

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
Guild Lounge and Videoconference  
June 5, 2024

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on June 5, 2024 in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Regan Thomson (Chemistry) called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the May 8, 2024 meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

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

The president said, following the frustration last meeting with the difficulty in assessing honorary degree nominees without knowing anything about them beforehand, that he has reviewed the process with the Provost's Office who agreed to share the nominees one week prior to the meeting where the vote takes place. He stressed that candidates will still be confidential, and that senators should not share that information with anyone outside of the Faculty Senate.

The president said he attended a joint session of the Academic Affairs and Student Life committees of the Board of Trustees on May 16<sup>th</sup>. He said the first half of the agenda was a presentation and discussion on faculty disciplinary processes led by Provost Kathleen Hagerty and Associate Provost Sumit Dhar. He said interest in the topic stemmed from campus protests and the pending (at the time) congressional testimony from President Schill. He said he has been continually impressed with the Provost's and Associate Provost's ability to support faculty and educate Trustees on the unique aspects of the university relative to faculty. He said the second half of the presentation featured a discussion of the response to the protests by the Division of Student Affairs, led by Vice President Susan Davis and Associate Vice Presidents Mona Dugo and Jeremy Schenk. He noted the compassion and dedication of that office for student support.

The president then gave an update on the Athletics report from the Paul, Weiss Law Firm. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, Senate leadership (president, past president, president-elect) and Senator Mark McCareins (NTE, Kellogg), chair of the ad hoc Athletics Committee, along with members of the administration and CAR (Committee on Athletics and Recreation) met with Attorney General Loretta Lynch and her team at Paul, Weiss to get a preview of the key findings and recommendations. The report currently remains confidential, but the president said it will be publicly released, likely sometime in mid-June. He said he anticipates opportunities for the Senate to engage in discussions with University leaders on the implementation of certain findings, especially in areas that concern faculty.

Lastly, the president said NU-Q (Northwestern's Qatar campus) faculty formed a Faculty Council to organize and elevate specific faculty issues on their campus. He said they are not trying to create their own Senate (there are three representatives from NU-Q on the Senate currently). Senate leadership also met with Zachary Wright (Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at NU-Q) to discuss ways to further engage with NU-Q faculty.

Senator Barbara Newman (English) said the faculty witnessed President Schill's congressional testimony and the attack on Northwestern. She said there has also been pressure from outside organizations to influence the Trustees to fire President Schill. Since the president attended a meeting with two committees from the Board, she wanted to know if the Trustees are supporting President Schill and are resisting the pressure from outside groups. The president said he does not know what the Board is considering. He said that during the session he attended the discussion was positive.

Senator Rebecca Zorach (Art History) asked if there will be any more information about the dismissals of staff members that President Schill mentioned during his testimony. She acknowledged that there were likely confidential personnel reasons for not sharing certain information, but she wanted to note her concern. The president said that is something the Senate leadership can discuss with the Provost, but he had no further information to offer.

Senator Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences) said he was not aware of how NU-Q operates from a faculty perspective or otherwise. He suggested perhaps having a faculty presentation at Senate

meeting next year to help further educate the Senate on NU-Q. The president said he thought that was a great idea.

The Senate then voted on and approved (51 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention) Senator Ian Hurd as the next President-Elect of the Faculty Senate.

Senator Zorach, chair of the Social Responsibility Committee, then shared a brief update on the committee's work throughout the year. She said their major research project this year, continuing from the previous year, was on faculty community engagement and community engaged research in relation to tenure and promotion. Senate Researcher Tricia England, along with Ruth Curry from the Center for Civic Engagement, completed a comprehensive report on what other institutions are doing with respect to both community engagement and the question of tenure and promotion. Senator Zorach said she shared their findings at the Spring Summit with President Schill and Provost Hagerty, which produced some ideas on how to continue the conversation around this topic at Northwestern. The committee also met with Chief Operations Officer Luke Figora about NUPD actions in relation to the *Daily Northwestern* parody and the encampment as well as other topics related to the University's commitment to police reform. She said she hoped that conversation continues and that they will continue to gather information. She also said the committee has had ongoing conversations about sustainability and fossil fuel divestment. The committee met with Chief Investment Officer Amy Falls last year to talk about this topic. Due to time constraints, CIO Falls wasn't able to share as much information on that topic when she visited the full Senate earlier this year, but Senator Zorach said they will continue to raise questions about the University's investment strategy as it pertains to fossil fuels and clean energy, and will also monitor the progress of the Advisory Committee on Investment Responsibility.

Senator Zorach then presented the following resolution, with input from the new Faculty and Staff for Climate Actions group, for approval:

WHEREAS Northwestern University expresses a strong commitment to sustainability, decarbonization, reductions in fossil fuel consumption and energy spending, and the current and future health and well-being of all members of our community;

WHEREAS the truth of a commitment is measured by actions and by the transparent reporting of goals and progress towards such goals;

WHEREAS addressing sustainability challenges will not be achieved through individual action but through systemic, institution-level change;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests that the University leadership expeditiously:

1. Provide an update on the status of the sustainability goals laid out in the 2017–2021 [NU Sustainability Plan](#), identifying goals that have been met and those not yet achieved, and providing clear indication of the specific metrics used to determine (if any) successes and (if any) future challenges in areas including those listed in the 2017–2021 Plan: Built Environment, Transportation, Resource Conservation, Experiential Learning, and Communications and Engagement;
2. Complete and make public the current Sustainability Plan;
3. Provide evidence regarding how Northwestern University plans to stay not just current but also forward-thinking in its steps to address current and future sustainability in energy production and consumption;
4. Provide evidence regarding how Northwestern University will engage all community members in formulating, discussing, and implementing any such plans;
5. Provide quarterly substantial progress reports at the *sustainNU* [news site](#).

Senator Zorach said outcomes from the 2017-21 sustainability plan were understandably stalled due to the pandemic, but now that it has been three full years, the resolution requests metrics on progress the University has made towards the stated goals, and asks what the new goals are, and if there can be more regular transparency regarding climate goals. She added that it also appears that the *sustainNU* office is understaffed, and perhaps this resolution could help open the door for more support.

The floor was then opened for discussion.

Senator Therese McGuire (Strategy) asked if a sustainability report is being actively worked on. Senator Zorach she has reason to believe there is, but they don't know very much about it.

Senator Jacqueline Babb (Medill) asked if resolution points three and four are in the sustainability plan. Senator Zorach said they are ambitions in the 2017-21 plan. She said she does believe there is a sustainability plan in progress, she is just not sure what stage it is at. She noted that the language in the resolution is meant to be forward-thinking, and to encourage having conversations in the community about sustainability at Northwestern.

Senator Jean-François Gaillard (Civil and Environmental Engineering) asked who works in the sustainability office, and if there was anyone in charge there, because he had heard the office might not be renewed. Senator Zorach said that wouldn't surprise her because there is no director, only an assistant director.

Senator Dave Kalainov (Orthopedic Surgery) asked if the Paula M. Trienens Institute for Sustainability and Energy worked with *sustainNU* and central administration on their campus plans or if that institute mainly focused on research. Senator Zorach said it was the latter. She said the university is doing a ton of research on sustainability, but the question remains: how are we living these values on campus.

Senator Newman said if no one is in charge of this effort then it suggests the University isn't taking sustainability seriously, and that's why she offered her support for the resolution.

Senator Ezra Getzler (Mathematics) asked if there is an intentional ask for more staff in the *sustainNU* office. He said the resolution didn't explicitly state that and he urged the Senate to proceed cautiously when asking for more staff at the center of the University. Senator Zorach said asking for more staff was not in the resolution because she didn't think it was something the Senate could propose. She said she would be happy with a faculty director of *sustainNU*. She said the things articulated in the resolution are important, and the resolution is a talking point to have the conversation about how to allocate resources.

Senator Caryn Ward (Medill) wondered if the wording in items three and four in the resolution could be more precise. She said "provide evidence" was vague, and that perhaps having them address the Senate would make it more pointed.

Senator Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering) said he supported the spirit of the resolution. He said he also thought the resolution was a little vague. He said he would much rather have a resolution

that asks for something specific that the faculty can follow up on. He said the vagueness allows for the administration to offer up their own platitudes. The president said he thought this resolution might lead to more specific actions in the future, but for now, he viewed it as starting the conversation on sustainability.

Senator Babb said there could be a two-stage ask. The first is about what's happening and how things could get done. She said using that frame could help sharpen the resolution.

With no further discussion, the Senate voted on and approved the above resolution (47 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions).

The Senate then heard a standing committee report from Senator McGuire, chair of the Budget and Planning Committee. She said the committee spent the year working on two projects: a peer comparison of endowment spend policies and gaining a better understanding of the budgeting process with the goal of figuring out how to increase the involvement of the Budget and Planning Committee in the budgeting process from the beginning to the end. Senator McGuire said they worked on the latter project with Chief Financial Officer Mandy Distel and Senior Associate Vice President of Budget and Planning Daniel Durack. She said they are great administrative partners and the plan is to have further discussion with them next year, starting in the fall when budgeting for FY2026 begins. Regarding the first project, Senator McGuire said Senate Researcher England gathered information on Northwestern and 16 peer universities. Senators Bev Wright (Communication Sciences and Disorders) and Tarita Thomas (Radiation Oncology) helped write a [one-page summary](#) of the committee's findings. She said that all 17 universities examined spent between 3-5.5% of their endowment in FY2022 and FY2023. She noted that Northwestern's payout percentage is in the middle of the pack. Northwestern's endowment size is small compared to the top schools. She said that many universities, including Northwestern, use formulas to determine the endowment spend rate i.e. taking the market value of the endowment and how much was spent from the endowment that year, and move that forward while incorporating inflation. The bottom line, Senator McGuire said, is that the committee determined Northwestern's endowment spend policies is in line with its peers.

The president opened the floor for questions. Seeing none, the president thanked the Budget and Planning Committee for their work this year.

The Senate then heard from Senator Joe Ferrie (Economics), chair of the Salary and Benefits Committee. He also reported on the committee's work thus far this year, including reviewing the University's health plans. He reminded senators to not use the "Premier" tier in the Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO plan. He said the "Premier" tier is "dominated" by the other tiers in ever imaginable circumstance.

He said the committee also considered the repercussions of the lost retirement contributions. Senator Ferrie said the University legally could have refunded faculty and staff contributions, but chose not to. He said there is nothing preventing the University from doing so again. Thus, he recommended the Senate think creatively about suggested guidelines for when a circumstance might arise necessitating the removal of benefits, and if the University does agree to a plan outlined by the Senate, it should be in writing.

He also reminded the Senate about the "Mega Backdoor Roth" option for retirement plans, which allows after-tax contributions to retirement plans that can be immediately rolled over into a Roth account (an extensive list of benefits is listed on the slides linked in the president's report above). He said some employers allow not only pre-tax and after-tax contributions (as Northwestern does), but a third type: after-tax (non-Roth) retirement contributions. Those are not subject to the \$22,500 cap; the only limitation is that all employee and employer retirement contributions taken together may not exceed a certain amount (\$66,000 in 2023). He said he discussed with HR offering the third options and received several reasons why it can't be done: Northwestern's retirement plan document won't allow it, Fidelity isn't set up to do this, very few faculty would take advantage, might violate the non-discrimination test, and Northwestern's HR isn't set up to do this. He offered one refutation to all of these: The University of California System offers the Mega Backdoor Roth, and they use Fidelity. He said pushing for Northwestern to offer the Mega Backdoor Roth option could be way for faculty to recuperate some of the funds lost when Northwestern suspended retirement contributions.

Senator Getzler asked if the \$66,000 cap was only individual's contributions. Senator Ferrie said it was the total amount for employee and employer contributions. Senator Getzler also said the University of California uses a 457 plan, which is different than Northwestern's 403b retirement plan. He suggested the committee find an example of another university using Fidelity with the same kind of plan. Senator Ferrie said that will require some more research.

Senator Judy Rosenbaum (Law School) said she tried to raise her personal contribution on the 403b and Northwestern HR said they don't do this and that she needed to contact TIAA. She heard the exact opposite from TIAA. She said it turned out that it is Fidelity that faculty need to contact and work through if they want to raise their personal contribution to their retirement plan. Senator Ferrie asked for Senator Rosenbaum to send an email to him about this issue so he can pass it along to the new Director of Benefits. Senator Rosenbaum said she would, and she also asked if the committee had any advice for those who are retiring soon and would like to make up for the lost retirement contributions in some way. Senator Ferrie said that topic did come up in that it was a reason why the administration did not want to give back the lost contributions i.e. it would be difficult tracking down faculty who had retired.

Senator Sara Solla (Physiology) noted that the raise pool this year for faculty—3%—was well below cost of living adjustments. She said the University should take inflation to account. Senator Ferrie said he would address that very point later in his presentation.

Senator Ferrie then reviewed data from the annual faculty salary report (full report, compiled by incomparable Senate Researcher Tricia England, will be shared in the committee's year-end report). He said he wanted to share some high-level comparisons and look at cost-of-living adjustments in order to better assess where Northwestern is ranked compared to its peers. He also noted that next year the committee should request data for both the libraries and Feinberg faculty, which are not included in the Provost's Office's salary tables, and also further examine the in-rank salary numbers.

Senator Ferrie then reviewed the [graphs](#) he created (slides 28-32) based on the salary comparison. As with the endowment payouts, Northwestern is in the middle of the top twenty schools based on full professor salaries (it's unknown if schools reporting to the AAUP national salary survey include medical schools; Northwestern does not). Looking at the full professor salaries adjusted for Chicago's cost of living, he said the picture is scrambled. Locations like Philadelphia, New Haven, Houston, Memphis and St. Louis all rank higher than Northwestern, but San Jose and New York fall lower in the rankings because their cost of living is much higher than Chicago's. For assistant professors, Senator Ferrie said Northwestern is a little below the middle, likewise when adjusted for cost of living. Senator Ferrie added that, compared to inflation, Northwestern faculty salaries are absolutely flat since 2011—no increase in real terms, but no decrease in real terms.



The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Rosenbaum said that Northwestern has a large number of NTE faculty. She said the data may not be available, but she would like to see the data compared to other schools. Senate Researcher England said there are internal comparisons between tenure-line and non-tenure eligible faculty, but the AAUP does not currently survey NTE data.

Senator Anne Zald (University Libraries) said she would share the librarian's collective bargaining agreement with the Salary and Benefits Committee. She also shared that the librarians just established a rank structure (beginning September 1<sup>st</sup>) and the salary increases that go along with such a structure.

Senator Julie Marie Myatt (Theatre) asked what the percentage of NTE faculty compared to tenure-line. She said the NTE have no leverage and it prevents negotiation. Senator Cat Fabian (NTE, School of Communication) said there are approximately 2,400 NTE faculty and 900 tenure-line faculty.

Senator Carol Schmidt (Ophthalmology) wondered if there was any effort to reach out to representatives from Feinberg to get salary data. She said that several years ago the medical school implemented a ranking based on relative value units compared to a database. She said salaries would be based on how doctors performed.

Senator Ana Maria Acosta (Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences) said that there is always pushback when salary data from Feinberg is requested. She said the rationale is there are no apple-to-apple comparisons because there are physician faculty members. She said she doubted the administration would provide that salary data.

Senator Rick Cohn (Northwestern Emeritus Organization) said the sources of income at the medical school are quite different—Northwestern Medicine, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Lurie Children's, etc. He said these are all separate and not under the purview of the dean, which complicates reporting figures.

Seeing no further questions, the president thanked Senator Ferrie and the Salary and Benefits Committee.

Senator Angela Lee (Marketing), chair of the Secure Faculty Survey Committee then shared the [results of the 2024 Faculty Senate survey](#). First though, she reminded the senators of the two charges the committee had this year: one was the Faculty Senate survey and the other was a University-wide survey of faculty. The last full survey of the faculty was conducted in 2015, and last year the Survey committee recommended the Provost's Office internally run its own survey of all full-time faculty. That survey is still pending, she said, due to a number of factors. Most notably, an upcoming NTE survey and two grant-related surveys related to STEM faculty. She said the administration is concerned about survey fatigue. To minimize that, the committee is considering looking at commonalities from the results of these surveys and then fielding a survey to the faculty who won't be captured in these three surveys.

Looking at the Executive Summary, Senator Lee said the Faculty Senate Survey was open from April 29-May 4, 2024, with a 66% response rate. She said senators perceive Faculty Senate to be somewhat efficient, somewhat effective, and the administration to be somewhat responsive to issues raised by the Faculty Senate. She indicated that those who have held committee chair positions tend to have a slightly more positive view on the Senate's effectiveness and administrative responsiveness. She noted that there are learning opportunities among senators for bringing issues to the Senate for discussion and the drafting of resolutions. There was also wide support for the annual orientation to begin the year. The appendices (linked above with identifiers redacted) also suggested many ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Senate. Senator Lee then highlighted several data points in the slides linked above.

The floor was the opened for questions.

Senator Babb asked if there was any relation between those who attended meetings on Zoom versus senators who attend in person. Senator Lee said they did not ask that question. But she did say that Chicago senators mostly attend on Zoom, and there were a few comments from them about holding more meetings downtown. She said there was not a notable difference between Chicago-campus senators and Evanston-campus senators.

With no further questions, the president thanked Senator Lee and the Secure Faculty Survey Committee.

The president then ended with a heartfelt thank you to Senate Secretary Jared Spitz, Senate Researcher Tricia England, Parliamentarian Roger Boye, all members of the Executive Committee, with special thanks to those leaving the Senate (Angela Lee, Mark Witte, Steve Jacobsen, Joe Ferrie, and Therese McGuire), the chair of the ad hoc Athletics Committee, Mark McCareins, Past President Ceci Rodgers (Medill), President-Elect Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences), and all senators. He also thanked Senator Ian Hurd (Political Science) for his willingness to step into a leadership role within the Senate next year.

President-Elect Wilson thanked Faculty Senate President Thomson (Chemistry) for his stellar leadership this year. She said she was very much looking forward to her term next year as well.

The president then asked if there was any new business.

Seeing none, the meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate