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Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 11/04/2009

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Northeastern University
Office of the Faculty Senate

TO: 2009-2010 FACULTY SENATE
FROM: STEPHEN W. MCKNIGHT, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
RE: MINUTES, 4 NOVEMBER 2009

Present: (Professors) Alverson, Balachandra, Board, Chilvers, Daynard, Gaffney, Goodale, Hafner, Herman, Karma, Kruger, Lifter, McKnight, Mierelles, Morrison, Mourant, Muftu, Podlaha-Murphy, Portz, Price, Rosengaus, Ross, D. Sherman, T. Sherman,

(Administrators) Director, Finkelstein, Loeffelholz, Moore, Powers-Lee, Ronkin, Spieler, Zoloth

Absent (Professors) Alshawbkeh, Born, De Ritis, Gatley, Sherwood, Thrush

(Administrators) Falcon, Luzzi

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:50 AM

- I. The minutes of 21 October 2009 were approved as written.
- II. Professor Morrison reported that SAC has met twice in regular session since the last Senate meeting. The following Senate resolution has been returned as noted:
 - Resolution #0910-02—Proposal to Restructure CAS and CCJ: Returned by the Provost “Informational only” w/comment: “I appreciate the Senate’s effort and support.”

The following Senate committee has been staffed and charged:
2009-10 Senate Special Ad Hoc Committee on Scholarly Communication and Publication

Members:

Professor James Fox, Chair (College of Criminal Justice)
Hillary Corbett, Scholarly Research (Libraries)
Robert Futrelle (CIS)
Elham Ghabbour, Senior Environmental Health & Safety Specialist
Sarah Hooke Lee, Librarian (Law)
Vice Provost Mary Loeffelholz
Professor Robert F. Young (Marketing-CBA)

Charge:

- Review the state of scholarly communication and publishing at Northeastern with the intent to make recommendations regarding the infrastructure at the University that supports the dissemination of scholarly research by its faculty;
 - Define the policies and procedures necessary to implement effectively the deposit requirements of the 2009 resolution regarding the University digital archive IRis;
 - Review the role of the University in the University Press of New England consortium and make recommendations for its future role.
- III. Provost Director reported the formation of various restructuring task forces and their membership which may be found on the Provost’s website. Task Force reports are expected sometime during December/January. In addition, the three Deans Search Committees have met at least once and search firms have been hired.

IV. The floor was opened to questions.

Professor Karma noted that a new director of the Division of Sponsored Project Administration (DSPA) was recently hired and wondered if he had missed a university-wide announcement about this from the Provost's Office. The Provost confirmed that Vice Provost Blank had hired Deborah Grupp-Patruz as the Director of Research Administration and Finance (which replaces DSPA). He was uncertain whether an announcement had been made to the NU community.

V. President Aoun.

The President began by stating that the economic downturn is putting all higher education institutions under stress, particularly endowment-rich and state institutions. "Business as usual" is not an option: universities must create innovative programs to attract students and justify tuition expenses. In spite of the difficult economic environment, Northeastern is recruiting 53 faculty this year. Northeastern University must work to continue to attract excellent students as the competition to do so is becoming intense. There is a focus on urgency and quality both in securing the best students and the best faculty. Current faculty are agents for accomplishing both. Quality at Northeastern is not negotiable.

The President opened the floor to discussion.

Professor Karma inquired whether the current ranking in *U.S. News and World Reports* can be improved, whether it is important that it be improved and, if so, what areas should be targeted for improvement.

President Aoun noted that rankings cannot capture Northeastern University, a comprehensive research institution. *USN&WR* places a heavy weight on SAT scores and other undergraduate criteria, and it is not possible to reduce NU to one area exclusive of the important areas of graduate education, research, and scholarship. NU ranks in the top 50 in terms of SAT scores and continues focus on improving retention and graduation rates above the current 80%. Therefore, NU will offer both a first-rate education with Coop and high graduation rates. This is not only essential for the health of the institution but for bottom line as well. Students are increasingly interested in global engagement, research, and Co-op which plays to Northeastern's strengths and new focus areas. Northeastern is one of the few universities in the country presently recruiting large numbers of faculty. The focus is on quality at all levels.

To Professor Muftu's question concerning whether there would be focus on recruiting high caliber graduate students the President noted that masters' programs have shifted to being more akin to an additional undergraduate degree with the exception of terminal programs such as the MBA. "Plus One" programs are essential as students wish to continue longer at university but also obtain a higher degree as are expanded on-line MS programs. The university has had a strong response to the "Double-Husky Program" that offers a tuition discount to recent graduates who return for an MS degree. The goal should be to increase masters' offerings which are innovative, flexible, and interdisciplinary to appeal to students.

Ph.D. programs attract students looking to work in a specific environment/domain and NU's programs must be distinctive in order to compete. Several themes (health, sustainability, and security) have been identified for development which includes the hiring of quality faculty.

Professor Muftu also requested information concerning upcoming capital projects. The President responded that there is a need for research labs and classrooms. Non-academic operations have been moved to the campus periphery to free up campus space to address some of those needs. Under the upcoming hybrid management system, Deans will have the primary role in identifying space needs.

Professor Goodale noted that the rapid increase in the quality of students has caused some criticism that classes are not challenging enough. President Aoun responded that the quality of the classes is in

the hands of the faculty. Courses must be challenging and innovative and represent what is exciting in the various fields and in the world.

Professor Mourant noted some very large classes in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering graduate programs which present difficulties for the instructor and affect the quality of education. The Professor has spoken to his chair, as advised by the Provost, but did not receive a response.

The President noted that NU has taken steps in the past several years to reduce class size by adding classrooms. He suggested, however, that faculty rethink course delivery and allow students the flexibility to complete the coursework any time they wish through "hybrid delivery," a combination of classroom and on-line resources. Curriculum issues such as this are in the hands of the faculty, chairs, and deans.

Professor Karma also noted that the increase in enrollment at COE had put stress on faculty and suggested that the number of faculty hires has not kept abreast. President Aoun responded that not all of last year's searches were filled including several in Engineering, which reflects the ongoing search for excellence.

President Aoun suggested that faculty offer ideas for initiatives and opportunities on which to capitalize. To the question of where those ideas should come from, the President offered that younger faculty colleagues should become involved in the life of the University to infuse innovation. As well, faculty colleagues, chairs, and deans can all foster and contribute ideas.

The University is focused on preparing students for life and their education must be diverse and rich at all levels; good ideas must be fostered and executed.

Professor Lifter noted the dilemma of encouraging tenure-track faculty to participate while at the same time protecting their time in their quest for tenure. She noted, too, that tenured faculty members have more freedom to speak. The President responded that the burden of new courses is often times placed on tenure-track faculty and that a culture, beginning in departments, must be fostered wherein probationary faculty spend ten percent of their time on service. They could be encouraged to take part in interdisciplinary endeavors and in departmental brain-storming sessions.

To Professor Portz's observation that there needs to be balance between interdisciplinary courses and the need for core disciplines within the limitations of budget resources, President Aoun responded enthusiastically that this balance is in the hands of faculty. Interdisciplinary areas of today will be the core disciplines tomorrow. The faculty members are the ones who can redefine and constantly evolve the disciplines and the balance between core and non-core courses.

The Senate thanked the President for his interaction and adjourned at 12:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. McKnight, Secretary
Faculty Senate