

April 5, 2006 Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting

Members In attendance:

Thomas Bauman, Paul Arntson, Bala Balachandran, Caroline Bledsoe, David Buchholz, Clarke Caywood, Sudhakar Deshmukh, John Elson, Abraham Haddad, Seth Lichter, Michael Stein, Robin Steinhorn, Allen Taflove

1. Approval of March 1st 2006 Minutes

Allen Taflove asked that the minutes from the March 1, 2006 meeting be amended to include the GFC's agreement that he draft a proposed resolution dealing with Professor Butz, on behalf of the GFC, for potential inclusion in the May Faculty Senate agenda. GFC members voted unanimously in favor of the proposed amendment. The minutes from the March 1, 2006 GFC meeting were approved unanimously, contingent upon the addition of the amendment.

2. Meeting with Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning (Associate Provost Stephen Fisher; Associate Dean Stephen Carr; and Gregory Light, Director of the Searle_Center for Teaching Excellence)

Associate Dean Stephen Carr and Associate Provost Stephen Fisher presented to the GFC the issue of Assessment of Student Learning and its significance to the accreditation of Northwestern University. Since one procedure cannot apply to everyone, assessment plans are to be set individually by each NU school using the proposed Five Guiding Principles of Assessment and the Five Criteria for Accreditation. The purpose for developing assessment plans according to these guiding principles is to prepare for the upcoming accreditation visit scheduled for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. Dean Carr and Associate Provost Fisher asked the GFC to endorse the document and to place this issue on the May Faculty Senate meeting agenda. After a brief discussion, the GFC voted in favor of endorsing the document and adding the issue of Assessment of Student Learning to the agenda of the May Faculty Senate meeting.

3. Report from Caroline Bledsoe on the Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Federal-Wide Assurance (FWA) Committee

Caroline Bledsoe, who spearheads the GFC IRB initiative, gave a brief overview of the recently established (May 31, 2005) Federal-Wide Assurance Committee (FWA), a sub-committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Advisory Board, and its current activities. As it stands, the IRB process remains complex and counterproductive. The NU IRB rules are abundant in number and make it

impossible for a researcher – and hence the institution as a whole -- to be in total compliance and also to conduct research ethically. This is also the case at many other peer institutions, although some, such as Princeton, with its far fewer rules and demands, more realistic expectations, and much greater comprehensibility, can provide models for how to change. In cases like some of the Social Sciences and the Humanities, however, total compliance may still be unattainable. For the Philosophies, their disciplinary traditions represent.

Caroline Bledsoe will continue to work as Chair of the FWA Committee toward reforming the IRB policies and procedures at NU. A major FWA report is forthcoming sometime this year or next, at which time Caroline or another representative will report back to the GFC on the progress. Since this is her final year as a member of the GFC committee, she asked that the GFC continue to pursue this issue into next year and thereafter.

4. Proposed Resolution for the Northwestern University Senate May Meeting: A. Butz

Allen Taflove presented a resolution dealing with Professor Arthur Butz for presentation to the Faculty Senate at its May meeting. After a brief discussion and various inputs from the GFC members, the statement below was agreed upon as the final version:

The Faculty Senate of Northwestern University hereby utterly disavows and condemns the views and actions of a member of our faculty, Arthur Butz, denying the historical reality of the Holocaust. Butz's Holocaust denial is an affront to our humanity, to our standards of scholarship, and the University's reputation for academic excellence, which he is trying to exploit.

Thomas Bauman announced that according to the GFC charter it is indeed within the charge of the GFC to pursue matters such as this. GFC members voted unanimously in favor of endorsing the resolution statement above and also to include this matter on the May 4th Senate Meeting agenda.

5. Nominations for and election of the GFC 2006-2007 Chair

Thomas Bauman will take up this matter at the next GFC meeting.

In Conclusion:

The next GFC meeting will be held on May 3, 2006 at 7:00 pm in Scott Hall room 201 (the Ripton Room)

Minutes Submitted by: Diana Snyder

Edited by: Thomas Bauman