

May 3, 2006 Minutes of the General Faculty Committee Meeting

Members In attendance:

Thomas Bauman, Paul Arntson, David Buchholz, Clarke Caywood, Dennis Chong, Sudhakar Deshmukh, John Elson, Abraham Haddad, James Kjelland, Spyridon Konstantopoulos, Martin Mueller, Teepu Siddique, Michael Stein, Allen Taflove, Jane Winston

1. Approval of April GFC minutes

The minutes of the April 5, 2006 meeting were approved with no changes.

2. Discussion of the agenda for the May 4 University Senate meeting

Shortly after the May GFC meeting, Thomas Bauman consulted with several colleagues regarding the Arthur Butz issue. They advised that a considerable number of colleagues at Northwestern will view the proposed resolution, voted on at the April 5 meeting of the GFC, as a move towards oppression of free speech and academic freedom and will likely attend the Spring meeting of the Faculty Senate for the purpose of voting against it. Based on these concerns and due to the administration's timeline pressure to get the University Senate agenda out, the Chair made an executive decision to incorporate the Butz issue into his report to the Senate rather than putting it as a separate agenda item, as voted on by members present at the May GFC meeting.

Allen Taflove went on record to state that he strongly objected to the manner in which this was handled and strongly disagrees with the decision made by the Chair not to include the Butz issue as a separate agenda item. There was no vote taken to negate the GFC's original decision, therefore the final decision was made without GFC consent. The Chair replied that he does not feel that he negated the original vote, since he will be reporting it as part of the GFC chair report, that his aim was rather to avoid an outcome both embarrassing to the Committee and contrary to the spirit and intent of the resolution, and that he did so after fully informing all members of the GFC of the circumstances.

There was further dialogue related to the resolution itself, with some GFC members in full support of it and others questioning its content. Some members who did not attend the April meeting or vote on the resolution voiced objections to the wording of the resolution, and in particular the fact that the statement expresses condemnation of Professor Butz's views rather than distancing the NU faculty from them. They view the nature of this issue as leaning more towards morality rather than academic scholarship, and find the resolution itself emotionally charged rather than rationally based. GFC members who continue to support the document as it stands feel strongly that it is important for the NU faculty community to go on record as not tolerating views that are historically inaccurate and morally offensive when these views

become connected in public discourse to the reputation of the University. The issue of freedom of speech and tolerance of opposing views in this matter were also discussed in detail.

Based on this discussion, the Chair will still present the Butz resolution to the Faculty Senate, and will circulate at the meeting both the text of the resolution and a list of the GFC members who voted in favor of the document. He will also state that not all of the GFC members are in support of this document, and consider it an infringement of academic freedom.

3. Election of Chair of the GFC for 2006-2007

Paul Arntson has agreed to serve as GFC chair for the upcoming FY2006-2007 term. All GFC members present voted unanimously in favor of appointing Paul Arntson as the next GFC chair.

4. Discussion of proposed position of vice-chair of the GFC

The General Faculty Committee will reinstate the procedure of appointing a GFC vice-chair. Thomas Bauman will gather names of nominees for a committee vote, scheduled to take place at the June GFC meeting.

5. Discussion of the role of the GFC in faculty governance at Northwestern

There are many questions surrounding the limited role and effectiveness of the General Faculty Committee and the Faculty Senate as a whole. GFC members would like to see current governance structures altered, restructuring the GFC to include having legislative authority, voting rights in major administration changes (decision in appointing new President), and full access to the Board of Trustees. Clear by-laws need to be established and implemented. To get the ball rolling, the GFC plans to hire a student over the summer to research governance at peer institutions and research the GFC archives.

6. Subcommittee Reports

Benefits: Since this will be his final year as chair of the Benefits Subcommittee, Abraham Haddad requested GFC members to consider taking his place as well as joining the sub-committee since current attendance and membership does not include representation from the GFC. The NU benefits structure will be changing, with the majority of the changes taking place in the medical insurance program (PPO and HMO). Abraham briefly explained the changes, new options, and incentives.

Research: David Buchholz talked about the two major issues the Research Subcommittee is working on -- the IRB, which remains an ongoing problem, and the question of privacy as it relates to email and computer resources. David is working with the IT department heads to revise the current policy allowing investigation of NU emails and other individual information available through various technological avenues.

Thomas Bauman and Paul Arntson will work on the subcommittee structures for next year and will enforce the policy that every member of the GFC must serve on a GFC subcommittee.

7. IRB Issue Revisited

Teepu Siddique voiced his disapproval of the current IRB processes and how they directly affect the Medical School. He gave specific examples of situations in which the IRB has created barriers and hindrances resulting in negative impact and discouragement of researchers.

8. June Meeting will be held at Jacky's Bistro in Evanston

Thomas Bauman announced that the final GFC meeting will be held on June 7, 2006 at 7:00 pm at Jacky's Bistro in Evanston.

Minutes Submitted by: Diana Snyder

Minutes Edited by: Thomas Bauman