

# **March 1, 2006** Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting

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## **Members in attendance:**

Thomas Bauman, Paul Arntson, David Buchholz, Sudhakar Deshmukh, Jeanne Dunning, John Elson, James Kjelland, Donald McCrimmon, Teepu Siddique, Michael Stein, Allen Taflove

## **1. Approval of February 1, 2006 Minutes**

The minutes of the February 1, 2006 meeting were approved with no changes.

## **2. Copyright Policy Presentation by Ken Alder**

Ken Alder, member of the Copyright Policy Ad Hoc Committee, gave a brief overview on the status of the Copyright Policy draft as it stands. The current draft is a direct product of negotiations with a variety of people and covers various topics and concerns addressed by faculty members. A motion was made that members of the GFC continue working with the NU ad hoc committee toward improving the current Copyright Policy draft and then to present a semi-final version at the upcoming Spring Faculty Senate Meeting scheduled for May 4th. The GFC voted in favor of the motion.

## **3. Discussion item: Professor Arthur Butz - issues of academic freedom (submitted by Allen Taflove)**

Allen Taflove presented the case for taking action against Professor Arthur Butz for his recent statements regarding the Holocaust. He proposed that the GFC form a subcommittee to address, in more depth, the Butz issue and those similar in nature. Professor Taflove also discussed the harassment complaint made against Professor Butz by a Northwestern Student, who had turned to the GFC after having received no response to his complaint from the Provost's Office. He talked about the merits of the complaint based on a lawsuit brought in New York State in which the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff. GFC members agreed to assist the student by drafting a statement to the Provost's Office asking that a response be made to the student's complaint. The Chair of the GFC will also communicate directly with the student.

Committee members then proceeded to discuss whether the Butz issue falls within the parameters of the GFC charge and whether the committee should take further action on the matter. Members with varying opinions debated the nature of the issue. Some felt this was an issue of harassment, while others thought it was an issue of free opinion and free speech. After an in-depth discussion, GFC members decided to hold off on making a definite decision on the matter until the Provost responds to the statement Thomas Bauman will be putting together on behalf of the GFC and the group's stand on the issue. Allen Taflove volunteered to draft a proposed resolution on behalf of the GFC dealing with Professor Butz for potential inclusion in the May Faculty Senate agenda.

#### **4. Discussion item: University privacy policy concerning email and other computer communications (submitted by Dave Buchholz)**

David Buchholz present a recent concern from a faculty member over the current policy related to email privacy and, more specifically, the individuals who have the authority to allow "invasion" of that privacy. The current policy gives authority to specific offices within the IT department (approximately 12 individuals) to approve the "spying." The question is whether it is appropriate for IT department administrators to be given this authority or whether it would be better for the Provost to decide on such matters. The GFC is considering setting up a separate subcommittee to address this matter and similar issues involving technology and communications in more detail.

#### **5. Discussion of GFC procedures for nominating and electing a Chair-elect**

Thomas Bauman will contact each of the second-year GFC members directly to see who is interested in standing for election as the GFC Chair-elect.

#### **Conclusion**

The next GFC meeting will be held on April 5, 2006, at 7:00 pm in Scott Hall room 201 (the Ripton Room)

Minutes Submitted by: Diana Snyder

Edited by: Thomas Bauman