

# **November 2, 2005 Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting**

---

**Members In attendance:** Thomas Bauman, Paul Arntson, Caroline Bledsoe, David Buchholz, Clarke Caywood, Sudhakar Deshmukh, John Elson, Abraham Haddad, James Kjelland, Seth Licher, Robin Steinhorn, Allen Taflove

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

## **1. Discussion of Ph.D. and Humanities Initiatives – Andrew Wachtel, Dean of TGS:**

Andrew Wachtel, Dean of the Graduate School, reported on the past and present Graduate School initiatives, as well as on the Humanities Initiative. After one year of examination, the role of the Graduate School has been defined primarily as a service organization that provides aid and support to students and to programs. Dean Wachtel gave a brief overview of the current state of financial affairs, which is healthy. With money becoming less of an issue and with the establishment of an official working budget, attention is now being directed toward improving the quality of graduate programs and the graduate student population. To stay competitive, the Graduate School will be offering students more opportunities for professional development beyond their academic programs. The current School administration regards diversifying the student population as a top priority.

Departments are currently implementing many new policies and procedures, and will continue to do so. The admissions process, for example, has been decentralized and is now in the hands of individual departments, eliminating many unnecessary and redundant steps. In addition, Andrew is currently working on giving departments a three-year block of fellowship allocations, rather than making them work on a yearly basis. Departments will have more freedom and flexibility in choosing valuable recipients. Dismissal guidelines, on the other hand, will now be a centralized initiative.

Dean Wachtel went over particular data on various aspects of key graduate programs, including specific student data and job placement statistics. He highlighted the fact that the humanities and social sciences are not at the level they should be. Several ideas for improving their performance were discussed: decoupling programs from the departments that run them;

offering more interesting courses; revamping the current curriculum structure and using more updated materials; and several others. Dean Wachtel is deeply committed to continuing work on improving the humanities and social sciences programs as well as other programs in need of polishing.

**2. Agenda items for Board of Trustees Meeting (December 3<sup>rd</sup>):**

Thomas Bauman gave a brief overview of what GFC members should expect at the upcoming Board of Trustees Meeting scheduled for December 3, 2005. The four administrative approved preliminary areas of discussion are as follows:

- 1. Demographics and Diversity:** Where are we going as an institution and what is the composition of the student and faculty member going to look like in ten years? What can we do to influence these things and how do we want do so?
- 2. International Competition:** This involves both bringing international students to Northwestern (undergrad and grad) and sending students to study abroad.
- 3. The Financing of Higher Education:** How will universities stay in business, how will parents pay for undergraduate education, and how will graduate education be funded?
- 4. Federal Funding of Research:** As Federal research funding declines, what can universities do, especially in the sciences and engineering? What role might private funding play?

Thomas Bauman asked for breakout volunteers to serve as either a spokesman or a participant in each breakout group. Abraham Haddad and Allen Taflove volunteered to join the group that will be discussing ***Demographics and Diversity***. Sudhakar Deshmukh volunteered to join the group that will be discussing ***International Competition***. Clarke Caywood volunteered to join the group that will be discussing ***The Financing of Higher Education***. David Buchholz, Robin Steinhorn, and Seth Licher volunteered to join the group that will be discussing ***Federal Funding of Research***. Thomas Bauman will solicit remaining group participants via email.

GFC members will communicate via email to help further develop the discussion topics. Thomas reminded members to send Joey Zafra their RSVP and bio, which need to be sent in whether or not GFC members will be attending the BOT meeting. He also encouraged those planning to attend the meeting to arrive early and take that opportunity to network with members of the Board of Trustees.

### **3. Approval of minutes:**

The minutes of the October 5, 2005 meeting were approved unanimously without changes.

### **4. Structure of the GFC Subcommittee**

Abraham Haddad has agreed to continue on as Chair of the Benefits sub-committee. Clarke Caywood has agreed to become the new Chair of the Budget and Policy sub-committee. David Buchholz has agreed to continue on as Chair of the Research sub-committee. The Benefits sub-committee, the Budget and Policy sub-committee and the Research sub-committee are the three clearly active standing committees. GFC members discussed the possibility of discontinuing the sub-committees that remain inactive. Further discussion will take place in the future.

Thomas Bauman explained the purpose and effectiveness of the General Faculty Committee in general and as it relates to the sub-committees and what can be achieved by this group. The GFC acts as an advisory board, and if topics and issues are pursued effectively much can be accomplished with or without the administration's approval.

### **In Conclusion:**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Minutes Submitted by:

Diana Snyder