

Boston University Faculty Council
Minutes of the Meeting
May 5, 2015

The tenth regular meeting of the Boston University Faculty Council for the 2014-2015 Session was held on May 5, 2015, at 3:30 p.m. on the Charles River Campus, 1 Silber Way, Room 916. Steve Brady, Chair of the Faculty Council, presided over the meeting. The following members attended:

Andy Andres (CGA), R.
Kazem Azadzoi (MED), R.
Yvette Cozier (SPH), R.
Ana di Robilant (LAW), Alt.
Ivan Fernandez-Val (CAS), R.
Walter Fluker (STH), R.
Gisela Hoecherl-Alden (CAS), R.
Allyn Hubbard (ENG), R.
Sean Kealy (LAW), R.
Rebecca Kinraide (CAS), R.
Susan Lee (CGS), R.
Luz Marilis Lopez (SSW), Alt.
David Lyons (LAW), Alt.
Joshua Pederson (CGS), Alt.
David Lyons (LAW), Alt.
Eileen O'Keefe (SAR), R.
Marnie Reed (SED), R.
Sheila Rodriguez-Vamvas (GSDM), Alt.
Amy Shanler (COM), R.
Woosung Sohn (GSDM), R.
Kristine Strand (SAR), R.
Martha Thompson (CAS), R.
Erinn Tucker (SHA), R.
Barry Unger (MET), Alt.
Charles White (SED), R.
Ann Zumwalt (MED), R.

Committee Chairs

John Carroll, Media and Communication
James Hamilton, Research
Shiela Kibbe-Hodgkins, Awards
Celeste Kong, Compensation and Benefits
D. Lynn O'Brien Hallstein, Teaching Resources
Hee-Young Park, Graduate Affairs
Robert Volk, Credentials and By-laws
Joyce Walsh, Student Life

Officers

Steve Brady, Chair
Kathe Darr, Past Chair
J. Robb Dixon, Secretary-treasurer

Members without a vote

Doreen Miller, R. CELOP

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I. Secretary's report:

There being a quorum, the minutes of the April 7, 2015 minutes were approved.

II. Chair's Report

Chair Brady announced that University Council (“UC”) will meet on May 6 and asked those who sit on the UC to attend. The course credit hour policy will be presented for a vote. Also, the President and the Provost will discuss the proposed faculty diversity working group. The Chair noted that under the new structure for the UC, it meets during the summer.

Chair Brady announced the outcome of the election for Faculty Council officers. J. Robb Dixon (Questrom) was elected Vice-Chair. Janelle Heineke (Questrom) was elected Secretary-treasurer. The Chair thanked D. Lynn O’Brien Hallstein (CGS) and Hee-Young Park (MED) for standing for election.

As this was the last scheduled meeting for the 2014-2015 academic year, the Chair thanked those Council members who will be stepping down. He thanked Kathe Darr for her service to the University as a Faculty Council officer and thanked her personally for her insight and counsel as Past Chair. Prof. Darr thanked the Council for their dedication to university governance and said that one of the joys of her experience as an officer has been the opportunity to know faculty across the University.

The Chair also thanked David Lyons for his service. In addition to Prof. Lyons’s award winning teaching and distinguished research, he represented the School of Law for over ten years. Chair Brady thanked Prof. Lyons for his advocacy for all faculty. He also noted that Leonid Levin (CAS) was stepping down as a representative and thanked him for his service.

Most of the schools and colleges have held their elections for Council representatives. The Chair reminded the members that it is important to complete elections by May 31.

Chair Brady reviewed the governance activities for the year. Under the new governance structure for the UC, the Faculty Council members engage in policy discussion earlier in the drafting process. The UC Chairs reported that it has been useful to have faculty feedback earlier in the drafting process

III. Update: Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing

J. Robb Dixon updated the Council on the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing (“ACSRI”). Last fall, DivestBU, a group of faculty and students, presented President Brown with a petition to divest the University endowment from fossil fuels. The Faculty Council Executive Committee heard a presentation from faculty members of

Divest BU last fall. The ACSRI established a process to educate themselves about the merits of divestment. The ACSRI hosted three forums in April that were open to the University community and posted articles on its website. Prof. Dixon reported that people with broad perspectives attended the forums and the ACSRI heard many points of view. There will be more forums in fall 2015. The ACSRI hopes to attract more faculty and students to participate in the discussion.

A general discussion followed. One Council member said that this is something that we should do as a university to help raise this issue in the public debate and noted that other universities and large institutions have divested from fossil fuels. Another Council member asked if divestment would have a real financial impact on the energy industry, or is it more of a statement? Prof. Dixon said that from a financial perspective, divestment would have no impact on the industry; it would be an ethical statement. The energy sector accounts for ten percent (10%) of GNP. The ACSRI has not examined what, if any, impact divestment would have on the endowment's return.

A Council member questioned whether the Board of Trustees has accepted the idea of socially responsible investing, given its rejection of the ACSRI's recommendation to divest from civilian firearms. Past Chair Darr provided a history the ACSRI, as it was established during her tenure as Chair. The Board of Trustees drafted principles around when it should divest, available on the ACSRI website. The criteria are narrow and specific.

A Council member asked if the criteria are so constricted so that the Board of Trustees will never act. Chair Brady said that both with apartheid and Sudan, there were clear outcomes that the University wanted to achieve with divestment. The challenge with this issue is that the outcome we want from divestment is not clear.

A Council member said that if the University's usage of fossil fuels does not change, then divestment makes no difference. Divestment then is simply a way for us to feel good about ourselves without doing anything. Another Council member said there is a difference between making a statement and solving a problem and disagreed with the argument that we should not comment on social issues unless we can solve them.

Chair Brady informed the Council that he and the Director have also heard from faculty about parking on campus. The campus will lose a parking lot to the construction of the life sciences research building. Chair Brady said that these faculty members' raise reasonable questions about accessibility on campus. How do we reconcile the call for divestment with the call for more parking?

A Council member suggested that divestment might be treated as an aspect of the University's overall sustainability efforts. Another Council member said that global warming is a dangerous crisis and supports any efforts, symbolic or otherwise, to combat it.

Prof. Dixon informed the Council that ACSRI will continue this discussion in the fall.

IV. Benefits

Chair Brady informed the Council that Human Resources received a lot of feedback from employees about the proposed changes to benefits. A number of faculty sent Diane Tucker, Chief of Human Resources, their own data analysis about retirement benefits. Ms. Tucker sent these analyses to Towers Watson to run the numbers for mitigation. Ms. Tucker will meet with the Executive Committee next week. The Chair and the Director will continue to engage with Diane Tucker and her staff with these issues over the summer.

A Council member said that health insurance is a major concern for her colleagues. Some of them calculate that the cost of the PPO will be a constructive pay cut and asked if there can be some mitigation for those who enroll in the PPO.

V. Faculty Diversity Working Group

Chair Brady discussed the Equity and Inclusion Committee's memo with President Brown and Provost Morrison. He reported that Provost Morrison will form a faculty diversity working group to address recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority faculty. They will settle on the membership and draft the charge for the working group this summer.

A Council member asked if Chair Brady and Past Chair Darr will be part of the group. Chair Brady said that it is his understanding that they will be invited. The membership will be set by the Provost.

V. VOTE: Committee Chair Elections

There being a quorum, the Faculty Council elected Janelle Heineke (Questrom) as Chair of the Academic Freedom Committee and James Hamilton (MED) as Chair of the Research Committee.

VI. New Business and Adjournment

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Robb Dixon
Secretary-treasurer