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Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 10/17/2007

Sharon M. Bruns
Northeastern University

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TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: SHARON M. BRUNS, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
RE: MINUTES, 2007-08 FACULTY SENATE MEETING, 17 OCTOBER

Present: (Professors) Bosso, Bruns, Chilvers, Cokely, Daynard, Fox, Galligan, Gilbert, Glod, Hall, Herman, Hill, Jackson, Kane, Lewis, Massey, McKnight, Morrison, Portz, Reucroft, Robinson-Wood, Sanchez, Sherman, Starr, Tolley, Touran, Waszczak, Welch, Zaremba
(Administrators) Abdelal, Falcon, Greene, Hopey, Loeffelholz, Moore, Powers-Lee, Stellar, Zoloth

Absent: (Professors) Hafner
(Administrators) Luzzi

Provost Abdelal convened the meeting at 11:53 AM.

I. The minutes of 19 September and 3 October were accepted as posted.

II. SAC report. Professor Glod reported the following:

- SAC has met two times in regular session.
- A Graduate Certificate in Cultural Arts Administration in the School of Professional and Continuing Studies was approved by the Graduate Council.
- SAC, in consultation with the President, has staffed the Provost Search Committee with 11 members consisting of seven faculty, two students, one Dean, and one Trustee. Professor Glod extended gratitude on behalf of the SAC to all involved. Members are:
 - Donna M. Bishop, Professor, College of Criminal Justice (Committee Chair)
 - Margot Botsford, Associate Justice, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court; Northeastern University Board of Trustees
 - Agnes H. Chan, Professor, Associate Dean, Director of Graduate Programs, College of Computer & Information Science
 - James R. Hackney, Professor, School of Law
 - Stephen Lavenberg, Student Government Association
 - Karin N. Lifter, Professor, Counseling and Applied Psychology
 - David E. Luzzi, Dean, College of Engineering
 - Joanne L. Miller, Professor, Psychology (Vice Chair)
 - Tina Penman, Graduate Student Representative
 - Carey M. Rappaport, Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering
 - David Sherman, Professor, Accounting

III. Having no report, the Provost moved to Questions.

Professor Bruns requested clarification of statistics in a pamphlet distributed at the President's Town Meeting. Specifically, she wanted to know how the figure "28% students of color" was defined, since it seems extraordinarily high. She also asked whether the 60% increase in total fundraising number included the large Silevitch gift and, if so, how much.

Provost Abdelal said that the 28% included all underrepresented minority students, but will need to determine if international students are included. He will check on the way this number was determined. As to fundraising, he explained that there are complex rules regarding when gifts can be recognized by the university. He noted that he believed that \$8 million of that particular gift was part of the increase in fundraising, out of a total increase of \$16 million.

Professor Hall noted that the percent of students of color varies according to who is producing the report and that, in previous years, the Northeastern University Annual Report included international students.

IV. Mid-Tenure Review Guidelines. This resolution remains in debate from the meeting of 3 October.

BE IT RESOLVED That the Annual Progress-Toward-Tenure Review guidelines approved by the Faculty Senate on 14 April 2003 (30-0-1) be amended as proposed by the Office of the Provost.

Professor Morrison again urged flexibility by retaining the wording in the current guidelines. He noted that the rationale provided for the present guidelines was to give candidates more time to get on course because departments had been told that they were required to judge tenure-track faculty as falling into one of three categories. Those categories are (1) on an appropriate course toward tenure; (2) needing to concentrate efforts in certain areas in order to be on track for tenure; and (3) not making sufficient progress toward tenure. Should the probationary faculty member be in the third category, he/she would receive a one-year terminal contract. If in the second category, one-year contracts would be issued conditional on meeting benchmarks.

Professor Herman reminded the Senate that flexibility was originally built in for space concerns, specifically allowing scientists whose labs were delayed to delay their tenure clocks. The Provost noted that, in practice, when a delay in providing appropriate research facilities is experienced, the Dean requests a tenure clock delay, and his office has always granted them.

Professor Zaremba questioned the timing of the guidelines if passed. For example, would they take effect immediately or could current tenure-track faculty assume that guidelines in place upon being hired would prevail? Could there be a one-year delay in implementation?

The Provost indicated that the Senate could clarify timing issues when voting on the resolution. He then focused on the need for a formative review and suggested that redefinition of the third year review and its goals should probably be undertaken, since the current definition is ten years old. He indicated that he had been unaware of the guidelines requiring categorization of faculty in the three categories mentioned earlier. Assuming that the goal is formative input to strengthen the faculty member's dossier prior to the tenure review, he suggested that perhaps this motion should be withdrawn and combined with a more comprehensive revision of the mid-tenure review process..

Senate members offered accounts of their own departmental practices whereupon Provost Abdelal noted that departmental manuals should be reviewed and revised for consistency.

Professor Glod noted that special circumstances in cases of clinical health sciences research require more time because of human subjects review issues and accessing clinical sites. She reminded her colleagues that the tenure-clock delay policy has not been approved. She also noted that there was some suggestion that this resolution be withdrawn to be studied further by the Office of the Provost and SAC.

A motion to withdraw the resolution was accepted by Vice Provost Powers-Lee and Professor Morrison. There being no objection, the motion was withdrawn.

V. 2006-07 Senate Committee for Academic Policy (APC) final report and resolutions. Professor Hill read the following resolution and it was seconded.

APC Resolution #1

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate accept the final report of the 2006-07 Academic Policy Committee.

Professor Hill explained the charge to the APC regarding academic honesty, noting that the University provides a modestly prescriptive statement about how to deal with cheating incidents, but that there are no general or formally promulgated guidelines to assist faculty who are confronted with incidents of cheating and plagiarism. The APC looked at policies at other universities. There appear to be large variations in the extent to which universities deal with academic dishonesty issues. Some universities such as Northwestern provide great detail in their guidelines; many others much less. The major issue involved with the following resolutions is whether or not NU should develop formal guidelines or continue to have an informal system whereby faculty are pretty much on their own in terms of dealing with individual issues of academic dishonesty. The APC also asked for a summary from the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR), which showed that of 3,000 complaints handled by that office between September 2005 and May 2006, approximately 32 were from faculty. (It was assumed that the remainder involved non-academic issues such as student conduct.) Of those 32 incidents, students were found responsible in 30 cases.

The APC was also charged to investigate the current state of affairs of students for whom English is not their first language. Prof. Hill noted that neither the International Student and Scholar Institute (ISSI) nor Dean's Office Advisors reported systemic problems when English is not the first language of students. It appears that the variation in grades within ESL students approximates the variation in non-ESL students, even though some ESL students certainly have problems.

There being no objection, the Senate moved to vote on Resolution #1.

VOTE to accept the report of the 2006-07 Academic Policy Committee: PASSED, 34-0-1

The following was moved by Professor Hill. Professor Herman seconded.

APC Resolution #2.

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate approve the recommendation of the 2006-07 Academic Standing Committee to expand upon the recently amended Student Government Association's Academic Integrity Policy, to include a more comprehensive statement about faculty options and institutional responsibilities, along the lines of Northwestern University's and/or The Pennsylvania State University's statements

In response to several questions, Professor Hill affirmed that voting in favor of this resolution would only be a statement that NU *should have* a more comprehensive policy concerning actions faculty could take when academic integrity is a question. A favorable vote would be followed by a study of possible policies and options and lead to resolutions which would be voted upon in the Senate. Prof. Hill also agreed that the low referral rate [to OSCCR] is probably due to the desire of faculty to deal personally with academic honesty issues rather than enter the university system. There was discussion that referral to OSCCR can entail a high-profile punishment which may have the potential to follow the student after he or she leaves NU.

There being no objection, the Senate moved to vote on Resolution #2.

