

December 7, 2005 Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting

Members In attendance: Thomas Bauman, Paul Arntson, David Buchholz, Clarke Caywood, John Elson, Abraham Haddad, Spyridon Konstantopoulos, Seth Lichter, Donald McCrimmon, Martin Mueller, Michael Stein, Robin Steinhorn, Allen Taflove

Introduction: GFC Chair Thomas Bauman called the meeting to order at 7:15pm. He welcomed everyone and announced the order of business for the evening.

1. Approval of November minutes:

The minutes of the November 2, 2005 meeting were approved with no changes.

2. Discussion of guests for Winter Quarter meetings:

In preparation for the upcoming January and February GFC meetings, members discussed several options for potential guest speakers and topics to discuss. First, the Research sub-committee plans to invite a representative for the February GFC meeting to discuss ongoing IRB issues. Second, the administration offered to send representatives to come and present the proposed policy change which would make all CTECs publicly available, but after a brief discussion, GFC members decided that at this time it would not be necessary for them to do so. Once additional information is attained, members may revisit the offer, but for now the GFC's involvement in this matter will be on an advisory level only. Finally, a suggestion was made to invite a Budget representative to come and speak at the March meeting. The GFC would like an update on the current budgetary status and where the University is headed in the future.

3. Report from Sub-committees

Benefits Sub-committee: Abraham Haddad, Chair of the Benefits Sub-committee

Abraham Haddad challenged GFC members to become more active in the Benefits sub-committee and its initiatives. This is to ensure successful continuation of current and future issues when his term ends at the close of this fiscal year. Abraham gave a brief update of recent benefits changes, which included co-pay changes, limits on drugs and various deductables. Both the Short-term Disability Rate and Life Insurance Rate have decreased, and there is finally an established premium scale for PPOs. Abraham discussed the results of a survey that compared NU's Benefits Plan with those of peer institutions. The University was ranked somewhere in the middle, which establishes NU as fairly competitive.

The University has hired Hewitt Associates to study long-range health plan options. They are currently recommending the consolidation of all HMO plans into one or two, which will save the University and individuals millions of dollars. A meeting is scheduled with Hewitt to discuss this and other recommendations. All GFC members were strongly encouraged to attend. Meeting details will be forwarded once they are solidified.

Research Sub-committee: David Buchholz, Chair of the Research Sub-committee

Although the Research Sub-committee has not yet met for the year, David Buchholz remains active in keeping topics alive. He has followed up with the administration on the status of the Hotline Initiative administered by the EthicsPoint Company, which was first presented to the GFC at the April 2005 meeting. Very few individuals have submitted complaints and not many faculty members have used the services, so currently there are no issues to report.

Budget Sub-committee: Clarke Caywood, Chair of the Budget Sub-committee

Clarke Caywood is pursuing the issue of the rapidly rising cost of tuition, what individuals can expect to pay in the year 2030 and what NU is doing about it. He is currently working with the administration to attain relevant information which he will eventually present to the GFC.

4. Report on November CIC Conference at Michigan State:

Thomas Bauman gave the GFC a brief overview of the recent CIC conference he attended at Michigan State University. He discussed the following conference topics: Faculty Governance itself, grievance procedures, role of faculty in the selection of a new president or provost, faculty communication with other faculty, conflict of interest issues, evaluative authority and IRB consistency and complications. These items are current hot topics at many of the CIC institutions, with the IRB being at the top of the list as the most taxing. This is also the case at NU, where the IRB remains a huge burden to researchers. GFC members discussed various ways to approach the administration with the issue, with the Research Su-committee taking the lead on this ongoing effort to help correct a substandard system.

5. Reports from GFC chairs of break-out sessions at GFC/BOT meeting:

GFC chairs of each break-out session gave a brief overview of their group meetings. The four group topics were Demographics and Diversity, International Competition, The Financing of Higher Education, and Federal Funding of Research. GFC members discussed their relationship to the Trustees and how to deal with the administration, which creates a barrier between the two groups. Although very difficult to do, the key element in communicating with the BOT is to remove the administrative filter and to educate the BOT directly about issues facing the faculty body. GFC members discussed the effectiveness of the joint GFC-BOT meetings. Some voiced the opinion that the meetings are more informative in nature rather than results oriented. Others felt that the meetings offer the one chance to cultivate relationships and engage in communication that paves the way towards change.

6. New Business: Early election of GFC chair-elect

Thomas Bauman will initiate the process for early election of a GFC chair-elect through email correspondence with GFC members.

In Conclusion:

The next GFC meeting will be held on February 1, 2006 at 7:00 pm in Scott Hall room 201 (the Ripton Room)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Minutes Submitted by: Diana Snyder