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## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 01/17/2007

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*Northeastern University*

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TO: FACULTY SENATE  
FROM: STUART S. PETERFREUND, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE  
RE: MINUTES, 2006-07 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 17 JANUARY

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Present: (Professors) Alper, Bosso, Cokely, Fox, Hall, Gilbert, Glod, Hafner, Herman, Hill, Janikian, Kane, Krishnamoorthy, Marshall, Meador, Metghalchi, Peterfreund, Reynolds, Robinson Wood, Sanchez, Sherman, Touran, Wallin, Willey, Zarembo

(Administrators) Abdelal, Falcon, Finkelstein, Moore, Sridhar, Stellar, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Bruns, Daynard, Hansberry, McKnight, Reucroft, Starr, Strauss, Welch  
(Administrators) Hopey, Onan

Provost Abdelal convened the meeting at 11:55 AM.

I. The minutes of 13 December were accepted as posted.

II. **SAC Report.** Professor Glod reported that the Senate Agenda Committee met twice in regular session and once with the Provost since the last Senate meeting. The SAC continues its attempt to schedule the first "Life of the Mind" lecture which had been arranged for 31 January but must be cancelled due to scheduling difficulties.

III. **Provost's Report.** Provost Abdelal distributed "Efforts in Graduate Recruitment and Financial Aid" which was written by Vice Provost Falcon to summarize strategies undertaken in that area. The last three years of investment in graduate student recruitment yielded an increase in applications for both masters and doctoral programs. Tuition discounts average 25% in the form of scholarships offered to applicants to professional masters programs. There are approximately 500 graduate teaching assistants who normally received a tuition waiver of up to twelve credit hours.

The Provost also distributed a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article entitled "A New Standard for Measuring Doctoral Programs" with accompanying data. This new approach has no reputational component. Rather, it is a quantitative measurement of faculty productivity for each doctoral program which could gain impact in the future. The Provost noted that in terms of research productivity, Northeastern University faculty ranked sixth in pharmaceutical sciences and medicinal chemistry, eighth in educational counseling, and fourteenth in the humanities. Further information is available at the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website.

Professor Herman pointed out that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website uses the term "controversial" and discusses four methods, this being the most quantitative and interesting.

Dean Finkelstein noted the importance of being able to generate this report yearly rather than waiting 12-15 years for ratings.

The Senate continued discussion of this report, noting that there is no measure of student productivity being done and noting, as well, the problem of measuring interdisciplinary research.

IV. The Provost opened the floor to questions.

In response to a request for clarification of the academic schedule during inauguration week, the following was offered: on Monday, 26 March, classes are suspended between 9:15 AM – 1:35 PM. On Friday, 30 March, a Monday schedule will be followed to mitigate the effect of three Monday holidays in the spring. The information will be shown on the Registrar's calendar.

Professor Fox asked when merit recommendations are due in the Provost's Office. Provost Abdelal indicated that a schedule has not been developed yet but that it will be communicated to the Deans when it has.

Professor Herman asked Provost Abdelal to comment on recent changes at the School of General Studies. The Provost reminded the Senate that the School of General Studies typically enrolls students who are undecided on their choice of colleges or whose application does not meet the standard of the colleges. Students who successfully complete the freshman year then transfer to one of the colleges. As the majority of courses offered through General Studies have been Arts & Sciences, beginning with fall 2007 the School will be relocated into the College of Arts & Sciences as a Program of General Studies where advising and mentoring will continue to be provided. Professor Herman added that students who wish to track out of CAS into, say, CBA or Bouvé, will continue to do so and will continue, too, to benefit from the freshman year learning community concept as well as from development of study skills.

In response to a question from Professor Hall, the Provost confirmed that this change did not come before the Faculty Senate as it is an administrative reorganization. Professor Peterfreund added that historically, such administrative reorganizations have not been the purview of the Senate.

Professor Hall then asked if the 140± General Studies' students are factored into NEU mean SAT scores for entering classes and if they are eligible for financial aid. The answer to both inquires was 'yes'.

V. Proposed Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science. Professor Hill moved the following resolution and it was seconded.

**BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science in the College of Arts and Sciences as approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee on December 14, 2006, with concomitant suspension of the B.S. in Geology, B.S. in Environmental Geology and B.A. in Earth Science (as previously approved by the CAS Council).**

Referring to the materials provided, Professor Hill explained that the course offerings build upon existing agreements and respond to incoming students' interests while providing the necessary background for future concentration in a variety of disciplines. He noted that if the proposal is approved, three existing majors in CAS will be suspended—the BS in Geology, the BS in Environmental Geology, and the BA in Earth Science.

Professor Willey suggested that an Engineering concentration be considered as well.

Professor Peterfreund offered clarification that, at this time, the Senate will vote only to approve or not approve the program itself. Program suspension is another matter altogether. Professor Herman then explained that program suspensions do not require Senate action and the CAS Council linked the new program with the suspensions so that the current Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences is not put into the position of suspending programs prior to receiving approval for the proposal. He further explained that suspensions pass from the department to the college, from the college to the UUCC, and on to the Senate Agenda Committee which may or may not bring them to the floor of the Senate, at its discretion.

It was noted that the proposal would come before the Board of Trustees this spring.

There being no further debate, the Senate moved to a vote.

Vote to approve the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science, PASSED: 29-0-0.

VI. Proposed Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. Professor Hill read the following resolution and it was seconded:

**BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences as approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee on December 14, 2006.**

The floor was yielded to Professor Setta, Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, who noted that the goal of the field of religious studies has been to educate students in belief systems different from their own and that introducing the major at Northeastern University has been a goal for a very long time. Responding to questions, Professor Setta counted three full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty and one full-time lecturer in religious studies within the department, as well as a contingent of faculty throughout the University whose courses lend themselves to inclusion. There are also five full-time faculty members teaching Philosophy. Professor Hall noted his own course, called "Religion in the African Diaspora".

There being no further questions or discussion, the Senate moved to a vote.

Vote to approve the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Students, PASSED: 30-0-0.

VII. Report on Strategic Planning. Chief Planning Officer Putnam noted that the planning process has proceeded more quickly than originally envisioned primarily due to the upcoming reaccreditation process and President Aoun's assessment that, in order to enter a self-study, the University's plan needs to be defined. The strategic plan is intended to be completed for approval by the Board of Trustees on 8 June 2007. The focus is on producing an academic initiative that will drive all other planning efforts, thus making academic priorities central to the plan. Planning teams consist of faculty and academic administration personnel and have been meeting actively in order to submit their reports by the end of February.

Provost Abdelal explained that an important aspect of this process is defining Northeastern's mission which encompasses how we see ourselves and how the board formally sees the University. How we see ourselves in terms of undergraduate and graduate education, research, student life and all the many other sectors, is important individually but another way of looking at this is to ask what makes Northeastern University unique and how can we build on that to achieve excellence and national and international recognition. Rather than taking each of these sectors individually, the academic planning process focuses on four themes: Urban & Global Dimensions; Experiential Learning Dimensions; Fundamental/Translational Research Dimensions; and Creative, Aesthetic & Ethical Dimensions. The Urban & Global Dimensions theme encompasses our urban campus and its interaction with the global environment. Experiential learning is a Northeastern hallmark the theme of which encompasses all creative opportunities that have been developed within the various colleges. Fundamental scholarship and research has been coupled with the idea of the translation, or application, of research which could be distinctive for Northeastern. Each theme suggests potential areas of inquiry and forums will continue to be offered for anyone wishing to contribute and discuss the various aspects.

Mr. Putnam described the beginnings of the process where he, the Provost and President Aoun walked the campus and thought about the approach in broad terms. Subsequently, discussions with the senior leadership team, the long-range planning committee, and the Board of Trustees took

place, as well as consultation with Mr. Lloyd Armstrong, an emeritus of USC who had developed several plans during his tenure as Provost. He has provided useful ways to approach some of the conceptual and organizational issues. An overall steering committee consisting of faculty, administrators, students, and others was then formed to oversee the process. And finally, the four thematic teams were formed which will be sponsoring a number of events for input. These will include persons from off campus to challenge our thinking in these areas. Open forums for all members of the campus community will also be held, ideally following the open forums. The reports generated by the thematic teams at the end of February will enable the steering committee to develop the strategic plan that will be presented to the Board. At the same time, a task force will work on the various implications for implementation. A website has been created where the various teams will post materials and the campus community can post comments.

The floor was then opened to questions. Professor Herman expressed concern that, in the several meetings he has attended, there appears to be a piece missing on synergy where some group would review the materials from the thematic teams and work on potential synergies to present to the steering committee. He urged that something formal be considered to enable this. Professor Peterfreund offered that this is happening to a great extent at the links on line.

Professor Fox suggested several additional areas of inquiry—education reform, public safety & security, human rights & justice—for inclusion and suggested, too, that bullets should not be used in the mission statement. Professor Meador noted that the draft mission statement does not include the words “teaching” or “instruction”, as does the old mission statement, and emphasized its importance. Both the Provost and Mr. Putnam urged Senate members to use the website for comments, noting that it has been a very successful way of gathering input.

Professor Peterfreund reminded the Senate that a strategic plan means setting priorities and goals and finding initiatives that will lead to those goals. It means choosing a direction and, while not treating with disrespect the full range of Northeastern University’s activities, there is no need to mention everyone and everything in the plan. Discussion ensued on the various aspects of the themes, the mission statement, and the former “Highway Project”. Provost Abdelal pointed out that Northeastern University aspires to be a national and internationally recognized research university and again urged Senate members to use the website to voice their input.

The meeting adjourned at 1:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart S. Peterfreund, Secretary  
Faculty Senate