

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
November 15, 2023

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing meeting on November 15, 2023 in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Regan Thomson called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the October 16, 2023 meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

The president then began his [report](#).

The president went over excerpts from the Faculty Handbook related to campus climate and free expression. He said he wanted to do this given the current debates on the crisis in the Middle East taking place on college campuses across the United States. He cited the section on academic freedom and noted that Northwestern community members are expected to deal with each other in a civil manner, that faculty enjoy freedom from institutional censorship in their scholarly pursuits and teaching activities while also being responsible for accuracy in speech and writing. The president also highlighted the section on free expression in the Faculty Handbook. He said that Northwestern welcomes the free expression of ideas, including viewpoints that may be unpopular or unorthodox. The University also encourages freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry, freedom of dissent, and the freedom to demonstrate in a peaceful fashion. Regardless of their views, he said community members share a corresponding responsibility to welcome and promote this freedom for everybody, and they also share a responsibility to maintain an atmosphere conducive to scholarly, creative, and educational pursuits and to respect the safety and rights of all individuals. The president said that if faculty have concerns that any of these rights have been violated, or if they feel they are being harassed, they should contact Associate Provost for Faculty Sumit Dhar. He added that threats of violence should be directed to the police. He also said Northwestern has an [Employee Assistance Program](#) to assist with a variety of mental health and well-being issues.

The president then gave an update on the changes to building access and security measures on campus. He said he met with Chief Operating Officer Luke Figora on November 7th. He said the current Wildcard access configuration is an initial pilot that will run until the end of December. After that, some changes to building accessibility will be made based on what was learned from the pilot. He said continued feedback is welcome.

Lastly, the president said a draft set of questions for Vice President Figora on the new football stadium and athletics' financing was circulated amongst faculty on October 23rd. He said he immediately sent the questions to Provost Kathleen Hagerty and Associate Provost Dhar and asked if Vice President Figora could provide some answers. Those answers were shared with the Senate on November 8th. Vice President Figora was on hand that evening to provide further context to the answers he provided. The president then provided a couple of sidenotes related to the process leading up to sending the questions to Vice President Figora. He said it would be preferable if resolutions operated within the defined Senate structure, and that not every issue needs to be a resolution. He added there was an issue with emails containing the link to the Google document with questions for Vice President Figora. They suddenly disappeared from Outlook inboxes and NU IT was immediately made aware. He stressed that NU IT was not responsible for the removal of the emails. Rather, it appears Microsoft algorithms flagged the email as malicious because it was shared and forward so widely and contained an external link. IT suggested using SharePoint to avoid this happening in the future.

The president then asked if there were any questions.

Senator Luís Amaral (Chemical and Biological Engineering) said that building access changes should have been discussed with the faculty first. He said the lack of vetting done by the administration brings up a shared governance concern in that faculty aren't providing input on decisions that directly affect them. The president said the topic of faculty input on University plans was discussed at the Fall Summit between the University leadership and the Faculty Senate's Executive Committee. He said this is an ongoing emphasis for the Senate and that the plan is to create a list where the Senate currently has direct involvement with the administration to determine if there are any gaps.

Senator Sara Solla (Physiology) said she agreed that the way the questions on the stadium were circulated was less than optimal. She said the disappearance of the emails bothered her though. She asked if the president believed there was no human intervention and the emails were instead removed by an algorithm. The president said he believed NU IT operated in good faith and shared the information willingly and to the best of their knowledge. Senator Solla said she disagreed but she appreciated his point of view.

The president then introduced Vice President Figora

Vice President Figora said he was thankful to join the Senate and that he was happy to answer any questions he could. He then gave an overview of how the plan for a new football stadium came to be. He said the concept of doing something to the stadium began two years ago. There were a number of deferred maintenance issues with the current stadium so the administration began looking at what a renovation would look like. Through that process, the University learned the cost of the renovation was \$300 million a couple of years ago, and the changes would not offer much of an improvement compared to the rest of the market. Vice President Figora said the Ryan family then offered a gift to build a new stadium. Planning then changed from a renovation to a rebuild, he said. Vice President Figora said the target budget for the new stadium is \$800 million. As for how the financing for the new stadium will be broken down, he said the University has committed \$124 million, the stadium will carry about \$78 million in debt that will be financed by the Athletics Department and the stadium's operations, and the remainder will come from philanthropy, the vast majority of which is from the Ryan family. Vice President Figora said they also hired consultants to assist in planning for stadium maintenance and operations once the stadium is built. He said there will be \$5 million a year in debt servicing and additional funds put aside to continually operate. All along he said the University has planned for the stadium to operate independently in Athletics. He added that the project sits with city council as of the meeting (the project has since been approved by Evanston City Council as of the authoring of these minutes).

The president opened the floor for questions.

Senator Therese McGuire (Strategy) said she had heard that donations to the University are down because of the recent hazing scandal and other issues. She asked if others outside of the Ryan family

don't choose to contribute, does the University expect the Ryan family to cover the full philanthropic cost for the football stadium. Vice President Figora said the Ryan family's gift was the largest in the University's history, and extends to both the athletic and academic branches of the University. He said that some of the fundraising beyond the Ryan family's gift is tied to suites and other units within the stadium. He said the University is confident the rest of the money can be raised.

Senator Mark Johnson (Biomedical Engineering) said the generous gift from the Ryan family was reported to be \$480 million, but his understanding was that a portion of those funds (roughly \$200 million) would go to academic research. He added that there are additional and significant legal costs related to hazing scandal and the recent announcement to add more funds to the University's Community Benefits Agreement with the City of Evanston. Senator Johnson said that none of those additional costs factored into the calculations on the stadium shared with the Senate. He said these costs add up to close to \$500 million and he wondered where that money was going to come from. He also asked what percentage of the philanthropy was the Ryan gift because it seemed, based on his calculations, that they were responsible for all of it. Vice President Figora said the Ryan family has increased the initial gift amount of \$480 million. In terms of the legal costs, Vice President Figora said it is in very early stages of litigations and there is no factual basis to the numbers being reported. He added that the over \$100 million Community Benefits Agreement will be paid out over 15 years and is a part of an operating budget Northwestern has planned for. He said he hopes the agreement will strengthen the University's ties to the City of Evanston.

Senator Mark Witte (NTE, WCAS) said faculty are concerned that the high costs to build and maintain a new football stadium will have negative effects on other parts of athletics and on the academic side of the University. He said that former University President Arnold Weber gave the advice of rejecting philanthropic gifts that "eat." He said he hopes the stadium rebuild goes well, but is concerned about overruns. He then asked where the revenue will come from to cover the debt and also where up-front money will come from as well. Vice President Figora said as far as cost overruns, the University is using a strategy called "construction manager at risk." The construction manager, Turner-Walsh, enters a guaranteed maximum price (GMP), based on hard construction costs, which is a portion of the \$800 million budget. He said Turner-Walsh is on the hook for any downstream movements that happen after the agreed upon GMP, unless the owner decides to make

changes midstream. He also said the soft costs portion of the budget contains contingencies, like finding contaminated soil or other unexpected changes, which also makes up a portion of the \$800 million. He said the Ryan family does play a role if the costs do change down the line. Senator Witte followed up to ask if Vice President Figora could provide the high-side risk. Vice President Figora said construction doesn't start until the final GMP is signed, and that won't happen until the stadium demolition is fully approved. If, he said, the GMP came in drastically over budget then the GMP wouldn't be signed and the stadium would not be demolished. Vice President Figora said the stadium and its revenue and debt will exist in the Athletics Department. He said ticket sales, concessions, etc. will be a part of covering the costs of the stadium.

Senator Rick Cohn (NEO) asked when Vice President Figora suspected the first football game would be played in the new stadium. Vice President Figora said the football stadium rebuild will be 30-month project. He said the goal is to be in the new stadium at the beginning of the 2026 football season.

Senator Amaral used the example of Jaguar cars, which are beautiful, but in the old days would break down internally. He said he thinks of football at Northwestern in a similar way—the product on its surface seems great, but in fact has caused the University many problems in the past few months, including the hazing scandal, the lawsuits, etc. Now, Senator Amaral, said it seems as if Athletics will receive a huge financial reward after all of the turmoil. He asked if Vice President Figora maintains that athletics will operate properly moving forward.

Senator Ian Horswill (Computer Science) said that Northwestern has had number of building projects that have gone overbudget. He asked Vice President Figora to explain why the stadium project won't go overbudget like the others did. Vice President Figora said a handful of things go into delivering a project on time and on budget. He said when decisions are made about the design of a building is a huge factor into a project's timeline and budget. If changes are made midstream, he said that can have a massive effect. Vice President Figora said they have only used the “construction manager at risk” strategy on one other capital project at Northwestern, so that is a different, hopefully more beneficial approach. He also said this is the first time they've hired an outside firm to work alongside Northwestern administrators as they manage the project.

Senator Taco Terpstra (Classics) asked where the money for the Community Benefits Agreement comes from. Vice President Figora said it comes from two main sources. He said the stadium itself will bear some of that cost and the University will cover another portion, which has been a part of the University's financial plans for some time. The payments will not be paid up front and will instead be paid annually.

Senator Deborah Cohen (History) asked what happens if Athletics cannot service the \$78 million in debt. She also wondered if the assumptions built into the budgeting model (revenue from concerts, football games) are too optimistic. Vice President Figora said the \$5 million annual payments for the debt gets paid out of the stadium's operations. He said once all of the bills are paid for staff and utilities and other regular costs, the first call on net operating performance is the debt. In the event that debt couldn't be serviced by the stadium, which he sees as unlikely, Vice President Figora said the Athletics Department covers it.

The president thanked Vice President Figora for joining the Senate and answering questions about the stadium.

Senator McGuire then introduced a resolution to ensure the building and maintenance of the new football stadium does not have a deleterious impact on the University's ability to maintain and enhance its mission. She said the Budget and Planning Committee met on October 30 to discuss a resolution on the football stadium. She said there are members of the Budget and Planning Committee opposed to the stadium and there are members in favor of it, but the resolution is not about the prospect of building the stadium. She said the resolution is intended to put the Faculty Senate on record about the implications of building the stadium and how it might affect the University's mission. She said the first three "Whereas" statements are directly from the University's values and priorities page. She said the next two "Whereas" statements acknowledge the money it takes to fulfill the University's mission. The next two "Whereas" statements call attention to recent financial difficulties the University has faced prior to the stadium being built. Finally, she said the resolution is to go on record with the faculty's beliefs and wants and that the faculty will be watching to ensure those are met. Senator McGuire then entered the following resolution into the record:

WHEREAS – Northwestern University’s mission states that it is committed to excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community; and

WHEREAS – Northwestern's stated priorities embody commitments to global eminence in research, innovation and education, and the strengthening of its academic community across our Evanston, Chicago and Qatar campuses; and

WHEREAS – Northwestern’s stated priorities include a commitment to excellence and equity across athletic programs, as well as an assurance the athletic program’s goals remain aligned with the University values and always place student safety and welfare at the forefront; and

WHEREAS – Continued development and improvement of teaching and research infrastructure is critical to support the mission of the University; and

WHEREAS – Competitive salaries, stipends, scholarships and benefits for students, faculty and staff are crucial to furthering the mission of the University by attracting and retaining the most talented people; and

WHEREAS – Previous actual and predicted financial shortfalls within the university have led to, inter alia, the delay of planned infrastructure improvements (e.g., Jacobs Center), staff reductions, faculty hiring freezes, reduced salary pools, and the temporary suspension of faculty retirement contributions; and

WHEREAS – The construction of an \$800 million stadium and the costs associated with its ongoing maintenance has the potential to place financial pressure on the University’s operations and commitment to its own mission;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT – The Faculty Senate holds Northwestern University’s Board of Trustees responsible for maintaining proper fiduciary oversight of the University such that it can maintain and enhance its mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT – Any future financial deficit due to the building or maintenance of the new stadium will not lead to a reduction in resources for any aspect of the mission of the University.

The floor was then opened for discussion.

Senator Julie Marie Myatt (Theatre) asked about the connection to concerts and the stadium's operating costs. She said the University is relying on huge crowds to fund these events, but the world has just come out of a pandemic and businesses were decimated by large crowds. She said she wanted the record to show the shortsighted planning involved in such a project.

Senator Amaral thanked the committee for the resolution. He said he was in favor of it.

Senator Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering) offered a friendly amendment to the resolution. He suggested striking the phrase “Any future financial deficit due to” and changing the word “or” to “and.” His amendment was accepted and no objections were offered.

Senator Solla said she is also was in favor of the resolution. She noted that the Social Security Administration gave a cost of living adjustment of 8.7% in 2023 and 3.2% for 2024. She said salary increases that do not keep up with that level of inflation are in fact salary decreases. She said the lack of full cost of living adjustments for faculty needs to be addressed at some point.

Senator Barbara Newman (English) called the question. There was no opposition to her motion.

