2025-2026 Year-End Committee Report

Committee:	Educational Affairs
Charge:	To recommend best practices in academic organization, research, and teaching in order to shape the Northwestern educational experience.
Chair:	Jacqueline Babb
# of Meetings:	3

Completed Business and/or Accomplishments

The Educational Affairs Committee met once in fall, winter, and spring quarters.

Committee Chair, Jacqueline Babb, serves as the Faculty Senate representative on the University Assessment and Accreditation Council (AAC). Northwestern completed a successful 10-year review in spring 2025. Jacqueline updated the full Senate on the AAC's strategic plan and ways that their departments can participate in the assessment process at the May meeting. The committee provided feedback on the ten-year strategic plan to the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching in the winter.

The Educational Affairs Committee met with ASG in the spring of 2026 to discuss academic integrity issues. Students are concerned about lack of transparency from the University, schools, departments, and individual faculty on permitted AI use. Jacqueline shared this feedback with the Provost's Office, who also met with the ASG leadership. Committee member, Francesca Tataranni, will join a committee to address teaching and AI this coming fall.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

The committee is now three years into its charge to follow up on a 2018 resolution to reimagine the CTEC instrument. The original Reimagine CTEC Committee, composed of faculty and administrators, proposed changes designed to reduce bias and produce more meaningful feedback. A staff–administrator work group then refined the instrument, added a statement addressing bias, gathered community input, and began early testing.

In January 2024, at the Faculty Senate's request, Chair Jacqueline Babb joined the work group. She presented the most recent version of the instrument to the Faculty Senate on February 7, 2024. Senators offered feedback that was shared with the work group afterward.

That feedback sparked a broader pilot initiative, developed with the Provost's Office and the Searle Cente to encourage teaching evaluation beyond CTEC. The pilot promotes a three-part approach:

student input, peer evaluation, and faculty reflection and innovation. It was introduced to Associate Deans for Faculty in May 2024, with additional conversations over that summer.

Testing of the revised CTEC began in 2025 and produced mixed results. By spring 2025, the work group recommended shifting focus from further instrument redesign to clarifying how CTEC should factor into promotion and compensation decisions at the school level. The Provost's Office has not yet responded.

This lack of clarity is especially concerning for the lowest-paid clinical faculty, whose compensation is already under review by the NTE and Salary and Benefits Committees. Because student feedback has been shown to contain bias (particularly against women and people of color) and does not reliably measure teaching effectiveness, tying pay directly to CTEC scores risks reinforcing inequities if the issue remains unaddressed.

New Business for Next Year

Northwestern may see renewed attention to grade inflation following Harvard University's recent policy changes. During the 2022–2023 academic year, the Educational Affairs Committee requested information on this issue and was informed by the Provost's Office that there is no evidence of grade inflation or significant grade changes at Northwestern in the post-COVID period.