



Northeastern University

Office of the Faculty Senate

TO: FACULTY SENATE
FROM: Secretary, Faculty Senate
SUBJECT: Minutes, September 14, 2022

Present: Professors: Board, Caracoglia, Carr, Chiou, Cisewski, Di Credico, Folmar, Gonyeau, Hertz, Jaeggli, Kitagawa, Krishnamoorthy, Landsmark, McSherry, Molnar, Moore, Musselman, Rappaport, Rawson, Rolland, Sivak, Smith, Spencer, Strange, Zulick

Administrators: Madigan, Hackney, Reid, Radhika Seshan,

Absent: (Professors) Avalon, Godoy-Carter, Lin, Marano, Nieves, Toledano Laredo, Vollmer, Willey
(Administrators) Isaacs, Mynatt, Wadia-Fascetti

CALL TO ORDER: 11:50 a.m.

I. SAC REPORT:

- Prof. Gonyeau welcomed new faculty from all over the globe, especially new colleagues at Mills College.
- He reviewed links to the various University governance and faculty rights documents.
- He reviewed Faculty Senate procedures such as voting and raising questions.
- He noted SAC has finalized standing committee charges and staffing.
- SAC has met 14 times since April 2022 and has met with Provost Madigan and Senior Vice Provost Franko 5 times.
- The complete SAC report has been posted to the Faculty Senate website.

II. PROVOST REPORT:

- Provost Madigan welcomed all returning faculty, new faculty and Mills College members. He noted it was his third academic year at Northeastern.
- The Provost discussed the report of a package explosion on Tuesday, Sept. 13th. He stated the investigation is ongoing and campus was secure, safe and functioning.
- The Provost mentioned three particular things:
- There is a proposal to build new climate center on Governor's Island in New York City. Northeastern is one of three finalists. Seven university presidents were in the room on Northeastern's team. A winner will be picked some time in next couple of months.
- Regarding parking, the Provost said they are aware about concerns about the cost of parking. He said a lot of people were looking for a way forward on this topic.
- Finally, the major theme of the President's retreat this year was the implementation of the academic plan. Part of the academic plan is the idea of an impact engine. An impact engines would focus on a world problem and figure out what Northeastern University can do with our partners to make progress with it. He said seven of them are up and running and more are in the works. He

encouraged everyone to get involved in this by proposing an impact engine or joining one. There is a website dedicated to impact engines: <https://impactengines.northeastern.edu>.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

- Regarding the possible package explosion, Prof. Gonyeau asked about the timing of student notifications.
Provost Madigan deferred to Madeleine Estabrook, Sr. Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said students all received RAVE alerts (banner on top of university webpage shows announcements). They get email and texts. Students also received the message that faculty and staff received this morning about resources. A second message from her office to students also referenced student resources. ResLife staff were available last night for students.

- Prof. Spencer noted that a lot of students expressed frustration and felt communications were not timely or consistent. As a result, the rumor mill ran rampant. She noted that some received alerts and some didn't. She asked if students have to sign up for those alerts. One suggestion was to make alerts opt out.

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said it is opt in for both text and email. She said it is true our students don't always read their emails and she will take that feedback back.

- Prof. Musselman recommended that Northeastern be more proactive about its communications. She said her office is in Holmes Hall and she felt it was problematic that when arrived there was a Globe reporter wandering around the building. There didn't seem to be any increased surveillance.
- Prof. Carr said she also teaches in Holmes Hall. The Registrar did contact her that the building was safe. However, the key code for that classroom that has been used over the last 2 years is still active and she feels that is a security issue that she has addressed with her department.

Prof. Gonyeau said that SAC would discuss these issues more at the next SAC/Provost meeting.

III. PRESENTATION:

DIANE LEVIN, UNIVERSITY OMBUDS

Highlights of Ombuds FY2022 Annual Report and Emerging Trends for FY2023.

(Posted to the Faculty Senate website.)

Diane Levin shared highlights of themes after she gave refresher about her role and data collection practices.

With each successive fiscal year, she has supported more employees. Total visitor concerns have increased as well. (Instead of one issue raised, more like 2-3). There was an increase due to the pandemic and its disruptions to our campus operation and the resulting complex circumstances.

Themes by all visitors reporting include:

1. Organizational and leadership
2. Values, ethics, and standards
3. Evaluative relationships

- Top themes for Faculty concerns:
 - All 3 very similar to last year's themes
 - "One Northeastern" not experienced by many NTT
 - Childcare, school K-12 impact – faculty did not feel supported.
 - Unit head relationships with faculty poor
 - Faculty concerned with staff retention
- Top themes for Staff concerns:
 - Wanted reassurance from leadership
 - Retention concerns
 - Bullying, microaggressions a concern
 - Need more education about compliance resources but also distrust with them
- Looking ahead:
 1. Organizational climate: Employee retention concerns persist. Parking is a big theme, a part of whole compensation package not adequate vs competitors. Housing costs.
 2. Change management: impact on NTT, community and trust building.
 3. Employee experiences in evaluative relationships: ongoing pressures, need better prep and accountability for those in supervisory roles.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

- Prof. Rappaport asked if the visits are virtual or in-person.

Diane Levin said they are both, especially with a global campus. Most individuals want remote, many for the privacy and perceived safety.

- Prof. Caracoglia raised a question around compensation that is not equitable with COS/inflation. Has she heard about this and any possible solutions?

Diane Levin said that compensation and benefits used to NOT be a top priority but are now with both faculty and staff. Inflation a big issue, affordability of housing a big issue as well.

- Prof. Spencer noted that these themes are persistent over last few years. They have been brought up repeatedly. How can we fix these problems? First, in her research has she come up with any solutions for change?

Diane Levin said some issues may be unique to Northeastern because it is growing so rapidly. But overall, when it comes to rolling out new initiatives and plans, the key is broader representation at the table when the plans are developed. This could prevent later problems with success and implementation phases. She has seen these organizational problems elsewhere. Problems with direct supervisors are always a problem. She encourages folks to craft their own solutions, and look at other organizations.

IV. PRESENTATION:

MADELEINE ESTABROOK, SR. VICE CHANCELLOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Update on the Wellness Day Pilot Program.

Sr. Vice Chancellor Estabrook said that during Summer 2 they undertook a pilot program for Wellness Days, an idea from students and from a coalition of student governments across the city of Boston that

are looking for additional ways to support student mental health and wellness. The program had 3 goals:

1. To allow students to be absent a day from classes for self-care.
 2. To offer an efficient method for students to indirectly notify multiple instructors of this excused absence while maintaining privacy.
 3. To reinforce Northeastern's commitment and support for student well-being.
- Overall, 160 students took one day. Surveys were done with the students and their faculty (92 faculty members) to check that the goals of the benefit worked.
 - Personal, academic, or a health matters was the reason for the absence and it helped the students manage their academics and/or life.
 - Regarding the method of notification for instructors, students felt it was easy for them. But we will continue to work to improve.
 - Students want the program to continue (98%).
 - Faculty not as strong about continuing it:
 - Not strong objection but perhaps neutral for doing more of this.
 - Recommendations:
 - Summer courses more intense so may have more positive results with the program during summer.
 - A fall pilot will give more info/data about it. This has not been announced yet.
 - Will present a more complete assessment after midterms in the fall.

Need to refine the messaging so all understand the rules and students do not use this for the “wrong reasons”. Work cannot be extended or pushed off when taking a wellness day. So NO extension of deadlines, makeup tests, etc. should occur.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

- Prof. Strange said she likes this idea. Is there a version of this for courses with no participation grade and attendance requirements?

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said for example on a lab day, a wellness day can't be used. Is there an “opposite version” for what you asked? Is this needed in classes where attendance isn't taken. She will take this back to the student groups working on the development of this program.

- Prof. Strange also said she would like to discuss how it applies to TAs, especially Undergraduate ones. What is the messaging with them? And some are paid by the hour.

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said she will take this back as well.

- Prof. Sivak asked for other 1-credit courses (co-op, level 1000, etc.) how does this apply for those that meet one hour/week.

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said students need to take accountability and it's still up to students to make up the work. They will look at case studies of different types of situations to help with this. Work should not fall to the faculty to give the student the extra help for a makeup. Labs, clinicals cannot be a part of this. Students cannot miss those due to wellness day.

- Prof. Gonyeau asked for a clarification for the communication plan for fall?

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said they hope to start communicating next week most likely – if this senate presentation goes well.

- Prof. Cisewski said she already received a well being request from a student. She supports the program and thinks it is a good idea but this student is asking for the Monday of Thanksgiving break.

Vice Chancellor Estabrook said the request went out because it's still on the student hub but no formal announcement went out yet. That day is not appropriate to request and that will be emphasized in the messaging.

ADDITIONAL QUESTION ON COVID POLICIES:

- Prof. Benda asked, in regards to COVID policies in classroom, can faculty mention masking at all? Some faculty are immunocompromised and/or have family at risk.

Provost Madigan said that the policy is that masks are optional and if an instructor says anything, that can be viewed as coercive. Faculty can wear a mask.

- Prof. Benda said he understands that faculty are not allowed to have students Zoom into class. That classes must be in-person. He said he has had 2 students say they have COVID.

Provost Madigan said that is an overly strong statement. We offer in-person instruction but if someone can't be in class, we should facilitate students learning. Can be NU flex, get notes, record class, etc. It should be for unusual circumstances.

- Prof. Benda said so this up to the faculty member to decide how to facilitate the learning of a student who can't be there?

Provost Madigan said yes.

- Prof. Benda asked if this is this messaging going to the students and parents?

Provost Madigan said yes. We are not going to be prescriptive about what a faculty member should or should not do.

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Prof. Rhonda Board
Senate Secretary