

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
Videoconference  
May 13, 2020

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The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on May 13, 2020, on a videoconference platform. President Lois Hedman called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president welcomed the Senate and noted that the minutes from the April 15, 2020 meeting were approved and entered into the record.

The president then gave her report.

The president said all remaining meetings will be held remotely the rest of the year, including the Faculty Assembly and the June Senate meeting. She said the tentative plan for the Spring Faculty Assembly is for President Schapiro to give introductory remarks followed by a panel of administrators answering questions from the audience.

The president said the Respectful University Policy is being developed by a subcommittee of the Policy Review Committee. Both the president and Past President Baron Reed are serving on the subcommittee. The president said the Respectful University Policy is a revision of the outdated Civility and Mutual Respect Policy. The latter is being updated to address certain types of behaviors—non-discriminatory harassment—that are not currently covered by other University policies, such as the Sexual Misconduct Policy and the policy on Discrimination and Harassment. The president said the Respectful University Policy is designed to ensure a consistent understanding across the University as to what behavior is unacceptable and to apply the same behavioral expectations to all members of the Northwestern community. She said the policy is being written to be consistent with Northwestern values while continuing to uphold academic freedom. The policy will also include an affirmative vision of the types of behaviors necessary to achieve a respectful environment. However, it does not sanction non-compliance. She said it also provides descriptions of behaviors that do constitute non-discriminatory harassment, which encompass bullying and other behaviors that a reasonable member of

the community would find to inhibit a person's ability to learn, work, or teach. The president said the policy also encourages a process for informal resolution when appropriate, but also provides points of contact for community members should they experience or witness any type of non-discriminatory harassment. She added that the Senate's Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee reviewed the Respectful University Policy in October 2019 and had no recommendations for revisions. She added that a draft policy will be posted for open comments hopefully by the end of May. It will also be reviewed again by the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee.

The president said the University recently announced a [search committee](#) to find a new leader for Office of Equity. She said the committee includes representatives from the student body, staff, and faculty. The committee will identify and recommend a slate of candidates to the provost. The president said she is serving as the Senate's representative. Additionally, the committee is inviting feedback from the Northwestern community along with any questions faculty might have or recommendations for candidates to lead the Office of Equity. Correspondences may be sent to this email address: [AVPEquitysearch@northwestern.edu](mailto:AVPEquitysearch@northwestern.edu).

The president shared three university initiatives that are intended to support faculty's remote teaching. She said the provost office will be soon be releasing a survey to ask about the resources faculty are already using to assist them in remote teaching as well as resources they might anticipate using. She encouraged senators to fill out this survey. Second, she highlighted the [Keep Teaching website](#), which is being coordinated by IT, the Libraries, Searle Center, and the Provost Office. She said this site is clearinghouse for many resources faculty might need while remote teaching. Third, the Searle Center has partnered with AccessibleNU, Northwestern IT, the School of Professional Studies, and Northwestern University Libraries to offer Foundations of Online Teaching, a practicum for instructors and TAs teaching in the summer.

Finally, the president said Secretary to the Faculty Senate Jared Spitz will be sending letters to department chairs for senators whose three year term has ended. The letter will note that an election will need to be held within the department. She said senators at the end of their first term are eligible to serve for a second term.

Upon finishing her report, the president said the Executive Committee, which serves as the nominating committee for Senate leadership positions, chose Senator Bob Holmgren, chair of the Research Affairs Committee and representative for the Department of Molecular Biosciences, as a nominee for President-Elect. The president then asked if there were any nominations from the floor for President-Elect. Seeing none, the president announced that Senator Holmgren will be running unopposed for the position of President-Elect in 2020-21. She added a vote will be held at the June meeting.

The president then announced a slight change to the agenda. Senior Vice President for Business and Finance Craig Johnson joined Interim Provost Kathleen Hagerty as the Senate's guest. A motion was made to allow Senior Vice President Craig Johnson to speak. The motion was seconded. A vote was held and the motion was approved.

Senior Vice President Johnson then gave an update on the University's financial situation. He said that going in to fiscal year 2020, Northwestern was emerging from a budget crisis and planned to have a break even budget with a potential draw of \$25 million from the endowment. However, he said the pandemic's impact on the University's finances has been exceptionally harmful. Right now, he said there is \$90 million revenue deficit. Some of those hits include reimbursing room and board (\$25 million), tuition refunds for masters and certain professional students (\$25 million), the cancellation of March Madness, reduced endowment payouts after the endowment shrunk, reduced revenue from the hospitals, supporting students with grants and certain distance learning initiatives, and philanthropy has markedly decreased. He said Northwestern started the year with about \$11.3 billion in the endowment, but that has since been reduced to about \$10 billion. When the crisis began, he said Northwestern immediately stopped all capital projects, initiated a hiring freeze, and all travel was stopped. However, Senior Vice President Johnson said these reductions in cost weren't able to offset the revenue losses mentioned earlier. Therefore, the administration decided to furlough 250 employees. He said they chose individuals who could not do their work during the stay-at-home order. He said Northwestern is continuing to pay their health insurance at the full premium level. He said they hope to bring those employees back as soon as possible. He also added that they initially had considered a larger number of furloughs—around 1,000 employees—but instead decided to stop all retirement matching. This allowed everyone to share the burden. He said the leadership also took salary cuts as a show of solidarity. He

noted that he believes the administration has taken all the actions they need to get through the summer and into the fall.

Looking towards the future, Senior Vice President Johnson said that he and Interim Provost Hagerty, along with their staffs, have been modeling different scenarios for the fall quarter. There are three workgroups tasked with decision making for the fall quarter—Senior Associate Vice President Luke Figora (Risk Management) leads the campus reactivation group (reopening labs, classrooms, dorms, testing models, etc.); Senior Vice President Johnson leads the Financial Modeling group (potential economic scenarios, market conditions, budget planning); Interim Provost Hagerty leads the work group tasked with examining the bigger picture beyond the fall. He said faculty are on the work groups, they meet with the Faculty Senate, and they are also meeting weekly with Trustees.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Noshir Contractor thanked the Northwestern leadership for their work during this difficult time. He said he was speaking on behalf of the Research Affairs Committee. He said that committee wished to address faculty's challenges with IRB, which he noted has been exacerbated by the pandemic. He said the committee solicited feedback from associate deans for research and department chairs. Some of the issues include significant delays in responses to proposals and changes to protocols after previous approvals. He asked if enough personnel were hired to the IRB office before the hiring freeze, what training IRB personnel are being provided, what can be done to keep from going up the hierarchy from becoming the default for IRB approvals. Senior Vice President Johnson said he was happy to look into that. He asked Senator Contractor to send those questions to him and he promised to provide a response.

Past President Baron Reed asked how this crisis might affect the thinking on financial aid going forward, especially given that it is a significant cost to the University after meeting its goal of admitting 20% Pell eligible students by 2020. He also asked if there will be extensions to financial aid if students do not complete their degree in four years due to challenges caused by the pandemic. Senior Vice President Johnson said he is unsure about delays or deferrals because those numbers are not yet known. However, he said there has been no change in their approach to admissions or their financial aid offerings for this coming fall.

Senator Laura Beth Nielsen asked about the process administrators are going through for when Northwestern community members might return to campus, specifically are administrator's guidelines consistent with Governor Pritzker's (return in phase 4) and will faculty who are in vulnerable groups be permitted to teach online even if there is a return to campus. Senior Vice President Johnson said that the University will be governed by the state of Illinois's and the city of Chicago and Evanston's plans for reopening, and the safety measures they outline once the state and cities are reopened. He also said Interim Provost Hagerty's work group is looking at ways faculty can continue to do their work in the fall should they elect not to return to campus.

Senator Jennifer Cole asked what the financial relationship is between athletic and academic programs at Northwestern. Senior Vice President Johnson said athletics is intrinsically part of Northwestern. However, he said their finances are operated separately. He said the TV contracts provide a large stream of revenue for athletics and that helps support their cost base. He said should football not be played in the fall, it would be a significant financial hit. His understanding is they won't play football if students are not on campus. He added that if athletics does not have the revenue to support their costs, the University would have to look at reducing their costs—some of the initial 250 furloughed employees were athletics personnel.

Senator Hao Zhang asked if there will be resources available for faculty to reconfigure courses if they are drastically altered in the fall, if there will be more furloughs in the fall, and if the financial situation is worse now than it was during the budget crisis two years ago. Senior Vice President Johnson said the financial challenges the pandemic has caused are fundamentally different and far larger than 2 year ago because it targets every single revenue stream. Going into the fall, he said if the University does have to make reductions, their plan is to mitigate damage over several years. They plan to take out more from the endowment to help the University now so it can operate in the future. Without knowing for certain, he said they might ask individuals to take voluntary furloughs for a certain number of days or some restricting in the academic infrastructure. He said Interim Provost Hagerty will speak more to the planning of courses, but noted his office is there to support any changes to course that are necessary.

Senator David Schoenbrun asked if during the decision-making process when cuts to retirement contributions were made, if administrations considered the extra burden people in the early stages of

their career will face as opposed to individuals later in their career. Senior Vice President Johnson said they did consider that. He said it was not an easy choice. If they furloughed more people, those furloughs would have been focused in areas with lower income employees and people earlier in their career. He added that the cut to retirement contributions was progressive in that it hit everybody at a certain level. But they ultimately decided that it was better to keep as many jobs as possible to protect as many people as possible in the short term. Hopefully, he said, by January the matches will begin again.

Senator Christine Helmer asked how the University plans to make up for lost salary raises for two years, and retirement losses this year. Senior Vice President Johnson said that the University has made up a lot of ground in certain areas, but he doesn't yet know how they will make it up. But all of Northwestern's peers are doing the freezing to their salaries as well. As soon as we emerge from this, he said, they will absolutely put dollars back into faculty salaries.

Senator Claudia Swan asked about funding for graduate students and the timeline for decisions that are pending for additional support. Senior Vice President Johnson said this question will be answered best by Interim Provost Hagerty. He promised she would be covering that topic in her remarks.

Senator Ceci Rodgers asked about the CARES funding Northwestern turned down. She asked if they might reconsider. Senior Vice President Johnson said no given the change in guidance and the restrictions with the funding. He said the requirements just weren't reasonable.

The president thanked Senior Vice President Johnson for coming and all the work he is doing.

The president then introduced Interim Provost Hagerty.

Interim Provost Hagerty said the administration has been continuously planning since she took over as Interim Provost on April 1. They are now in the planning stages for fall. From her perspective, she said there has been an incredible amount of cooperation and camaraderie since the University transitioned to remote learning. She has been very impressed with the faculty's ability to adjust and thrive during such a difficult time. She also said there will undoubtedly be more remote teaching in the future. She said her goal is that Northwestern will continue to be a great university and will be a great university when we emerge from this crisis.

The president then opened the floor for questions.

Interim Provost Hagerty answered the question about graduate students that was brought up by Senator Swan earlier in the meeting. She said that her office is aware of the graduate students' concerns. She noted that they are a heterogeneous group, and that makes coming up with a solution for all of them very difficult. She said it's very important to state that they will honor every financial commitment Northwestern has made to students. The Provost Office is looking at the demographics of students—what year they are in, what they study, etc.—and then they will try to figure out solutions for each group. Right now, she knows many students are worried about the library reopening. It's not safe for staff, unfortunately. When it is, she said they will reopen the library. She also knows students and faculty are worried about childcare. Again, unfortunately Northwestern cannot fix that problem right now because all of the schools and child care centers are closed. She said she certainly empathizes with their distress, though. Also, the job market has halted and that will present a huge challenge for graduate students and universities. The solution to the job market is unclear at the moment. However, what is clear is the need to help students finish their dissertations, she said, and that is what they plan to do.

Senator Fred Turek asked about the level of discussion among the three work groups about research versus teaching in the fall. He said he's concerned about Northwestern losing the ground it gained in its research enterprise now that costs will be being cut. Interim Provost Hagerty said there has been a huge amount of planning to get research going again. She said the place where Northwestern would like to start opening campus is allowing people to work in the labs. She said the university absolutely values the progress the research enterprise has made and they want to resume non-essential research as soon as possible, but they can't do it until the stay-at-home order is lifted and they can ensure the safety of those individuals working in the labs.

Senator Judy Franks asked what type of timeline the administration is building in for course development. Interim Provost Hagerty said there are points during the summer where they will have to say one way or other how instruction will be carried out in the fall. She said that no matter what, much of the curriculum will still need to be online due to certain restrictions with classroom capacity and faculty members feeling uncomfortable teaching in person. The University will not mandate anyone

teach in person if they feel unsafe doing so. Ultimately, she said she expects a final decision to be made by the middle of the summer, or at least two months ahead.

Senator Alessandra Visconti read the following statement signed by faculty from the Department of French and Italian:

“We understand that the Provost’s office has been overwhelmed, as we have, with this crisis, and we very much appreciate how effectively they have safeguarded the Northwestern community from the health risks associated with the virus, while also managing the many adjustments to university operations that have been required. However, since the beginning of this crisis, some communications about essential policies affecting our teaching and research have been released without enough advance notice to enable faculty members and departments to prepare or act appropriately. You may recall that the libraries were closed less than 8 hours after an email was sent out, the policy allowing special requests for office access was suspended over Easter weekend, during the first week of classes, and departments have received numerous requests in the past several weeks to deliver information in 24 hours or less. While these requests were certainly understandable given the nature of the crisis, planning for fall quarter with an entirely new model governing the course schedule and space requirements will require a great deal of time, as well as many adjustments from faculty and staff members alike in order to be successful. For these reasons, it would be very helpful to be able to anticipate what is coming. In the interests of a commitment to partnership and collaboration, therefore, we in French and Italian wish to ask the Provost’s office kindly to inform the faculty of plans currently underway, and keep us informed as the process unfolds.”

Interim Provost Hagerty said they absolutely will not repeat what happened in the spring. She said the way that things are structured is working with the schools. She said she meets with the all deans and all the associate deans for faculty separately each week. She said hopes that communication will flow up through the schools to her and vice versa. She said she does understand faculty’s frustration because she wants more answers, too. Unfortunately, so much is unknown right now she can’t give a definitive answer on the fall quarter yet.



Senator Steve Nelson said there were questions from his constituents (Department of Political Science) about how administrators balanced the cuts they made between retirement contributions and the furloughs. He also asked about teaching evaluations during the pandemic and how they might be used going forward. Interim Provost Hagerty said that for mitigation the administrators considered many things. She reiterated Senior Vice President Johnson's point about spreading the burden as opposed to cutting more staff. As far as teaching evaluations go, they will be conducted, but they will not be used for any high stakes decisions like promotions. She said the reason they wanted to collect student responses so they could use them to improve remote teaching going forward.

Senator Venkat Chandrasekhar asked if there are contingencies in place for supporting graduate students if they aren't able to do their work on campus. Interim Provost Hagerty said the Office of Research and the Office of Risk Management have each put a lot of thought into how it would look when people begin working in the labs. There will be many precautions, she said, like cleaning frequently, having people work in shifts, requiring protective gear, etc. Once the restrictions are lifted, students on grants will be some of the first to return when it is possible, she said.

Past President Baron Reed said after working with the Undergraduate Student Lifecycle Task Force, he realized how often students rely on faculty for informal mentorship. He asked if there are any systems that provide that kind of checking-in with students now that we are all off campus. Interim Provost Hagerty said Student Affairs is concerned about this issue. She noted that they are trying to create some co-curricular experiences where students can get involved, even if it is virtually. Part of the fall planning, she said, is to come up with some ideas around community building if the students are not physically here.

Senator Turek said that many faculty in biomedical research are paid a salary through their research grants. He said federal rules require that if those individuals have accepted that grant, the only work they can do is on that grant. He asked if the administration has considered what those individuals might do if they cannot perform that work due to social distancing requirements. Interim Provost Hagerty directed Senator Turek's question to Vice President for Research Milan Mrksich.

Senator Swan said some schools have added questions about remote teaching to CTECs. She reminded senators that this spring is an excellent time to add questions about remote teaching in order to better

plan for the fall. She asked if the administration is looking for ways to assist faculty in formulating lesson plans for online teaching regardless of the outcome of the final decision for the fall quarter. She also wondered if graduate students could be hired to help faculty develop these online courses. Interim Provost Hagerty said she would love it if faculty get together at the departmental level and come up with creative ways to develop curriculums for online teaching. She said that when they do, they should then tell the Provost Office how they can best assist them in fully realizing those plans. She also said there probably are opportunities to hire graduate students to teach, but they have to assess their financial situation first. The president added that the survey she mentioned in her report is seeking the ideas Senator Swan was referencing.

Senator Chandrasekhar asked about the plans for social distancing in the dorms. Interim Provost Hagerty said they have studied if it was possible to have each student in a room by themselves. She said that it might be possible. Then the issue is students who live off campus and their social lives beyond campus. She noted they do want to do everything they can to have students living on campus in the fall.

Senator Franks said that when faculty are given a new course, they are usually allotted one unit per based on the number of hours they must teach. Given the enormous change in how courses are offered, Senator Franks wondered if the Provost Office would be providing universal guidance to schools on allotment for time to develop new courses. Interim Provost Hagerty said her strategy has been to work through the deans because a single policy will not work for the entire university.

Senator Amy Kontrick asked if students have been asking for gap years or leaves of absence amongst all this uncertainty. Interim Provost Hagerty said they have not seen that yet. She said they may be waiting to see how the guidelines develop. Enrollment in the fall looks the same right now, she noted.

President-Elect Therese McGuire thanked Interim Provost Hagerty for her efforts, and also for taking the time to speak with the Senate. Likewise, Interim Provost Hagerty thanked the faculty for their hard work and cooperation. The president echoed comments made by her colleagues.

The meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate