Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
October 14, 2026

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held a standing monthly meeting on October 14, 2026, in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. Faculty Senate President Rebecca Zorach (Art History) called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the September 30, 2026, meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

Actions

1. N/A

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome President Mung Chiang

The president introduced and welcomed President Mung Chiang for his first to the Faculty Senate.

President Chiang thanked faculty senators for the invitation and their service. He called for togetherness in uncertain times and expressed a hope for building trust and transparency between he and the Faculty Senate. In that spirit, he shared a letter from Purdue's Faculty Senate leadership upon his departure expressing thanks for the opportunity to collaborate with President Chiang and wishing him all the best at Northwestern. He added that he considered this first visit, like his ongoing listening tour across constituencies, a conversation. He said he would listen closely to senator's feedback.

2026 marks the 175th anniversary of Northwestern University. President Chiang said the university has experienced many moments of strife and doubt but has collectively emerged a

better, stronger institution. In an effort to further the institution and its mission, he announced a campaign to raise $175 million to support faculty through either new endowed professorships or expansion of current endowed professorships. He also acknowledged hearing that compensation, benefits, and space on campus are key concerns for faculty.

President Chiang went on to highlight faculty hiring, recent faculty awards, and the Office of Research's announcement of new competitive seed grants encouraging interdisciplinary work.

Faculty Senate President Zorach then sat down with President Chiang to ask a few distilled questions from senators submitted in advance.

The president said the most common two categories for questions coalesced around the diversity of disciplines and fields of interest at Northwestern and shared governance. She then asked how the University values modes of inquiry that are not as readily susceptible to being funded, and what values does the university use to guide funding for the rich array of disciplines. President Chiang reiterated the campaign for professorships. He said that one of his core beliefs is the soul of an educational institution is rooted in the arts and the humanities. Along those lines, he added that a funded comprehensive study was just announced to look at research in the visual and performing arts at Northwestern. As to the values, President Chiang said it was no secret some units at the University subsidize other units, but at a granular level it will never be the case that every unit must generate revenue.

The president then asked how President Chiang thinks about shared governance and what meaningful consultation looks like in a practical sense. President Chiang said at Northwestern, as at many other institutions, there is a division of labor among the different constituent groups. Curricular choices, he said, for example, will always be the purview of faculty. He then gave an example of HR recently consulting the Senate leadership on a message to all employees about the upcoming open enrollment for benefits. He said the announcement benefitted from the Senate leadership's input and that was a good illustration of where they could perhaps cut across those divisions of labor.

The president then opened the floor for questions and asked for unanimous consent to allow Associate Provost Sumit Dhar and Provost Erik Luijten to speak. The Faculty Senate agreed to her request.

Senators offered a number of substantive questions and comments. Namely, there was a comment on President Chiang's tenure at Purdue University and his tense relationship with the Faculty Senate and the local AAUP chapter and a question about the administration's handling of Faculty Assembly resolutions. President Chiang said he had not yet read the resolutions from the Faculty Assembly. Associate Provost Dhar said they were reviewing one of the resolutions about increased faculty engagement with the Board of Trustees.

A senator asked about President Chiang's vision for Northwestern. President Chiang said he had not yet read Northwestern's vision statement and added it should not be one person's visions, but rather the collective vision of all Northwestern's constituents that guides the institution.

Several other higher education topics were touched upon, including the Report of the Yale Committee on Trust in Higher Education, undergraduate tuition rates, the many complicated challenges international students face at this moment, and what it means to prioritize being a global university. While he had not read the Yale Report, President Chiang said it might be worth studying and that he would welcome the Senate leadership's input on that topic. As for undergraduate tuition, President Chiang said the numbers are high, but Northwestern does have a robust financial aid program, although with limits to how that is funded. That is, most of the funding for undergraduate aid comes out of the annual budget compared to money endowed specifically for financial aid like at several peer institutions, which presents a recurring challenge, but a critically important one, he said. Both President Chiang and Provost Luijten acknowledged the hardships international students are facing and the vital importance of welcoming international talents. President Chiang listed a few other priorities about being a global institution: providing a high-quality, consistent study abroad education, continuing to establish a presence in other countries, enhancing the scholarship of global study, and furthering the reputation of Northwestern throughout the world. Provost Luijten said they are aware that the international community has been under

attack in recent years, one example of which is the restrictions on curricular practical training, that have had trickle down effects across the University, but which they have been able to alleviate with some streamlining of bureaucracy.

President Chiang ended by thanking the Senate again for the invitation and leaving the senators with a question: Is it fair to have different AI policies for different sections of the same course?

The president said the Senate would undoubtedly continue to discuss AI and the policies surrounding it in the months to come.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Jackie Stevens (Political Science), Axel Mueller (NTE, WCAS), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Debu Chakravarti (Ob-Gyn), Ian Hurd (Past President, Political Science)

II. Report of the Faculty Senate President

The president's report is below and in the accompanying slide deck.

The president said the healthcare benefits survey recently concluded. Nearly 4,000 employees responded, approximately 24% of benefit-eligible faculty and 40% of staff. She added that nearly two-thirds of respondents would like to return to BlueCross BlueShield, and only 3.8% of respondents were extremely satisfied with United Healthcare. A more detailed report is planned for later this year.

The president said the Executive Committee recently met with President Chiang and other senior leaders as a part of their quarterly summits. The discussion centered around improving communication from administrators to faculty and developing a process for moving forward with the resolution on constitutional rights, which will have implications on other shared governance processes.

The president reminded senators the Faculty Assembly is on Wednesday, October 28, at 4:30 p.m. in the McCormick Foundation Forum in Medill.

Lastly, the president said several working groups from various committees are moving forward objectives from last year and this year, including the resolution to amend the Faculty Handbook to include faculty appeals for removal from teaching or research, the resolution on constitutional rights mentioned above, and developing further contact between the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees.

III. Standing Committee Report: Community Affairs

Senator Danny M. Cohen was unable to attend. The president reported on his behalf (slide 8)

The Community Affairs Committee (formerly the Faculty Survey Committee) has a new remit. Several areas the committee is thinking about homing in on are: creating new rhythms for the Faculty Senate's internal and external communications (one example is bi-quarterly updates on the Faculty Senate being sent to all faculty), potentially developing small surveys to collect helpful data on faculty perspectives (questions around this: Would this be effective? How best can the Senate use the current contact form on the website?), identifying faculty expertise beyond the Senate and connecting faculty experts to ongoing Senate projects, continuing to support the analysis and reporting of the recent healthcare benefits survey, and cultivating faculty-community connections across Evanston and Chicago.

The president opened the floor for questions.

A senator mentioned that the effectiveness of the healthcare survey was a direct result of its narrow focus. Another senator suggested cultivating more interactions with staff groups as a mechanism for building community.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Ian Horswill (President-Elect, Computer Science), Kasey Evans (English)

IV. Open Discussion of Senate Priorities

The president shared the priority topics of concern senators shared in their pre-submitted questions to President Chiang (slides 10-11) and the current efforts to address certain topics:

- Supporting the diversity of research and teaching at the university
- Shared governance → Discussions underway to improve
- Salary and benefits → Healthcare survey
- Graduate funding and education
- Community issues (e.g. Clery report)
- The federal "deal" and federal government actions
- Athletics
- Budget → Budget committee conversations about communication re: new model.

She also shared what came up during discussion in the Zoom room during the September 30, 2026, Faculty Senate meeting (slide 12):

- Raises vs. merit pay (n.b. language faculty *did* receive larger than average raise, but continuing issues with NTE faculty salaries);
- Academic freedom and protecting vulnerable students and colleagues (trans folx, post-encampment affected activists);
- Addressing the pressure to complete the antisemitism and bias training;
- Shift from DEI to "civic dialogue" approaches; and
- Right to counsel for students, staff, or faculty attacked in connection with their academic activity (and beyond, for students).

The floor was the opened for senators to share what they would like to explore further. Senators shared the following:

- Donor-driven agenda setting;

- Surveillance/privacy on campus;
- Establishing a set of principles for Northwestern led by the faculty;
- Culture setting (how to get more faculty involved in shared governance);
- Self-censorship in curricula;
- White paper topics—know your rights, Senate as advocate for rights and decision-making, Faculty: who to blame, Senate achievements, how the university budget works, (what can be adjusted and what can't), open comment period for policy changes, role of the Board and how the endowment works; and
- Utilizing a diversity of tactics—legal avenues, activism, policy shaping, etc.—to advance the faculty's cause.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Helen Tilley (History), SonBinh Nguyen (Chemistry), Marcela Fuentes (Performance Studies), César Hoyos Álvarez (Spanish and Portuguese), Axel Mueller (NTE, WCAS), Jackie Stevens (Political Science), Eric Zaslow (Mathematics), Branden Ghena (NTE, McCormick), Ian Horswill (President-Elect, Computer Science), Ana Maria Acosta (Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences),

V. New Business

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate