

## Hello! Thank you for being here today.

Dee Spencer, SAC Secretary

- FTNNTT faculty member at DMSB
- 7<sup>th</sup> year of service on Faculty Senate committees
- 5<sup>th</sup> year as an elected senator
- 2<sup>nd</sup> term on the Senate Agenda Committee

# Background

This body does important work.

I have learned that we are strongest when we are informed and united.

- That doesn't mean we will always agree with one another.
- It does mean that we will make the best decisions when we have had ample time to properly digest a topic, to listen respectfully to each other, and to thoughtfully consider dissenting positions.

During and after our last meeting, I was concerned about the splintering that took place among faculty.

I would like to offer a perspective that I hope will bring us all back together.

- I believe that most faculty become Faculty Senators because they want to participate meaningfully in faculty governance.
- Senators become Senate Agenda Committee members because they see problems that they want to address, and because they want to actively advocate for faculty.

An enormous amount of the Senate Agenda Committee's time is focused on how to move something forward, so that the administration will understand and support our efforts. Why is this important?

- Faculty Senate approved resolutions are toothless, unless they are approved by the provost.
- Likewise, changes to the Faculty Handbook must be approved by the Board of Trustees.
- It is often a frustrating - and sometimes fruitless - experience.

I am not a patient person.

- I am continually frustrated by the slow pace of change that benefits faculty and the rapid pace of change that benefits the administration.
- But sometimes we win the fight.
- We make progress, albeit painfully slowly, and we return to fight again, because the causes and the people that we are fighting for are worth the effort – and because, at the end of the day, we want to effect positive change.

I suspect that you feel the same way.

It was not prudent to raise the topic of Academic Freedom hastily.

- The topic itself is enormous and needs to be discussed at length.
- Perhaps most importantly, faculty and the administration need to communicate effectively about Academic Freedom so that we can move forward together towards a common goal.

After our last Faculty Senate meeting, SAC decided to dedicate an entire meeting to the concept of Academic Freedom.

- We wanted to better understand faculty concerns and specific requests for change.
- We met with Professor Louise Walker, a fellow Senate member from CSSH, who shared the questions she had collected from faculty colleagues.
- Thank you, Louise, for taking the time to meet with us, and for helping us frame this important conversation.
- I will share these questions with you.

- We also wanted to reach out to the administration to begin our dialogue, and to gather some answers.
- I will also share these answers with you.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team are here today. They may be able to provide some of the answers that I do not have.
- I will also provide some background and procedural information that you may find helpful as we begin this discussion.



## What is the difference between the Faculty Handbook and the Northeastern University Policies?

- “The Faculty Handbook is a living document providing useful policy information most pertinent to University governance and faculty rights.”
- All sections of the Faculty Handbook apply to all full-time faculty, unless otherwise specified.
- Substantive changes to the Faculty Handbook require the approval of the Faculty Senate, the Provost, and the Board of Trustees.

**The Faculty Senate is Governed by Faculty Senate Bylaws  
The Section Below of the Bylaws is Pertinent to the University  
Policies (here, related to Academic Freedom)**

2. Functions and Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

b. To be consulted as either a whole body or in appropriate committees on all policies, proposals, and problems of faculty concern...

d. To initiate consideration and recommendation on any matter of faculty concern;

f. To provide communication between the University faculty and the Administration.

## Faculty Handbook Committee

A standing committee that annually reviews and proposes revisions to the Faculty Handbook. This is a group of faculty who have volunteered their time very generously!

This year, one of the Committee's charges is to review the University's policies on Academic Freedom.

- When they complete their work, they will present a resolution for the senate to review, discuss, and vote on.
- If the Faculty Senate votes in favor of the proposed resolution, Provost Madigan will review it and approve it (or not), then the Board of Trustees will review it and approve it (or not),

# The Academic Freedom Module of the Faculty Handbook

Northeastern University subscribes to the 1940 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure issued by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges, as amended in 1970.

- This policy applies to all individuals insofar as they are involved in teaching or scholarship at the University.

The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments is available at:

<https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

## How AAUP Describes Academic Freedom

1. Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.<sup>4</sup> Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.<sup>5</sup>

## How AAUP Describes Academic Freedom

3. College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.<sup>6</sup>

## Northeastern University Policies

University policies apply to all students, faculty and staff of Northeastern University. They “promote the university’s mission, enhance operational efficiency and university governance, and communicate expectations relating to conduct.”

“This policy applies to all existing and proposed university policies, except that the approval process described does not apply to the Faculty and Student Handbooks... which follow their own approval processes.”

# The Policy Oversight Committee

The Policy Oversight Committee oversees the development, review and proposed revisions of University policies.

- The Policy Oversight Committee is comprised of “representatives from key areas across the university that has been established by senior leadership and charged with overseeing the policy process including proposals for new policies; review of policy drafts and revisions; advice to units on policy development; and facilitation of policy review and approval by senior leadership.

## **Provost Madigan:**

- This Committee was formed in 2015.
- Committee membership will be added to the policy website.



# The Policy Oversight Committee

## SAC Concern and Request

There are currently no representatives from the Faculty Senate on the Policy Oversight Committee.

- Consistent with the language in section 2b of the Faculty Senate Bylaws, is the SLT amenable to adding Faculty Senate members to the Policy Oversight Committee?

## Provost Madigan:

- We are amenable to adding faculty to the policy oversight committee.
- We can have Senate Representation on it as well.

# A great deal of consternation resulted from the "Safe Campuses, Civil Discourse: Frequently Asked Questions" site.

Faculty want to know:

1. Who authored and maintains the FAQ document, and how & when can it be updated?
2. What is the nature of that FAQ? Because it is linked as "additional information" in the Policy on Demonstrations, some faculty have asked if the FAQ represents university policy.

**A great deal of consternation resulted from the "Safe Campuses, Civil Discourse: Frequently Asked Questions" site.**

**Provost Madigan:**

- External Affairs authored this site, and it is being updated.
- These are responses to commonly answered questions, not policies.
- This site cannot be inconsistent with the Faculty Handbook. Towards that end, edits are being made to the site.
- Much of the language that faculty find objectionable will be removed.

Regarding the Policy on Demonstrations: “Are there specific criteria for approving or denying requests to demonstrate? Or is it entirely up to the discretion of the Provost's Office?”

**Provost Madigan:**

- There is a protocol in place for undergraduates.

<https://csi.sites.northeastern.edu/so-major-policies-demonstrations/>

- There is not yet a protocol in place for faculty.

## We received many comments related specifically to the text of FAQ item “What is the university’s stance on academic freedom for faculty?”

- The last sentence seems to be a “threat” to faculty. It encourages students to report on faculty. It makes faculty vulnerable to students with personal or political axes to grind.

### **Provost Madigan:**

- The FAQ on reporting will be very aggressively altered.
- This section has been edited and the last sentence has been removed from the FAQ.

**This language persists in the text of FAQ item “What is the university’s stance on academic freedom for faculty?”**

What can students, staff, or faculty members do if they experience or are aware of bias, harassment or discrimination?

Members of the Northeastern community with such concerns can contact the Office of the Provost. Depending on the nature of the concerns, they may be directed to other university resources.

We have received many questions about how “bias” is determined and how controversial topics are addressed. Additionally, “Are faculty who speak up on social media and off campus outside of their professional capacities to be targeted?”

**Provost Madigan:**

- Per the AAUP description of Academic Freedom, highly controversial classroom discussions should serve pedagogical goals.
- More discussion on this topic is needed.

## Requests for Faculty Senate Action

- “I am wondering if you all [faculty senators] could find out what the process is once the Provost has received a request for organization or protest, and what recourse faculty has if that approval is not forthcoming.”
  
- “I support the draft resolution that Dr. Manjapra provided to bring Northeastern policy in line with AAUP standards. I would like to encourage you, as CSSH Senators, to take it to a senate vote at your next meeting.”



## Requests for Faculty Senate Action

- “Can the senate adopt a statement requesting that the university rescind the policy?”
- “Could you please inquire as to the process and protection for faculty members if students contact the Office for University Equity and Compliance about a complaint?”
- “Can you please find out: Does this cover protest on campus exclusively? Can faculty participate in protests outside of campus—and if so, how will they be shielded from student complaints of political bias?”

We look forward to this important discussion!