

UNH FACULTY SENATE  
MOTION # XII-M15

Recommendations for the NEASC Self Report

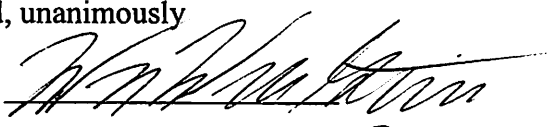
1. Motion presenter: Mimi Becker
2. Date of Faculty Senate discussion: 5/5/08
3. Rationale:

See the attached reports from the senate's Academic Affairs Committee and Research and Public Service Committee and the 5/5/08 senate discussion on the NEASC self report.

4. Motion:

**Mimi Becker moved and Anita Klein seconded a motion that the Faculty Senate requests that the NEASC Interim Report accurately reflect the concerns raised and advice offered by the Faculty Senate and its Academic Affairs, Research and Public Service, and Student Affairs Committees.**

5. Senate action: passed, unanimously

Senate chair's signature: 

Forwarded to: President Mark Huddleston, on June 13, 2008

Forwarded to: Provost Bruce Mallory, on June 13, 2008

Forwarded to: Interim Vice Provost Lisa MacFarlane, on June 13, 2008

Recommendations from the Academic Affairs Committee, regarding the NEASC Self Report:

May 1, 2008

To: Bill Stine, President, Faculty Senate  
From: Larry Prelli, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee  
Re: NEASC report.

As you know, the Academic Affairs Committee received the NEASC Report late in the semester due to a variety of circumstances. Thus, the committee lacked time to conduct the in-depth deliberations that are needed for careful appraisal of such an important document. However, the committee does understand that there are time pressures involving submission of the report, and we do not want to hold up the document. Nevertheless, we want to make plain that we neither

support nor reject the NEASC report. The committee also stresses that under no circumstances should this report to the Senate be used as evidence from which to infer the committee's endorsement, qualified or otherwise, of any contents within NEASC report. Our recommendation is that the Senate adopt a similarly agnostic position in view of pressing circumstances.

Based on our partial and unfinished discussion, the committee wants to note four broad areas of concern about the NEASC report. We shall discuss them in turn.

First, the report signals the possible role of "outreach" scholarship in shaping and changing the Promotion and Tenure process. We take no position on the possible merits of outreach scholarship, but we do take a strong position on the process used for deciding the relevance of such an activity for Promotion and Tenure. Thus, the committee stresses that the report must not be read as a substitute for the normal process involved when considering such major restructuring of faculty work expectations. Our concern about the need for a transparent and thorough process is somewhat amplified by ease of inferring from the report as presently written the conclusion that the proposed change establish a hierarchy of worthy (i.e., engaged) scholarship at the top with the scholarship and creative work that now characterizes much of the humanities, social sciences, and the arts at much lower levels. Given our significant concern, we not only encourage but insist that the Provost follow shared governance processes that are so fundamental to the legitimacy of any proposed change in Promotion and Tenure procedures – the kind of procedure he acknowledged at a recent Faculty Senate meeting. Meanwhile, we also recommend that the NEASC report reflect the reality that this is a proposal that would need to be vetted by various constituencies before being implemented. The report's authors could review material relevant to this concern and insert language that flags clearly for readers the preliminary, hypothetical, and tentative nature of what would amount to significant change in promotion and tenure practices.

Second, the committee does not believe that the NEASC report adequately addresses the issue of finding sufficient funds needed to enact programs such as Discovery. More generally, the committee is dissatisfied with the now commonplace tendency found in discussions of university resources to allude to the paucity of state funding as contributing to tough financial decision. We are dissatisfied since, frankly, in their nature *as* decisions, resources are made available in support of chosen initiatives but, simultaneously, they are withheld from other potential recipients of those resources. How those decisions are made and with what consequences must be transparent for meaningful shared governance to occur. The issue of how to meet overall costs must be addressed with faculty involvement.

Third, the report suggests that the administration has made strides in implementing shared governance. As our previous two concerns already exhibited, the committee asserts the centrality of shared governance as a core value of the university and stresses that this is an ongoing concern of the faculty. Indeed, it must become a natural part of how the university is governed and not something that the administration and faculty work out after decisions have already been made. It is important that both faculty and administration share a commitment to shared governance and forge common understandings of the challenges involved in making shared governance a crucial quality in the ethos of the university. Meanwhile, we recommend that the NEASC report better reflect the actuality of shared governance as it now is practiced at UNH. A quick reading might lead readers to jump to the conclusion that the administration has been admirably pro-active on this issue while the faculty, evidently, have been entirely mute. Surely, a discussion of shared governance ought to acknowledge the efforts of both administration and faculty governance bodies

in trying to work out mutual understandings of what constitutes shared governance. In our view, that kind of depiction is closer to actuality than the depiction found in the current report.

Fourth, we consider academic freedom, another topic in the report, both a normative value of the faculty and a right secured through law and contract. The administration and Board of Trustees deserve credit for public stands they took defending academic freedom. However, we wish to state that not only academic freedom, but procedures that ensure due process, must be guarded vigorously and defended whenever threatened.

May 1, 2008

Comments of the Research and Public Service Committee on the NEASC interim report.

The committee reviewed in detail the sections which fall under its purview of research and public service. These were the section on Undergraduate Research (p. 6-9) and all of Special Emphasis 2: Engagement through Research and Scholarship (p. 14-18)

**General Comments:**

(1) The document could use more introduction. It was not clear to the committee if the document was just supposed to focus on the three areas, or also address the broader perspective. Some areas that are clearly missing from the document are Research and the graduate experience.

(2) The sections on the three focus areas are organized very differently. It would be more readable if these followed the same format.

**Special Emphasis 1: The Undergraduate Experience:**

Here we comment on the specific recommendations on Undergraduate Research (p. 6-9)

(1) *"Recognize and reward faculty mentoring of undergraduate research".*

This is a good recommendation. There needs to be a realization that everyone doesn't have the time to do everything, but this is one choice that people can make, and it should be encouraged and recognized as part of a person's work-load.

(2) *"Undergraduate Research should be more clearly integrated in the undergraduate curriculum."*

Again, we agree with the recommendation. The following paragraph should mention the "capstone experience" of the "Discovery program" as the final step in that integration in addition to mentioning the two courses that now exist.

(3) *"Pay particular attention to the ways in which .... RCM may affect the ability to enhance undergraduate research"*

We felt this recommendation wasn't a specific action that could be tracked, and it also missed that other policies and initiatives in the university could also impact the ability to mentor undergraduates, in particular by affecting teaching loads. We recommend changing this to the following:

"Develop a way of assessing the impact of both RCM and the implementation of the Discovery program on the ability to enhance undergraduate research."

## **Special Emphasis 2: Engagement through Research and Scholarship:**

### **General comments:**

(1) We weren't clear on the relationship between the "Revised Strategic Actions for the Engagement Goal" list, and the list that follows called "Projections, Progress and Change." Some of these overlap, but some are different. The second list needs some sort of introduction or clarification.

(2) We weren't clear on why "centralized" and "decentralized" were added to each bullet of strategic actions. We recommend deleting them.

(3) We feel that a number of important engagement activities are not included in the description provided in this document. Examples of engagement that should be included as valued engagement activity include outreach to local, state, national and international bodies, service on government panels, translation of science to policy, and numerous other important activities that clearly fit the definition of engagement.

### **Specific comments:**

Here we reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> list, the "revised Strategic Actions for the Engagement Goal" (p. 15-16)

*(1) "Through the work ... support ongoing multi-disciplinary faculty and staff driven initiatives..."*

This recommendation needed more specifics. Is this support referring to money being given, or is it some other type of support?

*(2) Catalyze and advance a new partnership between UNH Manchester and UNH Cooperative Extension with a specific focus engagement with the Manchester metropolitan area*

No comments

*(3) "Strengthen outreach and mutually beneficial partnerships with external stakeholders by focusing on specific UNH strengths ..."*

We recommend deleting the specific list of strengths, since it ignores some important strengths, but listing too many does not look focused.

*(4) Build the internal capacity and strengthen the value of engagement and outreach by providing ongoing faculty professional development.*

We recommend deleting the phrase "through the Outreach Scholars Academy", because we felt there should be a broader focus, with more than one possible implementation.

*(5) Through a range of communications strategies... raise awareness about UNH's engagement efforts with external and internal stakeholders*

We would like to add "Maintain a database of faculty expertise that could be accessed by local, state, and national individuals and organizations", either as a separate bullet or as part of this action.

*(6) Create a University culture...*

No comments

*(7) Provide input and leadership to the national conversation about engaged scholarship and engagement...*

Again, we recommend deleting the second phrase "with a particular focus on advancing the Outreach Scholars Academy model", as we felt that this is too narrowly focused and leaves out other important initiatives.

Item IV of the 5/5/08 Faculty Senate minutes:

IV. NEASC self report – The senate chair said that Victor Benassi, who is a faculty member from the Psychology Department and a member of the committee which prepared the NEASC self report, is here to respond to questions about the report. The chair of the senate's Academic Affairs Committee said that his committee did not receive the NEASC self report until late in the semester and thus lacked the time needed to conduct in-depth deliberations and a careful appraisal of this important document. The committee neither supports nor rejects the report and states that under no circumstances should the committee's comments be used to infer its endorsement of any contents within the NEASC self report. The committee recommends that, in view of the time pressures, the senate should adopt a similarly agnostic position.

The committee has four areas of concern about the report. First, the report signals the possible role of outreach scholarship in shaping and changing the promotion and tenure process. However, the report must not be a substitute for the normal process of shared governance that is so fundamental to the legitimacy of any proposed change in faculty work expectations, promotion and tenure. The committee would like the authors of the NEASC self report to insert language which makes clear the preliminary and tentative nature of the report's proposal on outreach scholarship. Second, the committee does not believe that the report adequately addresses the issue of finding sufficient funds which are needed to implement initiatives such as the Discovery Program. If monies are made available to support certain projects, funds will be withheld from other potential recipients of those resources; and any such decision must be transparent and done with full shared governance and faculty participation. Third, the committee is concerned that the report should better reflect the actuality of shared governance as it now is practiced at UNH and should acknowledge the efforts of both administration and faculty governance bodies in trying to work out a mutual understanding of what constitutes shared governance. Shared governance is a crucial quality in the ethos of the university and must be done before decisions are made. Fourth, academic freedom is both a value and a right secured through law and contract; and both academic freedom and the procedures which ensure due process must be guarded vigorously and defended whenever threatened.

A member of the Academic Advising Committee commented that advising was another concern, and the Academic Affairs Committee chair agreed. The issue involved the report's reliance solely on UNH alumni responses used as a basis for inferring the need for faculty to become more knowledgeable about advising issues. The concern was that this was a very slanted way to analyze advising concerns since the imputed advisor-student partnership said nothing about student responsibilities. Another senator expressed concern about a proposal to allocate budget resources for the central administration to fund interdisciplinary programs, and she added that the academic departments need to have the resources in order to participate in such programs. The chair of the senate's Research and Public Service Committee agreed that there was not enough time to review the NEASC self report in detail, and she added that what the document is supposed to focus on needs to be clarified. The document should have a fuller introduction and should

follow the same format for each of the three focus areas. Although to “recognize and reward faculty mentoring of undergraduate research” is a good recommendation, the document should explain that this is one choice that people can make and that it should be encouraged and recognized as a part of a faculty member’s workload. In addition, the paragraph on integrating undergraduate research into the undergraduate curriculum should mention the capstone experience of the Discovery Program as a final step in that integration, in addition to the two courses that now exist. The Research and Public Service Committee recommends changing the part of the report which refers to paying “particular attention to the ways in which...RCM may affect the ability to enhance undergraduate research” to wording such as: “develop a way of assessing the impact of both RCM and the implementation of the Discovery Program on the ability to enhance undergraduate research.”

The committee suggests a clarification of the relationship between the “Revised Strategic Actions for the Engagement Goal” list and the subsequent list called “Projections, Progress and Change.” Also the designation of centralized or decentralized for each strategic action should be deleted. In the document, the concept of engagement should be expanded to include outreach to local, state, national and international bodies, service on government panels, translation of science to policy, etc. In order not to leave out other important initiatives, in the section on providing “input and leadership to the national conversation about engaged scholarship and engagement”, the committee recommends deleting the phrase “with a particular focus on advancing the Outreach Scholars Academic model”. Additional suggestions are listed in the Research and Public Service Committee’s report. A professor said that there should be clearer incentives for faculty to engage in outreach scholarship. The chair of the senate’s Student Affairs Committee did not list any additional suggestions. Victor Benassi said that he would take the faculty concerns back to the drafters of the report to NEASC.

**Mimi Becker moved and Anita Klein seconded a motion that the Faculty Senate requests that the NEASC Interim Report accurately reflect the concerns raised and advice offered by the Faculty Senate and its Academic Affairs, Research and Public Service, and Student Affairs Committees. The senate passed this motion unanimously.** The senate chair said that he has already forwarded the reports of the senate’s Academic Affairs and Research and Public Service Committees.