

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Videoconference
April 6, 2022

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on April 6, 2022, in Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Robert Holmgren called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the March 9, 2022, meeting were approved and entered into the record.

The president then introduced Board of Trustees Chair J. Landis Martin.

Chairperson Martin began by thanking the Senate for a robust discussion on sustainability at the annual luncheon between the Board of Trustees and the Faculty Senate. He said he thought the luncheon formed a great baseline for the Board to continue their work on sustainability. He also thanked the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for meeting with him before today's meeting. He said many thoughts were shared on how pedagogy and human relations are being reshaped during covid, and will continue to be reshaped following the pandemic.

Chairperson Martin then announced that his term as Chair of the Board of Trustees will be ending on August 31, 2022. He said he was on the Board about fifteen years before he became Chair, and will remain on the Board when his tenure is completed.

Chairperson Martin went on to share some important accomplishments that Northwestern achieved during his five-year term as Chair. He said he has been extremely proud of Northwestern's excellence in teaching and research, in particular the impact those two have had on society as a whole. He reiterated that the innovative teaching and interdisciplinary research done at Northwestern resounds across the globe. These accomplishments, he said, allow Northwestern to continue to attract top researchers which has led to steady growth in sponsored research funding. Chairperson Martin also expressed pride

that Northwestern places student excellence among its top priorities. He said the students' achievements, faculty excellence, an incredible staff, and President Schapiro's sound leadership have kept Northwestern among the top ten in university rankings nationwide—ninth overall in the last three years.

Recently, too, Chairperson Martin said the WeWill campaign, the University's years-long fundraising effort, was brought to an end. The result: more than \$6 billion raised, one of the largest campaigns completed by a private university. He said around fifteen percent of those funds went into facilities, another thirty percent into the endowment, and the rest into institutes, centers, research enterprises, faculty hires, and many other activities that remain the lifeblood of NU.

Relatedly, he said faculty eminence has blossomed over the last twenty years, and to Chairperson Martin it is a pleasure to see those positive changes bear fruit. He added that, during his tenure, he has been especially proud of the University's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The importance the Board, the administration, and the faculty place upon efforts to increase DEI is integral to Northwestern's success, and society's as well, he said.

Chairperson Martin acknowledged covid's effect on the University during his tenure. In March 2020, he said he established a Board and administrative committee to meet every week to establish campus protocols. That committee consisted of several staff members, several trustees, and several experts on covid from the hospital. He said he thought Northwestern made sound strategic and financial decisions during the pandemic, and in some ways decisions then will improve the institution moving forward.

Chairperson Martin added that during his tenure he came to have an even greater appreciation for his fellow trustees. He said he learned so much about their commitment and passion for Northwestern, on a deeper and more personal level, as Chair. Along those lines, he said the Board has made a lot of progress in diversifying its membership, which he believes will continue to pay dividends.

Noting the uniqueness of his tenure, Chairperson Martin also noted the fact a Presidential search took place, which ultimately led to the hiring of University of Wisconsin's current Chancellor, Rebecca

Blank. On a personal note, he said it was encouraging to hear how well-respected Northwestern is among academics around the world.

Finally, Chairperson Martin thanked the Faculty Senate leadership for their kindness and willingness to work together with the Board to strengthen Northwestern in all areas, but especially shared governance.

Moving forward, Chairperson Martin said Northwestern is positioned for success. He said President Schapiro achieved great things during his tenure as Northwestern's President, and he expected the same from Chancellor Blank. Both his successor and Chancellor Blank should focus, in his view, on maintaining Northwestern's strong financial position to keep supporting the purpose of the University, education and research.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Lois Hedman thanked Chairperson Martin for his service and for his remarks that evening. She then acknowledged the great efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion on the Board. However, one area she cited as an opportunity to improve was finding more Board members with an academic background. Chairperson Martin said that was a good suggestion and one he certainly would advise the Board to look at further. In the past, he said there were presidents of other universities serving on the Board at Northwestern.

