

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the University Senate Meeting  
June 1, 2004

The University Senate held its second meeting of the 2003–2004 year on June 1 in Hardin Hall on the Evanston Campus. President Bienen called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

I. The minutes of the November 20, 2003 meeting were approved unanimously without changes.

II. Bruce Wessels, Chair of the General Faculty Committee, reviewed the activities of the GFC during 2003-2004. This Committee serves as the steering committee of the Senate and consists of 19 members representing all schools of the University. Its subcommittee structure, reactivated this year, includes five active subcommittees: Budget and Policy; Benefits; Education; Faculty Development; and Research. In addition, there are two standing committees on Cause and the Committee on Committees. The newly added Budget and Policy Committee is expected to function similarly to the GFC Budget and Resource Allocation Committee (BRAC) of the 1970s and 80s. The newly-formed Budget and Policy Committee has the mission to advise the Senate on matters of budget and policy that affect the faculty university-wide. President Bienen has supported the Committee in its mission. It meets at least quarterly with Vice-president Sunshine and his staff to discuss the University budget and its development. Its ultimate goal is to serve as an informed faculty body in the area of University budget and policy, serving also to formulate the annual GFC budget request to the Administration budget committee. It made its first such presentation this winter. This GFC committee has made excellent progress in fulfilling its mission under the leadership of Professor Deborah Lucas of Kellogg. University faculty committees are major sources of information and advice in the formulation of University policy. The GFC believes it is important to have broad representation on University committees of strategic importance. This concept has been supported by the Provost's office. To diversify faculty representation on key University committees, the GFC has reinstated its Committee on Committees. Nominations have been made to the Provost's Committee on the Highest Order of Excellence, the search committee for a Dean of the Graduate School, and the advisory committee to the Vice President for Research. Members were also nominated to Vice President Cabbage's Strategic Communication Committee.

The Research Subcommittee, chaired by Professor Eva Redei of the Feinberg School of Medicine, has been actively deliberating on questions of research infrastructure and compliance, devising a process to vet faculty concerns. A communications hot line operated by the GFC has been set up and is operational. Details are given on the GFC website. Vice-president Bradley Moore has been supportive of this activity.

The Education subcommittee and its subcommittee on athletics have been involved in the nationwide intercollegiate athletics reform movement. Last year, the GFC and the Senate voted to support the Council on Inter-institutional Cooperation (CIC) document on intercollegiate athletic reform. The CIC, comprised of the Big Ten and the University of Chicago, enjoyed wide support from Big Ten faculty senates in its athletic reform

document. This year, the CIC and its university members joined forces with faculty senates of other Bowl Championship Series (BCS) leagues to draft recommendations for substantive reforms in the institutional governance of intercollegiate athletics. A group titled the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) met at NCAA headquarters last October. It formed a steering committee and formulated a document during the winter. This document, posted on the GFC website, proposes that faculty senates be more actively involved in the governance of intercollegiate athletics, and that athletics be supportive of the educational mission of universities. The GFC voted unanimously in favor of the COIA document. While Northwestern has an enviable record, especially in the graduation rates of its athletes compared to most NCAA Division I-A institutions, further integration of the athletics program into the University academic mission is needed, with more faculty and Senate involvement. The COIA reforms on governance should be instituted.

In addition to the aforementioned committees, the Benefits Subcommittee has been meeting with the Associate Vice-president for Human Resources on a variety of issues, including the portable tuition program, improvements in health care plans in the area of mental health, and retiree benefits.

While the GFC has had an extensive agenda, other important matters should and will be addressed in the future. These include (1) research and infrastructure development; (2) achieving diversity in the faculty and student body; (3) educational programs: the balance between arts, sciences, and professional education; (4) strategic planning at the university level. Strategic planning will play an ever more important role. As indicated by President Bienen in his recent State of the University address, the University is on firm financial ground. Nevertheless, there are limited resources, with limited growth in view. The growth in the endowment seen in the nineties will most likely not return. Tuition increases need to be limited to maintain a diverse student body. In light of these limitations, the Senate must consider whether we should be doing all that we are doing as a university. Should we be making hard choices on the educational programs we are now sustaining? Where will new resources come from to establish new programs that will form the basis of scholarship for the next generation? While there will be some growth in the endowment and new gifts to the University, we need to develop the discipline to make hard choices. Should we keep substandard or mediocre programs? Alternatively, the University could be developing new sources of income. For example, development of patents and entrepreneurial enterprises by the faculty are currently being pursued. Are these consistent with the university mission, and is commercialism in our best interest? The President and the Provost will address some of these issues at this meeting. These issues should in any case be subjects of continuing dialogue between the faculty and the administration.

