

Tufts University Faculty Senate
October 11, 2017

The University Faculty Senate met on October 11, 2017 at 8 a.m. in the Kohnstamm Conference Room of the Administration Building, Grafton campus. Present in Grafton were Senators Chris Swan, Lynne Pepall, Melissa Mazan, John Castellot, Vice Provost Kevin Dunn, and Provost Office Coordinator Lisa Bloom. Present via WebEx were Senate President Jeswald Salacuse, Senators Pearl Robinson, Eulogio Guzman, Larry Weiss, Janet Forrester, Brent Cochran, Roger Tobin, Nirupa Matthan, Norbert Wilson, Vida Johnson, Virginia Chomitz, Jeff Hopwood, Robert Jacob, Mitch McVey, Roman Schumann, Boris Bacanurschi, Fulton Gonzalez, Will Masters, Ali Muftu, Roger Tobin, Henry Wortis, Ann Mahoney, and Provost David Harris.

Senate President Jeswald Salacuse opened and chaired the meeting. First on the agenda was discussion and adoption of the Senate standing committee structure, as presented at the September meeting and revised after that discussion. After a motion and second, the Senate unanimously

VOTED: To adopt the standing committee structure as revised and distributed via email following the September meeting.

The next topic for discussion was the need for a mechanism by which we could give degrees and certifications that are not within a specific school - e.g., the College of Special Studies. Should the Senate create an executive committee comprising faculty from a number of schools? Degree programs tend to knit schools together, so this can be a positive thing. There is a problem with degrees from 2 different schools if students are not fully aware of which school the degree is coming from and what name will be on the degree.

The Senate then discussed the position of Ombudsperson. What is an ombudsperson, and to whom does this person report? It is a position that helps the grievance process; they do not have authority, but help in discovery. This person would report to the senate and would likely be a recently retired person who does not answer to current administration. They would likely also serve graduate students and post-docs. It was noted that the Provost's office should be kept informed during the process as they are responsible for funding the position.

Following a motion and a second, the Senate unanimously

VOTED: That the Senate take on the task of creating an ombuds office, with assistance of the Faculty Affairs committee.

Next on the agenda was a report by Melissa Mazan and David Harris concerning the Building Bridges initiative, which is a response to the highly-polarized current climate on the campuses. The initiative seeks to create mechanisms for engaging in constructive debate and expression. Melissa Mazan gave an overview of the meetings to date, mentioning that the group had brainstormed tools for effective discourse as well as looking at the challenges to productive discussion. They are examining current structures as well as exploring new ones. David Harris added that while this work began in the summer, the process required waiting for students to return to campus in order to move forward. Melissa will serve as the liaison between this initiative and the Faculty Senate, and there will be a plenary session of the Board of Trustees on this topic in November.

A question was posed as to whether the Bridging Differences initiative would fall under the purview of the Academic Affairs committee or the Educational Affairs and Policy committee. The response was that it would primarily be Educational Affairs and Policy, as it concerns Tufts' primary academic mission, and that it would be beneficial for the Senate to publicly show its support for the initiative in some fashion. David Harris emphasized the importance of transparency on this topic. A website has been created on which minutes and updates will be posted in as timely a manner as possible, in order to address brewing suspicion in the Tufts community. One

senator expressed appreciation for the open and transparent approach to this topic, adding that the website gives faculty a resource to recommend to students.

In other business, the question was raised as to whether senators can designate proxies to attend meetings in their place. While a couple senators expressed favorable opinions, others expressed concern that a proxy might not be well-informed about ongoing senate discussions and activities, and some had experience of proxies causing friction and disruption in meetings, as well as potentially normalizing absenteeism. The Senate agreed to think about this topic for discussion at the next meeting.

Melissa Mazan provided an update on the construction of a Faculty Senate website. She has been in contact with Allie Clifford in the Provost's office, and they discussed the site as a place to post Senate information, and also a place for non-Senate faculty to submit agenda items and questions. The site will evolve as the functional needs become clearer. Melissa asked for input from the Senate regarding content for the site, and suggestions included meeting minutes, bylaws, statements & resolutions, and biographies of the senators. It was discussed that the site should live independently under Tufts.edu, or under the faculty and staff header. It was also suggested that it could perhaps even reside under the Leadership heading. Melissa also mentioned that she had researched similar sites at a number of institutions, and that Northwestern had a particularly good example. Brent Cochran has agreed to assist Melissa with the website initiative.

The Senate adjourned at 9:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Mazan
Secretary of the Faculty Senate