

## **2023-2024 Year-End Committee Report**

<b>Committee:</b>	Governance Committee
<b>Charge:</b>	Improve the working of the governance of the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Assembly.
<b>Chair:</b>	Mark Witte
<b># of Meetings:</b>	4

### **Completed Business and/or Accomplishments**

We explored how resolutions and calls for the extra meetings of the Faculty Assembly could be submitted.

### **Unfinished/Continuing Business**

Drafts of proposed changes have been completed but would need to be formally considered for next year.

<b>New Business for Next Year</b>
Consideration of the proposed changes.

June 30, 2024

## Final Report from the Chair of the Faculty Senate Governance Committee

The Governance Committee worked on language for the mechanics of how resolutions and calls for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly should be submitted. I've included the drafts below and hope they can be advanced next year.

I went down something of a rabbit hole in search of a way of improving the Faculty Assembly in order to provide what would be some important benefits. However, doing so would almost surely involve the full process for amending the Faculty Assembly bylaws, which is always a challenge.

Problems with how the Faculty Assembly is currently structured include:

- 1) The need to verify the identities of the 100 faculty members who would be calling for the Assembly could be overly time-consuming when quick action might be called for.
- 2) The current bylaws specify that the Faculty Assembly would be chaired by the University President, which allows the central administration to effectively control the timing of a Faculty Assembly due to control of when the University President might be available.
- 3) It is quite possible that there may be issues where the faculty would strongly prefer that someone other than the University President chair a called Faculty Assembly (or some similar meeting).
- 4) The long-running goal of building toward shared governance between Northwestern's administration and the Faculty Senate might be facilitated if Faculty Assemblies were more straightforward to call and were more flexible in structure. If the central administration is dragging its feet in its dealings with the Faculty Senate, this could lead to the calling of a Faculty Assembly. Given the choice of working with the Faculty Senate or facing a Faculty Assembly, maintaining a good relationship with the Faculty Senate might be given greater weight.

Finally, the goal of "shared governance" has been something that the Faculty Senate has pursued steadily over the years, with the hope of demonstrating that we are reliable partners with Northwestern's central administration in the long-run quest to serve Northwestern's mission of creating new knowledge through research and spreading that knowledge through teaching, and, in fact, our faculty might have a lot of useful insights into how best to accomplish this mission. I feel like Northwestern's central administration, and particularly the Board of Trustees have been less invested in developing shared governance. Here are some examples that relate to questions faculty have been raised about Northwestern choices that are very hard for faculty to answer, but which presumably could be competently explained by the large staff in Crown who implemented and administer these choices.

- A) The Nim Chinniah debacle, with its resulting negative budgetary impact on faculty salaries, has never been fully explained.
- B) The suspension of the retirement matching in response to Covid and the decision afterward to not follow the University of Chicago or Johns Hopkins with a direct repayment of the funds. I'm sure that what was done was legal, but it's hard to think of

anything that's been more aggravating to our faculty than this, and the lack of concern for carefully and comprehensively making the administration's case is remarkable. When our constituents ask us questions about this, where is the authoritative reference to which we can refer? Where are the commitments for how such crises will be handled in the future?

- C) Joe Ferrie's questions about IRA and health plan options. These are important questions for faculty well-being, and the lack of urgency in granting serious responses is telling.
- D) Many questions were raised about the wisdom of choosing 2023-2024 to tear down our old stadium and build a new one, rather than waiting until some of the considerable uncertainties were resolved. The new stadium will be much more expensive to maintain, we had not found places for the football team to play its fall games, the revenue to support the stadium comes from cable subscriptions (which households are dropping at a rate of 5% per year), and the costs of fielding competitive teams will rise sharply due to NIL deals. While this project is surely exciting for the members of the BOT and those who will be cutting the ribbons, in the end, if it is another financial debacle, it will come out of resources that otherwise would have been used for Northwestern's real missions of research and teaching. Maybe everything will be fine. Certainly, most people who cross the street without looking for oncoming traffic don't end up getting hit by a car, but it's not the prudent way to conduct our lives.

It's hard to engage in shared governance without shared information. These were all examples where a bit of time spent by the central administration could have made Northwestern's faculty feel included and trusted in the operation of our university. Whether it was a lack of regard for our faculty or a concern about embarrassment at the answers we don't know, but it's not a great look.

In conclusion, changes to clarify how to submit resolutions and calls for a Faculty Assembly are worth doing and should be simple. A more fundamental reform of how Faculty Assemblies (or some similar called meeting) are structured would be a more challenging task, but is worth pursuing.

Thank you for reading this and for allowing me to play this role in our Faculty Senate.

Mark Witte  
WCAS NTE Senator  
Chair, Governance Committee

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### **Draft of the process for calling for a Faculty Assembly**

Motivation: There's no stated process for how extra Faculty Assemblies should be called.

**Draft language to outline the process whereby faculty can call for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly.**

- Additional meetings of the Faculty Assembly can be called by petition of at least 100 members of the Faculty Assembly.
- Petitions to call for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly should be submitted to [faculty-senate@northwestern.edu](mailto:faculty-senate@northwestern.edu).
- A valid petition for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly must include:
  - The stated purpose or purposes for the assembly,
  - The name of the Faculty Assembly member or members who are initiating the call for the meeting,
  - The date the petition is introduced.
- The list of names on the petition must include the faculty members' positions at Northwestern (rank, department(s)), and e-mails.
- The Faculty Assembly members' names for the petition will be collected online through an authentication system.
- The petition of names can be submitted in either of two ways:
  - As a complete list of at least 100 full-time faculty (on paper or an electronic document or any other commonly used format), where the names will then have to be verified by the Secretary to the Faculty Senate within two weeks of the submission of the petition.
  - Collected through an online authentication system set up by the Secretary of the Faculty Senate. It is the responsibility of the petitioners to publicize the existence of the petition.
    - If the online petition for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly does not get at least 100 Faculty Assembly members to support it by 30 calendar days after it is introduced, then the petition fails, but can be restarted from the beginning if some Faculty Assembly members so wish.
- The Faculty Assembly meeting in response to a successful petition can be held at any date that is 7 or more days after 100 validated signatures have been reached and the meeting agendas have been circulated.

**Current relevant text:**

Article V, Section 1: The University President will preside over meetings of the Faculty Assembly. The Faculty Senate Chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will establish its agenda and convene meetings at fixed dates at least **twice** a year.

Article V, Section 2: Additional meetings can be called by petition of at least 100 members of the Faculty Assembly. The faculty must be given a minimum of two weeks notice for all such special meetings with agendas made available at least one week in advance.

<https://www.northwestern.edu/faculty-senate/about/faculty-assembly/bylaws-procedures/>

### **Draft of the process for submitting a Resolution to the Faculty Senate**

Motivation: There's no stated process for how resolutions should be brought forward for consideration or who has standing to present a resolution.

### **Draft language to outline the process whereby faculty can submit proposed resolutions to the Faculty Senate.**

- Any member of the Faculty Assembly can submit a resolution to the chair of the appropriate Faculty Senate committee or to the Faculty Senate President, who will pass the resolution on to the appropriate committee.
- This Faculty Senate committee will then consider this resolution, amending it as necessary, and decide by a majority vote on whether to pass the resolution on to the full Faculty Senate.
- Resolutions that are passed at the committee level will have been considered to have had a "first reading" and will be placed on the Senate agenda for final consideration at the Senate's next meeting. The committee-approved proposal will be distributed with the meeting agenda so that Senators can consult with their constituents if necessary.
- In the case of a need for a faster response, a two-thirds majority vote of senators present to suspend the rules can be held in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Current relevant text:

Article IV (Meetings), Section 5: All resolutions of the Faculty Senate must be promptly communicated to the membership of the Faculty Assembly. To expedite the posting of minutes on the Faculty Senate website, the minutes of any meeting of the Faculty Senate can be approved through an online vote with at least one-third of all Senators voting "yes" with no dissenting votes.

<https://www.northwestern.edu/faculty-senate/about/bylaws-procedures/bylaws.html>

### **A point of concern regarding the Faculty Assembly Process**

The Faculty Assembly is an important option for Northwestern's faculty to express concerns. While 100 members of the Faculty Assembly can call for additional meetings of the Faculty Assembly beyond those set in the bylaws, the actual timing of such extra assemblies requires some degree of cooperation by Northwestern's administration due to possible complications with the University President's schedule.

While it is to be hoped that there would never be reason for disagreement between Northwestern's faculty and Northwestern's administration, particularly about some issue that might be highly time-sensitive, it might be useful to create a forum similar to the current Faculty Assembly, but which could meet on a faster timeline and might allow for the option of having the meeting be chaired by someone the members of Northwestern's faculty would choose, be that the University President, or someone else.

Creating such an option would require amending either Faculty Senate or Faculty Assembly bylaws.

The following text would be a useful way of amending the current Bylaws.

- A valid petition for a meeting of the Faculty Assembly must include:
  - The stated purpose or purposes for the assembly,
  - The name of the Faculty Assembly member or members who are initiating the call for the meeting,
  - The date the petition is introduced,
  - The name of the person whom the faculty wishes to chair the meeting (the designated chair is the University President, but if the petitioners are willing to have the meeting run by the co-chair Faculty Senate President or some other person they might designate).