VOTE to draft a more comprehensive statement regarding faculty options and institutional responsibilities involving academic integrity: PASSED, 30-2-1

Professor Hill moved the following and it was seconded:

APC Resolution #3

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate approve the recommendation of the 2006-07 Academic Standing Committee to establish a consistent university-wide reporting mechanism for all instances of academic integrity violations, including cases that are settled between a faculty member and a student directly as well as cases that faculty refer to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

Professor Herman noted the importance of a centralized reporting mechanism to track behavioral patterns of the few students who are multiple-offenders.. He stressed that any record-keeping systems evolving from this resolution should be subject to the same privacy parameters currently established at OSCCR.

The Senate embarked on a lengthy debate concerning issues of privacy, added bureaucracy, and the possibility of information such as this being used elsewhere and for other reasons. One point that was noted was that a first offense for cheating/plagiarism had often been dealt with by "suspending" the sentence of the student, meaning that university sanctions usually gave the student a second chance after an initial offense, even though the student suffered a failing grade/paper/exam in the class where the offense occurred.

Prof. Loeffelholz noted that the English Department had always had predictable problems with plagiarism. She stated that it was important for the instructor to have discretion over punishments and that a "suspended sentence" is usually appropriate, but that we needed to draw a line between those who make a mistake and those who are perpetual offenders.

Professor Waszczak related that Pharmacy had implemented a reporting system where instances of suspected and known cheating incidents are filed in the Dean's Office with the student's being informed of the filing of a report. Faculty members do not have access to this file. She explained that most faculty members handle issues of academic integrity independently and added that students had requested this process because of repeated integrity violations on the part of some students. Later in the discussion, Provost Abdelal noted that this reporting system was problematic in that it did not follow established handbook procedures.

In an attempt to move the discussion away from the Pharmacy policy to the general issues, Professor Herman stated that the proposed reporting system would only include instances where the professor and student had agreed upon resolutions to the cheating/plagiarism issues and would not include instances where the faculty member suspected integrity issues but could not prove them or achieve resolution with the student. He noted that a reporting system would be a means of helping those students who did not engage in intellectual dishonesty. He further noted that the details of the process can be worked out carefully, as in OSCCR where confidentiality is maintained by administration and students.

Professor Daynard suggested that the resolution state that documents be destroyed upon graduation to address any problems of warrants or other requests for information.

The Senate discussed the seriousness of the problem of cheating and the need for some centralized office to be aware of repeat offenders, the enormity of the undertaking, and whether faculty would comply once a system was implemented. Professor McKnight was very disturbed by the idea that we could exhibit any tolerance of academic dishonesty. He indicated that it would be very corrosive to any university to exhibit a tolerance for academic dishonesty, and this tolerance would be antithetical to academic achievement. A presumption that all students are honest is lofty but, when they are not, allowing repeat offenders to continue renders teaching meaningless. He cited the resolution as reasonable. Several Senators agreed. Professor Hall cited recent statistics indicating that 63-65% of high school students admitted to cheating and suggested that issues such as plagiarism be discussed at orientation in order to establish a university standard of academic honesty.

Dean Greene maintained that faculty members need to preserve strong discretion in handling cheating issues in their classes. He warned about the difficulty in balancing the severity of the offence with the punishment. He hoped that we could build a culture that taught students to value academic integrity versus than to push a culture of surveillance. Dean Hopey reiterated his opinion that a tracking system will not solve the problem of cheating.

Professor Hill reminded the Senate that the intent of the resolution is to guard against what is a subset of students whose grades are obtained by cheating and who are not presently tracked by the University. It is meant to address those acts that have been adjudicated by OSCCR or by the faculty member, not with reporting suspicions of possible violations of academic integrity.

Several Senators noted the persuasiveness of both sides of the debate. Professor Hill clarified that this resolution requests that a committee be charged to address the issue and to make recommendations to the Senate. Possible implementation details would be discussed by that committee.

The Senate adjourned at 1:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Bruns, Secretary
Faculty Senate