

February 08, 2012

## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 02/08/2012

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**Northeastern University**  
*Office of the Faculty Senate*

TO: FACULTY SENATE  
FROM: ARUN BANSIL, SECRETARY FACULTY SENATE  
SUBJECT: MINUTES, 2011-2012 FACULTY SENATE MEETING OF 8 FEBRUARY 2012

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Present: (Professors) Adams, Alper, Alshawabkeh, Aroian, Aslam, Bannister, Bansil, Barberis, Fountain, Fox, Gaffney, Hanson, Herman, Kruger, Muftu, Poriss, Rappaport, Sherman, Todorov, Yang, Young, Waszczak, Zgarrick

(Administrators) Costa, Director, Finkelstein, Gibson, Loeffelholz, Spieler, Van Den Abbeele, Zoloth

Absent (Professors) Basagni, Daynard, Fitzgerald, Katula, Sandler, Sherwood, Strauss

(Administrators) Lane, Soyster

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:50 AM

- I. Minutes of 30 January 2012 were approved as written.
- II. Professor Kruger reported the following: SAC met three times in regular session since the last Senate meeting and once with the Provost; Professor Kruger met once with the Provost.

The following Senate resolutions have been returned from the Provost's Office as follows:

Resolution #1112-03 – Research Policy and Oversight Committee Report and Recommendation on the Office of Research Administration and Finance was returned by the Provost as *Informational, no action required*.

Resolution #111204 – Withdrawal from University Press of New England agreement was returned by the Provost as *Approved, BOT approval not needed*.

Professor Kruger announced a new Graduate Certificate in the Non Profit Sector in the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and passed by a vote of the Graduate Council on 1/17/12. Objections or concerns should be submitted within ten days.

The following Senate committee has been staffed and charged. A full transcript of the charge may be found at <http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/>

**2012 Standing Committee for Information Technology Policies**

*Members*

Professor George Alverson, Chair, COS-Physics  
Professor John Devlin, BCHS-Pharmacy Practice

Mr. Joshua Harris, SGA representative  
Academic Specialist Leslie Hitch, CPS-Graduate Programs  
Vice President Rehan Kahn, Information Service, *Ex Officio member*  
Professor Terrence Masson, CAMD-Creative Industries  
Professor William Mayer, CSSH-Political Science  
Professor Ronald Mourant, COE-Mechanical & Industrial  
Principle Research Scientist Glenn Pierce, Center for Applied Social Research  
Professor Rajmohan Rajaraman, CCIS  
Academic Specialist Bruce Russell, MIS Concentration Coordinator  
Dean William Wakeling, University Libraries, *Provost's Appointee*

*Charge*

Keeping the strong upward trajectory of the University in mind, the Senate Agenda Committee respectfully requests that the Information Technology Policy Committee address the following:

Assess the status of the 2011 Information Services Academic Advisory Committee's recommendations on mobile computing, collaboration and sharing, and classroom support and technology;

Identify *broad* areas of relative strength and weakness in Northeastern University's IT infrastructure by conducting (a) a review of the *overall* information technology (IT) infrastructure of the University and its adequacy for meeting the growing IT needs for effective execution of the teaching and research missions of the University; and (b) a survey of matchmate and aspirant universities' overall IT infrastructures.

Provide recommendations for robust mechanisms for timely and regular input from faculty and students on relevant IT related issues.

Finally, Professor Kruger reminded those present that Senate elections are being scheduled and asked senators to encourage colleagues to attend and vote. He averred that there is a common goal to have a representative spectrum of tenured and tenure-track faculty on the Senate.

- III. Provost Director reported that NU's ROTC was recently recognized as one of the top eight of 273 in the country. Professor Barabasi [COS-Physics] published a paper that was downloaded 116 thousand times. Student Michael Cantalino was highlighted by CSNBC for college entrepreneurs. And finally, the NU Terriers women's hockey team won the Bean Pot ending a 13-year drought.

IV. Questions and Discussion.

Professor Gaffney congratulated the Provost on recent teaching and learning seminars and inquired about how to build on this energy with possible resources. The Provost responded that the exercise is tied into helping the NU community think about undergraduate teaching but that faculty should look first to their departments and then to their Deans for resources. Vice Provost Loeffelholz added that a call for proposals via CIETL should be sent soon if not already. Professor Kruger noted that research on isolated workshops indicates that they are not as powerful unless there is follow up. Like Professor Gaffney, he was

impressed by the enthusiasm of the participants and urged the Provost to consider how to build on that enthusiasm.

Professor Kruger, noting questions received from faculty, inquired whether the 6% indirect cost return recommended by Vice Provost Bernstein's committee is fixed across colleges or whether there is latitude; if the soft cap on discretionary monies in principle investigators' accounts has been determined; and if the cost of course buyout by faculty is different in various colleges.

Provost Director responded that many decisions must be made at the colleges and there is no uniform policy other than agreement among the deans on the 6% indirect cost return in order to avoid faculty shopping around. Professor Kruger noted that the question arose because there are differences, whereupon Dean Finklestein posited that any differences will ultimately converge due to the high number of anticipated interdisciplinary hires.

- V. Institutional Master Plan (IMP). Provost Director re-introduced Vice President Martin who had presented an overview of the master plan process previously. The Vice President reported that since then the University has retained the planning firm of Chan Krieger NBBJ who has met with deans, department heads, faculty, students, SAC and other principals to learn of aspirations, programmatic voids, building status and changes over the past ten to twelve years. Community engagement is planned and the document will be filed with the Boston Redevelopment Authority by 31 December 2012.

Mr. Patrick Tedesco of Chan Krieger noted that the IMP must meet the goals of the Long Range Plan. Some challenges are older academic space and a shortage of academic space. The firm has been working with the Provost's Office, deans and others and is now revisiting the deans. Categories of space are academic, research, instructional, residential life, student experience, athletics and recreation, support services. Issues being examined in various categories are as follows:

Residential life: a need for specific housing needs including flexible housing.

Student experience: a need for space for meetings, performing arts, exhibition space, etc.

Athletics: a lack of campus field space.

Support services: a need to address growth in administrative departments.

Academics: a need to address research space to support existing and new faculty; changing class sizes, technology; flexible configurations; seminar rooms, student project areas; aspirations of individual colleges; specialized instructional spaces; inter-disciplinary clusters; expanded degree and course offerings.

The team is also focused on the physical environment of the campus to better define certain parts of the campus as well as to facilitate the challenge of getting across the tracks.

Finally, although the primary focus is on the Boston campus, satellite campuses are also under review in order to understand their role in academic and strategic growth. A contact email is [Masterplan@neu.edu](mailto:Masterplan@neu.edu) and a website is under construction.

Vice President Martin responded to Professor Kruger's question concerning whether this constitutes the data collection phase affirmatively with clarification that input should be focused on the larger picture rather than specific buildings.

Professor Gaffney, noting the difficulty of imagining the University ten years hence, stated the need for graduate student residential space, which the Vice President acknowledged, adding that the process entails defining core needs as well as pursuits that could be undertaken in partnership with other Boston area institutions.

Professor Young expressed the need for informal gathering places for faculty acknowledging the difficulty in justifying such space. Mr. Tedesco admitted having heard this several times and noting that its lack is a result of too little space being available on the campus

Professor Yang asked about the possibility of vertical development which Mr. Tedesco confirmed was being examined. Another possibility on the table is institutional partnerships.

Professor Mufti noted the different needs of research areas and suggested the team look to Microsoft to confirm the value of informal gathering space for faculty.

Several senators commented on the difficulties of integrating office and classroom space, the viability of consolidating office space, and the need for research labs and faculty offices to be in close proximity.

- VI. University Ombuds Office. Provost Director explained that the Ombuds Office was created a year ago to address issues among faculty and staff and introduced Professor Donna Bishop, the first director. Professor Bishop synopsised her background and familiarity with the academic milieu as well as her background in crisis intervention. She has been and continues to circulate and meet with as many campus groups as possible.

The Ombuds Office is a confidential resource for all faculty and staff with no sharing of information and no records kept beyond the open cases. It is an informal resource with informal processes. It is an impartial resource, which means that it does not advocate except for fairness and a healthy work environment. And it is an independent unit within the University which reports to the Provost but is outside the normal chain-of-command structure.

The Office's two functions are to meet with individuals and groups in an attempt to resolve difficult situations and to provide a reporting mechanism on systemic patterns so that such matters may be addressed. For instance, it was determined that the new staff performance evaluation process was creating morale problems and discontent due to misinformation. HRM is now attempting to address those concerns.

To date, Professor Bishop has seen 66 faculty and staff with a slight majority being faculty. The general concerns include disputes with supervisors, abuse of power, incivility, abridgement of academic freedom, and reassignment of job responsibilities. Other matters have included lack of communication between units, faculty career progression and development, retirement, non-renewal of contracts among non-tenure-track faculty, and market equity adjustments.

Professor Alshawabkeh inquired about a resource for graduate students to which Professor Bishop answered that Student Services supplies such resources.

In answer to a question concerning the role of HRM, Professor Bishop explained, that while there are similarities between the services offered by the Ombuds Office and HRM, the former remains confidential whereas the latter is obligated to act in a formal manner.

VII. Professor Aroian read the following motion which was seconded

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate support the recommendations of the Enrollment and Admissions Policy Committee to enhance the freshman educational experience, and hereby respectfully request that the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education report to the Senate no later than November 30, 2012 on progress made toward implementing these recommendations.**

The Senate recognized Professor Leslie of the EAPC whose presentation, as well as the Committee report, may be found at [http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20112012/enrollment\\_admissions1/](http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20112012/enrollment_admissions1/)

Professor Leslie reported that the population of incoming freshman reflects a growing international presence, better prepared students, an increasing number of transferred AP/IB credits, and increased membership in the Honors Program. Some of these students are leaping over entry level courses designed to nurture the freshman class.

In the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) reports of spring 2009 and 2011, NU freshmen indicated having less interaction with faculty, less challenging work, and less agreement that the institution emphasizes studying and academic work. NU seniors' perceptions paralleled or exceeded those at peer institutions which indicate improvement between freshman and senior years.

Shared experiences of incoming freshmen include the NU core, a one-credit-hour first-year seminar in each college, an introduction to experiential learning in most colleges, a requirement that freshman live on campus, and openness to freshman participation in student organizations.

Committee recommendations are: resources for communicating best practices; diagnostic screening for students for whom English is not a native language; review of curricula to align with the high qualifications of entering freshmen; departmental review of teaching assignments; TRACE to ensure freshman interaction with tenured and tenure-track faculty; development of courses to facilitate freshmen with AP/IB credits; development of challenging courses for honors students; and opportunities for freshman/faculty and freshman/upper classmen student interaction.

The floor was opened to questions.

Professor Young expressed concern at the first three items. Professor Rappaport, noting that a good freshman experience has been a priority for years, posited that it is too comfortable and therefore not challenging. Professor Leslie replied that those entering with significant AP/IB credits typically land in large classes where individual students have less personal interaction. She suggested as well that the academic imperative should not be to 'make everything fun and comfortable' and perhaps an institutional change is needed to return to teaching the discipline.

Vice Provost Powers-Lee added that the Committee was charged because of NSSE data showing small differences between our students and those at other institutions. They were good at the senior level and equivocal at the freshman level. Professor Adams pointed out that today's seniors were admitted five years ago under lower admissions standards, and therefore, caution should be exercised in interpreting the results of the 2009 survey

The Senate recognized Professor Peterfreund who suggested that one reason for the lower NSSE statistics might be who is delivering courses. Many contract faculty members are reappointed based on student evaluations rather than quality of teaching.

Professor Fox posited that the percentage of courses being taught by non tenured/tenure-track faculty most likely varies considerably across the campus and suggested that statistics of both percentage of courses and percentage of credit hours be made available for study.

Professor Young noted that faculty members are responding to the increased emphasis on research and graduate education with less time to address the freshman experience.

Professor Bannister reported that in the most recent CBA statistics of those students on academic probation, 82% were direct-admit international students.

Dean Van Den Abbeele agreed that it is a rising problem but there are considerable funds for tutoring. He went on to say that there is some resistance from departments to assign their best faculty to freshman courses and that it might be helpful to have the academic community working with the deans. The Dean suggested that that 100% of the core curriculum should be delivered by 67% of the tenured/tenure-track faculty. A culture change needs to take place where it is an honor and privilege to teach freshmen.

Professor Leslie added that ways to manage students' ambitions must also be sought to allay frustration that their double or triple majors cannot be accommodated.

Professor Fox suggested special designations of honor and special training for those teaching freshmen. Dean Gibson noted that the RCM model encourages effort to attract and retain students making it natural for colleges to connect with the issues raised by the EAPC report.

Several senators commented on issues of ESL competency and ways to embrace international students and aid in their success. Professor Leslie responded that the committee's second charge addresses these matters.

A call for cloture was made. There being no objections, voting commenced.

VOTE to support the recommendations of the Senate Committee for Enrollment and Admissions Policy: *Passed, 28-0-0.*

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The Senate adjourned at 1:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Arun Bansil, Secretary,  
Faculty Senate