The Senate then voted upon the following resolution:

WHEREAS – Northwestern University's mission states that it is committed to excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community; and

WHEREAS – Northwestern's stated priorities embody commitments to global eminence in research, innovation and education, and the strengthening of its academic community across our Evanston, Chicago and Qatar campuses; and

WHEREAS – Northwestern’s stated priorities include a commitment to excellence and equity across athletic programs, as well as an assurance the athletic program’s goals remain aligned with the University values and always place student safety and welfare at the forefront; and

WHEREAS – Continued development and improvement of teaching and research infrastructure is critical to support the mission of the University; and

WHEREAS – Competitive salaries, stipends, scholarships and benefits for students, faculty and staff are crucial to furthering the mission of the University by attracting and retaining the most talented people; and

WHEREAS – Previous actual and predicted financial shortfalls within the university have led to, inter alia, the delay of planned infrastructure improvements (e.g., Jacobs Center), staff reductions, faculty hiring freezes, reduced salary pools, and the temporary suspension of faculty retirement contributions; and

WHEREAS – The construction of an \$800 million stadium and the costs associated with its ongoing maintenance has the potential to place financial pressure on the University’s operations and commitment to its own mission;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT – The Faculty Senate holds Northwestern University’s Board of Trustees responsible for maintaining proper fiduciary oversight of the University such that it can maintain and enhance its mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT – The building and maintenance of the new stadium will not lead to a reduction in resources for any aspect of the mission of the University.

The motion to approve the resolution passed.

President-Elect Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences) then gave an update on the Athletics Ad Hoc Committee. She said at that time they had only met once with more plans to meet later in the quarter. She said the committee’s charge and mission is to identify the role of

faculty in oversight of athletics, to advocate for processes that safeguard wellbeing of student athletes, to examine the composition and selection of the Committee on Athletics and Recreation (CAR), and to add faculty perspective and voice to the external evaluation of athletics currently underway.

President-Elect Wilson said their first steps are to engage with Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Associates, to develop a list of questions for the administration, such as what is the membership and de facto purpose of CAR, to ask how Athletics is administered, both its budget and how it is organized, and to determine the relationship between Athletics and NU's administrative structures. She said they are also doing research on faculty oversight of athletics at peer institutions.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Amaral said his understanding is that faculty are not given any financial information on athletics. He said he thought it would be important to have faculty oversight of Athletics' financial aspects.

The president said questions for that committee can be sent to Senator Mark McCareins, the chair, to him or to Senate Secretary Jared Spitz.

The Senate then heard standing committee reports.

Senator Tom Hope (Cell and Developmental Biology) said the Research Affairs Committee is looking forward to a busy year. He said they are excited to begin working with new Vice President for Research Eric Perrault. Senator Hope said he met with Vice President Perrault at the start of the year and he came away impressed with his energy and vision to improve all facets of scientific research at Northwestern, especially in areas like subcontracts and information science. He said Vice President Perrault also wants to continue to build strong partnerships with the other scientific institutions in Chicago. Senator Hope added that the Research Affairs Committee held their first meeting at the beginning of November. He said they came up with a list of items to pursue this year: continuing to ensure grant submissions go smoothly, fixing procurement problems in Feinberg, managing challenges with IT and security, and monitoring the functions of IRB.

The president added that Vice President Perrault has agreed to visit the Senate once he settles in.

Senator Jean-François Gaillard (Civil and Environmental Engineering) asked if the Research Affairs Committee plans to hold an exit interview with former Vice President for Research Milan Mrksich. Senator Hope said they had not considered that option, but he thought it was a good idea.

Senator Witte said the Governance Committee has been reviewing the Faculty Senate and Faculty Assembly Bylaws. He said the committee is looking at ways to improve how resolutions are formed and also what happens after resolutions are passed. Senator Witte said they also want to consider how many times a year the Faculty Assembly should be required to meet (currently twice a year and the committee might propose once a year plus as needed). Senator Witte likewise said the committee may consider encouraging presentations from the administration to be shared with Senate beforehand. He stressed that senators should reach out if they have any ideas about to improve the Senate's Bylaws and processes.

Senator Newman acknowledged that Senate process can be quite deliberate. However, she said there are occasionally issues that require more urgent action. Knowing that, she suggested the Governance Committee devise alternative protocols for immediate legislative concerns. Senator Witte said that was a great idea and that the committee consider such a change.

Senator Amaral said that many of the Senate's activities are centered around resolutions. He said the Senate could pass "expressions of concern," in which the Senate could convey a sentiment quickly. Senator Witte said when the Bylaws were written the internet was used quite differently, so how items are shared and voted upon can be done much more efficiently today.

