

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
March 12, 2025

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held a standing monthly meeting on March 12, 2025, in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences) called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the February 12, 2025, meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

Actions

1. No formal governing actions were taken during this meeting.

Meeting Summary

I. Report of the Faculty Senate President

The president's report, along with administrative and standing committee reports, can be found here: [March 2025.pptx](#). Below is her report.

- The NTE survey should be sent out in the next week or so.
- Campus communications has asked senators to share good things that are happening—any sort of good news, publications, research findings, or otherwise.
- Small win for Senate advocacy: a faculty member was initially denied tuition benefits and reached out to the Salary and Benefits Committee and its chair, Ian Horswill (Computer Science), who was able to advocate on the faculty member's behalf, leading to a reversal of the decision.

- The Weekly Academic News Digest is compiled by Senate Researcher Tricia England. It gives a recap of relevant news of the week and links to faculty resources. The president said the Digest can be forward to other faculty, and interested faculty can contact Tricia to be added the distribution list.
- Senator Jacqueline Babb (Medill), chair of the Educational Affairs Committee said the CTEC pilot was set to launch during the spring quarter. She asked for tenured faculty volunteers teaching two sections of the same quarter-long class. One class would get the current CTEC and the other would receive the pilot. Please contact Associate Provost Miriam Sherin if interested.
- Shout out to Curt's Café, a local restaurant that provided catering in a pinch.

II. Impacts on Graduate Students

Dean Mayo thanked the Senate for the invitation to speak. He then gave a brief overview of the graduate students the Graduate School (TGS) serves. There are 113 programs (62 PhD, 39 Master's, 12 combined) with nearly 7,000 students and trainees (3,645 PhD students, 2,051 Master's, 1,143 Postdoctoral Trainees). He also shared some demographic data for PhD students:

- 49% female, 50% male, 1+%N/A
- 60% domestic, 40% international, 88 countries total
- 20% first generation, 26% domestic URM, 20% LGBTQ+

Dean Mayo then provided an update on how the current fiscal environment was affecting graduate student recruiting. Last year, in 2024, Northwestern had a record number of applicants (13,570), which was 15% higher than the year before. This year, 2025, that number grew 15% again, to 15,439 applicants. 1,379 applicants were admitted in 2024, and so far, this year 1,138 have been accepted. He said they were approximately 100 admits behind last year's figures at this same time. In 2024, 606 students matriculated (44%), and thus far in 2025, 110 students have matriculated. He said that figure was slightly higher than last year's, and they were likely to see an effect on matriculation given that some schools have paused graduate student admissions.

Dean Mayo addressed some structural changes within TGS and on its website. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion within TGS has been reformulated with many of the same basic goals and values. It is now called the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Success.

Beginning in fiscal year 2026, graduate student funding will go directly from central administration to the individual schools. TGS, as a school itself, will still carry out its funding obligations. Dean Mayo noted that they have not seen major direct impacts to graduate student funding as a result of the recent Executive Orders. Nor have they seen any impact thus far on federal training grants. He said they will be watching both very closely.

Dean Mayo then shared some of the impactful accomplishments TGS has made with professional and career development, in partnership with Northwestern Career Advancement. Some of those programs are below:

- Beyond the Professoriate: How to Find a Job You'll Love
- Mentoring Up + Down Workshops
- Designing Your Life: PhD Edition
- PhD Student Reorientation
- Chicago Campus PhD and Postdoc Career Development Series
- Research Communication Training Program
- Management for PhDs (with Kellogg)

Dean Mayo ended by demonstrating the direct impact graduate students have on Northwestern's research and teaching missions. In FY24, over 1,100 doctoral students received \$28M+ in support from external faculty grants, contributing directly to the research accomplished at Northwestern. More than 350 PhD students directly obtained about \$10M in sponsored funding in support of their scholarship. Some \$20M in federal training grant support is also awarded annually to more than 250 Northwestern trainees. Likewise, in AY24 over 1,100 doctoral students served as a Teaching Assistant (83%) or Primary Instructor (17%) for over 2,500 courses at Northwestern. Their teaching responsibilities include

classroom instruction, discussion sections, holding office hours, grading assignments, and directing laboratory or studio sections.

Senators posed questions about protections for international students and students who protested. Dean Mayo said they are working with the Provost's Office and the Law School to host an info session on immigration issues. He said he was not aware of a specific circumstance akin to what happened at Columbia, and if that were to occur at Northwestern then the University had legal responsibility to protect that student. A senator also asked about a potential reduction in PhD students in the humanities. Dean Mayo said with the increased cost of stipends there has been an attempt to modestly slow down enrollment, but current admissions were on pace with last year's. There were likewise questions about the exclusion of students in performing arts from Bienen in TGS, which dean Mayo said he would investigate further.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Pamela Hinchman (Music Performance), Debu Chakravarti (Ob-Gyn), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Nasrin Qader (French and Italian)

III. Standing Committee Report

a. Research Affairs

Senator Swati Kulkarni (Surgery), chair of the Research Affairs Committee, reported on her committee's work thus far. During the fall quarter they met with several administrators, including Renee Gonzalez, Chief Research Operations Officer and Cathy Barrera, Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Research, to receive updates on the recent review of sponsored research processes and the changes they planned to make, including hiring 11 new staff members and amending the way grants were submitted (admin portion submitted 5 days prior and the science submitted later). The committee also met with Vice President for Research Eric Perrault and Vice Dean for Scientific Affairs and Graduate Education Rex Chisholm in the fall and

winter quarters. She said those meetings were productive. The committee discussed collaborations between the two campuses, received updates on sponsored research, improving issues with purchasing delays, and, in the winter quarter, grappled with the fallout from recent Executive Orders and how they might impact research funding.

The committee also met with LaShawnda Hall, Assistant Vice President for Research Financial Operations and head of Accounting Services for Research Sponsored Projects (ASRSP). She acknowledged the challenges faculty face in post awards and sub awards and presented data on how ASRSP was improving on those challenges.

Finally, the committee plans to organize a Chicago campus faculty forum on AI (date: TBD).

IV. Pre-Discussion of Draft Resolution for Big Ten Universities

The president then asked for feedback on a draft resolution (slides 19-20 in the PPT linked above) prepared by Faculty Senate leaders in the Big Ten. She said she planned to take the feedback to the aforementioned leaders so a final resolution can be considered for an up and down vote at the April meeting.

There was near consensus among the senators present about the need for a response to recent attacks on higher education, and that a collective one would strengthen their defense.

The president called the Senate's attention to the two highlighted portions, "Whereas, recent changes in federal policy..." and the phrase "diversity, equity, and inclusion" in the seventh resolution, noting that one senate leader at another school expressed reservations about these being included in the final draft. Many senators said the removal of the highlighted portions would water down the impact of the resolutions. Others supported the sentiment but were concerned about the use of "DEI" in the resolution because those words were being flagged in an effort to cancel grants. There were comments also made that "DEI" doesn't have the same meaning to everyone and the resolution should state plainly what it means instead of relying on an acronym.

A senator also suggested adding in more language about support for students. Others suggested phrasing that acknowledged the belief in continuous improvement and the ways in which taxpayer dollars have led to amazing discoveries.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Kent Grayson (Marketing), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences), Susan Pearson (History), Caryn Ward (Medill), Keith Tyo (Chemical and Biological Engineering), Mark Johnson (Biomedical Engineering), Regan Thomson (Past President, Chemistry), Anne Zald (University Libraries), Liz Hamilton (University Libraries), Kasey Evans (English), Jon Guryan (SESP), Ian Horswill (Computer Science), TJ Billard (Communication Studies).

V. Closed Session

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate