

March 31, 2010

## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 03/31/2010

Stephen W. McKnight  
*Northeastern University*

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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, 31 MARCH 2010**

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Present: (Professors) Alshawbkeh, Alverson, Balachandra, Board, Chilvers, Daynard, De Ritis, Gaffney, Gatley, Goodale, Hafner, Herman, Karma, Kruger, Lifter, McKnight, Morrison, Mourant, Muftu, Portz, Price, Rosengaus, Ross, T. Sherman, Sherwood, Thrush, Waszczak

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

Absent (Professors) Born, Mierelles, Podlaha-Murphy, D. Sherman,

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:49 AM

- I. The minutes of 17 March were approved as distributed.
- II. Professor Morrison reported that SAC met twice in regular session and once with the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees, the President and the Provost. The SAC meeting with the Board of Trustees is an annual event usually held in a formal setting. SAC requested and was granted an informal luncheon meeting which led to a more interactive and useful meeting.

The College of Business Administration elected Professors Sharon Bruns and Harry Lane to the Faculty Senate. A listing of 2010-2011 faculty Senators may be found on the Faculty Senate website.

The following Senate resolutions have been approved as noted:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 0910-09 | BS in Pharmacy Studies/School of Pharmacy: approved by the Provost 2/9/2010; Approved by the BOT 3/13/2010.                               |
| 0910-11 | Name change from MS in Clinical Exercise Physiology to MS in Exercise Science: approved by the Provost 3/2010; BOT approval not required. |

In preparation for the upcoming agenda, Professor Morrison explained to the Senate that the Faculty Handbook Committee worked over the period from 2001 to 2005 to revise and update the Faculty Handbook. However, the Board of Trustees could not or would not approve it in its entirety so faculty was left with the 2000-2001 edition, which is on-line at the Senate website.

Shortly after arriving on campus Provost Director and Vice Provost Loeffelholz began working with SAC to approve the Faculty Handbook section by section. Toward that end, the SAC agreed that an appropriate format would be a web-based "modular" Handbook and began work on modularizing the 2000-2001 Handbook as well as to attempt to resolve any differences in the proposed Handbook.

One area of difference was that the proposed Handbook section on tenure included language on economic security which is not explicitly included in the current 2000-01 Handbook. The Provost stated that he could not recommend Board of Trustees approval with that language. Accordingly, last year's SAC agreed to delete that language from the proposed FHB section on tenure and it was approved by the Board last May. It is that section that has been in debate.

As noted, the 2000-01 Handbook does not contain language on "economic security" but does state that the University subscribes to the 1940 AAUP statement and then lists essential features of that statement while omitting any explicit reference to the concept of economic freedom.

Based on these inconsistencies the SAC will work with a Handbook Committee to 1) see that no inadvertent changes were introduced in converting the 2000-01 Handbook to modular form and 2) ensure that approval of sections of the proposed Handbook does not lead to any inadvertent deletion or substitution of policies.

Therefore, consistent with the memorandum sent by the Provost to Senators, both proposed motions will be withdrawn. According to Parliamentary procedure, the motion on the floor belongs to the body and requires a motion to withdraw. The second motion remains the property of the maker and may be withdrawn unilaterally by the maker.

### III. Provost's Report.

Provost Director reported that the three Dean Search Committees have been conducting 'airport interviews' and have each recommended four to six candidates to proceed to campus interviews. The first candidate will arrive tomorrow (April 1), however, more advanced notice will be provided in the future. The Search Committees will provide candidates' names as far in advance as possible and will provide curriculum vitae on a secure website. It is intended that all candidates will be brought to campus within the next two to three weeks and each will present a public seminar. Candidates have been asked to address the future of their field rather than the direction of Northeastern University as they are not yet familiar with this institution. The Search Committees will also invite feedback following the campus visits. The Provost reminded faculty that the campus visits serve a dual purpose; one is to "sell" Northeastern and the other to evaluate the candidates.

Regarding his memorandum to Senators, the Provost corrected his statement that he had met with SAC to discuss changes to the Handbook language about annual contracts. He met only with the Chair of SAC which he does regularly.

### IV. Questions/Discussion.

Professor Gaffney inquired about a memorandum from Human Resources stating that the length of the faculty contract had been changed from eight months to nine months. The Provost stated that it was a miscommunication and that current faculty will remain on eight month appointments while new faculty will be hired with a nine month academic year appointment, which he averred is more traditional. HRM is issuing a new memorandum and there is no intent to change or reduce salaries.

Professor Karma wondered why the issue had not been discussed by the Senate Committee for Research Policy Oversight as it directly affects research faculty and summer salaries. The Provost explained that the change affects incoming faculty and is not a research issue. Professor Karma, however, expressed concern about recruiting faculty and pay inequities, and emphasized that the change should have been discussed with faculty. The Provost recommended that faculty members discuss the issue within their Colleges.

Similarly, Professor Board questioned the process for making the decision, agreeing with Professor Karma that faculty should have been included at the beginning of the process rather than now, after the decision has been made.

