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Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 04/28/2010

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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, 28 APRIL 2010

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

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

Absent (Professors) Board, Born, Daynard, Podlaha-Murphy, Price

(Administrators) Luzzi

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:20 AM

- I. The minutes of were approved as written.
- II. Professor Morrison reported the following election results for the 2010-2011 Senate Agenda Committee (a full list of Senators is available at the Faculty Senate website).

Senate Vice Chair/

Agenda Committee Chair: Professor Louis Kruger

Secretary: Professor Stephen McKnight

Members: Professor Sharon Bruns
Professor James Fox
Professor John Portz
Professor George Adams

The resolution for the *Bachelor in Landscape Architecture* approved last week by the Senate was mistakenly labeled 'Bachelor in Landscape Design' on the agenda. This has been corrected on the paperwork being submitted to the Board of Trustees.

The 2010 University Standing Appeals Committee for Tenure (USACT) is now staffed. These names may also be found at the Faculty Senate website.

Elected: Professor Kenneth Baclawski (CIS)
Professor Samuel Matthews (BCHS)
Professor Carl W. Nelson (CBA)
Professor Mary E. O'Connell (Law)
Professor Stuart Peterfreund (CAS)
Professor Dagmar Sternad (COE)

Appointed: Professor Judith Barr (BCHS)
Professor Judith Hall (CAS)
Professor Thomas H. Koenig (CAS)
Professor Joseph W. Meador (CBA)
Professor David Phillips (Law)

Professor Marjorie Platt (CBA)

The Senate ad Hoc Committee for Faculty Handbook Review is staffed as follows:

Professor Dennis Cokely, Chair
Professor Sharon Bruns
Professor Gerald Herman
Professor Alain Karma
Professor Joanne Miller

The Provost has approved Senate Resolution 0910-12 for new GPA requirements for Latin honors. Board of Trustee approval is not required.

Professor Morrison explained to the Senate that SAC agreed to remove the “economic security” language in the 2005 Draft Faculty Handbook on the 28 April 2009 SAC meeting at which eight members were present, i.e. both the 2008-09 and the 2009-10 SAC members. At the time, no member viewed it as a significant change although it was clearly the wrong decision. On behalf of all eight SAC members, Professor Morrison apologized to the Senate for agreeing to the change.

III. Provost’s report.

Provost Director offered gratitude to Professor Morrison for having served as Chair of SAC during the past two years and for assisting the Provost’s transition to NU. He noted Professor Morrison’s valuable advice, the opportunity for discussions, and the significance of monthly meetings with SAC. The Provost has been reminded on many occasions that the Faculty Senate operates differently at NU. The NEASC team noted its value despite the unorthodoxy. To further publicize the work of the Senate, he has worked with the Northeastern Voice newspaper to create a column on the Senate activities.

The Provost expressed appreciation for the collaborative spirit with SAC to move forward the approval of the new Handbook in modular fashion. He commended the decision to constitute a Handbook Review Committee in order to assess the Faculty Handbook and encouraged that committee to seek best practices at other institutions.

Of significance this year was the reorganization of the College of Arts and Sciences which represents a significant transformation in a short period of time. Feedback from faculty noted that the change will play a significant role in achieving the University’s goals. In addition, it has attracted outstanding candidates for the deans’ positions. As the new Senate reflects upon their agenda for next year, the Provost called for recognition that more than forty percent of faculty have arrived at NU within last ten years and the Senate should consider ways in which to engage them. He clarified that his statement is not meant to be negative but rather an issue for the future.

IV. Questions/Discussion.

Professor Gaffney requested from where comparison data for the most recent equity exercise came. Vice Provost Loeffelholz responded that it had been provided by Colonial Group which includes Boston College, Boston University, Notre Dame University, University of Miami, Brandeis University, Lehigh, Syracuse University and others. The Provost’s office is working with the Deans to gather data from departments where peer groups are no longer viable. Professor Gaffney suggested that the Senate Committee for Financial Affairs should provide input into comparison groups. Provost Director reported that he has engaged the Deans to identify other types of peer groups but that the Senate could undertake that task if it chooses. Professor Gaffney and Vice Provost Loeffelholz undertook a brief discussion concerning peer groups in Mathematics. The Vice

Provost explained that when peer groups disengage from Certified Unified Program Agencies (CUPA), new peer groups must be generated. Once completed, the data will be shared. Also, inquiries for data sets by unit are required to differ so that each list is unique which sometimes works well but also causes the artificial discard of some peer institutions as they have been used on more than three other lists. The comparison data will be available by 4 May. Dean Ronkin indicated he will move deadlines based on when that data becomes available.

Professor Kruger inquired whether departmental faculty members have the opportunity for input in the matchmate lists. Dean Zoloth confirmed that to be the case in disciplines where peer groups do not exist on this cycle.

Professor Muftu noted the importance of funding for new Ph.D. programs from the University and inquired whether the Provost's Office would provide assistance with other new Ph.D. programs as was provided for the Ph.D. in Information Assurance approved at the last meeting. The Provost clarified that the budget request for the Ph.D. in Information Assurance has not yet been approved. However, under the new budget model, the Colleges will retain most overhead and tuition funds and should self-fund start-up programs.

Professor Karma reported that a new program in biomedical engineering had requested graduate student support for five but only one is being funded. He expressed concern that under the new hybrid budget model each College will need to remit a "tax" to the University for collective resources and there would be less funding available to support new programs. Provost Director responded that under the new financial model each college will be allocated funding from the tax gathered.

The Provost explained that general fund allocations made to each college can vary from year to year and will become part of the income of the College. Colleges are asked to cover allocated non-academic costs on a proportional basis. The tax applied on income will be used for new initiatives as well as cost sharing for central facilities. Under this model, revenue from new initiatives will benefit the College directly rather than centrally.

The Senate discussed discretionary money, re-investment in programs, the search for new funds, and prioritization. The Provost clarified that new interdisciplinary programs are to be funded by the units involved, and the hybrid budget model stops at College level where Deans must make allocation decisions. The tax at the College level is twenty percent of revenue across the board which is characteristic of RCM models at other comparable universities. Four Colleges – the College of Professional Studies, the College of Business Administration, College of Engineering, and the Law School -- will undertake the new hybrid budget model in July with the remainder next fall. Units will be held harmless, no existing efforts will be defunded, and very little reserved for central resources when the new model begins, but in five years the funding may change.

V. Professor Karma read the following and it was seconded.

WHEREAS at its April 20, 2005 meeting the Faculty Senate approved by a vote of 24-0-1 for insertion into the final draft of the Faculty Handbook the following statement on tenure derived from the 1940 statement on tenure of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP),

“Tenure is established as a means (1) to maintain freedom of teaching, research and extramural activities, and (2) to provide a sufficient degree of economic security that the University can attract and retain excellent faculty members to meet this mission.”

And WHEREAS the 2008-2009 Senate Agenda Committee, upon request of Provost Director and without consultation with the Faculty Senate, agreed to remove item (2) from that section of the Handbook, which was subsequently submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees:

BE IT RESOLVED That it is the sense of the Faculty Senate that the 2008-2009 Senate Agenda Committee inadvertently exceeded its authority by removing item (2). Since item (2) is an inseparable part of the standard AAUP stated goals of tenure, and since its removal from the proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook was not approved by the Faculty Senate, **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that item (2) be included in the Faculty Handbook.

Professor Karma noted two issues, one of incorrect process for which SAC has apologized and the other of content and best practices. After surveying many institutions, he reported that University of Southern California, from whence President Aoun came, includes the full AAUP section in their Faculty Handbook as do some others. No other university that he surveyed included the first purpose of tenure from the 1940 AAUP statement while omitting the second. As NU is judged against other Universities, inclusion of the AAUP language recognizing the economic security purpose of tenure is critical for Northeastern to remain competitive in attracting and retaining faculty.. He urged, therefore, that the language be reinstated and that the Provost work with the President and Board of Trustees to ensure passage of the resolution.

Professor Hafner moved to amend the motion by removing the text in the last paragraph from “it is the sense of Senate” through “Since” at the beginning of the next sentence because it is not necessary to make a public issue of what happened in the past, but instead simply move the desired change. She was seconded. Professor Gaffney spoke against the amendment as the wording provides context for revisiting the issue with the Board of Trustees. Professor Karma requested an explanation from the Provost as to why SAC was asked to remove the language and the Provost reported that, when attempting to move four to five year old outstanding resolutions, this seemed a matter that could be resolved and approved quickly. He assured the Senate that there was no hidden agenda. Professor Karma then proposed a compromise, citing the reason proposed by Professor Gaffney. Professor Hafner rejected the proposal.

Professor T. Sherman spoke against the amendment stating that explanation is required and that SAC should take the responsibility so that others do not imagine collusion between the SAC, the Provost, and the Senate.

Professor Alverson, a 2008-09 SAC member, spoke in favor of the amendment. He explained that, while the SAC action was clearly a mistake, SAC neither made the decision inadvertently nor exceeded its authority as SAC is charged with approving Handbook changes that do not substantially alter existing policies by unanimous vote and this change was deemed minor at the time.

Professor Gaffney suggested that SAC should not be allowed to make judgments or changes to the Handbook and Professor Goodale disagreed. He supported the amendment and said that as a member of the Senate, he does not wish to address every insignificant editorial change that are appropriately the purview of the Senate Agenda committee.

Professor Waszczak requested that SAC explain why the language was removed. Professor Morrison reported that, while details of the decision process are difficult to recall, it was not generally apparent that items (1) and (2) were the paraphrasing the AAUP document as they are one paragraph below their reference. In addition, it seemed apparent at the time that tenure is about life-time employment not economic security. Professor McKnight confirmed that he did not

recall the meeting at all but is persuaded by Professor Alverson that the change was neither inadvertent nor outside the authority of SAC to make editorial changes. He supported the amendment.

It was clarified that Senate resolutions are then approved by the President, or the President's designee (Provost Director), and, when appropriate, by the Board of Trustees.

A call for cloture was seconded. VOTE for cloture: PASSED, 31-0-0

VOTE to approve the amendment: PASSED, 28-3-3.

As amended, the resolution is as follows:

WHEREAS at its April 20, 2005 meeting the Faculty Senate approved by a vote of 24-0-1 for insertion into the final draft of the Faculty Handbook the following statement on tenure derived from the 1940 statement on tenure of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP),

“Tenure is established as a means (1) to maintain freedom of teaching, research and extramural activities, and (2) to provide a sufficient degree of economic security that the University can attract and retain excellent faculty members to meet this mission.”

And WHEREAS the 2008-2009 Senate Agenda Committee, upon request of Provost Director and without consultation with the Faculty Senate, agreed to remove item (2) from that section of the Handbook, which was subsequently submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees:

BE IT RESOLVED That item (2) is an inseparable part of the standard AAUP stated goals of tenure, and since its removal from the proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook was not approved by the Faculty Senate, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that item (2) be included in the Faculty Handbook.

Professor Herman put forth a friendly amendment to add AACU (Association of American Colleges & Universities) following AAUP as it is a joint standard and has been approved by both bodies on many occasions. This was accepted by Professor Karma.

VOTE to include AACU after each incidence of AAUP: PASSED, 32-0-0

Professor Waszczak inquired of the Provost whether he would forward the motion to the Board of Trustees. The Provost clarified that the President's designee is allowed time to consider the issue and his decision is separate from the Senate's decision.

Professor Torchilin was recognized and submitted that, as SAC was in violation of its capacity to make editorial changes when the decision to omit the AAUP wording was made, Board approval of this section is thus nullified and the document should return to the status when originally approved by the Senate. Vice Provost Loeffelholz disagreed stating that the language would need to undergo the entire process for resubmission.. Prof. McKnight clarified that the current Handbook contains the statement “a) that the administration shall consult with the Senate Agenda Committee on any proposed revisions in the Faculty Handbook; b) that the Agenda Committee shall review all such proposed revisions; c) that, unless the Agenda Committee unanimously agrees that the proposed revisions do not substantially alter existing policies, the Agenda Committee shall present the revisions in question to the Senate for discussion and vote.”

A call for cloture was seconded.

VOTE on cloture: PASSED, 32-0-0

As amended the resolution is as follows:

WHEREAS at its April 20, 2005 meeting the Faculty Senate approved by a vote of 24-0-1 for insertion into the final draft of the Faculty Handbook the following statement on tenure derived from the 1940 statement on tenure of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U),

“Tenure is established as a means (1) to maintain freedom of teaching, research and extramural activities, and (2) to provide a sufficient degree of economic security that the University can attract and retain excellent faculty members to meet this mission.”

And **WHEREAS** the 2008-2009 Senate Agenda Committee, upon request of Provost Director and without consultation with the Faculty Senate, agreed to remove item (2) from that section of the Handbook, which was subsequently submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees:

BE IT RESOLVED That item (2) is an inseparable part of the standard AAUP and AAC&U stated goals of tenure and, since its removal from the proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook was not approved by the Faculty Senate, **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that item (2) be included in the Faculty Handbook.

VOTE to reinstate item (2) to the Faculty Handbook: PASSED, 32-0-0.

<The Senate recessed for ten minutes>

VI. Presentation and Discussion: Optimizing the Northeastern Experience: Insights from the National Survey of Student Engagement

Vice Provost Powers-Lee reported that the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) encompasses 1,200 institutions since 2000 and surveys two groups of students: first year students and seniors. There are 85 queries relating to key topics on educational research clustered into five benchmarks: Level of academic challenges; active and collaborative learning; student-faculty interactions; enriching educational experiences; supportive campus environment. A sample of the survey may be found at http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/nsse09_color_sample.pdf

The report supplied by NSSE consists of a detailed analysis of NU responses as well as comparative data from two groups: cross admits (Boston College, Drexel, Syracuse, UCONN, Maryland, Villanova, and Worcester Polytechnic) and near aspirants (Boston College, Drexel, Lehigh, Southern Methodist, Syracuse, Tufts, Tulane).

The comparison data is not dramatically different but the differences that do exist are highly significant. Relative retention and graduation rates are consistent with the absence of dramatic survey differences.

The material identifies areas of comparative NU strengths and weakness compared to peer groups. Five action items are identified which are applicable to broad academic programs:

- Extend the strength of senior year experiences to first year experiences
- Leverage strength in collaborative learning for NU distinction
- Extend the strength in experiential learning seen by NU Seniors to NU first year experience and extend overall strength
- Enhance first year student interactions with faculty
- Ensure that first year courses are challenging

Further action items may be identified by analysis of specific metrics/clusters targeted to the broad academic program and/or targeted to subsets of academic programming.

Following a brief look at how NU students responded to the various metrics, the floor was open to questions and discussion.

Professor T. Sherman recalled that Vice President Mantella emphasized that incoming students have increasing expectations and he has spoken to students who are transferring out of Northeastern because those expectations are not being met.

Professor Chilvers was surprised that students study an average of only ten hours for all subjects.

The Vice Provost confirmed that each College has the ability to look at their own data and that the information can be sorted by department upon request. Professor T. Sherman requested that the analysis presented here be uploaded to the Provost's website.

Provost Director suggested that the data be reviewed with the intention of offering more flexibility and possible curriculum changes. He noted, too, that Northeastern must work toward a graduation rate that exceeds 80% and must also address the freshman to sophomore retention rate. He indicated that, while the investment in reducing section sizes addresses many of these issues of student satisfaction, too many freshmen sections are being covered by graduate teaching assistants.

Prof. Thrush pointed out that freshmen who leave fall into one of two groups: those who find the work too hard or too time-consuming and high-ability students who are insufficiently challenged. He indicated the importance of meeting with students on a continuing basis to tackle freshmen retention issues, particularly of the second group. The Provost agreed that engagement of faculty in the process of increasing student retention is important.

The Senate adjourned at 1:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen W. McKnight, Secretary
Faculty Senate

*approved via email