliver some of the courses.

Professor Futrelle cautioned that there is a delicate balance between giving students the impression that the University has a uniform, coherent general education program built into its structure and allowing individual units to make adjustments to fit their own programs and/or dual majors.

Dean Soyster asked whether the report meant that engineering and science students would have to take only two courses outside their majors. Professor Herman responded that the report set *minimum* course requirements. Engineering's accreditation organization demands that students take more than two courses in Arts and Sciences. Whatever the totality of courses, each student will need to have at least one course from each of the knowledge domains. The minimum is actually three courses, not two.

Dean Soyster asked whether the knowledge domain could include, for example, chemical engineering as a component of one of the sciences. Professor Herman explained that the requirement of a course outside the major would mean that chemical engineering students would have to take an intermediate level course in that area, outside the major.

Dean Soyster asked whether, as was his understanding, one of the four intensive writing courses, would be delivered by the major itself. For example, chemical engineering would be teaching a middler level course that had to do with intensive writing. Professor Herman replied that faculty would teach an intermediate level chemical engineering course that would include intensive writing as one of the projects, as opposed to teaching intensive writing *per se*. English and math should play central roles in planning courses that might in fact be carried out in other units, so that the faculty who teach those courses will learn how to teach writing within their disciplines as part of what the students are doing.

Dean Soyster thought that a number of people would prefer that instead of four intensive writing courses, Engineering should have some courses in speech, communications, and project presentations.

Provost Abdelal observed that one model for writing across the curriculum is to have graduate teaching assistants from English work with a faculty member in the major course.

Professor Vaughn asked what was meant by the baseline MTH U115 course in the Quantitative Reasoning section. Professor Herman responded that college level mathematics is defined by MTH U115 or something equivalent because students need to come up to that level. Professor Vaughn thought that this level would be achieved by a high school student who had passed the MCAS in mathematics and that other alternatives should be considered.

Professor Sherman pointed out that the Mathematics Department considered MTH U115 a course that aspires to a level never satisfied by high school requirements. Professor Herman explained that math requirements

across the University vary widely. A long discussion about whether calculus ought to be the proficiency level course on the math side had resulted in the decision that it would require too much effort by the departments that do not require it now, and to begin to do so would reduce the number of electives that are currently available. The intent is not to supplant programs that exist in departments but to establish a baseline to see what can fit into the existing curriculum without doing damage to the one established during the course of the semester conversion.

Professor Ellis asked about the focus of the intensive writing courses, especially with respect to the courses offered with a major department. He hoped that the minimum might cause a general reform of curriculum to encourage more writing in all courses.

Professor Peterfreund considered this a particularly fortuitous moment for the writing intensive courses, as we have a new director of advanced writing for disciplines who was formerly associated with the Writing in the Disciplines program at Duke and has expertise in teaching science students how to write and in working with scientists to teach writing. A good number of advanced writing-in-discipline courses have always included presentations, for example, in business writing, and more could be added. He applauded the first-year writing requirement as important in a student's horizon of expectations.

Dean Finkelstein was curious as to the focus on writing in a discipline. Professor Herman explained that the report suggested a variety of ways to meet the requirements, one of which would be the discipline course.

Professor Kruger was pleased with the framework that the committee had developed. He asked for the committee's thoughts on information collected from other universities for a comparative context. Vice Provost Hill responded that other institutions have various strengths and conduct rich curricular academic discussions that are exciting to consider. We are a Coop institution and, as such, offer students an experiential expectation when they arrive. They graduate with various strands of learning as part of their education.

Professor Sherman hoped that an outgrowth of the report would be a collegial outreach to other departments to develop interesting and useful courses. He was a bit uneasy about the term "quantitative reasoning" because a whole aesthetic of mathematics is available to people who are not mathematicians.

Professor Alper expressed concern that the Advanced Placement policy might change so that students would receive "placement credit" instead of graduation credit. Provost Abdelal responded that the Provost's Office has been looking at data from overlapping institutions in terms of both learning and competitiveness. Vice Provost Hill added that this kind of discussion is ongoing at universities nationwide.

Professor Herman pointed out that at this point the committee was not seeking the Senate's approval for a detailed program. The review would take place in the appropriate areas, but he expected that AP students would receive graduation credit toward general electives and would still have to take a course in mathematics and a course in English. After the review, the committee will better know whether this will hurt our competitive relationship with other universities and whether we need to compromise.

Professor Alper saw asymmetry in travel abroad being considered as part of NU students' experiential education requirement, since we do not grant the same credit to foreign students who come here. Professor Herman noted that the Arts and Sciences definition is the broadest; in most of the other schools and colleges, experiential education is more narrowly defined.

Professor Sherwood asked if the committee had discussed the quintessential differences between capstone courses, honors projects, directed study, and the middler-writing requirement. It seems that one of the goals is that the capstone course be an assessment tool to measure the success of our curriculum goals. Professor Sherman replied that the committee had distinguished between the capstone course and other projects, but the essence of the capstone is to draw together the student's entire educational experience. He agreed that the capstone could and should be used as an assessment tool.

Professor Marshall did not understand replacing the present core curriculum. Professor Herman explained that the General Education requirement bears the same relationship to the Arts and Sciences core that ACE does.

In establishing institution-wide baselines, each college and unit will figure out the best mix, so that Arts and Sciences could say that its core curriculum at least partially meets the General Education requirement.

Professor Marshall encouraged thinking of more creative ways for students to have flexibility in piecing together their degrees.

Professor Lowndes commended the committee for its excellent report and on the components of General Education it outlined, adding that this is an opportunity to develop some new notions that were not considered during the semester conversion.

