

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
Guild Lounge and Videoconference  
November 12, 2025

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its standing monthly meeting on November 12, 2025 in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. Faculty Senate President Ian Hurd (Political Science) called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the October 8, 2025 meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

**Actions**

1. No formal actions were taken during this meeting.

**Meeting Summary**

**I. Report of the Faculty Senate President**

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

The president highlighted a few upcoming meetings, including the Executive Committee's summit meeting with senior administrative leadership on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, a special Faculty Senate meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup>, the annual university budget presented to the Senate on January 21<sup>st</sup>, and a change in time and location for the February 11<sup>th</sup> Senate meeting, which will now be held from NU-Q early that morning.

The president said that Past President Jill Wilson has been appointed to the search committee for the provost, and that they will ensure there is Senate representation on the presidential search committee once it is formed.

The Gender and Sexuality Studies program has made a formal request to join the Senate. The president said the NTE and Governance Committees are looking into it.

Senator Abid Ali from SPS plans to organize Chicago campus senators and will be reaching out to those individuals.

The president also highlighted several partnerships the Senate has continued to foster this year, including working with NUSAC, the staff advisory council, the student governing bodies, and faculty senates at peer institutions.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting:

Paola Zamperini (Asian Languages and Cultures)

## **II. Athletics at NU**

Senate President Ian Hurd introduced Combe Family Vice President for Athletics Mark Jackson. Vice President Jackson shared his journey to Northwestern, why he wanted this job (the prioritization of academics within athletics among other reasons), and how he is trying to reshape the culture in athletics to one of transparency and partnership with the broader campus. The president then asked Vice President Jackson questions submitted by faculty in advance of the meeting, asking him first to detail changes made following the law firm Paul, Weiss' review of the athletic department. Vice President Jackson said appropriate reporting mechanisms, hazing prevention measures, and increased faculty relations were all put into place. Specifically, what was once the Committee on Athletics and Recreation will now be the Intercollegiate Athletic Committee. That committee is currently being worked on and will be chaired by Professor Wes Burghardt and Vice President Jackson will play a role as well. He reiterated his commitment to be a partner with faculty and welcomed them to engage with athletics at all levels. Vice President Jackson also detailed administrative changes to respond to the evolving athletics landscape. The president and Vice President Jackson then discussed the changing external environment and how Northwestern continues to respond to shifts in college athletes being paid, transfer portals, and how Northwestern can compete in the NIL world.

The floor was then opened for questions.

Senators posed questions about the new football stadium, how to emphasize academics when athletics is increasingly commercialized, concussion prevention and stadium noise levels, the high number of scooters on campus, the influence of varsity athletics on campus, the balance between intramural and varsity sports, the athletics department and their lack of availability to journalism students, interactions with medical school students, and the striking financial disparity between athletics and academics. Vice President Jackson said he would field any questions about the new football field. He also said player safety in all sports is of the utmost priority, and that he has been adamant about scooter safety with all the players and coaches. He said his job is to make athletics the best it can be at Northwestern and that requires working all members of the campus, especially the faculty that guide and teach student athletes daily.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting:

Mike Miksis (Engineering Sciences and Applied Mathematics), Ji-Yeon Yuh (Council for Race and Ethnic Studies), Debu Chakravarti (Ob-Gyn), Cat Fabian (NTE, School of Communication), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering) Ian Horswill (Computer Science), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences), Karen Springen (Medill), Nick Cianciotto (Microbiology-Immunology), Helen Tilley (History).

### **III. Healthcare/Benefits Changes**

Senator Ian Horswill (Computer Science), chair of the Salary and Benefits Committee, presented what he knew thus far about recent changes to faculty healthcare benefits. His slides can be found in the slide deck linked above. He noted that it was likely too late to undo the switch to United Healthcare in the near future (it is a three-year contract), but the goal was to get clarity on how the decision was made and to formulate a proposal on employee representation in the process. Simultaneously, the committee would like to broadcast ways to appeal healthcare decisions and set up a process for tracking problems.

Senator Horswill then detailed the information he'd gathered on how health insurance coverage works at Northwestern.

The floor was opened for questions.

Senators pushed back on the notion the switch to United Healthcare was only to save \$7.5 million, suggesting the cost savings in payouts might be another reason. Senators also said UHC pays providers less, which is why fewer providers take UHC, and they were wondering what the dollars per claim was with UCH versus BCBS. Senator Horswill said these were great points and they should be raised on December 11<sup>th</sup> when the Senate meets with HR. He noted that bids are sealed, and faculty will not likely find out how those savings occur and why UHC was chosen.

Senators also repeatedly asked why faculty were not involved in the decision-making process and expressed a need for faculty to be informed moving forward. Senator Horswill said he always tells the administration to overcommunicate everything, to air on the side of saying too much. He added that there is a biannual review presented to administrators by the provider, and Senator Horswill argued that faculty should get an abridged version of that.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting:

Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences), Thrasso Pappas (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Sarit Markovich (Strategy), Seth Lichter, (Mechanical Engineering), Cat Fabian (NTE, School of Communication), Keith Tyo (Chemical and Biological Engineering), Karen Springen (Medill), SonBinh Nguyen (Chemistry), Larry Christiano (Economics), Ana Aparicio (Anthropology) Julie Marie Myatt (Theater), Axel Mueller (NTE, Weinberg), Domenic DeSocio (German), Greg Miller (Psychology)

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate