

Northwestern University  
Minutes of the Faculty Senate  
Guild Lounge and Videoconference  
April 9, 2025

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held a standing monthly meeting on April 9, 2025, in Scott Hall's Guild Lounge and over Zoom videoconference. President Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences) called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the March 12, 2025, meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

### **Actions**

1. The Faculty Senate endorsed and approved signing on to a [Statement in Support of the Core Mission and Values](#) of Higher Education in the United States of America.

### **Meeting Summary**

#### **I. Visit from the Chair of the Board of Trustees**

The Senate welcomed Northwestern Board of Trustees Chair Peter Barris. Mr. Barris thanked the Senate for the invitation and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to engage with faculty. He stressed how unprecedented this moment is, the most challenging he's faced in the last twenty-four years of serving on Northwestern's Board. He also noted the letter he received from faculty urging the Board to ensure faculty points of view are represented at the Board level, and he assured the Senate the Board is aligned with and fully supportive of President Schill's and Provost Hagerty's [guiding principles](#).

Mr. Barris spoke about the federal government's announced \$790 million research funding freeze on Northwestern. He said the Board is deeply concerned about this and President Schill has made clear his priority is to protect faculty's ability to freely write, research, and

teach. Mr. Barris added that the Board is speaking with his counterparts at other universities on how to collectively and strategically address the threats from the federal government, and that the University continues to leverage external partners in order to communicate its value on Capitol Hill.

In terms of financial planning, Mr. Barris said the Board and the administration are considering all options. While this moment is extremely challenging, he said the Trustees must balance that with the long-term health of the University. Drawing additional funds from the endowment is the last place they want to go, but it is not off the table. Mr. Barris then concluded his remarks by sharing the various ways the Board interacts with faculty, current and future infrastructure projects, and a willingness to sustain shared governance efforts with the Faculty Senate.

The floor was opened for questions.

Senators asked, both in pre-submitted questions, and on the floor, how the Board is making decisions, what their plan is in terms of responding to the federal government's assault on higher education, and how the Board has evaluated responses from other institutions thus far. Mr. Barris said the Board is trying to learn the answer to the question of whether the federal government is trying to inflict pain regardless or if there is some other agenda. He said they are working with other universities in the AAU to determine a course of action. He added that narrative around universities needs to shift, that the facts are on the sides of universities, but more positive stories about the impacts of innovations and research on society need to be told.

Several senators also asked about ways faculty input can reach the Board, and Mr. Barris said he would rely on the Senate and its leadership to continue to shape those conversations.

Some senators also expressed strong opinions about the University challenging the legality of the orders from the federal government. Likewise, some senators earnestly told Mr. Barris to stand up for faculty regardless of where they are on the political spectrum.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Nasrin Qader (French and Italian), Sara Solla (Neuroscience), Ana Aparicio (Anthropology), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Ian Hurd (Political Science, President-Elect), Debu Chakravarti (Obstetrics and Gynecology), James Fitzgerald (Neurobiology), Susan Pearson (History), Sylvester Johnson (Black Studies), Eric Zaslow (Mathematics) Rebecca Zorach (Art History)

## **II. Report of the Faculty Senate President**

The president's report, along with administrative and standing committee reports, can be found here: [April 2025.pptx](#). Below is her report.

- The Higher Learning Commission will visit Northwestern on April 28-29.
  - Site visit will include an open forum for faculty (check email for further details).
- Nominations for President-Elect will take place at the May Senate meeting.
  - Executive Committee will present a nominee
  - Nominations will also be taken from the floor
  - Nominations are not accepted after adjournment
  - Nominations must submit a written statement on their candidacy prior to the June meeting.
- Advisory Committee on Investment Responsibility (ACIR) is accepting applications from faculty.
- Faculty and Athletics Engagement workgroup is seeking greater collaboration between faculty and athletics and will continue to promote events like the lacrosse game on April 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Senator Dan Mroczek (Medical Social Sciences) shared some of the impacts of recent grant funding losses on his department and the department's subsequent response.

## **III. Discussion and Vote on BTAA Statement**

A motion was made to approve signing on to the following Statement in Support of the Core Mission and Values of Higher Education in the United States of America:

Private and public higher education institutions in the United States have for over three centuries contributed to the public good, and the nation's global leadership position, through the advancement and sharing of knowledge, and by providing pathways for workforce development.

Research funding in universities is judiciously used to drive innovation, providing an exceptional return on investment that advances economic growth, health and well-being, scientific breakthroughs, national security, and cultural and civic development. Academic research and scholarly expertise are also vital to excellent teaching and training, ensuring that the U.S. workforce of the future remains globally competitive.

Higher education in the United States continuously sets standards for international excellence and attracts students and colleagues from all over the world. The contributions of international scholars, staff, and students to U.S. higher education are integral to its leadership position.

U.S. higher education's global excellence and public impact require working and learning environments that ensure opportunities for all. Initiatives that reduce discrimination are part of that imperative.

As recent challenges to funding and programming threaten to dismantle the core values and mission of higher education, at great detriment to the public at large and the U.S.'s international reputation, the undersigned faculty governance bodies affirm the following:

1. Public and private universities serve the public good and contribute to the U.S.'s national and global excellence, through teaching, research, and service.

2. Cuts to research funding in higher education will undermine scientific innovation, health, societal progress, and the U.S.'s leadership position, with long-lasting detrimental impacts.
3. Academic scholarship and research, through peer review and professional accreditation, lead to evidence-based expertise, not partisan viewpoints.
4. We support academic freedom and free speech, and those who exercise their rights thereto, citizens and non-citizens alike.
5. We oppose the targeted harassment of faculty members for their expertise.
6. We support the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which guarantees the right of people to peaceably assemble. All community members who engage in peaceful assembly, regardless of viewpoint or citizenship status, should have the opportunity to do so without retaliation.
7. We agree with the Department of Education that discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (Title VI), sex (Title IX), and disability (ADA) is reprehensible, affirming our legal and moral obligation as educational institutions not to discriminate based on these or other identifying characteristics. Initiatives that help to reduce such discrimination, when grounded in best practice, increase opportunities and ensure real meritocracy for all.
8. We affirm the essential role of transparent and collaborative shared governance in maintaining the integrity of our universities, and commit to its continued strengthening.
9. Lastly, we call upon faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community partners of our universities to unite in support of the core mission, values, and academic freedoms of higher education in the U.S.

The motion was seconded, and the floor was then opened for discussion.

A majority of senators said they were in support of the statement for a variety of reasons—clear action, collectively standing up for the University's values on record, and defending the institution of higher education. Those in opposition said the risk of losing more research funding was not worth angering the federal government further with statements like this one.

The question was called, and the Senate approved the motion to end discussion.

The motion passed with a vote of 61 to 10.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Judy Rosenbaum (NTE, Law), Kasey Evans (English), Jacqueline Babb (Medill), Ian Hurd (Political Science, President-Elect), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Maria Dizon (Pediatrics), Nasrin Qader (French and Italian), Sara Solla (Neuroscience), James Fitzgerald (Neurobiology), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences)

#### **IV. Standing Committee Report**

##### **a. Secure Faculty Survey**

The Faculty Senate unanimously consented to delaying this report as the chair was absent due to illness.

#### **V. New Business**

Senators lamented the end to discussion while also expressing thanks for the Senate being a space for reasoned debate and dialogue.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Mark Johnson (Biomedical Engineering), Regan Thomson (Past President, Chemistry), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Julie Marie Myatt (Theatre), Sara Solla (Neuroscience), Anne Zald (Libraries)

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared Spitz

Secretary to the Faculty Senate