

April 6, 2005 Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting

Members In attendance: Eva Redei, Paul Arntson, Thomas Bauman, Caroline Bledsoe, Clarke Caywood, Dennis Chong, Sudhakar Deshmukh, Charles Geyer, Abraham Haddad, James Lindgren, Deborah Lucas, Martin Mueller, Michael Stein, Allen Taflove, Bruce Wessels

1. Presentation of the Hotline Initiative of NU: Michael J. Moody, Director of Compliance

Michael J. Moody, Director of Compliance, and Joan Trimuel, Audit Supervisor, presented a step by step look at Northwestern's newest Hotline Initiative to be administered by the EthicsPoint Company. Due to strict federal guidelines used in sentencing nonprofit organizations, NU felt a need to protect itself from future potential liability. The Hotline, scheduled to roll out on April 14th, offers a process by which the university can effectively and consistently service concerns or reports from faculty and staff of things that are going on which may be questionable in terms of internal and external regulations. It offers a web based and telephone based system which faculty and staff can securely use to disclose and ask questions about pertinent yet sensitive information related to unethical or careless practices. This one stop shop also allows individuals who do the investigating to appropriately document information and permits collaborators to find the information in one spot. When the university receives information from EthicsPoint, depending on the category of the comment, question or complaint, it goes to a specific university body. This Hotline tool has a unique feature which allows the university to temporarily communicate with faculty and staff without revealing the identity of individuals who wish to remain anonymous.

GFC members expressed concern in several areas, including the possibility of increased number of accusations as a result of having this hotline reporting mechanism in place. The university, however, expects that liability will actually decrease as a result of the hotline. There are additional concerns about the information monitoring process and the guarantee of information confidentiality and accuracy. One GFC member raised the issue focusing on the anonymity aspect of accusations in terms of academic dishonesty and reputation of the accused. The major concern, for which follow-up from Michael Moody was requested, is the lack of statement on the hotline website describing what happens with the information attained and how the rights of faculty and staff are affected with the system. There have been also concerns raised

regarding the entry point of the link for EthicsPoint, namely that it is planned to be featured on the Faculty and Staff homepage.

GFC members discussed whether an Office of the Ombudsman could accomplish the same goal as the hotline. If both were in place, would the hotline compete with the Ombudsman Office, which is faculty managed and monitored? What would the division of labor and responsibility be if NU has both mechanisms in place? Members were told that there is no expectation that the Hotline will replace any existing mechanisms currently in place. The Hotline is not meant to substitute current processes, but is intended to offer an alternative option to individuals.

2. Approval of February 2nd and March 2nd 2005 Minutes

The minutes of the February 2, 2005 meeting were approved with no changes. The minutes of the March 2, 2005 meeting were approved with one minor change.

3. Agenda of the Faculty Senate Meeting

The four items to be placed on the Faculty Senate Meeting agenda are the GFC status report, the establishment of an Ombudsman office, a discussion about Academic Freedom and the current status of the IRB.

Eva Redei asked the subcommittee chairs to submit a description of their subcommittee's work to date that will be summarized at the Faculty Senate Meeting.

Most big universities have an Ombudsman office, which serves a different purpose as the currently established EthicsPoint hotline. The Ombudsman office is concerned with safeguarding individual rights and promoting better channels of communication throughout the University.

It was also suggested that the GFC make a statement to the senate about academic freedom. This discussion brought up a serious issue that currently exists. One IRB panel employs a (relatively) large number of community members that are deciding on the worthiness of research projects. The fact that someone outside the university is making career decisions is clearly a violation of faculty academic freedom. It was suggested that the GFC press the university to start passing resolutions that outsiders should not be allowed to make research decision. Additional regulatory requirements resulted in eliminating some student research,

changing the content of some research-related courses and placing an ever-growing burden on the faculty.

The committee also discussed issues related to the rights of faculty. GFC members discussed the ETES Supervisor Approval Authorization form as a prime example of how the NU business offices forget about the faculty rights. Faculty are warned to be immediately dismissed upon any violation of a copyright agreement! After discussing the matter further, GFC members decided that the Senate meeting was not the right forum to bring up this topic.

The EthicsPoint Hotline language creates similar faculty rights concerns as the ETES forms. There is a great chance that the Hotline will result in an increase in accusations especially anonymous ones, which could potentially amplify vindictive allegations. What's even more upsetting is that the designers of this hotline were not aware that there are existing procedures detailed in the faculty handbook dealing with faculty misconduct. The Hotline will be rolled out prematurely and hastily and sends the wrong message to the University and the outside world. The GFC would like to put a stop to this initiative at least until it is better considered. This topic will be brought up at the upcoming Executive Committee Meeting.

4. Sub-Committee Reports

Sub-committee reports have been postponed until the next GFC meeting.

5. General Faculty Forum – Blog

The General Faculty Forum Blog has been officially rolled out. Eva Redei requested that the Blog link be placed on the Northwestern University Faculty home page.

In Conclusion:

a. The next GFC meeting will be held on May 4, 2005 at 7:00 pm in Scott Hall room 201 (the Ripton Room)

Minutes Submitted by:

Diana Snyder