

Northwestern University
Minutes of the University Senate Meeting
of
January 28, 2010

The University Senate held its second meeting of the 2009–10 year on October 29 in the Pancoe Auditorium on the Evanston campus, with an audio connection to Wieboldt 421 on the Chicago Campus. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by General Faculty Committee Chair Stephen F. Eisenman.

1. The minutes of the October 29 meeting were approved with the following corrections. On page 2, Provost Linzer was misunderstood to say that the endowment payout rate was not more than 4%. That sentence should be deleted. His next statement should be corrected to say “Linzer estimated a decline of 3–4% in the FY ‘11 endowment payout compared to the FY ‘10 rate.”

2. Before moving to the main business of the meeting, Eisenman said that the planning process for the University’s mission statement for the next period of years, replacing the one called The Highest Order of Excellence, has been under way for some time. The GFC has been concerned that this process has been undertaken only by the various deans and central administration without participation by the faculty itself. The faculty would like to have a say in the constitution of the committees as well as the specific matters discussed. Many faculty have been involved in the issues to be addressed, including at a recent meeting of the GFC with the Trustees. At the request of the GFC, Eisenman wrote a letter to Provost Linzer and President Schapiro asking that the GFC might be able to nominate several individuals to serve on these committees. He received a gracious reply from Linzer to the effect that the GFC can nominate participants. As the committees involved in planning begin their work in the next few weeks, the GFC asks for input from the faculty as a whole as well as students and any interested persons. Eisenman asked Vice President Marilyn McCoy to have information about the website for planning input re-sent to the community as a whole. McCoy said that planning suggestions could be e-mailed directly to her.

3. President Schapiro spoke briefly about the shared governance proposal to be voted upon at the present meeting. He recalled what he had said at the last Senate meeting, that the principles of shared governance are important, but if they were easy to make a reality everyone would have such governance. Yet most colleges and universities do not have shared governance. He is therefore under no illusion that Northwestern can easily set a new standard, but he finds it a worthy goal. Many of the best ideas will come from the faculty; even if the Administration stumbles upon a good idea in the absence of faculty input and is smart enough to recognize its value, without buy-in from the faculty they would be unable to achieve the idea’s benefit. As a member of the Northwestern faculty, he wants his voice heard. The Faculty-Administrative Governance document is a big step forward, and though it is no guarantee, it forms a basis for the shared governance it promotes. A future goal, after additional fine tuning, is approval by the Trustees.

4. Eisenman moved for the acceptance of the shared governance proposal. A period of discussion followed seconding of the motion. Sandro Mussa-Ivaldi, speaking from the Chicago campus, asked as a point of order whether the vote to be taken is final. Eisenman confirmed that there are no substantive disagreements. If the Trustees should subsequently ask for a major revision, the situation would change. Speaking for himself and the Provost, President Schapiro expressed his hope that the Trustees would accept the document as it stands. Bruce Spencer observed that the proposal on the floor is more of a concept paper than a developed proposal. Key definitions and representation are not clearly laid out; what

proportion of the faculty teach, and how many are research faculty, are still unspecified. Representation is skewed against large departments in favor of small, and faculty members at some schools are better represented than at others. Eisenman replied that statistical anomalies of this kind are present in all representative systems. The current Senate representation is by schools, and it also has its disproportions. Nevertheless, representatives are able to act upon matters outside their parochial interests as they are in the U.S. Senate. The representation provided in the present document was recommended by the faculty at large, not by any units or departments therein. Laurie Zoloth commented from the Chicago campus that the justice anticipated in the proposed representation arises from discursive democracy and is in line with what is found in sister universities. Mussa-Ivaldi added that today's document is not so written in stone that it cannot be modified as needed to improve representation. In response to a question of what the faculty leaves behind in giving up the GFC structure, Eisenman said we may in the future have less nimbleness than is now possible with a 21-member executive. The new Senate will have 83 members, including six at-large members representing non-tenure track faculty. This will require a stronger committee structure, so meetings of the group as a whole will consist largely of committee reports followed by general discussion. In the new Assembly, non-tenure line faculty are represented for the first time. Carol Simpson Stern asked what "regular" means in the section on membership stating that Faculty Assembly membership shall consist of all full-time regular faculty members. Eisenman and Paul Arntson agreed that "regular" should have been struck from the wording of the section on membership. Laurie Zoloth added that what we are giving up under the new proposal is the poor functionality of the GFC. Another question had to do with the requirement of a quorum for passage of a Senate action. Do the framers of the proposal expect there will always be the required minimum of 42 members? Eisenman replied that in the absence of a quorum the Senate may debate a motion without passing it. The quorum requirement may be revised if experience shows it is overly optimistic. Cynthia Nazarian asked what happens if a large body of faculty in the Assembly feel strongly about a matter that is not passed by the Senate. Eisenman replied that the faculty as a community, administrators, and Trustees may also influence University policy. President Schapiro agreed that there will remain other corridors of action to address policy. Under the Northwestern Charter the President is not a member of the Trustees, but the Administration has the duty of responding to the needs of the faculty whenever that can be prudently done. Eisenman added that the Administration needs to have good interlocutors in the faculty. Provost Linzer commented that there are some matters where the Administration now looks to the GFC and under the new proposal would look to the Faculty Senate. Such matters amount to a co-approval, for example the Faculty Handbook, which is now under revision.

5. Eisenman then called for a vote by paper ballot to be collected upon adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.

Following adjournment, the vote on adoption of new Faculty-Administrative Governance documents was reported at 70 to 5 in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel H. Garrison
Secretary to the Senate