Provost Director emphasized a number of times that the issue had been discussed at several Deans' Meetings and the reasoning for it is that an eight month faculty contract is not the norm among aspirant and other institutions. Several Senators noted, however, that the information had not been disseminated to faculty by the Deans.

Professor Waszczak supported the notion that changes in the academic calendar should come before faculty as they affect all faculty; that change simply because something is not generally done elsewhere is not a valid reason for change; and that unilateral decisions are concerning.

The Provost explained that the academic calendar is not being changed and reiterated that discussions on the issue need to take place in the Colleges since what would work in one unit may not work in another unit.

Professor Kruger added that it is an ethical and organizational imperative to include the Senate in decisions that affect all faculty members as administration may not perceive all the implications. Professor Sherwood questioned the role of SAC in the decision to which Professor Morrison responded that SAC became aware of the decision yesterday (Tuesday, 30 March) and brought it to the Provost's attention who instructed HRM to issue a new memorandum.

Debate continued wherein the Provost suggested that discussions at the College level would include more faculty than at the Senate, that high-quality faculty with nine-month appointments have been hired at other institutions, that alignment with aspirant institutions is necessary, and that many current faculty have refused to attend graduation because it falls outside their eight-month commitment with the University. In response to Professor Karma's question about whether this could be discussed in the Senate, the Provost agreed that this would be a reasonable thing to do, but that institutions change and we shouldn't continue a policy just because it has been followed in the past.

Professor Kruger suggested that if there is a problem with the eight-month contracts, faculty involvement to solve the problem engenders more enthusiasm and commitment. Professor Portz pointed out that if new faculty will have nine-month contracts the situation will change only very slowly. Professor Karma added that comparison to institutions without Co-op is ineffectual since summer sessions courses are offered starting in early May.

In response to a question about match mate information for equity raises, Provost Director confirmed that the data is being collected and that the Deans will play a key role in communicating the data to the faculty and in distributing equity. He stated that equity must be based on merit and that all increases are essentially based on merit.

- V. Vice Provost Loeffelholz moved to withdraw the following motion, which remains in debate, and it was seconded.

***WHEREAS* tenure at academic institutions is ordinarily construed as an appointment without limitation of time, and**

***WHEREAS* Northeastern University's present definition of tenure as a continuing right to annual employment contracts imposes inefficiencies upon the University,**

**BE IT RESOLVED** That the Faculty Handbook section on "Tenure", revised and approved by the Faculty Senate on April 14, 2003 and again on April 22, 2009 and approved by the Board of Trustees May 8, 2009, be amended *as attached*.

Objection was made; a vote ensued.

VOTE to withdraw motion #1 to revise the Faculty Handbook section on "Tenure": PASSED, 21-9-4.  
The motion is withdrawn.

Vice Provost Loeffelholz withdrew Faculty Handbook motion #2 on the agenda.

- VI. Vice Provost Powers-Lee read the following and it was seconded.

**BE IT RESOLVED** That the Faculty Senate recommends that GPA requirements to graduate with honors be 3.500-3.699 for cum laude, 3.700-3.849 for magna cum laude

**and 3.850-4.000 for summa cum laude; that the GPA requirement for Dean's List be 3.500; and that future statements of these GPA minima contain the provision that the University reserves the right to change these standards.**

**BE IT ALSO RESOLVED That new honors graduation requirements take effect for the class graduating in January, 2014.**

Vice Provost Powers-Lee explained that the motion is not related to the Honors Program but to "Latin honors" which are awarded based on GPA achievement. Latin honors comprised 54% of the 2009 graduating class and, compared to fifteen other institutions, is not in alignment. Requirements were last adjusted in 1984. The recommended GPA values would have yielded 31% of the 2009 graduating class which is aligned with several institutions that award honors on a percentage basis (BC at 30% and BU at 33%). The UUCC recommends that the proposed change be effective for a graduating class rather than an entering class to avoid different standards for one graduating cohort and recommends a January date as January graduates share in the May ceremony. The UUCC debated the timing of implementation with the majority in favor of the January 2014 graduation for maximum awareness among students with the greatest number of Co-ops between a spring 2010 rule change and the January 2014 graduation. UUCC conversed with the Senate Committee for Academic Policy (APC) as well as the Student Government Association.

Professor Holbrook Robinson, chair of the APC, was recognized and affirmed that the Vice Provost had confirmed with him yesterday and, while there was little time to discuss it, the request appears reasonable.

Several Senators spoke in favor of the motion. Professor Gaffney recommended a formal review mechanism given the new colleges that will be in place in July. Vice Provost Powers-Lee suggested the APC. She also explained, in response to Professor Ross, that the high percentage of honors is due to higher performing students and higher grades across the nation.

VOTE to increase the requirements for graduation with Latin honors; to increase the requirements for graduation on the Dean's list; and that the requirements shall take effect for the graduating class of January 2014: PASSED, 35-0-0.

A motion to adjourn was seconded. The Provost adjourned at 12:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. McKnight, Secretary  
Faculty Senate