Professor Vaughn pointed out that Northeastern is less homogeneous than many other institutions, especially in skill levels, and this should be factored into the design of a curriculum without lowering the common denominator.

Professor Shafai noted that in the report, the capstone course description did not mention oral presentations, which would be complimentary to the writing component. Dean Zoloth responded that the value of the report is its dynamic interaction, and reminded Senators that committee members are looking forward to department responses.

Professor Sherman, in response to Professor Vaughn's earlier question, explained that the math department is trying to section students with advanced capacity into appropriate courses in a complex, evolving process.

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

Vote: PASSED, 31-1-0.

- V. **Graduate and Professional Student Government Association (GPSA) Proposal for a Common Activity Period for Graduate Students.** Professor Herman moved the following resolution, and the motion was seconded:

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate endorse the request by the Graduate and Professional Student Association to bar graduate as well as undergraduate courses from meeting during the Registrar-designated Student Activities Hours to permit graduate as well as undergraduate student activities to flourish on campus.

Professor Herman explained that graduate students have long found it difficult to get together because no common free time is set aside for their activities. The GPSA proposed that the two current activity periods for undergraduate students be made available to graduate students.

Dean Spieler was in favor of the concept but was not certain it could be done in the Law School without further investigation of scheduling needs.

Dean Moore thought logistical problems would also arise in the College of Business.

Professor Morrison had originally thought it outrageous that departments would schedule classes during activities periods. On reflection, he realized that many departments must schedule graduate classes at 4 p.m., which conflicts with a third of the Thursday afternoon activity period. Although he viewed the resolution as well-intentioned, he believed it would create difficulty for many. He added that carving out times of the day for meetings is not the national norm.

Professor Vaughn noted that, in Physics, most graduate students are teaching assistants and have to teach at widely varied times. They are also required to participate in research seminars on Wednesdays at noon, which is the only time available. He thought it should be up to departments to manage their own affairs in a way that is consistent with what their graduate students need.

Professor Sherwood thought the burden should be on the units to justify using this time period for courses. He suggested adding, "Units may apply to the Provost Office for exemptions from this policy on a case by case basis." This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

Professor Herman explained that, while he understood the complexities inherent in the resolution, it seemed to him that, in good faith, we have to make the effort.

Professor Peterfreund wondered if the focus should be on the Wednesday activity period and whether it might be better to get some sense of what is possible rather than voting the resolution up or down. He would prefer to see a resolution with some "teeth" in it.

Professor Ellis spoke in favor of both the resolution and the friendly amendment. Graduate students should not have teaching duties during activity periods because undergraduate courses are not supposed to be scheduled during those times. When faculty members teach graduate courses during activity hours, they are then not available these times when department, college or Senate meetings can be scheduled. The issue is also to have some specific times when large numbers of faculty can come together to govern their program and the University. This is nearly impossible to do without some specific hours when classes are not scheduled.

With respect to the friendly amendment, Vice Provost Falcon expressed concern on the issue of the Provost Office having to clear curriculum scheduling matters for dozens of departments; it would just add another layer of bureaucracy. To change the course schedules from the 4-6 and 6-8 o'clock class times that some graduate programs use would mean pushing those courses farther into the night. He recommended giving the matter more thought and suggested postponing the discussion.

Motion. Professor Onan moved to postpone, and the motion was seconded.

Professor Herman pointed out that the motion to postpone was debatable and required a majority vote.

Professor Lowndes urged that whoever studies the issue should have the intention to find a time, perhaps only one period, and not necessarily the activity periods that are flexible for undergraduates, so that graduate students can participate in their activities. He was convinced that some period of time could be found and designated for graduate students. He also recommended that postponement should be done with the intent of a positive outcome and not to kill the resolution.

Professor Kruger expressed concern that more than 95% of Bouvé graduate students take classes at 4 p.m. They do field-based internships until 3 p.m. and do not get back to campus until almost 4 p.m. While he favored the general idea, he urged further investigation as to the most appropriate time.

Professor Herman suggested postponing the discussion until the Graduate Council arrives at a recommendation for an activities period acceptable to both students and the graduate programs. He proposed, as a friendly amendment, that it be postponed to a time certain, with a request for the Graduate Council to do the research. Professor Onan did not accept the suggestion as a friendly amendment.

Professor Onan pointed out that, with so much happening at the end of the year, she would prefer real data-gathering to find a solution that would work for everyone concerned.

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

Vote on postponement: PASSED, 24-5-3.

Adjourned at 1:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles H. Ellis, Jr.

Secretary

Appendix: Table 2

FY03	<i>US News</i> Rankings: Universities ranked 50-100*	Northeastern University
Total # of Library volumes	2,795,500	984,443
# of PhDs awarded	213	93
Total # of Library volumes per FT FTE student	134	58
\$s spent on monographs	\$1,622,153	\$478,328**
\$s spent on monographs as % of total spent on Library materials	24.0%	11.7%
\$s spent on serials (incl. database subscriptions)	\$4,473,153	\$3,498,946
\$s spent on serials per FT FTE Student	\$214	\$207
\$s spent on Library materials per FT FTE student	\$323	\$241
\$s spent on Library salaries and wages	\$7,266,589	\$3,499,141
\$s spent on operating costs	\$2,005,502	\$524,545
Total Library expenditure	\$16,124,386	\$8,259,774

* More precisely, the 51 of the 56 institutions ranked between 50 and 98= in the 2005 *US News* ranking for which data were available.

** Of this total, \$271,161 was spent on maintaining standing orders to systematic treatises, handbooks, collected works, etc., and \$81,117 was spent from gifted and endowed funds restricted to use in specific subject areas, leaving \$126,050 for use in discretionary purchasing of books, satisfying student and faculty requests, etc.