

SAC Report

Faculty Senate Meeting
4 November 2020

SAC Activities since October 21, 2020

Met 2 times and worked with elected senators (via email and at an elected senators meeting)

- on the faculty response to the announced Spring 2021 remote work policy
- on continuing to gather input from faculty and senators regarding caregiving challenges faced by faculty

Met with Provost Madigan & Deb Franko once, in addition to other communications.

Topics of discussion included:

- Faculty remote work policy for Spring 2021
- Upcoming faculty handbook NTT faculty dismissal module
- Sustainability and Resilience Advisory Team report dated June 2019
- Improving communication between administration and faculty
- Accessing data necessary for the charges of FT-NTT Faculty Committee and Financial Affairs Committee

Spring Remote Work Policy

A group of elected senators prepared an open letter:

- <https://sites.google.com/view/open-letter-on-remote-work-neu/home>
- It received 762 signatures as of 9:47pm on November 3, 2020.

The letter emphasizes the following in the context of the Spring 2021 remote work policy:

- Concerns from a public health perspective
- Concerns from a diversity and inclusion perspective
- Concerns from a (faculty/staff) caregiving crisis
- Concerns for lack of shared governance
- Concerns from a pedagogical innovation perspective
- Concerns from a civic responsibility perspective

Spring Remote Work Policy

A memorandum regarding SoL faculty thoughts on the teaching on-campus policy was sent to the Faculty Senate by Prof. Hemanth Gundavaram (also Senator & Parliamentarian).

The memorandum summarizes various thoughts he received from SoL faculty, including:

- Concerns on overall safety, age and other risk factors
- Concerns on care for others (family members)
- Concerns for unilateral adoption of policy by administration without senate involvement
- Concerns regarding standing relative to peer institutions, challenges to recruiting
- Concerns regarding the introduction of HR/ADA into the process
- Concerns regarding pedagogy

Quoting from the SoL memorandum to the Faculty Senate:

Faculty Senate Role. The unilateral adoption of this policy without community discussion or faculty senate involvement is devastating to collegial governance. The governance handbook specifically requires the faculty senate “to be consulted as either a whole body or in appropriate committees on all policies, proposals, and problems of faculty concern.” It is hard to imagine a policy that could have greater faculty concern, and yet this was not done. The Administration’s unilateral action is a grave challenge to the faculty senate’s legitimacy and role in university governance.

Spring Remote Work Policy

Paraphrasing from a faculty member regarding the HR process mentioned in the policy:

- Requiring disclosure of health conditions to HR is an invasion of privacy and may lead to unintended negative consequences. This is not equivalent to an employee requesting accommodation under ADA.
- Requiring medical certification by a physician at a time reaching physicians is challenging, and providers have more important things to do than to certify someone's condition...
- Perception of risk varies; anxiety about risk is a factor to be considered. Discounting this means disrespect for faculty...
- Job security of faculty varies tremendously. Non-tenured faculty are less likely to raise concerns and may be more reluctant to reveal health conditions to HR, putting them at greater risk.

Paraphrasing from another faculty member regarding remote work in Spring 2021

- Thank you (senate) for the resolution, a call for common sense, decency, realistic expectations, compassion, and advocacy against this outrageous Forced Return summons.

Spring Remote Work Policy & Childcare Crisis

A memorandum was sent on October 28, 2020 from NUParents to Provost Madigan and others in the administration as a *Response to Provost Madigan's email entitled 'Spring 2021 Term: Faculty COVID-19 Temporary Remote Work Policy'* and was shared with SAC and senators.

The memorandum summarizes various challenges for parents struggling to balance work and family responsibilities, including:

- Majority of schools operating in hybrid or fully remote schedules
- Hiring a nanny or other childcare service being expensive due to low supply, and being challenging in practice due to other safety considerations
- The disproportionate impact of caregiving responsibilities on women, particularly women of color
- Infeasibility of grandparent support due to safety concerns, even if that was an option pre-pandemic
- Additional challenges facing single parents, without a partner to share all these responsibilities

Caregiving Crisis

The caregiving crisis continues to impact faculty and staff during the pandemic.

- This impact is multifaceted and goes beyond the significant financial burdens faced by caregivers.
- Children school schedules complex, children ages or transportation needs diverse, childcare partially open...
- Elderly parents (with dementia or other health issues) pose different challenges than childcare.
- Remote work not an option for partner/spouse (e.g. spouse is a doctor).
- We have established earlier that Care.com benefits are not useful nor sufficient in most cases.

A model that takes faculty/staff away from children/elders who need care is not appropriate.

A model that improves flexibility to enable balancing work/family responsibilities is necessary.

Suggestions to enable faculty/staff to better manage work/family balance challenges:

- Consistent stable long-term care-giving assistance, not temporary/emergency care assistance
- Lower work/course-load expectation, spread course load for spring into summer, flexible on/off daily schedules
- Childcare stipends, paid family leave, mental health days, family testing at NU
- Virtual adult-sitting, virtual pre-school, more support through NU daycare (including support for <29 months)
- Pay attention to faculty with especially unique conditions (e.g. clinical faculty co-funded by a hospital)
- Extend the March 2021 deadline for flexible spending accounts (FSA)
- Flexible enrollment for FSA, dependent care accounts for next year (another open enrollment in mid-2021)

Updates

There are no curriculum updates.

Student Government Association passes resolution SR-FA-20-102 regarding the University's pass/fail policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolution calls for

- a policy allowing students to opt-in for pass/fail grades for all classes,
- and extending the opt-in deadline to the last day of instruction (December 9th).