Minutes of the February 15, 2022 faculty meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm on Zoom by Dean Adrian Randolph.

I. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of October 12, 2021.

The minutes of the Faculty Meeting of October 12, 2021 were approved.

II. Proposal to Change the Name of the Department of Statistics to the Department of Statistics and Data Science. Second reading.

Associate Dean for Research Catherine Woolley introduced the second reading of the proposal to change the name of the Department of Statistics to the Department of Statistics and Data Science:

_We propose to change the name of the Department of Statistics to the Department of Statistics and Data Science to reflect the current status of the field as well as the educational and scholarly activities of the department. Statistics, since its inception, has been an applied science, focused on data analysis, modeling, prediction, visualization, and presentation. Data science, as an emerging discipline, while heavily overlapping with statistics, concerns principles and methods that encompass broader activities, including data collection and management, integration, analysis, and computing algorithms to tackle the challenges of the massive data generated in many disciplines with unprecedented size, scale, dimension and complexity. While a consensus in definition of data science is still lacking, statistics is still regarded as one of the most important foundations of data science. Housing statistics and data science in the same department has become an increasing trend among leading institutions nationwide. The Department of Statistics at Northwestern is distinguished for research in the application of statistics in diverse areas such as social sciences, life sciences, economics, finance, engineering, law, medicine, and public policy. In response to the data science drive, the department has planned strategically to develop data science programs as its first priority in the coming years. Through recent and ongoing hiring the department is building up a strong faculty team in both research and teaching in data science. As a result, two undergraduate programs were established recently, namely the minor in data science in 2019, and major in data science which will begin in the fall of 2022. Thus, the proposed new name better captures the ongoing scholarly and educational activities of the department. It will help to foster a physical hub at Northwestern for both statistics and data science, which with nurture our statistics and data science programs and_
Associate Dean Woolley reminded the faculty that this was a second reading of the proposed name change and opened the floor for questions from the faculty ahead of the forthcoming vote. Professor Jiping Wang, Chair of the Department of Statistics, affirmed the department’s excitement for this prospective change.

Dean Randolph added that the proposed name change was intended to further incorporate data science as a growing field of study within the Department of Statistics and not meant to suggest data science does not occur in other disciplines within the College.

The proposal to change the name of the Department of Statistics to the Department of Statistics and Data Science was approved by a vote of 41 faculty in favor, 0 faculty opposed.

III. Remarks and Q&A with Provost Hagerty

Provost Kathleen Hagerty began her remarks by thanking the Weinberg faculty for their excellence and dedication in the face of a pandemic and its resultant challenges. She proceeded to offer some updates on capital projects, institutional salaries, presidential transition, and Teaching-Track faculty.

Provost Hagerty addressed Jacobs Center renovations. She stated the building would be gutted and rehabbed, similar to Kresge, and reiterated its intended purpose as a social sciences hub. Provost Hagerty noted that, unlike the Global Hub—which serviced a strictly-defined population—Jacobs’ designation for the more broadly defined social sciences has led to prolonged discussions of building occupancy. Provost Hagerty also shared that, when units move into Jacobs, other space opportunities would be created for all College units. In the search for an architect, Provost Hagerty mentioned she was hoping to secure an architect who would focus on clever ways to incorporate community into the building’s design. She relayed an expected completion date of the 2025-26 academic year. Next, Provost Hagerty spoke about Mudd and her support of Weinberg’s goals for that space.

Associate Professor of Instruction Patricia Beddows asked Provost Hagerty to address sustainability in the Jacobs design process. Provost Hagerty affirmed the importance of sustainability in conversations about the building and architect selection.

Professor Jennifer Cole inquired when units would be informed of a move to Jacobs. Dean Randolph and Provost Hagerty confirmed that they did not know when such an announcement would occur, though much is known about the intended occupancy of Jacobs.
Professor Bryna Kra asked if only social science units would be moving into Jacobs. Dean Randolph responded that, broadly, that understanding is correct.

Associate Dean for Facilities Joel Trammell inquired if the exterior of the building would experience change in the renovation. Provost Hagerty noted the significance of the building to Northwestern’s stakeholders while expressing a desire to limit aesthetic costs in favor of other budgetary needs.

Professor Karen Alter asked about Buffett’s intentions for the space. Dean Randolph responded that, while he was not appraised of Buffett’s plans specifically, he was aware that other units connected to international affairs would have some involvement in the space.

Professor Benjamin Weinkove inquired after the relocation plans for split departments that would not be moving to Jacobs. Dean Randolph reiterated that space vacated by Jacobs-bound units would be looked at with an eye for reuniting split departments.

Provost Hagerty transitioned to addressing faculty and staff salaries. She noted that concerns relating to salaries have played a noteworthy role in her tenure as Provost and acknowledged those concerns as a top priority of the University. She shared she was working with University leadership to focus FY23 recurring spending on the merit pool and reiterated her previous commitment to at least 3%.

Provost Hagerty next spoke about the presidential transition and President-Elect Blank’s expected arrival to campus in summer 2022. Professor Alter inquired about the presidential transition. Provost Hagerty explained that each of Northwestern’s units prepared organizational charts for President-Elect Blank to review and stated interactions between herself and the President-Elect had been limited. She followed this by noting that much of the transitional work would take place throughout summer 2022.

Provost Hagerty highlighted two recent Board presentations given by her office about Teaching-Track faculty; delivered to create greater awareness, appreciation, and understanding for the Teaching-Track population and their important work. In her advocacy, Provost Hagerty noted the broad discontinuation of one-year contracts. Professor of Instruction John Alongi shared that his understanding of one-year contracts remaining as the university norm. Dean Randolph & Provost Hagerty responded that language can become imprecise when discussing “contracts” and “appointments” and welcomed further discussion with Professor Alongi on this issue.

Provost Hagerty proceeded to open the floor to faculty questions.

Professor Carole LaBonne asked about the timeline of lifting COVID-related spending constraints. Provost Hagerty affirmed the University’s operational climate had
transitioned away from crisis, and she anticipated continued stabilization on that front, while acknowledging that budgetary decisions rest with the Board of Trustees. She then noted faculty relief funds and commented that ~65% of eligible faculty received aid, which measured impressively compared to peer institutions.

Professor LaBonne mentioned that Princeton was no longer requiring faculty to pay tuition from their grants and that this practice should be on the University’s radar. Dean Randolph responded that Princeton’s budgetary environment is distinct from Northwestern’s and additional benchmarks should be considered when assessing University action on such matters.

Dean Randolph solicited news on campus masking protocols. Provost Hagerty affirmed the University’s commitment to following local and state guidelines on masking.

Dean Randolph proceeded to thank Provost Hagerty for her collegiality, professionalism and dedication to the College. Provost Hagerty reiterated her gratitude to the College’s faculty. There being no further updates, Dean Randolph thanked the faculty in attendance and the meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Quinn Leach, Weinberg College Program Coordinator.