TO: Faculty Senate
FROM: Mary Jo Ondrechen, Secretary, Faculty Senate
SUBJECT: Minutes, 12 December 2012

Present: (Professors) Adams, Alshawabkeh, Aroian, Basagni, Board, Cokely, Daynard, Fox, Herman, Lefkovitz, McDonough, Muftu, Ondrechen, Peterfreund, Poriss, Rappaport, Sceppa, Sherman, Stepanyants,

(Administrators) Costa, Director, Gibson, Courtney, Loeffelholz, Ronkin, Fulmer

Absent: Professors Aslam, Bansil, Fitzgerald, Fountain, Gaffney, Katula, Lee, Nelson, Strauss, Yang, Zgarrick; Deans Finklestein, Aubry, Poiger

The Senate was convened at 11:48 AM

I. The minutes of 11/28/12 were approved as amended.

II. SAC Report. Professor Daynard reported SAC had met twice since the last Senate meeting and once with the senior leadership team.

As a result of the discussion at the last Senate meeting, the following will be charged to the Senate Committee for Academic Policy:

In light of current interdisciplinary collaborations, entrepreneurial activities, and RCM budget framework, the Committee is charged with reviewing best practices and describing University safeguards for course offerings to ensure excellence in teaching with special emphasis on identifying and using specific expertise where it is found within the University.

Interim Dean Uta Poiger will join the Senate from the College of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The following committee has been staffed:

Search Committee for a Dean of the College of Computer and Information Science

Elected members:
- Professor Javed Aslam
- Professor Pete Manolios
- Professor Guevara Noubir
- Professor Mirek Riedwald

Appointed members:
- Dean Nadine Aubry, College of Engineering
- Professor Rupal Patel, Speech Language Pathology + Audiology
Professor Magy Seif El-Nasr, Creative Industries

Student representatives:
Mr. Gregg Kerr, undergraduate representative
Mr. Travis Mayberry, graduate representative

III. Provost Director introduced Dean Jeremy Paul of the Law School.

A motion to move to Committee-of-the-Whole was seconded and passed by acclamation.

IV. Vice Provost Bruce Ronkin presented a follow up on last year’s committee to make recommendations on the freshman experience.

Compared to six years ago, today’s first-year students include a growing international population; a better prepared cohort in terms of SATs; an increasing number of transferred AP/IB credits; and increased honors program membership.

Last year’s Senate Committee for Enrollment and Admissions Policies made eight recommendations regarding the freshman experience.

1. Create additional resources for communicating best practices. Regular meetings and workshops were scheduled and a first year seminar resource created on Blackboard. Colleges participated individually as well.

2. Provide a screening system for entering students for whom English is not the native language. An assessment process is in place as well as tutoring services and improved guidance toward ESL courses. CBA developed a course available to all NU students; peer mentoring for international students; and programs at Bouvé.

3. Align curricula to high qualifications of entering freshmen. All colleges have launched curriculum reviews and revision led by Vice Provost Susan Ambrose.

4. Ensure that instruction is delivered effectively including interaction with tenure line faculty. Most colleges report increased use of TRACE responses and a push for the best faculty to teach first-year students. There is an increase in tenure-line faculty in first-year courses as well as focused curriculum enrichment efforts.

5. Develop courses for students with AP credit. Some departments have developed new courses and others plan to accelerate students to advanced courses or to pursue a minor.

6. Develop courses to serve Honors Program students and increase faculty mentoring. The College Honors Task Force was created this past summer. Colleges have introduced enhancements, encouraged information sessions, provided honors courses for most first-year courses and strengthened currents offerings.

7. Explore opportunities for faculty/freshman and upper-class/freshman interaction outside of classes. Colleges are creating activities such as peer tutoring/mentoring programs; expos; student speaker series; and faculty/student dinners.

8. Reconsider the NU Core “learning communities” category, as AP credit has weakened its original intent, and possibly replace it with a first year seminar. Many colleges agree that seminars could serve as a replacement for this. Vice Provost Ronkin suggested that the Faculty Senate consider a change in the NU Core or request a recommendation from the UUCC.
Professor Ondrechen requested that the presentation be made available for the Senate website and the Vice Provost agreed. The presentation may be found at: https://sharepointportal.nunet.neu.edu/NEUSites/Faculty%20Senate/default.aspx

Professor Fox suggested a special designation for tenure-line faculty who teach freshman courses for another type of reward such as scheduling priorities or TA support. Provost Director suggested that the discussion should be held with the chairs and deans which prompted Professor Fox to suggest a University-wide designation.

Discussion ensued concerning a variety of points: the junior/senior thesis, which Vice Provost Ronkin suggested could be discontinued; the use of enrollment data and the importance of creating and supporting courses with initial low enrollments due, in part, to honors courses being offered; the importance of a balanced education; and lab space issues caused by increasing interest in undergraduate research. Commenting on the latter, Dean Gibson added that the issue is also one of resources but the College is reviewing a variety of ways to engage faculty with undergraduate students.

Professor Aslam asked about a mechanism for undeclared majors to find out what 1000-level courses are available to them. Vice Provost Powers-Lee responded that advisors work continuously to update information. The goal is to explore but have a smooth transition.

Professor Laura Green was recognized and expressed concern at the amount of time apparently being spent on the first year experience for honors students at the possible expense of the 86% who are not honors students. Provost Director noted that incoming average SATs puts most students in the honors category and that many programs begun for honors students will become available to all students the following year. He maintained that the matter should be discussed at the college level. Brief discussion took place regarding the need for a cross-college discussion of tenured/tenure-track faculty teaching as the undergraduate core courses are taught university-wide and affect most undergraduate students.

A motion to move out of Committee-of-the-Whole was seconded and passed without objection and was followed immediately by a motion to adjourn, also seconded and passed.

The Senate adjourned at 12:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Jo Ondrechen, Secretary
Faculty Senate