Senator Ezra Getzler thanked Chairperson Martin. He then asked if the Board has had a chance to consider the implications the war in Ukraine might have for Northwestern, and if the Board has had any conversations about welcoming academic refugees from either Ukraine, Russia, or both. Chairperson Martin said the last Board meeting was the fourth day of the war. The Board asked a faculty member to share his perspective on the war. Chairperson Martin said he is sure administrators are thinking about how to best address academic refugees—what policies specifically should be in place—and he promised to pass that idea on to his fellow Board members. He also added that the United States benefitted greatly from the arrival of refugees fleeing the rise of Nazism in central Europe in the 1930s.

Senator Kyle Henry was appreciative of Chairperson Martin's presentation. He then asked what oversight mechanisms were put in place following the budget deficit in 2017. He also asked if the Board regularly reviews student satisfaction surveys, and if so, considers the impact those surveys have on budgeting decisions. Chairperson Martin said the Board has two committees that deal with both of the issues Senator Henry raised: the Finance Committee and the Student Life Committee. He said members of the Finance Committee worked with the staff to consider changes that needed to be made as far as personnel and operational practices. He acknowledged the deficit being a jolt to the system after so many years of running budget surpluses. He said the deficit required much more focus from himself and other members of the Finance Committee, and added that that focus has not waned. As for the Student Life Committee, Chairperson Martin said they review the results of the various surveys given to the students. They listen to the administration's perspective on those survey results as well.

Senator Barbara Newman, following up on Senator Henry's question about the budget, said faculty have been told that there was now a more centralized budget planning process in place after years of having a more decentralized budgeting procedures. Many of those stringent cutbacks, related to the centralized budgeting system, are still in place, and Senator Newman wondered if the University is now in a place where some of those restrictions can be lifted. Chairperson Martin said there were a lot of reasons Northwestern ran a deficit, decentralization being a contributing factor, but not the only one. He said he valued Senator Newman's input and agreed to pass it along to the administration for their consideration.

Senator Martin Lariviere asked what Chairperson Martin and the Board thought the state of the relationship between the University and its employees after a difficult five years beginning with the budget deficit and then leading into the pandemic. Chairperson Martin said the labor market is in a state of flux, much of it caused by covid. He said, however, he feels confident in the administration's ability to navigate these challenges.

Senator Luís Amaral began by saying how much he appreciated Chairperson Martin's commitment to Northwestern. He said he too cares deeply about Northwestern, which is why he said he was concerned about the lack of diversity of thought at the highest levels. The Board, he argued, is primarily made of up of alumni, and while they may be able to consult other stakeholders, those stakeholders are not the

ones making the final decisions on a number of important issues. Senator Amaral claimed if the Board had been more representative of the University, then some of—what he deemed poor— financial and personnel decisions of the past could’ve been avoided. He specifically criticized laying off IT staff during the pandemic and who the pandemic response committees were or were not consulting. He then asked the Chairperson what was the possibility of diversifying the Board with a broader spectrum of the University community. Chairperson Martin said the governing model Northwestern has is fairly common among most private universities, and that the separation of the different governing groups— trustees, administration, and faculty—is the traditional model. Bringing others onto the Board might’ve helped, he said, but not necessarily.

Senator Fred Turek asked what role of the Board of Trustees and the administration is when there is student unrest on campus. Chairperson Martin said the administration primarily engages with the students. The Student Affairs Office, he said, would be the primary focal point for any student-related matters. Senator Turek followed up by asking if the Board advises the administration when students shut down speakers on campus, for example. Chairperson Martin said the administration reports on issues that may have happened on campus, and that the Board has the governing power to make decisions on those issues, but the number of times the Board does is few and far between.