Senator Solla said the Senate needs to be more active when it comes to governance. She said the Senate is being reactive rather than proactive, and thus needs to establish better rules to allow it to be more effective. She then asked if the draft resolution with questions for Vice President Figora that Senator Witte distributed to the faculty, which received over 100 signatures, was enough to call for a Faculty Assembly. The president said the signature count was high enough, however the document did not explicitly state it was a petition to call a Faculty Assembly.

The president noted that Senator Joe Ferrie, chair of the Salary and Benefits Committee, was unable to join the Senate and would therefore be removed the agenda for that evening.

Senator McGuire then shared what the Budget and Planning Committee has worked on thus far and plans to work on throughout this year. She said the committee's first meeting was spent crafting the resolution voted on earlier that evening. The second meeting they plan to hold that quarter is with Vice President Mandy Distel, during which they would further explore Northwestern's budgeting process, specifically faculty's role in that process, and have a discussion on Northwestern's endowment spend percentage. Senator McGuire also said that Vice President Distel, in an effort to be as useful to faculty as possible, requested feedback and input from senators on draft presentation on Northwestern's budget and financing that Vice President Mandy Distel and Provost Hagerty will make at the January 10, 2024 Faculty Senate meeting. She said three senators graciously agreed to provide feedback: Senator Jennifer Cole (Linguistics), Senator Jim Mahoney (Sociology), and Senator Caryn Ward (Medill). Those senators plan to meet with Vice President Distel On November 30.

Senator Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences) said he loves the idea of having non-economists review the presentation. However, he said it might be a good idea to have an economist in the room as well to ask the right questions. Senator McGuire said she understood and thanked Senator Beitel for his feedback.

Senator Lichter said Northwestern often compares itself to its peers, like Harvard, University of Chicago, Princeton, etc. He said that Vice President Figora mentioned Northwestern needing a stadium comparable to its peers. Senator Lichter said it did not seem Vice President Figora had the same peers in mind that are often cited. He likewise said the Budget and Planning Committee must consider schools with similar endowments when it does its comparison of endowment spend percentages. Senator McGuire said the committee spent a fair amount of time discussing that very concern with Senate Researcher Tricia England.

Senator Ezra Getzler (Mathematics) said it was his understanding that the endowment was held in various units around the University. He asked if the spend percentage is the same in each of those

units. Senator McGuire said that was a great question and she said the committee would look into it further.

The Senate then broke out into small groups to discuss the following questions: 1. Are there specific questions related to the University budget that the Senate is interested in learning more about? 2. Are there useful types of data on salary that the Senate thinks would be valuable to know when creating its annual salary report?

Senator Lichter said his group discussed financial disclosures regarding the stadium. He said they wanted to know if there was a document detailing the current accounting for the construction and upkeep of the new football stadium.

Senator Ward said her table had a few questions related to staffing levels at the University: What are the staffing levels currently, specifically in IT? Related to that, there is a concern about the length of time it takes during faculty searches, and that faculty are being lost because of that. Also, will there be raises next year closer to inflation? Additionally, will the reinstatement of retirement funds be considered by the administration? Finally, what is the timeline for when decisions about faculty salaries and appointments are made?

The president said Senator Ferrie is in the process of seeking more information on the suspension of retirement funds and will report on that in the near future.

Senator Anne Zald (University Libraries) said there is generally a reported figure for raises University-wide, but the money is then allocated to the deans to decide how raises are doled out in the schools. Her table asked if there is any oversight from the Provost's Office after the money is distributed to the schools. She also said that being able to see salary highs, lows, and averages within rank would be highly valuable. She said there is also concern among faculty about how grad student unionization might effect staffing levels. Also, they would like to know what the financial impact of the current lawsuits is going to be.

Senator Getzler posed the following question: Does the administration intend to increase the budget for graduate student support or do they plan to reduce the number of graduate students?

Senator Solla wondered why cut retirement contributions weren't returned after it was revealed the budget wasn't nearly as bad as initially expected during the beginning of the pandemic. She said her group also wondered why raises didn't match the cost of living adjustments announced by social security. She also wondered if the salary distribution within departments matches departments at peer institutions.

Senator Newman said that Senate representation wasn't equal across the schools—WCAS has a representative in every department and the Law School only has two representatives for the whole school. She said they also discussed how schools determine raises and also the size of graduate student classes given the recent unionization.

The president then asked if there was any other new business. Seeing none, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate