Northeastern University
Faculty Senate

TO: Senate Agenda Committee
FROM: Academic Policy Committee
DATE: February 15, 2025
SUBJECT: Final report for AY 2024-2025 Academic Policy Committee

The Academic Policy Committee held six meetings during the 2024-2025 academic year to address the specific charges assigned by the Senate Agenda Committee (SAC). Below is a summary of how each charge was addressed, along with corresponding recommendations or resolutions:

Charge 1: Report on Whether and How Resolution 23 (4/24/19) Has Been Implemented.

Resolution 23 (April 2019):

"*Whereas there are a number of faculty with administrative appointments who might benefit from faculty input during performance review,*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate recommends that deans identify their administrative appointees who interact regularly with faculty and for whom faculty input would be valuable as part of their review, with the mechanism(s) for this faculty input left to the dean's discretion. The Administrator Evaluation Process is an option for those administrative appointees whose function is similar to that of department chair."

The Academic Policy Committee was tasked with assessing the extent to which Resolution 23 has been implemented. To fulfill this charge, the committee contacted the Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs from each of the ten colleges via email to gather information about implementation progress.

Findings from the Email Survey:

- Bouvé College of Health Sciences has fully implemented Resolution 23.
- D'Amore-McKim School of Business has partially implemented the resolution, applying it only to group chairs.
- Khoury College of Computer Sciences plans to implement a survey in spring 2025.

The responses also revealed that many Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs were unaware of Resolution 23. To gain further insights, the committee included questions on faculty awareness and perceptions of the resolution in the Faculty Senate Fall 2024 survey.

Faculty Senate Fall 2024 Survey Results:

In the faculty survey, several questions were posed. This report focuses on six key areas:
1. Awareness of Resolution 23.
2. Participation in providing input on administrative appointees.
3. Extent to which participants felt their input was considered.
4. Effectiveness of the current evaluation process.
5. Importance of faculty input in administrative evaluations.
6. Suggestions for improving the evaluation process.

These focus areas were chosen to capture faculty perspectives on the implementation of Resolution 23 and to identify opportunities for improving the administrator evaluation process in cases where it has been partially or fully implemented.

Awareness of Resolution 23
Among the 297 respondents, 186 (63%) indicated they were not aware of Resolution 23, while 63 respondents (21%) confirmed their awareness. An additional 47 respondents (16%) were unsure about the resolution. These results suggest a need for broader communication and outreach regarding the resolution and its objectives.

Participation in Providing Input
Out of 302 responses, 156 respondents (52%) reported that they were asked to provide input on the performance of administrative appointees in the past year. In contrast, 121 respondents (40%) said they were not asked, and 24 respondents (8%) were unsure. This highlights that while a majority were engaged, a significant proportion of faculty were excluded from the process.

Perception of Input Consideration
Regarding the extent to which faculty felt their input was considered, 86 respondents (33%) reported "Not at all," and another 63 respondents (24%) said their input was considered "Somewhat." Meanwhile, 38 respondents (15%) felt their input was considered "To a moderate extent." These mixed perceptions reflect varying levels of satisfaction with the process.

Effectiveness of the Evaluation Process
The perceived effectiveness of the evaluation process was rated as "Neutral" by 99 respondents (39%). However, 64 respondents (25%) found it "Ineffective," and 51 respondents (20%) deemed it "Very ineffective." Only 28 respondents (11%) rated the process as "Effective," highlighting a need for improvements in process design and execution.

Importance of Faculty Input
Faculty overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of providing input during performance reviews. Among 263 responses, 153 respondents (58%) considered it "Very important," and 65 respondents (25%) rated it as "Moderately important." This consensus highlights the value faculty place on their contributions to administrative evaluations.

Suggestions for Improvement
The survey collected 95 unique suggestions for improving the evaluation process. The responses to the question, "Would you recommend any changes to the evaluation process to ensure that

faculty input is more effectively incorporated in reviews of administrative appointees whose decisions directly impact faculty work?" reflect diverse opinions and suggestions. The responses can be categorized as follows:

1. General Support for Change
- A significant number of respondents recommended changes to improve the evaluation process. Some of the key themes include:
  - **Process Improvement**: Respondents suggested that the process should be better tailored to the roles and responsibilities of administrative appointees. Specific recommendations included explicit evaluation questions, 360-degree reviews, and more tailored evaluation questions for specific colleges and departments.
  - **Transparency and Accountability**: Many highlighted the need for greater transparency in how feedback is incorporated and how decisions are made. Suggestions included making raw data available to faculty, publishing summaries of faculty input, and ensuring administrators respond to feedback.
  - **Mechanisms for Feedback**: Proposed changes included anonymous discussion boards, an anonymous feedback link, and more regularized and standardized feedback mechanisms.

2. Concerns About Effectiveness
- Some respondents expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of incorporating faculty input, citing issues such as:
  - **Lack of Administrative Will**: Several comments pointed to a perceived lack of interest among senior leadership in enacting changes based on faculty feedback.
  - **Misalignment of Priorities**: Some noted that administrative decisions often prioritize financial or institutional growth over faculty concerns.

3. Specific Suggestions
- **Structural and Policy Changes**: Recommendations included forming committees to engage in the feedback process, adjusting faculty bylaws to enhance accountability, and basing administrator compensation and retention on faculty evaluations.
- **Direct Engagement**: Suggestions included requiring deans and administrators to directly engage with faculty through town halls or open letters to address feedback.
- **Enhanced Communication**: Several responses noted that emails requesting evaluations often go unnoticed, buried in other university correspondence. Clearer and more prominent communication was suggested.

4. Neutral or Negative Responses
- A number of respondents did not recommend changes, citing either satisfaction with the current process or skepticism about its impact. Some mentioned they were new faculty or lacked sufficient experience to provide input.

5. Barriers to Effective Participation
- Several respondents noted barriers that hinder effective participation, such as lack of awareness of the process, insufficient time during the semester, and unclear or undefined roles and evaluation criteria.

- A large number of faculty members emphasized that maintaining anonymity in the feedback process is important. This concern points to a potential fear of retaliation, which may discourage open and honest participation.

6. Critical Observations
- Some responses were critical of the process itself, highlighting issues such as:
  - Faculty feedback often being disregarded in decision-making.
  - The perception that administrators prioritize institutional objectives over faculty needs.
  - The limited impact of surveys when results are not clearly communicated or acted upon.

The responses to this question underline a widespread desire for a more transparent, accountable, and effective evaluation process. While some respondents expressed skepticism about the impact of faculty input, many offered constructive suggestions for improvement. Key recommendations include enhancing transparency, tailoring evaluations to specific roles, implementing standardized and anonymous feedback mechanisms, and fostering greater engagement between administrators and faculty. Addressing these concerns can help build trust and ensure that faculty voices are meaningfully integrated into administrative evaluations.

APC Recommendation:

Based on extensive faculty input, the Academic Policy Committee (APC) recommends that the Faculty Senate work collaboratively with faculty leadership within each college to support the development and implementation of a confidential feedback mechanism for gathering annual input from faculty on the performance of academic administrators.

This decentralized approach allows each college to design a process tailored to its specific administrative structure while aligning with shared principles of confidentiality, transparency, and faculty empowerment. For colleges that do not currently have a feedback mechanism in place, the Faculty Senate—through the APC—can provide guidance and share models and tools to support local implementation.

Faculty have consistently expressed concern about the lack of opportunities to provide meaningful feedback on academic leadership, particularly in contexts where hierarchical dynamics or fear of retaliation may discourage open communication. By supporting the establishment of anonymous and college-specific feedback processes, this initiative aims to promote trust, candor, and continuous improvement in academic leadership.

This recommendation builds on the model successfully implemented by the Bouvé College of Health Sciences, which uses an anonymous survey tool to collect structured feedback from faculty on college leadership. Appendix A includes a sample instrument adapted from Bouvé's model that can serve as a resource or starting point for colleges developing their own process.

Ultimately, the APC believes that empowering colleges to develop locally relevant feedback mechanisms—while supporting their efforts through Faculty Senate collaboration—will

strengthen shared governance, enhance faculty morale, and contribute to a healthier, more responsive leadership culture across the university.

Charge 2: Working in conjunction with the AEOC committee, identify faculty who work as unit heads across all ten colleges, who do not currently fall under the AEOC's evaluation process, and report (or propose if none exists) the review process for unit heads who have the same job function and responsibility as department chairs.

The Academic Policy Committee (APC) worked in collaboration with the chair of the Administrator Evaluation Oversight Committee (AEOC) and the Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs to identify faculty members who serve as unit heads across the university's ten colleges. The primary objective was to determine which individuals in these roles currently do not fall under the AEOC's evaluation process but could benefit from faculty feedback, given their managerial responsibilities and direct impact on faculty.

Findings

Through an email survey of Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs and a review of college websites, the committee identified 63 individuals serving in 13 distinct roles. These roles include:
- Senior Associate Deans of Academic Affairs
- Senior Associate Deans of Faculty Affairs
- Associate Deans of Faculty Affairs
- Senior Associate Deans for Academic Programs
- Associate Deans of Graduate Programs
- Associate Deans of Undergraduate Programs
- Associate Deans of Research and Innovation
- Associate Deans of Curricular Development
- Associate Deans of Graduate Education
- Assistant Deans for Academic Programs
- Assistant Deans of Academic Affairs
- Unit Heads
- Group Chairs

While the titles differ across colleges, some roles share identical functions. For example, both the Associate Dean of Graduate Education and the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs oversee graduate programs within their colleges and serve as unit heads. Despite differences in naming conventions, these roles involve significant managerial responsibilities, faculty interaction, and decision-making authority.

Key Observations

- **Roles Similar to Department Chairs**: Several roles were identified as comparable to department chairs in terms of responsibility and impact on faculty. Notably, Senior Associate Deans for Academic Affairs and Associate Deans for Academic Programs (both graduate and undergraduate) have substantial interaction with faculty and make

managerial decisions that can significantly influence faculty work environments and outcomes.

- ▪ **Reporting Structures**: In some colleges, associate deans report directly to the dean, while in others, they report to senior associate deans. This variation highlights the need for a consistent review mechanism across colleges to ensure that faculty feedback is incorporated into the evaluation of all unit heads with similar responsibilities.

Proposal for Review Process

Based on our findings, several key academic leadership roles should be evaluated with direct input from faculty to promote transparency, accountability, and leadership effectiveness. Specifically:

1. **Senior Associate Deans**: Given the scope and influence of their responsibilities—often comparable to those of department chairs—Senior Associate Deans for Academic Affairs should be included in college-based feedback processes. These processes should incorporate structured faculty input as part of their performance evaluations.
2. **Other Unit Heads**: Positions such as Associate Deans for Academic Programs (undergraduate and graduate) and Associate Deans for Education should similarly be included in these feedback mechanisms. Their responsibilities directly impact faculty experiences, making their evaluation through confidential faculty input essential.

Recommendation

Building on the recommendation above, we propose that particular attention be given to roles not currently evaluated by the Administrator Evaluation Oversight Committee (AEOC). These include Senior Associate Deans, Associate Deans, and other unit-level administrators with significant managerial oversight of faculty.

Incorporating faculty feedback into the evaluation of these roles will:

- ▪ Promote leadership responsiveness and growth;
- ▪ Enable early identification and resolution of faculty concerns;
- ▪ Strengthen transparency in academic governance;
- ▪ Support retention and morale through constructive engagement.

This initiative complements existing evaluation processes and addresses under-evaluated positions. It promotes greater consistency and equity in how academic leaders are held accountable across all colleges.

Resolution to Establish a Faculty Feedback Process for Administrative Leadership

Whereas, effective leadership within academic units influences faculty morale, productivity, and retention, thereby affecting institutional stability and success;

Whereas, faculty perspectives are a valuable resource for improving administrative leadership, promoting collaboration, and addressing workplace challenges;

Whereas, Resolution 23 (4/24/19; approved 5/7/19) affirmed the value of incorporating faculty feedback in the evaluation of administrative appointees whose actions significantly affect faculty;

Whereas, the institution currently lacks a consistent process for faculty to provide structured feedback on many administrators to whom they report;

Whereas, the Faculty Senate's Fall 2024 survey identified widespread concerns regarding transparency, fear of retaliation, and the lack of formal mechanisms for leadership evaluation;

Be It Resolved, that the Faculty Senate charge the Academic Policy Committee (APC) to collaborate with faculty governance bodies in each college to develop and implement a confidential, standardized process for collecting annual faculty feedback on administrative appointees not already reviewed through the Administrator Evaluation Oversight Committee (AEOC), including senior associate deans, associate deans, unit heads (as defined by each college), and other administrators with significant oversight of faculty;

Be It Further Resolved, that each college shall administer the survey annually, with results provided to the administrator's supervisor and shared with faculty within the respective college.

Respectfully submitted,
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Appendix A
Sample Survey Instrument for Faculty Feedback
Sample Survey

Leadership Experience Feedback Survey

Purpose:
The Faculty Senate seeks to anonymously gather faculty feedback on interactions with administrators across Northeastern University. Your responses will guide efforts to improve leadership effectiveness and decision-making processes.

Instructions:
- Reflect on your experiences with the listed administrators during the past academic year.
- Select "Unable to Comment" if you lack sufficient knowledge to provide a response.

Demographics Section

With which college are you primarily affiliated?

- College of Arts, Media and Design (CAMD)
- Bouvé College of Health Sciences
- College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH)
- College of Engineering
- College of Science
- Khoury College of Computer Sciences
- D'Amore-McKim School of Business
- School of Law
- College of Professional Studies (CPS)
- Mills College

Administrator Evaluation Section

Choose the administrator you want to evaluate and complete the process for each individual. For each administrator, rate the following statements using the provided scale:
1 – Strongly Agree
2 – Agree
3 – Neutral
4 – Disagree
5 – Strongly Disagree
6 – Unable to Comment

The Administrator:
1. Provides effective leadership in the implementation of program/unit goals.

2. Involves faculty in the formulation and implementation of program/unit goals and curricular decisions.
3. Fosters the professional and career development of faculty.
4. Recruits high-quality new faculty and staff.
5. Works to retain high-quality faculty through supportive policies and practices.
6. Effectively advocates for the program/unit within the college and institution.
7. Establishes and maintains high-quality and innovative curricula.
8. Promotes student recruitment, retention, and success.
9. Establishes a supportive and inclusive environment for students, fostering their development.
10. Promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in policies, practices, and decision-making.
11. Fosters excellence in teaching, mentoring, and advising.
12. Supports and fosters excellence in faculty scholarship and research contributions.
13. Conducts evaluations constructively, fairly, and in a timely manner, with actionable feedback.
14. Appropriately and fairly implements the unit's workload policy.
15. Delegates effectively while ensuring accountability.
16. Engages in clear, effective, and timely two-way communication with faculty and staff.
17. Creates a climate that encourages faculty to develop, innovate, and learn.
18. Promotes interprofessional and cross-unit collaboration.
19. Fosters a collaborative and respectful work environment open to new ideas.
20. Supports faculty well-being and work-life balance.
21. Fosters faculty morale and engagement.
22. Leads effectively through change, promoting innovation and continuous improvement.
23. Provides a clear strategic vision and aligns it with institutional priorities.
24. Fosters an environment of transparency and openness.

Open-Ended Questions

1. What strengths have you observed in the leadership of this administrator?
2. What areas could benefit from improvement?
3. Are there specific initiatives or changes you would recommend for the coming year?
4. Additional feedback regarding leadership effectiveness or support services.

Unit-Level Support Evaluation

Satisfaction with Dean's Office Support: Please rank your satisfaction with the support you receive from the Dean's office in the following areas:

1 – Very Satisfied
2 – Somewhat Satisfied
3 – Neutral
4 – Somewhat Dissatisfied
5 – Very Dissatisfied
6 – Unable to Comment

1. Support for curriculum and academic program development.
2. Assistance with faculty recruitment and retention.
3. Guidance and resources for research and innovation.
4. Support for student success and services.
5. Administrative processes such as budgeting and HR.

In the box below please feel free to share any positive examples and experience or suggestions for improvement/priorities in any of the other areas that the Dean's Office provides support (e.g., academic affairs, administration and finance, advancement and fundraising, clinical and experiential education, DEIB, faculty affairs, human resources, network programs, research and innovation):

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