



# Northeastern University

## *Office of the Faculty Senate*

**TO:** Faculty Senate  
**FROM:** Secretary, Faculty Senate  
**SUBJECT:** Minutes, 6 October, 2021

Present: Professors: Avalon, Board, Caracoglia, Carr, Chiou, Dau, Dennerlein, Ergun, Fernandez, Gonyeau, Herlihy, Hertz, Landsmark, Mages, McSherry, Molnar, Mukerjee, Musselman, Rappaport, Smith, Spencer, Strange, Toledano Laredo, Willey, Wood, Zaarour, Zulick

Administrators: Madigan, Abowd, Cohen, Gallagher, Ronkin, Sceppa

Absent: (Professors) Cisewski, Gundavaram, Nieves, Vollmer  
(Administrators) Reid

**CALL TO ORDER:** 11:45 a.m.

I. The minutes for the 9.15.21 Senate meeting were approved.

## II. SAC REPORT

Since the 9.15.21 Senate meeting SAC has met three times.

SAC has been working on search committee elections and committee constitution.

These committees include:

- Bouve College of Health Sciences:
  - Chair, Health Sciences
  - Dean, School of Nursing
- College of Professional Studies
  - Dean
- D'Amore McKim School of Business
  - Dean
- College of Arts, Media and Design
  - Chair, Communication Studies
- College of Social Sciences and Humanities
  - Director School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs.

SAC developed and sent out the first Senate newsletter to all the senators. If there is any feedback, please contact the SAC members.

SAC met with Provost Madigan and Senior Vice Provost Franko twice. Topics included updates on fall teaching, HR benefits, follow-up on past resolutions and Covid-19.

## III. PRESIDENT AOUN'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

During his annual address to the Senate, President Aoun gave an overview of what is happening in higher education and how we are faring with respect to our peers and competitors.

He started with lessons learned from Covid-19. Some lessons specific to Northeastern University and some in general.

When Covid hit, all universities closed and moved to online learning. This had a number of interesting consequences for most universities. Ninety percent equate their campus with their identity.

That is not the case at Northeastern because of the number of campuses throughout the nation, Canada and London.

Universities started integrating the notion of online learning and hybrid learning. Going forward, faculty should expect all universities will do that. That is the first lesson in higher education.

Another lesson learned is that the residential model is an important model for our students and students at large. When universities closed last year and Northeastern didn't close, various colleges and universities faced the following situation. Their students rented apartments in student groups to recreate campus life.

The residential model is important not only for interaction with faculty but with other students, with clubs – all the learning that takes place outside the classroom.

Faculty gave students a great experience last year resulting in a record number of applications, 75,500 and next year is expected to be even higher.

Students want our type of education that is based on co-op and experiential education. Even during Covid, this remained an attractive model. At start of Covid, there was a decline in some domains for co-op and rise in others, such as telehealth. Now see across the board a strong demand for co-op students so students have choices.

In terms of research, society at large realized it had to help with Covid. Northeastern did its share and received the largest number of grants of any institution from the NSF relating to Covid. This has positioned Northeastern extremely well in society. The university had a stellar year in research. Last year, Northeastern had over \$185 million dollars in research and expects continued growth and impact here.

Another aspect of Covid that caught us all flat-footed was the powerful Black Lives Matter movement that, along with other movements, took over the nation and the world. Our community gathered and said what can we do? How can we change the situation?

At this point, we can report that we have the most diverse student body ever. Northeastern needs to continue to diversify faculty, staff and the student body. We need to innovate in the way we are thinking about diversification, opportunities and access. Khoury College will announce something exciting soon. Since it is not official yet, President Aoun did not want to name the institution. Khoury is concluding an agreement with a historically black college to allow students to get into the Align program and get into the tech world. We expect to reach out to other institutions and become pioneers in allowing people of color, black, Hispanic and native American communities to engage in endeavors not previously done.

President Aoun turned to focus on the academic plan. He noted that Northeastern 2025 was a very innovative academic plan that put us on the map in higher education. Other universities refer to this plan. Northeastern was the first in nation to look at the impact of AI and tech on people. This plan allowed us to launch many endeavors including the important concept of Humanics. Students are reacting very favorable to that. Over 50% of students applying to Northeastern are already involved in

combined majors. That is Humanics in action.

The University launched other endeavors to allow students to chart their own path or personalized journey. There is a demand there.

Looking at students who are applying here, they are interested in co-op, combined majors (explicitly Humanics), research and discovery, and in mobility. They want different experiences. They don't want to remain in a campus but be engaged with the world. They want different academic experiences. They want London, Silicon Valley – we can provide this throughout our network.

Northeastern has a model for education that is impactful. Our research is impactful and will grow. Northeastern has to continue to diversify. It cannot stand still and be satisfied. Why? The world is noticing our model and trying to duplicate that in terms of experiential education, impact and a strong desire to be inclusive in an innovative way.

President Aoun noted that the Trustees also worked on the academic plan. The new academic plan is called Experience Unleashed. Meaning in whatever we do, we have to integrate the context in which we live, study, we impact and we are impacted with.

The previous plan was a binary plan focused on the experience between humans and machines. The world is more complex. Northeastern must understand and impact the physical world. It must understand and impact the biological world. And Northeastern must understand and impact each other and incorporate the digital world.

Moving forward the focus will be on the integration of all these worlds and how Northeastern adds value with our education and research. We will use what is special to Northeastern – that Northeastern is experiential throughout.

Research and discovery must be contextual. The global university system Northeastern is building is allowing us to have a campus that is much larger than Boston. Northeastern will take advantage of that in terms of learning, recruitment, and impact.

The President said that Mills College can be a game changer for us. Northeastern will be the only US university that has two comprehensive campuses, one on the west coast and one on the east, with different offerings that will adapt to the context in which they exist. Our platform is becoming nationwide and worldwide.

President Aoun said in general higher education is not doing well. Last year only 34% of colleges filled their seats. Northeastern bucked that trend. Differentiation is the key. Co-op gives us differentiation in terms of learning.

In the next couple of years, as more colleges and universities close or merge, Northeastern will have opportunities. The President said the University already has opportunities on a weekly basis and says no to 98-99% of them. Why? Northeastern is driven by new ambitious strategic plan. Moving forward, everything we do has to have leadership and impact. We will continue to refine this in terms of learning, building research opportunities and building a global university system.

The future of the global university system is in our hands collectively. The future is exciting. Let's make it happen.

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.

- Prof. Mukerjee thanked the President Aoun for his remarks. He asked for the President's insight on the two strategic places Northeastern has gone under his leadership – Mills College and London. What is the President's vision for both?

President Aoun said to add in the Roux Institute and every node in the network. Some faculty are saying they want to be in London for network opportunities and same with Roux Institute in regards to research opportunities. We start by saying what are the opportunities and who would like to partake. It's in your hands.

- Prof. Gonyeau noted that the expectation because of Covid is that we will be integrating more hybrid learning models and thinking about the major investment the university put in place with NUFlex, balancing that with the fact that students still want a residential model, what is the right balance? We have the infrastructure and have students here and engage with them while we are also leveraging the technology and platforms we have. How should we balance those things?

President Aoun said what's exciting about this is seeing proposals by students and faculty. What students are looking for and we are shaping is a different way of engaging them in the learning process. For example, last year, there was something in online learning called NUStart for students who couldn't be in Boston. This is morphing into Global Connections. This is a completely different model of learning for us and will be refined more. The aim is to have it contextual and experiential from day one.

The balance is going to be through innovation and we are very receptive to innovation.

- Prof. Modestino asked the President to talk about the infrastructure that could be put in place to coordinate across campuses. She said she liked the idea of specialized campuses but what about sharing resources and learning across campuses.

President Aoun asked how do we share our experiences? What is working and not working? We need to continue to work on this and share it. At this point, we built the research infrastructure in the greater Boston area – Boston, Burlington and Nahant. Moving forward we are counting on building a research infrastructure at the Roux. The Mills campus provides us with enormous opportunities. It is a gorgeous campus -- 135 acres. It is twice the footprint of this campus. There will be research infrastructure opportunities, and also opportunities to engage with the community.

The Provost will share the many possibilities over the next year. In some ways, now that the canvas is the global campus, all of us are called to play a role at this level. We have a lot to learn from the world and hopefully a lot to contribute ourselves.

## IV. PROVOST REPORT

Provost Madigan said that the President had covered most topics. In reference to the academic plan, he said we began work last spring with many involved. Now need to turn this aspirational document and turn it into a long-range plan. That work is underway.

In regards to Mills college, there is a lot of work going on. There are two accreditors involved and a CA state agency. The focus is very much on the current Mills students and looking to new programs on that campus.

Regarding the new College of Humanities in London, the accreditor is coming this week. It is an

important time for that campus.

Provost Madigan said we are really evolving into a global research university with pieces still to be worked on, but it is an exciting time. There are so many pieces of the puzzle yet to figure out. Faculty should think creatively how to harness this.

The Provost said this is the time of year faculty hiring is underway at all levels. We hired many great faculty last year and expect this year to be good as well. Thank you for the work with this.

#### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

- Prof. Gonyeau asked with new academic plan and how we move forward, are there any non-starters? Is everything on the table? Because the academic plan talks about getting rid of departments or changing the infrastructure. Are there parameters around these big ideas?

Provost Madigan said no, nothing is off the table. He also said the academic plan does not call for the dismantling of departments. There was a sentence in the first draft that was misinterpreted. It has now been reworded. The plan is very centered on impact on the world and work backward – how do we organize ourselves to maximize impact. The problems in the world can't be addressed by one discipline, but many disciplines. Need all to target these problems and bring disciplines together.

- Prof. Mukerjee said it is exciting about the various campuses but need a more sustained conversation about how to integrate these campuses so faculty can report back to our units about the plans on the table and then bring back suggestions to the senate. For example, a suggestion for summer conferences in the other places to get to know them and be able to integrate our teaching and research.

Provost Madigan agreed that we need to have these conversations and collectively harness all our imaginations. He hopes the senate is active with this. Mills has definitive agreement but they are still an independent entity until July 1, 2022.

- Prof. Gonyeau asked how can the senate communicate out to faculty to see how to get faculty to engage in this so that everyone feels part of this and we are getting all the best ideas?

Provost Madigan said he would love to hear ideas about how to do this.

- Prof. Poe said since Mills has an English Dept., should we now be thinking of a massive Northeastern English department or individual ones with their own identities? Last year with NCH, it was good to have those colleagues teach online, but when we started talking about on ground instruction it became complicated around such issues as visas. Also, are there opportunities for money for interdisciplinary work across colleges so we can get to know and work with our colleagues?

Provost Madigan said yes, seed money will be created. With regard to departments at Mills, Mills is very small. He said he doesn't know the answer to what happens to the tiny departments at Mills and what makes sense. There are lots of questions like that that are still on the table. They also have a school of education. How do we bring these together?

- Prof. Poe said they have lot of adjuncts. How does that work with our PT faculty who are unionized?

Provost Madigan said they use the term adjunct differently than we do.

- Prof. Gonyeau said he sees a central role for the senate to play in these discussions with regard to faculty governance so all faculty in all locations have a say. Communicate better for more engagement.

Provost Madigan said they are imagining a Mills College at Northeastern and that college will have representation on the senate starting fall 2022.

- Prof. Arnold Mages said he saw the recent announcement of the decommissioning of SAIL. He asked did the Provost see something to parallel the SAIL experience?

Provost Madigan said he is not a SAIL expert but the objectives and aspirations of SAIL are fantastic but it didn't work as in the utilization was very low. It missed the mark. We need to double down on this. The Student Hub is a success and thought it would help with SAIL but did not.

- Prof. Gonyeau said many faculty did not feel involved in the development of the SAIL platform so that may have affected student usage. Faculty need to be involved in the processes and development so all new things are successful.
- Prof. Smith said related to building out the global network and having faculty working together. An issue came up in Khoury with other campuses, around the issue of private faculty space. It was hard to meet with students and keep faculty items safe. He meets with students online to maintain confidentiality. Raise this with strategic planning of nuts and bolts at lower level.

Provost Madigan said perhaps they could discuss this issue at another senate meeting. Need to rethink how we use space. Need collaborative space with fluid work. Do we need confidential spaces as well? Need to think holistically how we design efficient spaces that are also designed in consort with how we work.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Prof. Rhonda Board  
Senate Secretary