III. Eva Redei, chair of the GFC Research Subcommittee, stated that the mission of her subcommittee is to mediate between the faculty and the University administration regarding the research environment issues that facilitate or impede research. It monitors the University's progress in remedying research impediments. While Vice-president Moore has been implementing major changes in the research infrastructure, the GFC Research Subcommittee promotes peer-to-peer communication among faculty involved in a wide variety of research, and facilitates evaluation of issues that arise. Such

evaluation can be passed to the appropriate unit directors without identifying individuals by name. In so doing, the Subcommittee can identify possibly emergent issues and facilitate necessary changes. Another matter on the Subcommittee's agenda is research compliance, which requires a real effort to maintain. Some kinds of compliance are obligatory under Federal requirements; others are self-imposed. The GFC will look into all such issues in the coming year.

IV. A report by Professor Charles Dowding on the Advisory Committee on University Space Planning (ACUSP) was tabled because of an unexpected delay in Dowding's arrival. Copies of the Committee's working draft of Principles and Commentary on Space Planning were made available at the end of the meeting.

V. Provost Lawrence Dumas gave an update on the University Strategic Plan. The committee to update The Highest Order of Excellence has been involved during the academic year in refocusing the overall sense of University vision and strategies seven years after the original plan was published. Since last fall, Dumas, Vice President for Administration and Planning Marilyn McCoy, Vice President for Research Bradley Moore, and Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development Sarah Pierson have been working with an 18-person faculty committee to develop a renewed vision for Northwestern for next fall and strategies for its realization. A dominant aspect of faculty culture, hopefully reflected in the students and staff of Northwestern, is a particular aptitude for collaboration and cooperation across disciplines and administrative units. Over the years, this has allowed the faculty to bring together clusters of faculty with different kinds of expertise and different skill sets to found new fields of study such as African Studies, Materials Science, and Performance Studies. This aptitude bodes well as a competitive advantage for the future. The focus of this statement of renewed vision will be on the best use of Northwestern's ability to collaborate across disciplines, in teaching as well as research. Deans of the schools have been engaged individually and collectively in developing The Highest Order of Excellence II. Subcommittees have been spun off: one to consider new areas of collaborative research, another to create new visions for undergraduate education. Marilyn McCoy has led a committee of upper-level staff from the schools and the central administration to investigate what infrastructure improvements are needed in the administration to support the aspirations of faculty and students in implementing these new programs. Rebecca Dixon, Associate Provost for Enrollment, has led a group reporting on new strategies for undergraduate recruitment, with special reference to a collaborative learning environment and the applicability of new knowledge in the real world. Associate Provost Stephen Fisher and Vice-president for Student Affairs William Banis are leading efforts to identify a few areas where undergraduate student satisfaction is not as high as it should be and how it might be improved. Alan Cabbage, Vice-president for University Relations, is reporting on how we might improve internal communications. At this stage, the 18-member group is working with officers of the central administration to write a first draft of what will be by fall, 2004, the next version of the vision and strategy statement referred to as The Highest Order of Excellence. At its next meeting, the committee will meet with the Board of Trustees' Educational Policies Committee to learn their thinking. An iterative process over the summer will refine the current draft, and by next fall the products of the process

just described will be ready to be rolled out.

In response to a question about the composition of the 18-person committee, McCoy referred to an article in the Northwestern Observer identifying the participants. Bruce Wessels noted it would be helpful to post this information on the University website as well. He went on to ask about the budget impact of the developments foreseen by the new vision statement. Dumas replied that constraints on the budget had in fact delayed this year of reflection for some two years. The need to sunset some of the matured initiatives of the past has been built into the strategic plan, thus offsetting some of its opportunity costs. Because most of the money needed is already deployed in existing programs, the first priority must be to ask if the best use is being made of the money thus budgeted.

VI. President Bienen offered general comments on the academic year now coming to a close. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions has gone into its waiting list of applicants for freshman admission, as have other institutions such as Stanford, Princeton, and Harvard. Prospective students are applying to more schools, and financial aid considerations may be playing a larger role. Northwestern has reduced the number of students admitted, thus competing in a tougher market with a lower yield rate. The average combined verbal and quantitative SAT score of enrolled students is up about six points from an already high base, for a new average of 1398. The class looks very strong. The budget is solid enough; the greatest concern is with new flows of money for development. While donors are still paying off their pledges, the pipeline is not very promising of new pledges. Some turnover in staff may also have been a factor in disappointing gift revenue. It is still too early to judge the success of faculty recruitment; some retention battles for valuable faculty have been lost. This is costly to the University, both in talent and in costs of retention and recruitment. For all the troubles of the public universities, the best faculty talent still enjoys a seller's market. Bienen welcomed the acknowledgment of the GFC that reduction in some programs is a necessary condition of initiatives envisaged by The Highest Order of Excellence in its second phase. The closing of the Dental School was a massive step in this necessary direction; short of the closure of a school, which he does not anticipate, there are centers and programs that will need to be considered for closing. The same is true on the nonacademic side: we have not scrutinized our budgets closely enough in recent years.

On the subject of patents and technology transfer, Bienen remarked that development of such incomes is not necessarily a distortion of Northwestern's mission. To the contrary, it is frequently consistent with the recruitment of researchers who will come only if we have a successful program of commercialization. Both federal and state governments see research support by major universities in terms of benefits to the country: not necessarily commercial benefits, but typically benefits that are put to some use more tangible than abstract knowledge. The same is true of foundations and individual donors. The potentially most successful patent to issue from Northwestern's labs comes from Richard Silverman's work in chemistry. Silverman also wins teaching awards for his work with graduates and undergraduates. His research is expected to have a massive impact on the quality of life of people with neuropathic problems while bringing significant revenues to him and to the University. Wrongly applied, technology transfer can indeed distort the values of a university, which is why it is so important to get it right. We do not believe we have misapplied this objective, however.

With regard to athletics, Bienen agreed that Northwestern does not have the problems noted at universities where education takes a back seat to playing field glitz. Though not always problem free, Northwestern has maintained good academic standards for students in athletic teams. High graduation rates and high average SAT scores of athletes place us in the top rank with a handful of schools such as Stanford and Duke with respect to the kinds of student athletes we admit. We also have an excellent process of governance: the Athletic Director reports directly to the President. They meet frequently and discuss every aspect of the evolution of our athletic programs. In admissions, we have a strict appeals process by which, if a coach's athlete is rejected by the Admissions Office, only the Athletic Director can approve an appeal by the coach to the Provost. A faculty committee on athletics and recreation is also part of the governance structure. Specific proposals for improvement will be given due consideration; but the present detailed, careful structure of athletic governance at Northwestern is preventing the gross abuses that have been found at some major universities. Coach Barnett's recent statements at Boulder have recalled the narrow parameters with which he had to work at Northwestern. Coaches do not admit students at Northwestern: that is done only at the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. The system at Northwestern is not broken, though it is always open to improvement. Northwestern differs from other Big Ten institutions not in degree, but in kind.

In response to a question from Bruce Wessels, President Bienen expressed his view that membership in the Big Ten does not put us in a "bad gang" and that Ivy League membership is not a good alternative. The Big Ten bargain has been long since struck, with Northwestern organizing its participation in its own way. Bienen's hope is that the other schools will become more like Northwestern. It seems likely now that such changes will occur, some driven by the NCAA, some perhaps by the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, others by the universities themselves. Not all Big Ten schools have equally low standards for student athletes. Incremental change is the most feasible, and the most likely to occur.

Wessels inquired about the measurement of return on various programs at the University. Bienen replied that there can be no true test of a department's or a program's output. Some are very small, but important for their teaching. Should all of them have their own PhD programs? Should we have a two-tier faculty? Departments are not subject to a market test, even in the number of students they attract. It is easier to make decisions about institutes and programs than about departments. It is probably not a good policy to get rid of departments that have not been able to become strong. There is no magic formula to be laid down. The Northwestern Press, for example, ran large deficits but was not closed down. Thirty years ago, sales of 2000 copies of a book were common: today, an academic press may regard a title selling only 500 copies in the first six months as a great success. But there is no plan to close down the Press on those grounds. By the same token, the University's operating costs go up in response to such non-academic pressures as compliance demands, auditing, and the need for better information systems. There is no margin for error, and the costs of human administrative structures go up with the amount of research performed. Costs of student health services, security, and law enforcement are likewise non-negotiable.

VII. There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel H. Garrison  
Secretary to the University Senate