

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Videoconference
April 14, 2021

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on April 14, 2021, over Zoom videoconference. President Therese McGuire called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the March 10, 2021 meeting were approved and entered into the record.

The president then introduced Chairman of the Board of Trustees J. Landis Martin.

Chairman Martin thanked the Senate for the invitation. He expressed an eagerness to answer all the faculty's questions and indicated he learned a lot from these interactions in the past. He then updated the Senate on the state of Northwestern. The University has maintained its #9 ranking in the U.S. News and World Report for the second year in a row. This is a result of a steady rise in the rankings over the last several years, he said. This position in the rankings is a result of finding successful students and recruiting top research faculty. He reiterated that the faculty and their efforts are critical to the success of any University, and Northwestern excels in this regard. Citing admission statistics, Chairman Martin said the number of student applications nearly doubled this past year, partly driven by the pandemic, but he added that the caliber and the diversity of the student body has been growing for years. The acceptance rate, he said, too is below 7%, which again is a result of the dramatic increase in applications. Similarly, graduate and professional school programs have seen similar selectivity gains. Keeping with the theme of growth, Chairman Martin said sponsored research was up to nearly \$900 million and research funding has increased 110% in the last ten years, making Northwestern the largest research institution in the state of Illinois. Northwestern, he said, is also poised to complete a historic fundraising campaign: approximately \$5.4 billion as of March 31, 2021. As to the financial state of the University, Chairman Martin said Northwestern avoided projected deficits of \$90 million and ended with a surplus of nearly the same size in fiscal year 2020. However, he said the Board believes sustained vigilance should be in place for FY2022 in order to achieved balanced operations. The FY2022 budget

will prioritize faculty and staff salary pools to attract and retain talent, IT and physical infrastructure, and strategic investments in research. Chairman Martin said the challenges of the last year have been a tremendous strain on organizations, but despite these challenges Northwestern remains positioned to lead now and into the future. He added that combating the pandemic will remain a priority as the University looks to repopulate its campus safely in the coming months. With regard to social justice, Chairman Martin said Northwestern will continue to strive for change on its campus and within the broader community. He said they have taken steps to strive for a more just, anti-racist community. This work is ongoing, he said, and fully supported by leadership across the University. The University also continues to strengthen its leadership team with the additions of Robin Means Coleman, the newly appointed Chief Diversity Officer, and Amy Falls, who was chosen as Chief Investment Officer. The Board of Trustees is also keenly focused on the search for Northwestern's next president, Chairman Martin said. He said they look forward to choosing another visionary leader that will continue Northwestern's momentum. A presidential search committee representing diverse backgrounds and constituencies has been appointed. Because the search for the next president will continue over the summer and into the next academic year, Chairman Martin said he is pleased that Senate President-Elect Bob Holmgren will be serving on the committee. The search committee plans to create a calendar soon that will detail when they will meet with various constituent groups, including the Faculty Senate. The goal of these engagements is to understand desired priorities and leadership priorities from as many perspectives as possible. Chairman Martin concluded his remarks by thanking the Faculty Senate for its partnership over the years.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Allan Horwich asked, in light of the search for the new athletic director and the recent allegations stemming from the cheerleading program, if there was a mission statement with regards to Northwestern's stance on intercollegiate athletics. Chairman Martin believed there is a mission statement and he promised to look into that further. He said that athletics has an important role at Northwestern. He acknowledged that the allegations are troubling, and he said they are being looked at closely. He said they are looking for an athletic director with a keen understanding of the balance of academics and athletics.

Senator Caryn Ward said her colleagues at the Medill School of Journalism were disappointed that not all schools were represented by faculty in the search committee, including Medill. She asked how Chairman Martin might address that gap in speaking with various constituent groups. Chairman Martin said that there was Medill representation from the Board, namely Mike Wilbon, who is a Professor of Practice there. He said the Board did their best in creating a broad, representative committee. He also said they will absolutely reach out to Medill and the other schools for more input.

Senator Josh Hauser said he is a Chicago faculty member and an Evanston resident, and that he has wondered for years if there are ways for the two campuses to connect better. He wondered if the Board has thought about this as well and what ideas they might have for better connection. Chairman Martin said Northwestern considers collaboration a hallmark of its approach to instruction and research. He said they always revisit discussions around collaboration because attention to this principle must never wane. They will also be looking for a president who believes strongly in the type of collaboration Northwestern currently has, and wants in the future, between the schools.

Senator Ceci Rodgers referenced Chairman Martin's comments on fostering a more just, anti-racist campus and stressed the importance of the moment in society and to the students. She then asked what role Northwestern can play in leading on these topics. Chairman Martin said these are questions everyone wrestles with and it is a challenging issue to address. He said that there will be issues raised by students and faculty that Northwestern should respond to and address.

Senator Luís Amaral said he was impressed by President Schapiro's efforts to connect with undergraduate students and to increase the enrollment in underrepresented groups at the University. Recently, though, he said he was disappointed with President Schapiro's response to the students protesting policing on campus. Senator Amaral then asked for details about what the Board thought about the President Schapiro's response to the protests and his actions since then. Chairman Martin said the Board is very supportive of President Schapiro. He noted that President Schapiro is in a difficult, complex position in balancing all the constituencies holding him accountable. In general, Chairman Martin said he believes President Schapiro does an excellent job interacting with students. The recent protests have highlighted some consternation for those in the Northwestern community, he said, but he reiterated that he believes President Schapiro is doing his best given the circumstances.

Senator Kyle Henry said that with the wonderful news that research funding grew 110%, that Northwestern completed one of the most successful fundraising campaigns in the history of higher education, and there was a surplus at the end of fiscal year 2020, he asked if the Board considered refunding retirement contributions for faculty and staff that were cut last year. Chairman Martin said there were a number of steps taken to return the budget for fiscal year 2020 to surplus. The good news is that the financial impact of the pandemic was not as dramatic as the University had projected, he added. Chairman Martin cited some of the things that returned the University to a surplus were Kellogg's Executive Education program reopening, elective surgeries returning, and the Big Ten media contract being honored. Nevertheless, Chairman Martin said it was a shared sacrifice to cut those benefits, it prevented a worse crisis, and many of the savings incurred during that year will need to be spent in the future. With that in mind, he said the Board is not considering refunding the retirement contributions.

Senator Marty Lariviere asked how the Board saw the financial outlook evolving at Northwestern over the next five years. Or rather, when does the Board expect the University to return to some normalcy financially speaking. Chairman Martin said there are many uncertainties next year, including whether some expenses will return, like travel. He said they have planned for significant capital expenditures to return in the next five years, probably around year three.

Senator Candy Lee said that faculty often keep in mind three pillars: service to the University, teaching, and research. She contended that teaching, because Northwestern is an eminent R1 university, can be overlooked. She wondered how the Board might continue to look at how they evaluate and reward good teaching on campus. Chairman Martin said he appreciated the comments and understood these were ongoing issues on all R1 campuses. Although, he pointed out, many trustees think about teaching on campus because they remember good professors from when they took classes at Northwestern. Balancing between research and teaching will further the prospects of the University, he noted, and Northwestern, too, continues to be highly rated on its teaching inside and outside the university.

Senator Mark Witte asked how Chairman Martin viewed the role of the Board of Trustees at Northwestern and how it might differ from that at other peer institutions. Chairman Martin said the size of the Board at Northwestern stands out as one of the larger ones compared to its peers. He said having a larger Board is generally good. Having more Board members grants an opportunity for more

alumni to be engaged and philanthropic. It also continues the Board's move towards greater diversity. Aside from that, there is a lot of similarity between how the boards operate.

Past President Lois Hedman asked if Chairman Martin could share his ideas about how Northwestern can lead on the social front, even in a dramatic way, when universities traditionally have moved slowly and incrementally. Chairman Martin said the Board discusses changes being made currently with the administration. However, he said the Board tries not to make any dramatic decisions. The reason being is they must consider the impacts of changes on all of the University's constituents.

Senator Kathy Martinez asked about plans for potential childcare facilities on campus in the next five years. Chairman Martin said that ideally it would be good to have it, but there are many complexities to implementing childcare on campus. He said no plans for childcare on campus have been advanced to the Board and he doesn't anticipate it being on the horizon.

Senator Carol Heimer said there have been a series of challenges getting students from abroad onto campus and she wondered if thinking about how we engage with students abroad has changed since the pandemic began. Chairman Martin said they stay abreast of the issues Senator Heimer alluded to and share the concern she has for them. He said he believes ensuring these students get a quality education on Northwestern's campus remains a high priority.

The president thanked Chairman Martin for engaging the Senate.

The president then began her report.

Associate Provost Sumit Dhar launched the Post-Pandemic Faculty Planning Workgroup. She said this workgroup is comprised of a dozen faculty members from across the university, and from the tenure and NTE ranks. It will be a 16-week effort starting now and will culminate in a report to Provost Hagerty on three things: 1. The impact of the pandemic on faculty. 2. A comparison across peer schools on mitigation steps schools have taken to help ease the burden on faculty. 3. Recommendations for actionable steps for faculty departments, schools, and the University for long term mitigation of the impact of COVID-19. Membership on this committee includes Senator Marty Lariviere.

The president said the Senate leadership has forwarded the resolution on the cheer-team incidents passed at the March Senate meeting to President Schapiro and Provost Hagerty. She stressed that the faculty view of the situation is informing the administration's thinking on this matter. Faculty views are also being heard as the search for the new athletic director continues.

Senator Bob Hariman brought to the Senate leadership's attention his constituents' frustrations with bureaucratic delays from the Position Approval Committee (PAC), a committee that approves hiring of certain categories of staff. The leadership shared the concerns with Associate Provost Mark Francis who assured them efforts to streamline and automate the PAC process were underway.

Past President Hedman and President-Elect Holmgren are undertaking a two-month project to assess the impact of the Faculty Senate NTE survey report on NTE processes and policies in each of the schools. They will report back to the Senate at the June meeting.

The president said Senator Stephen White from the Philosophy department passed away unexpectedly on March 21. Senator White was a brilliant ethicist, a beloved mentor and teacher, and a valued colleague. He was an exemplary member of the Senate. He was an active member on the Faculty Handbook Committee and was the official Senate representative on the Community Safety Advisory Board. The president then asked for a moment of silence in Senator White's memory.

The president concluded her report.

The Senate then heard a standing committee report.

The president recognized Faculty Handbook Committee Chair Ceci Rodgers.

Senator Rodgers said the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committees had been working on a revision of the academic freedom language in the Faculty Handbook. That revision was shared with the Senate prior to the meeting. However, she said since then the committees have heard valuable feedback from faculty and the Provost Office, and based on their feedback, they feel the proposed language needs more deliberation and revision. With that in mind, Senator Rodgers introduced a motion to table the discussion of the changes to the academic freedom language of the

Faculty Handbook until the May meeting. The motion was seconded. Senator Henry asked for a point of information wondering about the optimal way to provide further feedback on the revision. Senator Rodgers said anyone can write an email to her or Senator Feinsod. Following that, the Senate approved the tabling of the motion until the May meeting.

The president then asked if there was any new business.

Senator Karen Alter offered up an item brought to her by a colleague that was supplemented by an [article](#) in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. After Northwestern announced a budget surplus, it was proposed by Senator Alter's colleague that the Senate consider taking a similar approach as the faculty at Johns Hopkins and commission a forensic audit of the University's finances in an effort to secure restitution for the cut to retirement funds Northwestern implemented last summer. Senator Alter then shared responses to these decisions from many colleagues in her department (Political Science) who were frustrated by the University's initial cuts and the fact they have not reimbursed the faculty since learning of the surplus. Senator Henry seconded discussion of the topic at hand.

The president then opened the floor for comments.

Senator Candy Lee said at the Conversations with the President event held the day before Senior Vice President Craig Johnson explained the budget situation, both the deficit and the surplus. A recording is available on the President's website. She said it was unclear how much of the surplus would be needed this year for additional costs like testing.

Senator Hariman said he was glad the issue was brought to the table. He wondered about those who were laid-off or furloughed as a result of the pandemic and why the faculty would come before rehiring or bringing back those employees.

Senator Bob Gordon said he would like to reinforce Senator Hariman's comment by suggesting that the Senate not consider faculty retirement contributions and the laid-off employees as alternatives. Rather, he said the endowment has grown at an astonishing rate due to unforeseen growth in the stock market. Relative to this growth, he said, reinstatement of retirement contributions and rehiring employees is a low cost to the University. Senator Gordon also pointed out that the University used to

have a rainy-day fund which they stockpiled during more prosperous times and drew from during leaner periods. At some point, the rainy-day fund was abolished and put into the endowment. This fund, he said, would have provided a buffer, and he asked that the Senate go further than just the reinstatement of retirement contributions and ask for a history and reimplementation of the rainy-day fund.

Senator Henry said he raised the questions to Chairman Martin to get clarification on their point of view. He said he was quite disturbed to hear about repair work being taken care of since the surplus was announced, which may not have been in the budget before the pandemic. A forensic audit gives us data to understand the situation, he said, and it behooves the Senate to practice due diligence given some of the mismanagement in the past.

Senator Amaral said he agrees that faculty need to defend and voice their interests. But he also thinks as a University community, each unit should advocate for each other. Staff, for example, are frustrated by the fact that they haven't received raises in years. Similarly, graduate students haven't received guaranteed funding beyond five years despite extenuating circumstances.

President-Elect Holmgren said part of the reaction of the administration was predicated on the financial deficit a few years ago and being concerned about a similar fate. He said he believes the administration made good-faith, difficult decisions to mitigate the damage they foresaw. And after they realized there was a surplus, tax laws prevented the administration from reinstating cut retirement contributions.

Past President Hedman talked about the transparency the central administration has shown over the past few years. In the last few years, the Provost has come to the Senate in January to give an annual address on the budget. Since then, she believes they have been pretty transparent about the decisions made.

Senator Alter said that the question of the forensic audit is a provision that allows for someone independent to get more information on the university's finances. Where the money goes or how it is distributed is a question for another day. What's on the table is whether Senate committees explore the option of a forensic audit, she clarified.

The president asked Senator Lariviere, who chairs the Budget and Planning Committee, if he would be willing to take the question of a forensic audit back to his committee. Senator Lariviere said he was happy to have a discussion with the committee regarding this topic.

Senator Henry added that he was worried about the precedent set last year for the University to take faculty benefits away when a difficult financial situation arises.

Senator Hariman said the two issues in play are accountability and restitution. He said he would like the committee to discuss the possible benefits and risks of doing a forensic audit. On the question of restitution, he said he was struck by Senator Gordon's comments on the recent windfall from the stock market's growth. He wondered if one of the Senate committees might also discuss how the endowment functions and whether some of that windfall might be used as restitution or put into a rainy-day fund.

Senator Gordon articulated the point that Chairman Martin contends the endowment should always be for future generations. Senator Gordon, however, argued that a more appropriate philosophy would be that some percent should go to the current generation impacted by the pandemic. He said a good question to ask the administration is what the state of the endowment is currently. The president then asked if they could also assign this topic—considering a proposal to reallocate surplus funds and to create a rainy-day fund—to the Budget and Planning Committee. Senator Lariviere agreed to do this as well.

Senator Fred Turek said the University has shot up in the rankings in the last twelve years—#21 to #9. One reason, according to President Schapiro he said, is the increase in the endowment. He also acknowledged that lot more than the size of the endowment goes into the ranking of universities And while he agrees with the rainy-day fund approach, he understands the position of the administration that has to balance these decisions for both future and current generations.

Senator Amaral said the incentives for the Board and the administration are the rankings, and an easy way to climb the rankings is increasing the endowment. He personally is frustrated by decisions being driven by the size of the endowment. Senator Gordon seconded this sentiment.

Senator Heimer said the rainy-day fund was brought up with Chairman Martin during the discussion with the Executive Committee. She said he thought such a fund was a bad idea because it could be a slippery slope, which Senator Heimer found surprising. More importantly though, the endowment draw is based on a range—more can be taken out in challenging years, and she believes 2020 qualified as such. An investigation into the balance between the current and future generations is appropriate, she said.

Senator Henry said a forensic audit could be viewed as an act of solidarity with others in the Northwestern community, like staff, that cannot advocate for themselves as directly as faculty.

Past President Hedman noted that the 5% draw, which is standard for universities, will grow if the endowment has grown. Therefore, some of the endowment will serve the present.

Senator Arend Kuyper said that growing the endowment is important, but he hoped the conversation in the committees would center around the current extraordinary moment and whether or not it constituted a special draw. He also suggested sharpening the focus on the rainy-day fund and being certain about what the Senate might ask for.

Senator Dan Foltz said the extraordinary moment argument didn't seem to sway Chairman Martin. He said a better focus might be looking at the negative effects of not reimbursing faculty, like retention, or not bringing back furloughed employees, like recruitment of staff.

Senator Alter disagreed with Senator Foltz's characterization because of the way schools look at peers. If peers make cuts too, then it won't harm Northwestern. She wanted to underscore the principle that faculty benefits are not the way to balance budgets.

Senator Lariviere said he had a brief conversation with Vice Provost Jake Julia. One thing Vice Provost Julia said that 60% of the University's budget is salary and benefits. If a crisis is perceived, staffing and salary are the obvious places to impose cuts, he said.

The president reiterated the Budget and Planning Committee would review these topics and then report on them at the May Faculty Senate meeting.

Senator Angela Lee posed one last item of new business related to guidance on how faculty can approach controversial topics in the classroom. The president asked Senate Researcher Tricia England to look for both internal and external guidance so Senator Lee may share what is found with her constituents.

With no further new business, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate