



# Northeastern University

## Office of the Faculty Senate

**TO:** Faculty Senate  
**FROM:** Secretary, Faculty Senate  
**SUBJECT:** Minutes, 16 September, 2020

Present: (Professors) Bart, Beighley, Board, Caracoglia, Carr, Chai, Cisewski, Dau, Desnoyers, Erdogmus, Ergun, Goluch, Gonyeau, Gundavaram, Herlihy, Laboy, Lorette, Mages, McNabb, Mountain, Mukerjee, Musselman, Smith, Spencer, Stephens, Stowell, Wertheim, Wood  
Administrators: Madigan, Isaacs, Loeffelholz, Poiger, Ronkin, Sive, Gallagher

Absent: (Professors) Bormann, Dennerlein, Poe, Vollmer, Zulick  
(Administrators)

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

The August 31, 2020 Senate minutes were approved.

### I. SAC REPORT

- Prof. Erdogmus reported that since August 31, 2020 31 SAC met 3 times and worked towards finalizing members and charges for senate committees.
- SAC is almost done populating all standing senate committees and is aiming to finalize all committee charges this week.
- SAC anticipates that all standing committees will start working by the end of September, if we can find a kick-off meeting solution for all committee members.
- Prof. Erdogmus reported that there will be an Ad-hoc Committee on Inclusion and Diversity at Northeastern with various charges around issues involving increased concerns around these issues.
- SAC will meet with Provost Madigan and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Deb Franko on September 17, 2020.

### II. PROVOST REPORT

- Provost Madigan noted that students are back in large numbers and classes are underway.
- He said NUFlex has experienced some hiccups, but these are being addressed.
- The Provost said on the COVID-19 testing front, positive rates are extremely low at this point.
- The Provost noted the school suspended 11 students due to COVID-19 non-compliance at the Westin Hotel. They are trying to help these students as best they can.

- The Provost believes the decision was the correct one to ensure that we have a successful semester for our entire community.
- The Provost said he is looking forward to focusing on the newly initiated strategic planning process and engaging with the community and Senate involvement in all aspects of the planning process.
- The Provost said he is happy that that the Senate will have a committee on Inclusion and Diversity. He said the university will be examining a number of fronts on which we will be taking action. Referencing President Aoun's June announcement to the University on diversity and inclusion, the Provost set this let to setting up a series of workstreams. These workstreams have been working over the summer, resulting in recommendations, which are now being collated and will be sent out to everyone in the university. These recommendations will include metrics and goals.

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

- Michelle Laboy asked if the University is tracking how many Boston students are abiding by the 3 day testing schedule. The Provost said they are and the initial compliance rates are extremely high.
  - The Provost said the importance that this compliance remain high over the course of the semester is not lost on him and there are strategies in place to work to keep everyone motivated to continue with these high compliance numbers. He added there are waves of communications planned for the semester.
- Ed Wertheim said he knows the fiscal year is over and he knows the auditor's report isn't in yet, but unaudited, what is our fiscal situation as of June 30<sup>th</sup>. He also asked if the Provost could comment on our fiscal situation moving forward.
  - The Provost said that the fiscal year that just ended, ended strongly with a modest surplus.
  - He said FY '21 is much more complicated, as the University was hit on two fronts:
    - There was a large decrease in international students.
    - COVID-19 reopening procedures have been very expensive.
      - Testing (procedures as well as staffing), technology, infrastructure etc. The University is doing 7-8,000 tests a day.
    - Current thinking is to be extremely conservative right now in university spending while we wait and see how the year unfolds.
  - Ed Wertheim followed up asking as a result of these large testing expenditures and revenue shortfalls, does the University anticipate significant steps to address the anticipated/possible shortfalls?
    - The Provost responded that the University is evaluating the situation as it unfolds.
    - He added we have frozen staff hiring at this point and withheld merit increases for last year.
    - He said the University wants to continue with a normal hiring season, but that situation is another lever by which we may need to restrict based on the financial situation of the University.

- Dee Spencer asked how have faculty responded to the initiatives for parents? Are there any continuing concerns or questions that faculty have?
  - The Provost turned to Sr. Vice Provost Deb Franko for an update. She said she has received a number of positive responses to increases in CARE.com, as well as tutoring changes. Also, the promotion and tenure dossier extension deadline to November 1<sup>st</sup> for all faculty has been well received.
- Michelle Laboy said she was curious what the Provost may have found out about the Broad Institute testing children of staff/faculty.
  - Provost Madigan said that Northeastern University is not licensed to test family members, but the Broad Institute may be able to do so. The Provost will follow up on that point.
- Ozlem Ergun asked for an update on how the student hub is choosing which students can be in-person? It seems like there still are some problems with very few students in-person and a large number saying that they can't get in-person assignments for some classes.
  - The Provost responded that the scheduler is up and running. He said there is an algorithm allocates available spots in classrooms to students who want to be in person. And it does so in a way that rotates students in those spots. The Provost said there were some testing issues in the first week do the 1-3-5 COVID-19 testing regimen and quite a few students were excluded.
  - The scheduler seems to be assigning less students to in person, perhaps due to the testing restrictions, but feedback should be sent if the issues persist.
  - There is a lack of clarity about the algorithm, so a request to send out a clarifying message to students and faculty may be in order.
  - There may be some issues with the scheduling and testing results system not efficiently talking to the class scheduling software, the Provost asked for some specific examples so that any problems can be identified.
  - Sr. Vice Provost Franko suggested that the Senate invite Cole Campese, V.P. Information Technology and CIO, to the next meeting to provide some more details about the process.
  - Cole Campese joined the meeting at the senate's request. He reviewed for the Senate how the Scheduler actually operates.
    - Monday at 12 a.m.: students are allowed to make preferences for courses that have an option for in person. Students need to make their choice before 9 p.m. on Wednesday evening.
    - Overnight, Wednesday to Thursday the algorithm runs.
    - Thursday am: preliminary view of next week for students and faculty.
    - Saturday afternoon (after close of Covid testing center) scheduler runs again and updates with student Covid testing results and are switched to remote if student is not in compliance.
      - If students are switched to remote because of non-compliance, the scheduler is not currently able to then allow other students to be in person, which is likely why we are seeing far fewer students actually in person

- V.P. Camplese also noted that as of Monday, Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, there were 9,525 students currently flagged as remote only. This came about as a result of a survey Enrollment Management sent to the students over the summer.
        - V.P. Camplese is working with Registrar’s office to see if any of these 9,525 students want to update their preference to see where they really are currently.
        - Also, as of the week of Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>, there were 4,500 students who had not finalized their Covid-19 testing.
          - Should see an increase in in-person attendance now that the 4,500 have completed the Covid-19 testing.
      - Some students seem to think that if they are not planning to come in person for classes next week, they do not need to get tested every 3 days. The Provost will work with others to strategize about communicating to all of our students that testing every 3 days is the expectation for anyone who might be in person at any point in the semester.
    - Jennie Stephens asked how the strategic planning process will intersect with the cluster proposals. She added faculty don’t know a lot about the student experience is on campus outside the classroom.
      - The Provost will ask Madeline Estabrook, Sr. Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, to come to a Senate meeting and describe the various student affairs activities that are happening.
      - Regarding the clusters and strategic plan, Provost Madigan said yes they will intersect and should inform each other.
        - He said the strategic planning process will likely take longer than the cluster process moving forward. He said the process will be an open process.
        - He plans to have open comments on the cluster proposals, with the intention of moving ahead with some of the clusters right away.
        - Michael Gonyeau asked a follow up question. Will there be an assessment of last strategic plan to help inform planning for the next strategic plan?
          - The Provost said he is establishing a group to do a deep analysis of the last strategic plan to inform the next and disseminate.

### III. NEW BUSINESS

Professor Gonyeau read the following and Dean Loeffelholz seconded.

Whereas irregularities due to introduction of NUFlex, complete transition to Canvas, and continuing pandemic circumstances impacting life and work conditions of faculty and students result in disruption to teaching and learning conditions,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate recommend that the provost and deans consider these irregularities in the fall 2020 term and recognize the faculty effort required to overcome

these unexpected and uncontrollable circumstances in the evaluation of teaching performance that is utilized for merit, tenure, and/or promotion considerations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that also considering resolution #25 by the 2019-20 senate, teaching evaluations for the entire 2020 calendar year take into account the challenging conditions under which instruction and learning took place.

#### DISCUSSION:

- Prof. Erdogmus said it seems some students' expectations may not be being met re: NUFlex versus some courses being fully remote for the Fall semester. This may translate into poor TRACE reviews for this semester.
- Provost Madigan said we have an uphill battle to persuade our students that remote education can be of the same quality as in person.
- Michelle Carr said she has also heard that there is some student disappointment about the number of courses that are only offered remotely and is likely to impact student TRACE scores.
- Dean Poiger said she understood the situation and wanted to know why merit committees and chairs are not included in the resolution.
  - CSSH Spring TRACE results showed that aggregate evaluation scores did not decrease significantly, but the response rate did decrease in spring.
  - She added we should all continue to contextualize the student feedback, but they are very important.
  - She added we should also continue to reach out to students about how important and helpful their feedback is to try to make sure the response rates do not continue to decrease.
- Peter Desnoyers said this semester may lead to tension between actions best for the campus community versus what is best for a faculty member's professional career.
  - Provost Madigan said so you are saying we do not want a faculty member who has a co-morbid condition feeling pressure to be in person for teaching because of fears about "bad" teaching evaluations.
- Dean Poiger proposed a friendly amendment that merit committees and chairs be included in the resolution.

The amended resolution read as follows:

Whereas irregularities due to introduction of NUFlex, complete transition to Canvas, and continuing pandemic circumstances impacting life and work conditions of faculty and students result in disruption to teaching and learning conditions,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate recommend that the provost, deans, chairs, and merit committees consider the irregularity of the spring/summer 2020 terms and recognize the faculty effort required for the unexpected transition from on-ground to remote instruction in the evaluation of teaching performance that is utilized for merit, tenure, and/or promotion considerations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that also considering resolution #25 by the 2019-20 senate, teaching evaluations for the entire 2020 calendar year take into account the challenging conditions under which instruction and learning took place.

The vote was taken. The motion PASSED, 34-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Michael Gonyeau, Senate Secretary