

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
Videoconference  
January 12, 2022

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The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on January 12, 2022, over Zoom videoconference. President Robert Holmgren called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the November 3, 2021, meeting were approved and entered into the record.

The president then introduced Vice President for Operations Luke Figora. Vice President Figora thanked the Senate and said his goal was to give an update on the impact of the pandemic on campus during the start of the 2022 winter quarter.

Vice President Figora said the University was currently in the Wildcat Wellness stage. He said that prior to that there was uptick in cases following Thanksgiving break. Some researchers on campus performed sequencing on those positives, and he said the first case of omicron they detected occurred in early December. Over the holiday break, there was also a significant number of positive cases. Through the Wildcat Wellness period, he said that uptick continued for a rolling positivity rate each day of 2.5% asymptomatic cases, and factoring in symptomatic testing and self-reported figures, an aggregate positivity rate of 5.5%. Vice President Figora said those numbers have come down this week. At that moment, there were 95 staff members, 8 faculty, 200 undergraduate students, and 180 graduate students in isolation. He said there were currently 100 students in on-campus quarantine spaces.

Vice President Figora then gave some updates on guidance during the winter quarter. Booster shots, he said, are being required by all members of the Northwestern community by January 31, 2022. Surgical masks at a minimum are now required in indoor settings. He said the University did obtain a significant number of KN95 masks, which they are working with each of the schools to distribute to faculty and staff. Each faculty member teaching this quarter will get an initial shipment of four KN95 masks. As far

as testing, Vice President Figora said the University did open up a supplemental testing site on the Evanston campus for symptomatic testing. He added that the University has distributed a little over 500,000 at home tests so far.

Vice President Figora also said the University took a more conservative approach to the new CDC guidance that suggested a five day quarantine period after experiencing symptoms. At Northwestern, they are treating day zero as the day of the positive test. On day five, Northwestern considers a negative result from a rapid antigen test as sufficient for resuming activity. So far, he said a little over half the students have tested negative on day five. He also said Northwestern will apply the city of Evanston's vaccination requirements at all public events.

Lastly, Vice President Figora said the University is currently reviewing the measures it has taken—testing, contact tracing, distancing requirements, etc.—to see if they are still effective against more spreadable variants like omicron.

The president thanked Vice President Figora and then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Kyle Henry thanked Vice President Figora as well and said that he appreciated the conservative approach Northwestern is taking. He then asked if the University would be extending the distribution of N95 and KN95 masks to staff and students as well, as opposed to the double masking guidance.

Vice President Figora said the double masking suggestion came from medical advisors at Northwestern Medicine. He clarified that double masking means wearing a cloth mask over a blue surgical mask. He said they are working on getting more KN95 to distribute more broadly, but the first shipment would be going to faculty teaching in classrooms and staff members working in shared settings. He did add that they have also distributed KN95 masks to students living in residence halls.

Senator Luís Amaral said he is concerned the University is taking a long time to be cautious rather than setting a baseline level of caution. Having said that, he asked why Northwestern wasn't taking a day-to-day approach to returning to in person classes. Vice President Figora said that Northwestern remains committed to tracking the situation in real time. He said the University has always tried to take a cautious and measured approach to health guidelines. He also said the campus environment is relatively

safe when comparing its testing data with the broader community. Vice President Figora reiterated that everyone in the administration is committed to setting safe guidelines for all.

Senator Fred Turek said he bought 50 N95 masks for his research lab. He asked if Northwestern had a deal for buying those masks in bulk. Vice President Figora said Northwestern acquired 50,000 KN95 masks in their first shipment. He said they are working on getting as many as possible moving forward and distributing them as widely as possible.

Senator Ezra Getzler said, in his opinion, generally organizations have been slow to remove restrictions. He then asked what Vice President Figora's thoughts were on some examples he gave of guidance being slow to change. Vice President Figora said Senator Getzler highlighted the tension the University has been experiencing over the last couple of years. He said they do their best to focus on what the experts are suggesting and applying guidance based on their advice and what is best for Northwestern.

Senator Barbara Newman thanked Vice President Figora and others in the administration for carefully weighing the risks. She noted that there are risks to staying remote and going back in person. If the University stayed remote, for example, there's risk of loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health concerns. Many students and colleagues of hers have experienced serious mental health issues from the extended period of isolation. Therefore, she said she was relieved the University will return to in person instruction with the appropriate safety measures in place.

Senator Amaral said he understands there are opinions from both sides, but he said the facts are striking, including over 400,000 deaths in the U.S. since the vaccines were widely available. He said if the highly educated and the wealthy are escaping serious danger, it doesn't mean they aren't putting others at risk who might not be so lucky.

The president said he thought everyone could agree that the cost of the pandemic has been devastating in the U.S. and across the world. He then thanked Vice President Figora once again for coming to the Senate.

The president said the next item on the agenda would need to be slightly amended. Unfortunately, Senior Vice President Craig Johnson had a conflict and could not join the Senate. Senior Vice President Johnson sent Senior Associate Vice President for Finance and Treasurer Mandy Distel in his place. The president asked for a motion to allow Senior Associate Vice President Distel to speak. A motion was made, seconded, and approved by the Senate.

Following the vote, the president introduced Provost Kathleen Hagerty and Senior Associate Vice President Distel.

Provost Hagerty thanked the Senate and said she would begin with a general background on the financial numbers and Senior Associate Vice President Distel would then closely examine the University's financial performance for FY2021. She also, before she began, thanked everyone for their efforts before and after winter break given the serious challenges the new COVID variant has posed.

Provost Hagerty then began her presentation with strategic priorities related to finances. She said that Northwestern aims to sustain and expand a breadth of excellence across the University through a focus on enhancing its intellectual eminence and positioning itself for the future. In order to do this, she said the University must build in areas of strength across faculty, students, and the research enterprise, and reflect on strategic investments to support faculty hiring, retention, and research growth. She reiterated that University and Faculty excellence are intertwined. To that end, Provost Hagerty said with the recent retirement incentive program (5% of the University's tenured faculty will retire by August 2022) there is an unprecedented opportunity to further invest in faculty by bringing in new ideas and diversifying the faculty. Last year, she said the deans developed a three-year faculty hiring plan. She said staggering faculty hiring over three years is a more effective and flexible process that gives departments and schools added leeway. The approved hiring plan for AY2023, she added, is nearly \$117 million (this figure includes salary and start-up/capital costs and will extend over several years), and includes 66 tenure-line searches and 48 requested and approved NTE searches.

Provost Hagerty shared a number of capital projects related to academics, including a complete renovation of the Jacobs Center, Mudd Hall 4&5, 1801 Maple, the Tarry Building, investments in IT

capital for FY2022, and launching the Research Space Study. Overall, she said there is almost \$500 million worth of capital projects related to academics going on right now or in the near future.

For FY2023, Provost Hagerty said three priority areas for investment are staff hiring and retention (faculty and staff compensation are the highest priority), ensuring top departments stay on top and that cusp departments are able to make the leap to top departments, and continuing to fund priority needs to maintain health and safety of the community during the pandemic.

Senior Associate Vice President Distel began her portion of the presentation by noting the publishing of the [University's 2021 financial report](#). She said the University did end FY2021 with an operating surplus of \$87.8 million, about 3.5% of operating expenses. From a bottom line standpoint, this number is similar, she said, to the surplus of \$83.4 million from FY2020. However, she indicated that the drivers for each surplus were quite different. In FY2020, the performance was largely driven by uncertainty in revenue sources at the onset of the pandemic. In FY2021, the performance is more driven by uncertainty over expenses. For example, the University expected a full return to campus in Fall 2020 and that did not happen, which drastically reduced the expected on campus operating expenses. This offset additional costs in testing and other pandemic-related costs.

Senior Associate Vice President Distel then shared the operating statements of activities. She highlighted the decreases in auxiliary services (room and board in fall 2020) and also the large decrease in sales and services (football tickets and other events). As for nonoperating revenue and expenses, the most important change was a \$3.6 billion increase in net assets from 2020 to 2021, which was almost exclusively driven by gains in endowment investments. The endowment, she said, did have an annual return of 37% in the last fiscal year. She also added that Northwestern did have a small decrease in debt of about \$300 million.

Senior Associate Vice President Distel moved on to the FY2022 operating budget summary. The budget was built in June 2021. Goals for that budget included investing in faculty and staff compensation and facilities and IT infrastructure, supporting research trajectory and academic priorities, and furthering goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion. She then shared the FY2022 budget. One number Senior Associate Vice President Distel highlighted was a 6.4% increase in faculty

compensation. She also noted that faculty recruitment and retention costs are budgeted separately from the salary pool. She then shared an updated outlook for the FY2022 budget, which included additional testing and tracing expenses, reduced spending in travel and discretionary funds for the first quarter, and the potential effect of a robust employment market. To help support recruitment of staff, the University plans to reinstate a one-year waiting period for retirement matching (currently there is a two-year waiting period).

Provost Hagerty then shared some information about resource planning for FY2023. She said the University's primary goals are to strengthen faculty and staff compensation pools, restoring support for basic infrastructure through targeted investments in IT and facilities, and continuing to fund health and safety needs. As for how it is built, Provost Hagerty said it starts at the beginning of the fiscal year with University leaders holding macro meetings to determine overarching components of the University budget. Then, in January, each school presents its strategy and funding options. In March, the tuition rates are brought to the Finance Committee in March for approval. She noted that in 2020, the Faculty Senate and central administration formalized a process for faculty representation on the University's resource planning workgroup. The Chair of the Budget and Planning Committee meets with that group at least twice a year.

Provost Hagerty indicated, too, that there are a few working assumptions for the FY2023 budget: undergraduate tuition and fees, including room and board grow at pre-pandemic rates; undergraduate and PhD financial aid align with tuition and fee assumptions; auxiliary revenues grow modestly; compensation across all categories grows; non-compensation is held flat except for incremental growth in sponsored categories; professional schools have autonomy for incremental growth above global parameters when aligned with strategic plan.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Mark Witte said that a number of his constituents shared with him their concern about their salary increases the past few years being below recent inflation rates, and well below the current rate. Coupling this with the temporary cessation of retirement matching and a one-time bonus in lieu of across the board salary increases has caused significant frustration among Weinberg NTE faculty.

Senator Witte then asked if NTE faculty could expect a patch to these gaps in wages over the past few years. Provost Hagerty said the University is cognizant of remaining competitive and the need to raise faculty's salaries. She was hesitant to commit to an evening out of wages lost, but she did say she was very aware of this issue with salaries and that it remains a top priority to increase the salary pool going forward. She added that last year and this year they asked the deans to pay close attention to individuals on the lower end of the salary spectrum.

Senator Amaral said he appreciated the detailed report. He also wondered if the slides could be shared with senators so they could report back to their departments. Prior to asking his question, Senator Amaral expressed happiness over the decision to renovate Jacobs and Mudd, which align with the priorities of the University. However, acknowledging the unfairness of the question, he asked what the thinking was going into investing hundreds of millions of dollars on renovating a football stadium, which is not a priority for a University. Provost Hagerty said that renovation is primarily supported by a gift from the Ryan family.

Senator Henry said he was thankful for the presentation, but was concerned that students weren't listed as a priority, which led him to wonder what the funding for mental health services would be for next year. And, in terms of the salary pool, he asked for clarification on providing merit raises versus cost of living raises, and if the central administration had considered making those two categories separate prior to reaching the schools. Provost Hagerty said she made a conscious choice to focus on funding for faculty because of the audience. She said mental health support for students is of the utmost concern and the University will spare no cost to support the needs of students. The challenge right now isn't funding, but the exponential increase in demand for mental health services and trying to get staffing to match in a very difficult job market. With regard to the salary pool, Provost Hagerty said it is the case that the University sets aside separate money for retention and promotions.

Senator Caryn Ward followed up on Senator Henry's question about mental health support to see if there was a dollar amount the Provost could share, both in regards to current funding and the expected increase. Provost Hagerty said she did not have a specific number, but she said she could get it. She did say the amount of spending on mental health has increased over time, and reiterated the problem is not

a financial one, but rather the complexity of staffing and getting the types of counselors students request.

Senator Newman expressed concern about the current staffing levels in departments, the libraries, IT, and building maintenance. She asked what specific efforts have been made to remediate recent staff losses. Provost Hagerty said the current labor market has caused a lot of stress across the industry, and that she spends a lot of time worrying about staffing. She said the University has put a lot of effort into make hiring easier, identifying candidates more quickly, reevaluating salary grades, and hiring a new Vice President for Human Resources. She also said the University would absolutely love to increase staffing, but right now it is hard to keep employees and it is hard to hire them. Senior Associate Vice President Distel also reminded senators about the University's plans to reinstate a one-year waiting period for retirement matching to help recruit staff.

Senator Hannah Feldman said her home department, Art History, was not allowed to hire back the support staff let go during the pandemic. This, she said, has become a retention issue in the department. She also wanted clarity on the distinction between financial and strategic decisions the University has made versus problems in the current labor market, especially related to how those decisions have impacted the everyday work of faculty, and what remediating steps will be taken to address such shortages. She also asked what percentage of the 66 tenure-line hires were from the humanities. Provost Hagerty said the exact number is not available to her, but she could say the lines were distributed broadly across STEM, social sciences, and humanities. Senator Feldman said Art History issued retirement replacement requests because they are currently down five tenure-line positions and were denied due to the lack of staff in their department. Provost Hagerty said she concurs with Senator Feldman's position that staffing needs to be increased.

Senator Lois Hedman emphasized what others have said about staff shortages and the need to recruit and pay them well. She added this was the first time she has heard in a budget report to the Senate that the merit pool is separate from the retention pool. She expressed appreciation for that clarification because it answered a longstanding question from the Senate.



Senator Judy Franks asked what happens when faculty get sick with COVID. At Medill, she said that faculty have the discretion to put ten percent of their classes online. She wondered if there was guidance on how faculty can navigate managing their classrooms when they come down with a serious illness, and also if grading deadlines could be extended to accommodate for these extenuating circumstances. Provost Hagerty said that faculty have always gotten sick and the processes are much the same as they were before: cancel, get a sub, or make the class up later. She said the University absolutely does not want faculty to teach when they are severely ill. And if there is an emergency preventing grades from being in on time, Provost Hagerty suggested working with the registrar, who typically accommodates requests of that type.

Senator Turek said the Research Affairs and Budget and Planning Committees are discussing the issue of staff retention and hiring. He said he hopes the Provost Office is working hard to retain the staff we currently have, particularly because in the research areas a lot of senior staff were lost when early retirement was offered. Provost Hagerty agreed. She said she works with staff everyday now as Provost, and she sees all the time how they make the University run.

Senator Getzler shared an anecdotal example of staff being poached by other departments within the University after recently being laid off by another department. He said this type of behavior gives him pause and makes him worry about the University's reputation among staff. Provost Hagerty said she is unaware of the particulars in that case, making it difficult for her to comment.

Senator Karen Alter said she has always wondered if equity might be a separate element alongside retention and promotion. She said the Chronicle of Higher Education recently released a report on faculty salaries, which once again demonstrated the gender gap in wages. Relatedly, she asked what the gender distribution of the \$117 million salary pool approved for next year, and based on that, if there might be a separate fund put in place to redress inequities in salaries. Provost Hagerty said last year women faculty at Northwestern had more outside offers than men. She said she wasn't disputing her point, but in terms of retention there were many involving women recently.

Senator Steve Adams asked if the Deering Library renovation was still planning to go forward. He also wondered about the feasibility of eliminating the retirement benefit waiting period altogether rather

than reducing it by a year. Provost Hagerty said Deering will be renovated. It should be approved by the Trustees in March. For matching pension contributions, the plan is to have a one year waiting period for staff, but faculty coming from another institution do not have to wait.

Senator Swati Kulkarni said she wanted to share the effect limited staffing is having on the Cancer Center and the clinical departments in which she works. The loss of clinical research staff has been staggering: 36% of staff in her clinical research office. The huge differential in salary between pharmaceutical companies and the University is driving this loss. Similarly, the clinical staff are turning down jobs because the salary is too low. Provost Hagerty said central administration is aware of this problem. The University is working on the issue, she said, and knows salaries have to change.

Senator Enectalí Figueroa-Feliciano seconded Senator Kulkarni's comments. In the Physics department, they are searching for a new chair, and he said the biggest problem they are facing is staff turnover. He said it essentially renders the department inoperable. And when they hire a fantastic employee and want to keep them, they can't raise their salary because of the bureaucratic delays in HR. He categorized the staff turnover as a crisis in his department. Provost Hagerty said she understands how difficult these problems are. She added that, before the omicron variant, her biggest concern was staffing issues.

Senator Carol Heimer said that in addition to salaries, there are also huge problems with the way HR operates, specifically the time it takes to get positions approved and offers made. Provost Hagerty said the new Vice President of HR will arrive on February 1, and she hopes she will address some of those issues.

Past President Therese McGuire moved to end discussion. The motion was seconded. Such a motion does not require discussion, so the Senate immediately went to a vote. The motion was approved.

The president thanked Provost Hagerty and Senior Associate Vice President Distel for sharing such detailed financial information. Provost Hagerty assured the Senate she heard and shared their concerns.

The president then introduced Ellen Phillips Katz Director of the Block Museum Lisa Graziose Corrin and the Steven and Lisa Tananbaum Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art Janet Dees.

Director Corrin began by thanking the Faculty Senate. She said it is her tenth year at Northwestern and it was the first time she addressed the Senate. She then gave a brief overview of the [Block Museum](#) and introduced her colleague, Curator Dees.

Curator Dees then presented Block's Upcoming Exhibition: [\*A Site of Struggle: American Art Against Anti-Black Violence\*](#). The exhibition runs from January 26-July 10, 2022. Curator Dees invited faculty to visit the Block with their students or as a department. She also said faculty may sign up to attend special sessions not available to the public. Those sessions are from 9AM-5PM on Mondays and Tuesdays. The opening program will also take place on Saturday, January 29 at 2PM.

The president opened the floor for questions.

Senator Henry thanked the Block for their work. He lauded them as one of the most forward facing venues in terms of communicating with the public.

Senator Josh Hauser thanked the presenters. He promised that folks from the Feinberg School of Medicine would be visiting and considering ways to use the materials in the exhibit to open up conversations. Director Corrin said they have worked closely with Feinberg's equity office in the past, and would value continued connections between the Block and the medical school.

Senator Carol Schmidt asked if there were limitations in terms of the number of people that can visit at once. Director Corrin said this exhibition calls for a lot of mindfulness and reflection. She said they aren't giving tours. She recommended they get together with the scheduler and discuss the scale of the department so they can work with the faculty member to ensure everyone who attends gets the best experience.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The Senate approved that motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate