

December 16, 2009

Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 12/16/2009

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Recommended Citation

McKnight, Stephen W., "Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 12/16/2009" (2009). *Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes*. Paper 112.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20000102>

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Northeastern University
Office of the Faculty Senate

TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: STEPHEN W. MCKNIGHT, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE
RE: MINUTES, 2009-10 FACULTY SENATE, 16 DECEMBER 2009

Present: (Professors) Alshawbkeh, Board, Daynard, De Ritis, Gaffney, Gatley, Goodale, Herman, Karma, Kruger, Lifter, McKnight, Mierelles, Morrison, Mourant, Podlaha-Murphy, Portz, Price, Rosengaus, Ross, D. Sherman, T. Sherman, Thrush

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

Absent (Professors) Alverson, Balachandra, Born, Chilvers, Hafner, Muftu, Sherwood,

(Administrators) Moore

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:51 AM

- I. The minutes of 2 December were approved as amended.
- II. Professor Morrison reported that SAC had met twice and that the 13 January Senate meeting is cancelled. The next Senate meeting is 27 January in Raytheon..
- III. Provost Director reported that the news media has misreported the four-year Coop which is not a replacement for the five-year Coop, as reported, but rather another option for students. Faculty members are developing the changes required and it will take several years of work. The intent is that the option be made available to incoming freshmen but it is not ready for current students. There has also been misunderstanding as to online course offerings which are meant to be one possible choice to meet requirements and not the only option.

The Provost also reported that recent data shows an overall growth in graduate enrollments by nearly 70% from 2006 to 2009 in professional masters degree programs; a 42% increase in masters' programs; a 200% increase in the professional doctorate nursing program; and a 23% increase in Ph.D. enrollments.

There were 53 faculty searches at beginning of the academic year of which nine have been completed to date including several senior hires. Forty-four others remain in progress.

Northeastern's stated goal is to reach \$65M in externally sponsored research. In the fiscal year through October, new grants and contracts have increased approximately 48%.

Expenditures are \$27.1M compared to \$24.6M last year with the expectation that these will increase significantly in the spring 2010 term as new faculty hires are completed.

- IV. The floor was opened to questions.

Professor Gaffney requested an update on the task forces for restructuring. The Provost responded that he has received four reports thus far from the Communication Studies

Department task force and those of the Department of Education, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Undeclared Majors. These will be disseminated following review by the Provost's Office.

- V. Professor Price read the following motion from the Senate Committee on Financial Affairs and it was seconded.

WHEREAS the academic units have long-standing merit and equity processes that are overseen by the deans and the Provost's Office and that reward faculty differentially based on performance.

BE IT RESOLVED That the processes for the distribution of merit and equity outlined in the *University Faculty Handbook* be followed until such time as an evaluation of its merits and faults can be undertaken by the faculty and administration and a new process agreed to.

Professor Kruger spoke in favor of the motion and to its importance noting that the procedure employed this past year is not the procedure approved by faculty in the Faculty Handbook and is neither a merit nor equity process but a third procedure altogether. If the currently approved process needs to be revisited, there is a course of action through the Faculty Senate. While being mindful of the current financial conditions and knowing that many universities had no raise pool, these are not justification for not following the accepted procedure written in the Faculty Handbook. The Faculty Handbook codifies the faculty relationship with administration and should not be undermined.

Professor Thrush understood the procedure employed to be an equity process which was valuable and does not appear to be a radical departure from the approved method.

Professor Portz noted that in the past faculty have received a merit increase with or without equity consideration but never merely equity. And while the process has varied, there is typically some review of matchmates for equity consideration. The process employed this year was a "targeted raise" and implicated judgment on merit but did not follow established procedures.

Professor Thrush countered that one could view the process employed this year as one where there was zero percent for the merit pool and two percent in the equity pool. He opined that the process provided greater freedom to reward faculty with retention in mind. Professor Daynard noted disconnection between the broader financial crisis and apportionment between the two pools. These are separate issues—whereas the current financial crisis speaks to whether there should be a pool at all, how a pool is distributed is another issue. Harvard recently announced a modest raise pool to be allocated according to previously agreed-upon procedures.

Professor Price reminded the Senate that the Financial Affairs Committee was given a charge and the recommendations before the Senate today resulted from that charge. The resolution before the Senate honors what is in the Faculty Handbook.

In response to Professor Karma's question the floor recognized Professor Pantalone, Chair of the Senate Committee on Financial Affairs, who explained that the Faculty Handbook refers specifically to merit increases and equity adjustments for a variety of reasons. Equity adjustments have been known by a variety of names.

Vice Provost Loeffelholz noted that there is currently a requirement whereby departmental processes be vetted by the appropriate dean and by the Provost prior to implementation and cautioned that the processes being followed in units may not all have been vetted at the Provost level.

Professor Gatley asked if the Faculty Handbook wasn't a contract between the University and faculty and suggested that, if it is not, any section of the Handbook may be ignored.

To this the Provost responded that if one took the interpretation suggested by Professor Thrush, the process was followed and fits within procedure.

