

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
October 8, 2025

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its first standing monthly meeting of the 2025-2026 academic year on October 8, 2025 in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. Faculty Senate President Ian Hurd (Political Science) called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the June 4, 2025 meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

Actions

1. The Faculty Senate approved both the standing committee chairs and the members of the Committee on Cause.

Meeting Summary

I. Report of the Faculty Senate President

The president's report is below and in the accompanying [slide deck](#).

The Senate leadership (president, past president, president-elect) have been meeting with the administration regularly, both sharing faculty concerns and responding to the administration's. He said the President, Provost, and Deans are all eager to engage with the Senate. Likewise, the president said they continue to have conversations with the Board of Trustees about how faculty can have work with them.

The president said they have been communicating the upset shrinking benefits, and the lack of communication about the cuts, is causing.

The president reported a small number of undergrads, and a slightly larger number of graduate students, refuse to take the mandatory antibias training. The Provost's Office assured the Senate that they revise these trainings every year and that it will look different next year.

Senators shared some concerns about the structure of the Faculty Assembly and how time is allotted on the agenda. The president assured senators that the times listed are guidelines, and if the faculty would like to spend more time on a particular topic, they may share that during the meeting.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Thrason Pappas (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Julie Marie Myatt (Theater)

II. Ratify Standing Committee Chairs, Committee on Cause Members

The Senate approved the following standing committee chairs:

- Ravi Jagannathan, Professor, Finance (Kellogg): **Budget and Planning**
- Jon Guryan, Professor, Education and Social Policy (SESP): **Committee on Cause**
- Jacqueline Babb, Senior Lecturer, Int. Marketing Communications (Medill):
Educational Affairs
- Ann Bradlow, Professor, Linguistics (WCAS): **Faculty Handbook**
- Mark Alznauer, Associate Professor, Philosophy (WCAS): **Faculty Rights and Responsibilities**
- Danny M. Cohen, Professor of Instruction, Non-Tenure (SESP): **Faculty Survey**
- Andrew Koppelman, Professor, Law Instruction (Pritzker): **Governance**
- Cat Fabian, Clinical Assistant Professor, Non-Tenure (SoC): **Non-Tenure Eligible**
- Pablo Durango-Cohen, Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering (McCormick): **Research Affairs**

- Ian Horswill, Associate Professor, Computer Science (McCormick): **Salary and Benefits**
- Kasey Evans, Associate Professor, English (WCAS): **Social Responsibility**
- Ana Maria Acosta, Associate Professor, Phys. Thpy. and Hum. Mov. Sci. (Feinberg): **Student Affairs**

The Senate also approved the following members of the Committee on Cause:

- Jon Guryan, Professor, Education and Social Policy (SESP) — Chair
- Nick Cianciotto, Professor, Microbiology-Immunology (Feinberg)
- Caryn Ward, Professor, Journalism Undergrad (Medill)
- TJ Billard, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies (SoC)
- Vicente Garcia Tomas, Assistant Professor, Anesthesiology (Feinberg)
- Julia Oliver Rajan, Associate Professor of Instruction, Spanish and Portuguese (WCAS)
- Heather Risser, Assistant Professor, Psychiatry and Behav. Sciences (Feinberg)
- Greg Miller, Professor, Psychology (WCAS)

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Mike Miksis (Engineering Science and Applied Mathematics), Ian Horswill (Computer Science)

III. Faculty Senate Topics for the Year

The president identified three issues the Senate might take up this year (listed below). He asked for Senate discussion on each topic.

- **Change in Benefits**

Over the summer, the Senate collected faculty feedback and shared with the administration hundreds of comments regarding the switch to United Healthcare (UHC).

The contract with UHC is for one year, but the cost to switch providers is quite high.

The administration says the network of providers, especially as it relates to mental health, will grow substantially with UHC.

It has been reported that the university saved approximately \$7.5 million in administrative costs after switching to UHC, and that UHC is aware of the unhappiness on campus about the switch.

The president made clear that the Senate did not know any of the above details until after they were made public. He then asked if senators had further thoughts. The majority of senators expressed deep frustration that faculty often have to bear the brunt of budgetary shortfalls.

There was general agreement that further feedback from the faculty should be collected, and that the Senate's committees—both Budget and Planning and Salary and Benefits—should be involved in the decision-making processes.

Senators asked to know the criteria for assessing healthcare providers and the timeline for when such decisions are made. The president said they have pressed HR a lot on these topics and there has been relatively little communication.

Some senators suggested calling attention to the issue through collective action, like a walkout. Others were dubious of the effectiveness of a walkout but acknowledged the sentiment.

Senators also expressed a deep desire to have, broadly, more faculty involvement in university governance.

Senators suggested making positive, research-backed proposals to the administration, especially in the face of ever rising healthcare costs.

The Senate thought it might be a good idea to have the decision makers to a future Senate meeting.

- **University Autonomy**

The president said there has been nothing reported about an agreement with the federal government. Interim President Bienen said he has clear red lines over preserving Northwestern's academic freedom and keeping a place that researches and teaches without government interference; while also acknowledging the real challenges the University is facing without federal research funds, and that the White House will not provide answers on anything.

The "compact" sent to nine universities (and has since been extended to all universities) is a clear threat.

Given all that, the president asked what the Senate's role might be.

The Senate discussed ways to more effectively communicate the Senate's place in shared governance, and how to leverage the power of other Senates across the country. The president said he would look into what it would mean to activate the network of Faculty Senate's across the country.

The Senate also discussed the potential and pitfalls of lawsuits to get research funding back.

- **Presidential Search**

The president said the committee to search for the new University President has yet to be formed, but they have been assured by the administration that there will be significant faculty representation on that committee. But that leaves open questions who is chosen and how, and what role the Senate might play in that process.

Some senators questioned the power faculty have in these kinds of situations and how the Senate might leverage its collective power.

It was pointed out that the Senate President has been a representative on these searches in the past and a substantive role, both in interviewing candidates and providing information from the faculty perspective.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Debu Chakravarti (Ob-Gyn), SonBinh Ngyuen (Chemistry), Julie Marie Myatt (Theater), Helen Tilley (History), Pablo Durango-Cohen (Civil and Environmental Engineering), Mike Miksis (Engineering Science and Applied Mathematics), Nick Cianciotto (Microbiology-Immunology), Ian Horswill (Computer Science), Ariel Stess (Radio, TV, Film), Nasrin Qader (French and Italian), Ji-Yeon Yuh (Council for Race and Ethnic Studies), Simone Ispa-Landa (Sociology), Danny M. Cohen (SESP), Aaron Shaw (Communication Studies), James Fitzgerald (Neurobiology), Ana Maria Acosta (Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Kalyani Chadha (Medill), Kasey Evans (English), Yujay Masah (Libraries), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Nikki Spigner (Black Studies), (Karen Springen (Medill), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences)

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate