

November 30, 2011

## Faculty Senate meeting minutes: 11/30/2011

Arun Bansil  
*Northeastern University*

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

**TO: THE FACULTY SENATE**  
**FROM: ARUN BANSIL, SECRETARY, FACULTY SENATE**  
**SUBJECT: MINUTES, FACULTY SENATE MEETING OF 30 NOVEMBER 2011**

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Present: (Professors) Adams, Alper, Alshawabkeh, Aroian, Aslam, Bansil, Barberis, Basagni, Daynard, Fitzgerald, Fox, Gaffney, Hanson, Herman, Kruger, Muftu, Poriss, Rappaport, Sandler, Sherman, Sherwood, Strasser, Strauss, Todorov, Yang, Young, Waszczak, Zgarrick

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

Absent (Professors) Bannister, Katula  
(Administrators) Gibson

Provost Director convened the meeting at 11:48 AM

- I. The minutes of 16 November were approved as written.
- II. SAC report. Professor Kruger noted for the record that abstentions are not counted as part of the voting record; only yea and nay votes are relevant when reporting the outcome.

SAC met once in regular session since the last Senate meeting; Professor Kruger met once with the Provost.

SAC has been asked to convene a search committee for the chair of the Department of Earth and Environmental Science in the College of Science. This will be an internal search. Staffing is underway.

The following Senate Committees have been staffed as follows:

**Chair Search Committee for the Department of Communication Studies in the College of Art, Media and Design (external)**

*Elected members from the Department:*

Professor J. David Cisneros  
Professor Heidi Kevoe Feldman  
Professor Gregory S. Goodale

*Appointed members:*

Professor Nicholas Daniloff (Chair), CAMD-School of Journalism  
Professor Malcolm D. Hill, COS-Earth and Environmental Science

**Dean Search Committee for the College of Engineering (external)**

*Elected members from the College:*

Professor Anand Asthagiri, Chemical Engineering  
Professor Dana Brooks (Chair), Electrical & Computer Engineering

Professor Sara Wadia-Fascetti, Civil & Environmental Engineering  
Professor John Cipolla, Mechanical & Industrial Engineering

*Appointed members:*

Professor Katherine S. Ziemer, Chemical Engineering  
Dean Murray Gibson, College of Science  
Trustee *TBA*

*Student members:*

Jeffrey Patenaude, COE  
Beatrice Van Den Heuvel, COE

**Research Policy Oversight Committee**

Professor Vincent G. Harris, Chair (COE)  
Professor William T. Dickens (CHHS)  
Professor Graham Jones (COS)  
Professor Ben-An Khaw (BCHS)  
Professor Alexandro Makriyannis (BCHS)  
Professor Sanjeev Mukerjee (COS)  
Professor James R. Ross (CAMD)  
Professor Ronald L. Sandler (CSSH)  
Professor Srinivas Sridhar (COS)  
Senior Vice Provost for Research Melvin Bernstein, *Ex Officio* (Provost's appointee)  
Professor Michael P. Pollastri (COS), *Ex Officio* (President's Representative)

**Background to Charge**

This Committee was established to review and assess the direction and implementation of the University's research mission, advocate for its needs, review periodically and make recommendations on its research resources, infrastructures, and policies, serve as a research "ombuds-body" to address structural impediments and faculty complaints, and work with the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance, the Senior Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the President to insure the best possible environment for research and scholarship.

**Committee Charge**

1. Provide an analysis of how the announced research priorities of the University (sustainability, security, and health) are being promoted and implemented across the University and ensure faculty input in this process.
2. Review the existing policies and procedures to ensure effective utilization of University's investment in the Holyoke Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center.
3. Review the existing policies and procedures for the establishment, maintenance, and retirement of Centers, Institutes and Research Facilities at the University.
4. Review the existing policies and procedures at the University related to conflicts of interest (COI), especially as they pertain to the research activities of the faculty.
5. Provide an assessment of the adequacy of research infrastructure of the University for both funded and unfunded research with focus on support staff, research facilities and seed funding.

III. Provost Director reported that the number of students applying to the University's non-binding early application program has increased steadily over the past three years and is now 14% of total applications for fall 2012. This represents 5.7 applicants per seat. SAT scores increased by ten points over last year. Last year saw an acceptance rate of 47%; this year NU will lower that number. He noted that it is significant that the number of early applicants from outside New England and the Atlantic seaboard has increased.

IV. Questions

Several professors asked for statistical details related to the the Provost's report. Not having the data at hand, the Provost encouraged questions to be emailed to him.

Professor Strauss complemented President Aoun's report [at the 16 November Senate meeting] but noted that while much was said concerning shared vision, little was offered about shared governance which is a pressing issue.

Professor Kruger added that shared vision is not synonymous with shared governance which has many moving parts. The Senate Agenda Committee has appointed an *ad hoc* committee to review shared governance. In addition, SAC has been meeting with the Senior Leadership Team in an attempt to focus on a variety of shared governance issues. Professor Gaffney added that he hoped the sharing of information, which the President affirmed is a *sine qua non*, is the commonly agreed starting point.

V. Report of the 2011-12 Financial Affairs Committee. Professor Young read the following and it was seconded:

***BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate support the recommendation of the Financial Affairs Committee for a merit pool of 4% in the fiscal year 2013 effective 1 July 2012.***

The Senate recognized Professor Kwoka who presented baseline data, a salary comparison with aspirants and peers, and an overall recommendation. (The FAC presentation to the Senate may be found at [http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20112012/financial\\_affairs/](http://www.facultysenate.neu.edu/committees/20112012/financial_affairs/) )

NU's financial status is strong due to admissions, retention and US News and World Report (USN&WR) rankings. However challenges which can impact future enrollment and retention remain. Over the past five years, NU's faculty raise pool has averaged 2.9% with the average inflation rate at 2.28% which leaves a real salary increase of .61%. In comparison to AAUP data on the average salary increase among seventeen peer and aspirants, NU is in the middle. In comparing by rank, Assistant and Association Professors are moving toward the top third while full Professors remain in the middle.

Salaries represent a benefit as well as a cost. Salary increases have led to higher numbers of new and high profile newly hired faculty and play an important role in USN&WR 'faculty resource' rankings.

The Financial Affairs Committee thus recommends a raise pool of four percent (4%) calculated using the AAUP data in order to close the increasing gap quickly rather than over an extended period of time.

Professor Spieler asked if it may be assumed that increases should be focused on full professors to which Professor Kwoka replied that the FAC took no position on that believing that such determinations are best made at the unit level. Professor Young confirmed that the data encompasses full-time faculty members as does the recommendation.

Professor Gaffney requested matchmate data from administration whereupon Vice Provost Loeffelholz noted that the results of the process should reflect that data and that further information from matchmates is unavailable. Professor Gaffney relayed his surprise that the percentage of raise pool is a closely held secret at matchmate institutions.

Professor Fox noted that Northeastern's ranking for 'financial resources' is 90 and asked for clarification. Vice Provost Loeffelholz responded that NU's 'faculty resources' rank is 36.

Professor Kruger clarified that the proposed resolution identifies a merit pool which differs from an equity pool. The equity pool is available to reduce inequities in salary due to any variety of reasons. There is a process by which faculty may apply for an equity increase and matchmate data should be available in the departments.

Following a brief discussion of the meaning of averages, the Senate turned to a vote.

VOTE to support a 4% merit pool for faculty in fiscal year 2012-2013: PASSED, 24-0-7.

#### VI. Report on the Undergraduate Experience

Vice Provost Ronkin reiterated the advantage of NU's unique approach, the application surge, the increase in SAT scores, and the many choices available to students. The most entrepreneurial of students are taking advantage of these many choices with individualized, custom-made global experiential learning programs. However, many students are not taking advantage and so NU will undertake a comprehensive review of the undergraduate curriculum to determine the distinctive characteristics of an NU graduate and whether the curriculum achieves that goal. This entails a University-wide conversation about undergraduate education which focuses on how the University is meeting the needs of students academically and how to deliver on NU's promise of unparalleled global experiential learning opportunities. Such conversation will take place within Colleges and departments, across colleges, within the entire University community, and with international thought leaders.

The timetable is as follows:

- January through May – conversations held within college working groups, cross-college working groups, and with outside guests.
- May through August – outcomes are organized and posted on web for full University access.
- September through December – Deans will work with faculty to convert college ideas into plans; the Vice Provost will work with colleges to develop the University-wide aspects; the plan will be implemented.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to proceed as if in a committee-of-the-whole.

Professor Fox noted that a critical promise to students is classes taught by world-class faculty and this is not always delivered. Vice Provost Ronkin agreed that some leading faculty members are not teaching as much as one would hope and that ways of delivering

on this promise without over-burdening faculty are needed. Provost Director noted that he recently spoke to a student nearing the end of his/her academic experience who reported having taken only four courses taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty. He declined to identify the unit.

Professor Aroian asked how the Senate will be involved in this initiative and that the goals of the process be clarified. Vice Provost Ronkin replied that faculty is part of the discussion within the units and the goal is to ensure that NU continues to deliver quality academics to the students. Professor Aroian repeated her question concerning the involvement of the Faculty Senate to which the Vice Provost replied that he could not dictate Senate involvement and that the Senate should think beyond the Senate.

Professor Adams noted that who teaches is important and that the University should attempt to limit the number of graduate students teaching classes. He noted as well that the number 24 is not a true indicator of class size as it does not consider courses offering lab credit. The real average class size needs to be reduced. Vice Provost Ronkin added that faculty keep in mind that graduate students are preparing to be professors and they must be given opportunities to teach.

Professor Muftu reported that he is not convinced there is a curriculum flexibility problem and wondered if specific problems might be identified on which to base the conversations.

Professor Herman recalled that the core was designed to open boundaries. The initiative points to the Senate role in the University's mission. He noted too that the students' experiences include what happens outside the classroom and encouraged conversations about the ways in which students are connected to the University and how the University mission is carried out to maintain oversight and commitment to their experience regardless of their physical location.

Professor Sandler suggested that student feedback is needed to determine why they may not be taking advantage of opportunities prior to college discussions.

Professor Poriss noted that facilities are a problem in CAMD and suggested that it is important to interface with the Master Plan process. The Provost agreed.

Professor Alper saw nothing mentioned concerning how to determine the needs of the students. Vice Provost Ronkin reported that surveys have been conducted using *Student Voice*, an assessment platform. Professor Alper asked if these surveys are geared to academic issues rather than residential/campus issues. The Vice Provost noted that the platform is being used by Student Services and International Operations and that more information is needed.

Professor Young encouraged that thought be given to what the detailed numerical information will indicate and to move beyond averages.

Professor Gaffney suggested that student choices regarding experiential education is a behavioral question and that framing surveys as such could produce richer conversations.

Dean Van Den Abbeele stressed that different needs will be defined between the Colleges. He also noted that great institutions teach with a majority of tenured/tenure-track faculty.

Professor Alshawabkeh questioned how much focus might be given to the graduate educational experience whereupon the Provost responded that the focus of this initiative is the undergraduate experience.

Dean Finkelstein suggested that those areas where NU exceeds, does not exceed, or is moving to catch up should be identified as well.

Professor Peterfreund was recognized and emphasized the importance of focusing on process as well as substance. He suggested that all students should be masters of the art of reinvention and that this may be achieved on many fronts. Most graduates will undertake three career changes. It is important, as well, that NU provides opportunities for those students who are not above average. The conversations must also identify consequences and keep in mind the bigger picture.

Professor Kruger thanked the Vice Provost for introducing this initiative to the Senate and noted that there is no more important issue for Senate involvement than that of academics and the NU education. He would like to see the outcomes of the initiative return to the Senate in the form of resolutions. In terms of substance, we must be clear on NU advantages but not lose sight of the more mundane aspects of a good education such as writing and communication skills.

Professor Fox suggested that class size, which is traditionally approached from the faculty perspective, be approached from the student perspective as well. Professor Young agreed, noting that this was his point about data analysis.

Professor Muftu again asked whether there were identifiable problems driving this initiative and, if so, would they be shared with the Senate. Provost Director responded that the initiative is not driven by a set of problems but by the larger issue of what the NU education should look like in the future. While problems that may be identified should be addressed, they should not limit the broader view.

A motion was made and seconded to move out of the committee-of-the-whole.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

The Senate adjourned at 1:18 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Arun Bansil, Secretary  
Faculty Senate