Professor Kruger reported that it was not clear what, if any category [merit and/or equity] was used at all. If it was an equity increase, faculty members have the right to a matchmate analysis. In addition, any faculty member, chair, or dean may request equity consideration. There was much ambiguity.

The Provost countered that the process employed was discussed at two Senate Agenda Committee meetings where Professor Kruger was present and that SAC made suggestions that were taken into consideration. Professor Kruger reiterated that there had never been clear intention of whether the process was merit, equity, or something altogether different and, if the latter, it should have come before the Senate.

Professor Board supported this notion by stating that faculty members at the School of Nursing were uninformed and unclear about the process employed. Neither strategic increases nor targeted increases are mentioned in the Faculty Handbook. Was it a merit increase or an equity increase and, if the latter, how was consideration made? She stated her strong support of this resolution.

Professor Herman noted that the Senate discussed the economic circumstances last spring and had approved a resolution that specifically accepted a special process for this year only. Such one-time acceptance does not abrogate the Faculty Handbook. Professor Herman indicated support of this resolution.

Provost Director reiterated that some individual units have been using processes which have not been approved by the Provost. As well, the move to the hybrid budget model will provide more discretion within units as to how raises will be distributed and the Senate will need to consider how future Financial Affairs Committees will approach their charge. He has discussed with the Chair of SAC how to best go about undertaking a review of current procedures. The Provost noted that, ultimately, the Board of Trustees makes the decision about what becomes implemented.

Professor Daynard concurred that the motion is intended to be forward-looking rather than a criticism of this year's process. It is important to restate that, as the hybrid model is instituted, we must proceed under the current agreed-upon procedure until such time as another is agreed upon.

Professor Kruger commented that he did not recall a motion passed last year as described by Professor Herman. He concurred, however, with the importance of moving forward and noted that any consideration of procedural change must be in partnership.

Professor Lifter stated her pleasure in the funding provided this year but noted that more communication about criteria would have been helpful.

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, 31-0-0

VI. Professor Price read the following and it was seconded:

BE IT RESOLVED That the merit raise pool for faculty in FY2011 be set at 3% with actual increases for individual faculty determined by merit. The Committee recommends that an additional 1% be set aside for equity adjustments as needed.

Citing page seven of the FAC report for rationale, Professor Price recognized Professor Pantalone who explained that the FAC had considered inflation rates, peer institutions, and the most recent matchmate study (2007-8). While NU still faces challenges, enrollment is strong. Therefore the FAC regards this recommendation as reasonable request.

Provost Director requested the ability to further clarify the state of the University and recognized Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance McCarthy.

Senior Vice President McCarthy reported that the endowment fund has rebounded well with a significant portion remaining liquid. However, the University remains vulnerable and recovery is far from comfortable. While the tone of the FAC report is somewhat optimistic, there are many factors for consideration and some caution is needed when looking ahead.

The Senate concurred wholeheartedly with Professor Kruger that the Senior Vice President is an asset to the University.

Provost Director then shared average faculty salaries at Boston-area institutions from the most recent AAUP survey, pointing out the favorable change in NU salaries over the past ten years. The study shows institution-wide salaries rather than salaries by unit, however NU salaries are encouraging.

A broader look at aspirant institutions also shows favorable gains but the University must remain competitive. The Provost then showed the fiscal year 2008 distribution of raises in four unnamed departments and noted that a better job must be made for the appropriate distribution of rewards in some departments.

Professor Pantalone pointed out that FAC reviewed average salaries of comparable institutions but did not include the data because of the wide margin of disparity. We need to get back to the concept of matchmate institutions for salary comparisons.

As to Professor Daynard's question whether there is a number that the Provost would find more appropriate or realistic, the Provost responded that the current interpretation of two 'buckets' may not be the best. The University has made no decision on proceeds from the endowment for 2011 and is still mulling what tuition increase may be acceptable. The freshman to sophomore retention rate dropped from 93-91% due to financial priorities so it is not a good time to speculate whether the proposal is reasonable.

Senior Vice President McCarthy was recognized and described the budget process and timing as follows: Faculty Senate and student input is gathered prior to submission of the first draft of the 2011 budget to the Financial Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees on 8 January. A working model has been prepared but requires further input. The Budget Committee will meet again with the Financial Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees in late February with further recommendations. At the same time, the Budget Committee will continue to gather information

generated by the financial climate and tuition increases by other institutions and will meet finally with the full Board of Trustees in early March. The Board will provide approval by 12 March.

Vote: PASSED, 27-0-1

VII. Professor Price read the following and it was seconded:

WHEREAS the last matchmate salary study was undertaken with 2007-08 data and with the University's improved ranking, it is likely that its peer and aspirant groups have changed.

BE IT RESOLVED That the University update the Faculty Matchmate Salary Study, taking the opportunity to revisit the list of peer and aspirant schools and that deans and faculty should be involved in recommending matchmate universities

The Provost noted that he has been soliciting matchmate information from the Deans. It is an ongoing process whereby individual units will provide input.

Vote: PASSED, 29-0-0.

The Senate adjourned at 12:49 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. McKnight, Secretary
Faculty Senate