Senator Lariviere said the Senate passed [two resolutions](#) last year, one which asked the Board to reimburse the retirement contributions, and another asking the University and the Board to quantify the risk of retirement benefits being taken away in the future and requesting the University create a “rainy-day fund” to prevent any benefits being removed due to the volatility of financial markets. Last year, Senator Lariviere recalled Chairperson Martin claiming the financial upheaval from the pandemic was not a once in a century occurrence, but something akin to the housing bubble or the tech bubble bursting. Given that, Senator Lariviere asked if the Board has grappled with the issue of articulating the risk faculty and staff face of losing retirement contributions once again. Chairperson Martin said he did not recall making the statements about the pandemic being a once in a decade financial stressor. He made clear that the pandemic, in his view, is a once in a lifetime event. He said the Board thought the financial threats the pandemic could and was causing was existential. He argued that the Board and the administration felt they had to take significant action quickly and across the Board to prevent something catastrophic from happening. He said the Board was wrong about the impact the pandemic

would have on the financial health of the University. He noted, too, that the University was able to bounce back quicker than expected, in part because of the actions they took. He also said it would be very hard to predict when or if another event like the pandemic would occur and how the University would respond to such an event. Chairperson Martin stressed that he has heard the voices of faculty regarding the decision to cease retirement matching during the pandemic. Senator Lariviere asked if the Board has specifically discussed the Faculty Senate's resolutions from last May. Chairperson Martin said the resolutions have not been presented to the Board of Trustees. He added that the decision was made to provide small bonuses at the end of last fiscal year, but redistributing the lost funds from retirement matching would be incredibly difficult. Additionally, during Chairperson Martin's remarks, the president said he sent the resolutions to the University President and the Provost, but not to the Office of Administration and Planning, which liaises with the Board.

Senator Joshua Hauser said one of the reasons he has enjoyed his time on the Faculty Senate is it provides an opportunity for faculty on the Chicago campus and the Evanston Campus to interact [Senator Hauser represents the Department of Medicine]. He asked if the Chairperson had thoughts about more areas of opportunity for the two campuses to engage in interdisciplinary work. Chairperson Martin said, in his personal experience, everyone is very proud of the interdisciplinary work at Northwestern. Having spoken with several faculty members and administrators at other schools, many feel Northwestern is doing more than most in terms of interdisciplinary work. This doesn't mean these efforts can't be redoubled, he said. But, on balance, he thought Northwestern was doing a good job working across the two campuses despite some of the geographical and time-constraining challenges.

Senator Hannah Feldman said the removal of the retirement contributions was an unethical decision. She said the consequences of performing unethically are severe, and she also wanted to know if overcoming any legal challenges to returning the matching funds was being discussed by the Board. She expressed frustration that the University profited greatly following those cuts, and that the faculty has not seen any meaningful change in their compensation. She said that acknowledging the Board was wrong sets an important ethical precedent for the wrong being addressed. She also echoed suggestions that the Board add faculty and students to its membership. Senator Feldman then asked if the Board has had conversations about divesting not only from the fossil fuel industry, but also from companies involved in the production of weaponry. Chairperson Martin said that new Chief Investment Officer

Amy Falls is working with others on developing a policy on various types of investments. He said he expects a policy in several months. Chairperson Martin also clarified that he and the Board were wrong about covid's impact on Northwestern's financial standing. He did not believe they were legally or ethically wrong in withhold retirement matching when they did. He said they were concerned about the wellbeing of everyone at the University and thought that decision was the best way to mitigate damage.

Senator Mark Witte asked what ways Chairperson Martin thought the Board and how it functions could be improved. Chairperson Martin said the Board has its own program review that will begin next year. He said the review is very thorough—the typical issues that come up are the size of the Board and term limits. He added that he is supportive of the way the Board is operating currently.

Senator Henry suggested the Board receive direct communication from the Faculty Senate, in light of the fact that the Board was not formally presented with the resolutions the Senate passed last May. He said receiving resolutions of that type could also serve as oversight of the administration. Senator Henry, detailing the crisis in youth mental health taking place, then asked what role the Board could have in monitoring Northwestern's progress in increasing student mental health services. Chairperson Martin said the Student Life Committee has considered the issue of student mental health and has made it a high priority. The answers to improving the situation are not fully clear, but he said the Board trusts the President and the Provost to come up with additional solutions.

Senator Turek asked how often Northwestern University's Board of Trustees meets with Northwestern Memorial Hospital Trustees. Chairperson Martin said collaboration happens often between those two groups, in part because three or four Trustees sit on both Boards.

Senator Hao Zhang thanked Chairperson Martin for his service. He then asked what big project or building the Board is looking forward to over the next ten years. He said he asked this because faculty hiring in the funded research areas is almost always constrained by space. Chairperson Martin said there is a committee dedicated to facilities. They do three, five, and ten-year plans, he said, and it is all primarily academic space.

With no further questions, the president thanked Chairperson Martin for joining the Senate.

The president then began his report.

The president said all of the undergraduates were tested for covid during the first week of the spring quarter. There were sixty positive cases recorded during that testing period. The number of positive cases in Evanston is about thirteen on average per day.

The president said that at the May meeting the Senate will entertain nominations for Faculty Senate President-Elect. He said the Executive Committee, per the Senate's Bylaws, will put a candidate forward. He added that anyone may nominate a senator at the next meeting. Once the candidates are identified in May, he said a vote will be held in June to determine who will be the next Faculty Senate President-Elect.

The president said the Executive Committee will hold the Spring Summit with the administration on April 7. The topics they planned to discuss are reimagining CTECs, collaboration between the central administration and the relevant Senate standing committees, the goal for the latter being that faculty advise the administration before policies are put into place. He said the Senate has made progress in several areas in that regard, but they want to be even more involved. He said they also plan to talk about student admissions. Another agenda item, he said, coming from Senator Amaral, will be to discuss a faculty survey with the administration. In the past, the Senate has planned a survey of the faculty in conjunction with the administration. At tomorrow's meeting he said, they start the process of putting the survey together. He said the Senate will also reconstitute the Secure Faculty Survey Committee, which will be responsible for working with the administration on the survey. The president said he expects the survey to occur in the next academic year.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Amaral said he is worried about the race to lower acceptance rates. He said he believes Northwestern essentially encourages students across the country to apply, and the vast majority have no chance of getting into Northwestern. He said the faculty should decide if, as a University, lowering the admittance rate is a worthy priority.

Senator Henry asked if Provost Hagerty, after her promise at the January meeting, has yet shared the budget for student mental health services. And if she hasn't yet, Senator Henry asked if the Senate leaders could ask about that figure at the Spring Summit meeting. He also asked if the Senate could establish a more reliable communication channel between the Board and the Senate given the Board hasn't yet received the resolutions from last May. The president said he agreed in principle with both suggestions.

Senator Turek, responding to Senator Amaral's comments on the acceptance rate at Northwestern, said that if Northwestern stops pursuing goals like exclusive admissions, then other schools will take their place.

Senator Amaral said that Northwestern should be a leader and not follow others schools. He said Northwestern should also set clear values and follow them when it comes to admissions.

Senator Judy Franks said she was also worried the Board had not seen the Senate resolutions, and both branches, the Board and administration, should review any resolution the Senate passes. Secondly, Senator Franks suggested the discussion on the composition of the Board should be relayed to the central administration during the Spring Summit.

Senator Kalyani Chadha asked if there had ever been discussion about providing mental health services through telehealth. The president said the University is currently using telehealth services.

Senator Thrason Pappas expanded on Senator Amaral's comment comparing it to the number of papers submitted to academic journals. He argued that universities should be taking a holistic approach in looking at students, like what they have accomplished, what their interests are, and what they hope to achieve. The president said the admissions process is, unfortunately, completely divorced from the faculty.

Senator Carol Schmidt said that the selection of an EAP health provider is forthcoming—the University's current contract with Humana ends on August 31, 2022. She said she volunteered to serve

on a committee tasked with looking at all the options Northwestern has for health providers. She said she has been impressed with Human Resources and their efforts to find a health provider that can meet the needs of the University, including telehealth services. The president thanked Senator Schmidt for serving on the committee.

The president asked if there was any new business.

Senator Getzler said he has had some serious challenges in getting the right classroom to fit the needs of his course this quarter. He expressed concern about the Registrar struggling with handling the return to campus. He asked if the Senate could look into classroom assignments further. The president promised to be in touch with the Registrar's Office.

A motion was then made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The Senate approved that motion and the meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate