



Northeastern University

Office of the Faculty Senate

TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: Secretary, Faculty Senate
SUBJECT: Minutes, November 17, 2021

Present: Professors: Avalon, Board, Bourns, Caracoglia, Chiou, Cisewski, Dau, Ergun, Fernandez, Gonyeau, Gundavaram, Herlihy, Hertz, Mages, McSherry, Molnar, Mukerjee, Musselman, Nieves, Rappaport, Smith, Spencer, Toledano Laredo, Willey, Wood, Zaarour, Zimmerman, Zulick

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

Absent: (Professors) Carr, Dennerlein, Landsmark, Strange
(Administrators) Gallagher

CALL TO ORDER: 11:50 a.m.

I. The minutes for the 11.3.21 Senate meeting were approved.

II. **SAC REPORT:**

- Prof. Gonyeau reported that since Nov. 3rd SAC has met 2 times.
- SAC continues to work with search committees to schedule their initial meetings.
- SAC continues to work with Senate committees to send out a comprehensive survey to faculty to gather data related to committee charges.
- SAC met with Provost Madigan and Senior Vice Provost Franko 1 time. Discussion topics included: HR benefits, follow up on past senate resolutions, communication strategies, Mills college updates, all things COVID-19, faculty involvement in the new academic plan, faculty hiring initiatives and processes.

III. **PROVOST REPORT:**

- Provost Madigan reported that activities around Mills College are moving along. HR, IT, etc. work going on now in preparation of the merger. Discussions around programming will be beginning in the next few weeks. There will be opportunities for all to engage in these discussions.
- Provost Madigan also reviewed the T/TT hires for this year. He said faculty would have seen a marketing piece that stated Northeastern was going to hire 500 faculty in 5 years. He said the message to the outside world is yes, Northeastern is hiring.

He showed a slide with all colleges and said the searches could yield about 80 hires for FY 23. The University hired 70 FT/TT faculty members last year in addition to other categories.

He noted that searches this year are mostly organized thematically versus by department. Last year, about ½ were joint hires across colleges, about 1/3 represented diversity in one way or another. Three of the current searches are truly multi-college.

Provost Madigan noted that within COS, last year, Dean Sive led a successful hiring program called

INVEST. Dean Sive joined the discussion and explained the goal was to try and figure ways to identify junior candidates not in a typical track who could join right after a PhD. Many represent demographic groups across society that would enhance faculty at Northeastern.

The program was across the college with no fields designated. This resulted in six subcommittees that went through more than 600 applicants. COS ended up making 6 offers and brought on board 4 candidates who greatly added to the college's and University's demographics.

The INVEST program offered an independent postdoc period where candidates would be able to develop independent research programming with funding and no other obligations besides research.

This year COS has extended INVEST and have 6 spots open now. They already have 100 pre-inquiries to date. The program has been very successful. There are discussions of extending the INVEST program to other colleges.

Provost Madigan thanked Dean Sive for pioneering this endeavor. He added that diversifying our faculty and insuring that the faculty look like our students and the communities in which we are working is an absolute imperative. This program is a hugely important device in that regard.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

- Prof. Spencer asked if there was any indication as to when the DMSB Dean Search Committee will be fully constituted?

Provost Madigan said there are two Dean searches underway – CPS Dean Search Com. and the DMSB Dean Search Com. The Provost said it took a while to constitute these two committees but we are now ready to convene them.

Prof. Spencer also asked if there would be an announcement to her faculty as to who is on the committee?

Prof. Gonyeau said yes, they would get that information out and the scheduling of the first meeting was underway.

- Prof. Herlihy thanked the Provost for the hiring overview. He asked if there are any numbers/profiles for hiring NTT hiring strategy?

Provost Madigan said he will report on this at next senate meeting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. ACADEMIC PROPOSAL: GRADUATE COUNCIL COMMITTEE – PROGRAM IN THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.

Prof. Zulick read the following:

BE IT RESOLVED That the University establish the Masters of Professional Studies in Insurance Analytics and Management in the College of Professional Studies as approved by the Graduate Council Committee on 13 October 2021 (17-0-0).

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

There were no questions and discussion.

The VOTE to establish the Masters of Professional Studies in Insurance Analytics and Management in the College of Professional Studies PASSED 29.0.0.

B. **ACADEMIC PROPOSAL: GRADUATE COUNCIL COMMITTEE – PROGRAM IN THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.**

Prof. Zulick read the following:

BE IT RESOLVED That the University establish the Master of Arts in Security & Intelligence Studies in the College of Professional Studies as approved by the Graduate Council Committee on 13 October 2021 (17-0-0).

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

There were no questions and discussion.

The VOTE to establish the Master of Arts in Security & Intelligence Studies in the College of Professional Studies PASSED 29.1.0.

C. **ACADEMIC PROPOSAL: GRADUATE COUNCIL COMMITTEE – PROGRAM IN THE BOUVÉ COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES.**

Prof. Molnar read the following:

BE IT RESOLVED That the University establish the Masters of Science in Real-World Evidence in Healthcare and Life Sciences in the Bouvé College of Health Sciences as approved by the Graduate Council Committee on 27 October 2021 (17-0-0).

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

There were no questions and discussion.

The VOTE to establish the Masters of Science in Real-World Evidence in Healthcare and Life Sciences in the Bouvé College of Health Sciences PASSED 30.0.0.

V. **PRESENTATION:**

DIANE LEVIN, UNIVERSITY OMBUDS

Current Trends in Faculty and Staff Concerns: The View from the Office of the Ombuds

(The presentation can be found on the Faculty Senate website.)

Prior to her presentation, Prof. Gonyeau noted that SAC has been meeting with Diane Levin and plan to ask her to give updates to the senate once a semester.

The Ombuds gave an update on the “view from her seat” looking back at last fiscal year in terms of trends and patterns involving faculty and staff. In terms of looking ahead, she looked at what stayed same and where there have been shifts.

The parameters of the Ombuds role is to provide a safe space to informally raise and address concerns off the record and to be first or last resort for any point in the life cycle of an issue. Various universities and other organizations have ombuds offices like Northeastern University does.

The standards of practice that attach to her work are promulgated by a professional association that she belongs to -- the International Ombuds Association.

In her role, Diane Levin follows the Ombuds Office Practice Standards: confidentiality, independence, neutrality and informality except for mandated reporting in Title IX instances and if someone plans on inflicting harm. There is a "firewall" between this office and Provost's Office. She does not take a side. She passes on feedback to institutional leaders but does not influence a decision on them.

She noted that her office is not an office of notice or record. This means she can't compel anyone to react. She doesn't have the power to direct others to act upon feedback.

In regards to data tracking, nothing is tracked that will lead to visitor (term she uses to emphasize informal nature of interactions) identification. She tracks data so that she can identify how people are using her office. She also does this to identify patterns and provide feedback to the university about systematic trends. She tracks the numbers of visitors, affiliation, referral sources, types of concerns and services provided by ombuds office.

The Ombuds position is part time but has a large workload.

The types of information that is tracked include: number of visitors, visitor affiliation (faculty, staff, other), referral source, types of concerns, and services provided by the Ombuds Office.

Trends seen include:

1. Visitor numbers: Since she started tracking visitor numbers in 2018, the numbers have increased. Staff outnumber faculty 3-4: 1. Primarily supports FT and not PT faculty, probably due to dispute mechanism with the union for the PT. For 2021 – 410 total. This year so far (thru Oct. 31) 142. Case load increased each year.
2. Visitor concerns: The number has increased since 2018. For 2021 there were 920 concerns. This year 333 concerns so far. About 2.3 concerns/visitor, so one visitor typically with more than one concern.
3. Major themes this past FY:
 - a. Organizational climate and employee morale. Faculty and staff alike with stress and strain of pandemic.
 - b. DEI issues, especially in hierarchical and peer relationships. Need for those working with mentoring and managing people/teams, to be better equipped to support healthy dynamics within diverse teams.
 - c. COVID-related safety and health concerns. Primarily for those with student-facing roles and who must be physically present.
 - d. Perceived misalignment between NU values and practices. Disconnect between stated and practiced values.
4. Top 3 categories for faculty this FY:
 - a. Organizational climate: responsibility of leadership to address climate and morale; and importance of communication and messaging on trust and confidence.

- b. Value and culture: alignment of values stated versus practiced, especially this year the “one NU” and NTT experience and how to help with this. Tenured faculty coming forward in support of this.
 - c. Hierarchical relationships: fear of retaliation for raising concerns or questions. Some have reported experiencing intimidating behavior or microaggressions in interpersonal interactions.
5. Top 3 categories for staff this FY:
- a. Hierarchical relationships top priority. She is hearing more reports around bullying or retaliatory behavior or fear of retaliatory behavior. There are DEI concerns. Appreciate anti-racism training but want to know those efforts to improve this will continue.
 - b. Organizational climate. There are concerns around staff retention and keeping morale boosted. There are still issues around the pandemic. Staff also talking about how important communication is.
 - c. Alignment between NU values and practices. Have come to Ombuds Office more so than faculty to talk about impact of specific policies and changes, such as sick time.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

- Prof. Spencer said her colleagues have shared a lot of what was just stated. The bigger question is “and then what”? What can be done to affect change that is meaningful?

Diane Levin responded that she cannot compel others to act. She serves as a megaphone for voices. She collects voices and perspectives to then bring forward concerns. If she does not hear about a concern over a period of time, she doesn’t know if it is still a persistent issue.

She said she wants visitors to continue to contact her and keep concerns on her radar. Also, needs more voices to weight an issue (5-6 versus 1-2 for example). She can help an individual go face-to-face with a decision-maker. And she can brainstorm with an individual.

- Prof. Gonyeau said this is why SAC wants a relationship with the Ombuds Office and help create action items on priority topics.

Diane Levin said so many visitors to her office do not want to be seen as complainers. They care about folks, the students, the university, etc. and are coming forward because see potential opportunities for the university and/or potential costs and wants the University to not lose out on these opportunities.

- Prof. Rappaport asked if there is any data tracking of efficacy of the referrals?

Diane Levin said often people do not follow up with her because they are not required to follow-up. So it is hard to track what might have happened. She is working with other ombuds to figure how to track and measure their effectiveness.

- Prof. Spencer asked if the Ombuds sees patterns, does she present these general patterns to the Provost’s Office?

Diane Levin said this depends on the issue and who is the appropriate recipient. For ex., in regards to the sick policy, she would go to chief HR officer. Also, this would be driven by needs of the visitors. Some may fear retaliation so want the process to go slow and have her hold back until they feel safe. She may accompany the visitor to that meeting not as an advocate but as a neutral support.

- Prof. Spencer said it strikes her that many of the examples offered are hierarchical and there are definite power issues. So visitors may be uncomfortable with the Ombuds moving forward. How do we get something done if the problem is with a supervisor yet can't tell the supervisor?

Diane Levin said she works with visitors to regain control over their circumstances.

Diane Levin recognized her colleague Dr. Kimberly Wong who is the graduate and PhD student Ombuds/resource.

- Prof. Herlihy asked if there were any statistics ombuds-wise of instances of retaliation across universities? Prof. Herlihy clarified that he meant retaliation from the ombuds process.

Diane Levin said there is no research on it to her knowledge. Anecdotally, if someone found out about a visitor visiting the Ombuds Office, it does not come from her office. She can look into this. She takes the breach of confidentiality very seriously, and has in all her past and present roles.

Prof. Gonyeau took a moment to highlight a flyer noting the upcoming **Provost's Diversity Recruitment and Retention Forums**.

(This flyer is posted to the Senate website with the 11.17.21 Senate materials.)

Sr. Vice Provost Deb Franko noted the virtual forums will be open to all faculty.

The focus will be on broadening candidate pools and how to recruit and retain faculty. The Provost's Office will send out a notice soon.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Prof. Rhonda Board
Senate Secretary