

Boston University Faculty Council
Minutes of the Meeting
October 23, 2015

The third regular meeting of the Boston University Faculty Council for the 2015-2016 Session was held on October 23, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. on the Charles River Campus, 225 Bay State Road. Steve Brady, Chair of the Faculty Council, presided over the meeting. The following members attended:

Andy Andres (CGS), R.
Christopher Coffman (CGS), Alt.
Susan Conkling (CFA), Alt.
Canan Corlu (MET), R.
Yvette Cozier (SPH), R.
Theresa Davies-Heerema (MED), R.
Ted de Winter (ENG), R.
Ana di Robilant (LAW), Alt.
Rani Elwy (SPH), Alt.
Ivan Fernandez-Val (CAS), R.
Tamar Frankel (LAW), R.
Laura Grey (CFA), Alt.
Andrew Henderson (MED), R.
Eleni Kanasi (GSDM), R.
Frank Korom (CAS), R.
Susan Lee (CGS), R.
Cataldo Leone (GSDM), R.
Jordana Muroff (SSW), R.
Eileen O'Keefe (SAR), R.
Carole Palumbo (MED), R.
Matthew Parfitt (CGS), R.
Stephen Roberts (GSDM), R.
Courtney Suess-Raeisinarchi (SHA), R.
Amy Shanler (COM), R.
Erinn Tucker (SHA), R.
Barry Unger (MET), Alt.
Lauren Wise (SPH), R.
Jason Yust (CFA), R.

Committee Chairs

John Carroll, Media and Communication
Joyce Walsh, Student Life

Officers

Steve Brady, Chair
J. Robb Dixon, Vice Chair
Janelle Heineke, Secretary-treasurer

Members without a vote

Doreen Miller, R. CELOP

Guests

Elizabeth Loizeaux, Associate Provost
of Undergraduate Programs
Douglas Kriner
Michael Salinger
Tom Tulips

I. Chair's Report

Chair Brady reminded the Council that Faculty Assembly will convene on November 4 and encouraged them to tell their colleagues to attend. The Assembly meeting is an opportunity for faculty to ask the President and the Provost questions. The Provost will attend the Faculty Council meeting on November 11.

Chair Brady informed the Council that Beth Loizeaux, Associate Provost of Undergraduate Programs; Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith, University Registrar, and Liza Burke, Associate Registrar met with the Executive Committee to discuss their plans to revise the course schedule on the Charles River Campus ("CRC"). Since this policy will have a significant impact on all faculty who teach on CRC, the Chair has invited them to come to the December Faculty Council meeting.

The Faculty Senate of the School of Public Health sent the Chair and the Human Resources ("HR") staff a letter to express its concerns about the impact the new health insurance plan will have on employees on the lower end of the pay scale who live outside of Boston. The Chair noted that the SPH Senate should have addressed the letter to President Brown and to Senior Vice President of Operations Gary Nicksa. Yvette Cozier, the SPH representative, said that the SPH Senate intended to ask the Administration to conduct a study of the effect the new health plans will have on employees who live outside of Boston.

Vice Chair J. Robb Dixon told the Council that he is working with the non-tenure track working group to advance the discussion about non-tenure track review and promotion with the Administration.

Chair Brady asked the Council members to share their questions for the Provost. He reminded them to focus their questions on academic matters that are within her purview and not, for example, to focus on human resources issues.

A Council member said that the Provost should receive the questions the Council asked President Brown about academic support for international students. Many faculty think that the international students need more support. Another Council member said that the faculty need to be trained about how to identify the students' problems, i.e. is the problem linguistic, cultural, personal, etc. A Council member noted that CELOP has been underutilized in this respect. Another Council member said that the percentage of international students has increased from twenty to twenty-five percent and asked about the institution's strategy to support the students.

A Council member said that faculty are supposed to be on campus four days per week and asked whether there is any expectation that that will be enforced.

A Council member asked about course scheduling on CRC. Some faculty are assigned to teach in classrooms on opposite ends of the campus. It seems that there could be a better

utilization of classroom space and faculty time.

II. Discussion: Academic Freedom in the Classroom

Chair Brady reminded the Council that academic freedom of speech in the classroom has been in the news lately. Students at other universities are calling for “trigger warnings” to alert, or in some cases, to shield them from exposure to course materials that might upset them. President Brown discussed this briefly at his meeting with Faculty Council in September. During a discussion in Executive Committee, the Chair learned that high schools in greater Boston are issuing trigger warnings to students. For some students, trigger warnings are a standard practice. The American University Faculty Senate issued a statement to affirm freedom of speech in the classroom. The Chair asked the Council if it should do the same.

A general discussion followed. A Council member said that the Faculty Council should make a statement before this becomes a problem. Students cannot exempt themselves from the requirements of a class without serious deliberation. Another Council member said that the purpose of a university education is to challenge students and to educate them about the larger world; it is not an extension of high school. A Council member said that the University’s duty is to prepare students for what is outside of the classroom. In her discipline, it would constitute malpractice not to expose students to disturbing issues. Another Council member said that in the Law School, students are taught how to argue in a manner that is forceful and clear. It is for the faculty to develop and preserve a culture of respectful argument at the University. Another Council member said that we should consider what the students are asking for with trigger warnings and to be careful that the Faculty Council does not issue a statement that gives faculty license to be uncivil.

Chair Brady thanked the Council for their insight. He said he will convene the Academic Freedom Committee to discuss this further. This issue will be on the agenda again this semester.

III. Guests: Task Force on General Education

The following members of the Task Force on General Education joined the meeting: Beth Loizeaux, Douglas Kriner, Michael Salinger and Tom Tulips.

Bruce Schulman, Co-Chair of the Undergraduate Programs Committee and of the Task Force on General Education provided a review of the Provost’s charge to the Task Force and introduction to the working paper. The Task Force met with faculty, students and deans from all of the colleges that confer undergraduate degrees, as well as parents and alumni.

The Task Force discussed the needs of current and prospective students as well as the

value of a Boston University degree for alumni. They studied what other peer and peer plus institutions have done with their general education curriculum. They published a working paper earlier this month and have scheduled thirty-four meetings to discuss the paper with members of the University community. Prof. Schulman and Assoc. Provost Loizeaux outlined the “Elements and Characteristics,” “Pathways,” “Personal Qualities” and the “Cross-College Challenge” of the working paper.

A general discussion followed. A Council member asked if the Characteristics section of the paper is arranged by order of priority. Prof. Schulman said they are not. The Task Force considered sorting the Characteristics into categories, but chose to present them for comment from the University community first. The Council members discussed the Characteristics and offered editorial suggestions.

A Council member asked when the Task Force’s recommendations will be implemented and by whom. Assoc. Provost Loizeaux said that the original plan was to introduce the changes in Fall 2016, but as the Task Force started to work, they realized that it will take longer. There will be a General Education committee formed to implement the final recommendations of the Task Force, probably no earlier than Fall 2017 for freshmen.

A Council member asked if the University will add more general education requirements. Assoc. Provost Loizeaux said that the Task Force thinks its final report will propose to replace the current general education requirements. The general education requirements are not meant to be fulfilled during the freshman and sophomore years, but maybe satisfied over four years. For NEASC accreditation, the University must require a minimum of forty (40) credits.

A Council member asked if foreign language proficiency will be part of the general education requirements. Prof. Schulman said that they have discussed it and expect that language study will be part of the requirements.

A Council member asked if the Task Force aspires to create a program that will make Boston University distinctive. Prof. Schulman said that the Cross-College Challenge is the unique piece of their recommendation. Students told the Task Force that they would like an opportunity to meet and work with colleagues in other schools and colleges on a team project. The same Council member said that one project does not teach team skills; there is a lot of preparation required to make team projects a good experience.

A Council member asked if the faculty have the capacity and capability to teach this curriculum. Assoc. Provost Loizeaux and Prof. Schulman said that the Task Force recognizes that some faculty will be more open to the opportunities a new general education curriculum offers, but not all faculty will be involved, or want to be.

A Council member said we might be trying to do too much with twelve Characteristics. The final report should identify learning outcomes for the Characteristics.

Chair Brady thanked the Task Force for their work.

IV. New business, adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Janelle Heineke
Secretary-treasurer