

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Videoconference
March 18, 2020

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on March 18, 2020, on a videoconference platform. President Lois Hedman called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president welcomed the Senate and noted that the minutes from the February 19, 2020 meeting were approved and entered into the record.

The president shared the unfortunate news that Interim Vice President for Research Affairs Milan Mrksich would not be able to attend due to a number of time sensitive issues related to the coronavirus pandemic. She said the Senate plans to reschedule with Vice President Mrksich and had requested that the space committee he chairs refrain from making any final decisions before speaking with the Senate.

The president then gave her report.

She acknowledged the unprecedented circumstances the University, and the world, finds itself in. She said the coronavirus has had a profound effect on all of our lives. Accordingly, the University has made several difficult decisions with the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff in mind. One such decision was the Provost's directive that final assessments during the winter quarter were optional. She said this decision was viewed by some faculty as the administration undermining faculty autonomy in the classroom. The preservation of faculty autonomy in the classroom is a significant concern for all faculty, and especially the Faculty Senate. With that value in mind, the Senate leadership contacted the Provost to ascertain the complexities surrounding this decision and to discuss the implications of allowing optional final assessments. From those discussions, she said the Senate leadership is confident that the decision to allow for optional finals was made in a time-sensitive context with the intention of solving an immediate problem and where consultation with other constituencies was not feasible. She also believes the administration will preserve faculty's authority in the classroom to the greatest extent possible during this crisis and will continue to consult the Senate leadership going forward. The

president also said the Provost has agreed to review the principles that underlie emergency academic measures and to work with the Senate to develop guidelines for consulting faculty on immediate decisions.

With the recent announcement that all classes will be taught online for at least the first three weeks of the spring quarter, the Senate received an inquiry from a faculty member concerned about student and faculty privacy, especially in regard to third-party contractors and their ability to potentially mine data. The president wrote to Sean Reynolds, Vice President for Information Technology, for a response. She read the following email from him:

“In this world of interconnectedness and distributed information technology services, privacy of our community’s information is a concern that we closely manage. For any software we purchase or systems we contract to use externally, we have a process to review what data they may have access to and how they handle that data. We manage this through the contracting process. There are two parts to this process. The first part contains over 80 assessment questions that we ask related to the company and their IT controls (includes data handling). The second part is an Information Security Addendum that forms part of the contract that covers things like:

- Network, application and data security
- Minimum standards on data depersonalization
- Storage and transmission restrictions
- Requirement that any stored data be encrypted
- Requirement that the data exchanged shall be used for the sole purposes set out and not distributed, repurposed, shared or used for other purposes
- End of agreement handling of data: destruction of NU data within 30 days of the termination of the contract
- Breach notification
- Other technical control and technical aspects of data controls.

The parties in the review process and contracting process include staff in the NUIT Information Security Office and contracts office, and the Office of General Counsel.” The president said the bookstore is shipping book orders for free right now. As a result, faculty teaching spring courses can encourage students to order their books early.

The president shared a brief summary of her visit to the NU-Q campus. She traveled there in February with the Provost delegation. She said she found Craig Lamay, the interim Dean and former senator, to be an impressive leader. One initiative he implemented that stood out is the advisory committee on faculty appointment and review charged with preparing a report on faculty appointment and evaluation for the Provost and incoming Dean. The president also met with the entire NU-Q faculty. Her impressions were as follows: faculty are eager to work with the new dean; they are a little wary of the unknown; however, they feel more empowered and are sharing their vision for NU-Q with each other and with the incoming dean. She asked the Senate to consider ways to better integrate the NU-Q faculty in the Senate’s work. She then welcomed Craig Lamay’s replacement from the NU-Q Journalism department, Ibrahim Abusharif, who is an Associate Professor in Residence. Overall, the president said the visit to NU-Q was highly educational and she was grateful to her hosts and thankful for the opportunity.

The president said the Senate has been told they need to move to a new space, 555 N. Clark Street. In addition to fulfilling the needs of the Senate’s full-time staff and having a conference room for the Senate’s committees to meet, she said the space the administration assigns represents the public face of the faculty at Northwestern, and it reflects the administration’s perceptions of the Senate as a whole. As such, the president has requested space commensurate with the value the Senate provides and that will also maintain the momentum it has achieved with respect to its stature at the university.

As evidence of the Senate’s value, Jay Walsh, senior research and science advisor to President Schapiro, asked the president to recommend a senator to serve on a committee being tasked with providing advice, policies, and procedures that will help Northwestern limit the risk of foreign interference as well

as provide guidance for faculty and administration. She said Senator Bob Holmgren, chair of the Research Affairs Committee, agreed to serve as the Senate's representative.

The president addressed a question from last meeting—what happens to Senate resolutions once they are passed—by updating the Senate on the [resolution](#) from the Salary and Benefits Committee, which was passed in February 2020. She sent the resolution to Senior Vice President Craig Johnson and Vice President for Human Resources Manuel Cuevas-Trisán. Vice President Cuevas-Trisán responded that HR will review benefits during the summer. He invited further discussion from the Senate. Chair of the Salary and Benefits Committee, Senator Bob Gordon, plans to meet with both Senior Vice President Johnson and Vice President Manuel Cuevas-Trisán. The president said this will also be an issue that can be addressed through the new processes being developed by the Budget and Planning Committee that will provide opportunities for the Faculty Senate to be engaged in University budget and planning.

Following up on another past Senate resolution, the president said the [job posting for the ombudsperson](#) is now live. She asked that senators please share this information with their colleagues and potential candidates and to encourage any qualified individuals to apply.

The president followed up on the news that Northwestern has chosen Julie Payne-Kirchmeier as the new Vice President for Student Affairs. Ms. Payne-Kirchmeier served as the interim VP for several months prior.

The president said the Senate plans to hold the April Senate meeting online as well. She hopes Lanny Martin, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, will still be able to attend online. If that happens, she asked that senators prepare questions for him and reach out to their constituents for questions as well.

The president ended her report by saying everyone at the University, the Senate included, is doing their best to navigate this troubling time. She said it is not clear how far and at what pace the Senate agenda will progress this year. Thus, she asked that the senators do what they can with initiatives they have started, but please reach out to her with any issues or barriers they may be facing.

The president then introduced Senator Karen Springen, chair of the Student Affairs Committee, who serves on the Affordable Instructional Resources (AIR) team. Senator Springen then introduced two

members from that committee, Lauren McKeen, Communication Librarian in the University Libraries, and Victoria Getis, Director of Teaching and Learning Technologies for NUIT, who presented the committee's findings thus far.

Ms. McKeen thanked the Senate for taking the time to hear their presentation. She said AIR is a partnership between the Provost Office, University Libraries, and NUIT. Their goal is to increase access and inclusion in higher education through initiatives that address the high cost of course materials. Ms. McKeen said the group has five focus areas right now: 1. Timely textbook orders 2. Course reserves 3. Course packets 4. Open Educational Resources (OER) 5. Books for Cats. She then shared a [link to a short video](#).

Ms. Getis then spoke about timely textbook orders. She said that one initiative AIR has been focusing on is getting faculty and department assistants to list their course material requirements in Caesar by the time students register for their next set of classes. She stressed the importance of this because the sooner students receive information about course materials the better they can plan financially for the upcoming quarter and also have time to potentially find cost effective alternatives. She acknowledged how complicated the process of logging these materials is and she said AIR is working both with the University bookstore and the Registrar's Office to see if the process can be simplified. She then shared tracking from the Registrar's Office that followed classes that listed items in the "Required Materials" field. They have information on every quarter for the past four quarters. Up until Winter 2020, the number of entries in the "Required Materials" field were below fifty percent. Going school by school, Medill has recently jumped from below fifty percent to nearly ninety percent. They achieved this increase by meeting with program assistants, telling them the importance of entering this data, and also incentivizing their entries with prizes for those who entered the information on time. Ms. Getis said AIR hopes for similar transformations in other departments as they continue to meet with faculty and their program assistants.

Ms. McKeen wrapped up their presentation with a plug for [AIR's Open Educational Resources faculty grant](#).

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Claudia Swan thanked the AIR members for the presentation and their work.

Senator Mark Witte, who is the NTE representative for WCAS, then asked the president several questions he received from his constituents: How will grades work during the spring quarter? Will faculty need to worry about CTECs? What help will there be for handling matters of academic integrity during exams? The president said those were excellent questions and ones that the Senate leadership can bring to the Provost Office to make sure they are considering all of these factors in their plans for the upcoming quarter. Senator Witte followed up that statement with a question about the level of faculty input in crisis response. The president said there was not much input during the initial stages of the crisis because matters were moving so quickly. However, going forward she believes the Senate will be involved and they are working on formalizing that process. Senator Witte asked three additional questions: Given that the schools are closed, how are faculty with children supposed to design new online classes and teach them with a house full of children? Can faculty afford to hire childcare for the aforementioned children? Are raises for teaching faculty a possibility to offset the need to pay for childcare? For adjuncts, are they at risk of creating a new class format and then have the class cancelled next year? The president responded by saying these are good issues to bring forth and the University needs to ensure these issues are taken seriously when formulating a response to the current crisis.

Senator Judy Franks asked the president to ensure the Senate has a chance to participate in decisions related to commencement. The president agreed with this sentiment and said she would move forward with that request.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate