

Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Baldwin Auditorium and Videoconference
May 7, 2025

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held a standing monthly meeting on May 7, 2025, in Baldwin Auditorium on the Chicago campus and over Zoom videoconference. President Jill Wilson (Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences) called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

The president noted that the minutes from the April 9, 2025, meeting were approved electronically and entered into the record.

Actions

1. The Faculty Senate passed a [resolution](#) thanking the administration and Board of Trustees for their financial support amid the funding freeze.
2. The Faculty Senate approved an [amended version of the Rutgers's Mutual Defense Compact](#).
3. The Faculty Senate endorsed a [faculty letter](#) sent to the administration and Board of Trustees on April 17.

Meeting Summary

I. Honorary Degree Nominations

The Senate entered a closed session to consider honorary degree nominations from the Honorary Degree Committee.

II. Report of the Faculty Senate President

The president's report, along with standing committee reports, can be found here: [May 2025 Meeting Slides.pptx](#). Below is an overview of her report.

- The president alerted senators to several upcoming events.
- The Faculty Assembly on April 21 achieved quorum for the first time. The proposed resolutions passed by a vote of 383 yes, 83 no, and 35 abstentions.
- The Senate briefly discussed a written update on the Athletics follow-up of the Paul Weiss report.
- The president and the Senate offered heartfelt congratulations to Senate Secretary Jared Spitz on his selection for the StoryStudio Chicago Emerging Writers Award, and his upcoming graduation with an MFA in Poetry & Prose.

III. Nominations for President-Elect

The president opened the floor for nominations for the position of President-Elect. The Executive Committee nominated Senator Jacqueline Babb (Medill) and Senator Susan Pearson (History) nominated Senator Rebecca Zorach (Art History).

IV. Standing Committee Reports

a. Governance

- Senator Ceci Rodgers said the committee met twice this year, most recently prior to the Faculty Assembly. Given the unprecedented circumstances, the committee wanted to review the Faculty Assembly Bylaws and evaluate how procedures went during the meeting. She said the committee will continue to review those processes over the summer and into the fall. Furthermore, she asked senators to share their feedback, and their constituents, on faculty interactions with the Board of Trustees at the following email address:
faculty-senate@northwestern.edu.

b. Social Responsibility

- Following up on a Faculty Senate sustainability resolution, Senator Rebecca Zorach said the committee met with staff—Senior Associate Vice President Angel Dizon, Assistant Vice President for Facilities Carrie West, Director of

Sustainability and Planning Noel Davis—from SustainNU and Facilities to receive an update on the University’s sustainability plan. The initial sustainability plan (2017-2021) is now considered a living document, one the SustainNU staff continues to modify. Given that, she said it would be beneficial to hear from SustainNU at a Faculty Senate meeting next year.

Senator Zorach then shared some sustainability data (slides 24 and 25 in deck linked above). She also noted that building and infrastructure is responsible for 99% of emissions on campus and emphasized that resources need to be invested to ensure Northwestern meets its goal of net zero emissions by 2050. She also shared the [campus sustainability map](#) for faculty to peruse.

Based on a senator’s question, Senator Zorach said her committee would follow up on local sustainability plans in Evanston and Chicago to see how they align with Northwestern’s.

c. Educational Affairs

i. Senate Jacqueline Babb said the committee had three main initiatives this year:

- CTEC reform
 - A pilot is happening this quarter. The plan is to launch a broader test in the fall, which will include different types of classes taught by both tenure-track and NTE faculty.
- Faculty-Student Interaction Grant
 - Sponsored by Associated Student Government (ASG), providing funding for faculty and students to interact around topics related to the course.
- University Reaccreditation
 - Higher Learning Commission visited Northwestern on April 28th and 29th. Senator Babb thanked all those involved and said a report will be sent back from the HLC in approximately six months.

Senators asked about how the recent changes in federal government might affect accreditation going forward and about the limits of the initial CTEC pilot in the spring (only tenure-track faculty teaching two sections could participate). Senator Babb said the question about accreditation was posed when the HLC was here in late April and they don't know what to expect in terms of the federal government, but they are aware of the external forces putting pressure on universities. She added that the administration is planning to expand the CTEC pilot in the fall.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Judy Rosenbaum (Law), Susan Pearson (History)

d. Secure Faculty Survey

- i. Senator Danny Cohen said the last faculty-wide survey took place in 2015, and questions about the next one have been going on for some time. Given that, he said the Survey Committee wanted to solicit senators' feedback regarding a faculty-wide survey so that they may prepare a recommendation to submit the administration.

Senator Cohen posed two questions: What do faculty believe is the purpose of a faculty-wide survey? And, in terms of survey design, what should be the priority?

The Senate formed breakout groups to discuss the questions. Below is a brief recap of what senators shared in relation to a faculty-wide survey:

- Examining broad topics, like the purpose of academe, how funding works, tuition, etc.
- Comparing new data from the responses gathered in the 2015 survey (many comments related to what happened after the 2015 survey and

how might items in the new survey be addressed) and with other peer institutions.

- Tailoring the survey by school or including several school-specific questions.
- Potentially conducting smaller surveys when issues arise instead of one large survey, and would such surveys perhaps capture the volatility of a particular moment.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Angelique Duenas (Medical Education), Greg Betiel (Molecular Biosciences), Judy Rosenbaum (Law), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Thrasos Pappas (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Ian Hurd (Political Science, President-Elect), Susan Pearson (History), Ian Horswill (Computer Science)

V. Discussion of Senate Statements

The Faculty Senate considered future actions after having passed a [statement](#) in support of the core mission and values of higher education at its last meeting. The president first shared some responses to the straw poll (slide 36) she conducted prior to the meeting. That poll asked senators what specific steps it would like the Senate to take, be it endorsing an April 17 letter sent by faculty to the Board of Trustees and the administration, signing on to the mutual defense compact proposed by Rutgers Faculty Senate, and/or writing its own statement.

Senators then offered their positions on next steps. Several senators shared how their opinions have changed as the federal funding situation has evolved. Many said it was clear the Senate needed to stand up and make their position clear and often. The feasibility of the defense compact was discussed at length, along with its symbolic value.

During discussion, a motion was made by Senator James Fitzgerald to approve a resolution (see Appendix A) thanking the administration and Board of Trustees for providing gap funding while funding for federal grants is frozen. The motion was seconded, and after a friendly amendment the Senate discussed approved the resolution thanking the administration (54 yes, 1 no, 3 abstentions).

Following that vote, a motion was made for the Senate to approve its own version of the [mutual defense compact](#).

The Senate debated the feasibility of such a measure and the optics of not joining the compact after all but four Faculty Senates in the Big Ten had signed on. During discussion, Senator Seth Lichter proposed an amendment to the original resolution (see Appendix B). The amendment was seconded and discussed. After a successful motion to end debate, the Senate approved the amended mutual defense compact statement (47 yes, 3 no, 1 abstention).

Following the vote, a motion was made to endorse the [April 17 faculty letter](#) (Appendix C). The motion was seconded, and the floor was opened for discussion. Senators debated the idea of endorsing a letter all faculty had an opportunity to sign individually. Following discussion, the Senate approved endorsing the April 17 faculty letter (44 yes, 8 no).

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Danny M. Cohen (NTE, SESP), Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences), Aaron Shaw (Communication Studies), Tom Hope (Cell and Developmental Biology), Axel Mueller (NTE, WCAS), James Fitzgerald (Neurobiology), Ian Hurd (Political Science, President-Elect), Susan Pearson (History), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Ian Horswill (Computer Science), Mary Zimmerman (Performance Studies), Jacqueline Babb (IMC, Medill)

VI. New Business

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate

Whereas, scientific research benefits society and is central to the academic mission of Northwestern University;

Whereas, federal grants are the primary funding mechanism supporting scientific research at Northwestern University and other universities in the United States of America;

Whereas, most scientists and trainees at Northwestern are paid from federal grants;

Whereas, a large fraction of Northwestern's federal research funding has been subject to stop-work orders or otherwise withheld by the federal government;

Whereas, Northwestern's Board of Trustees and President have continued to fund many scientific projects impacted by the federal government's stop-work orders and funding freeze to Northwestern University;

Whereas, many scientific projects have continued that would have collapsed without funding;

Whereas, many scientists remain employed that would have lost their jobs without funding;

Be it resolved that the Northwestern University Faculty Senate thanks Northwestern University's Board of Trustees, President Michael Schill, and other central administrators for their indispensable support in this difficult time.

Appendix B: Mutual Defense Compact Resolution

Whereas, recent and escalating politically motivated actions by governmental bodies pose a significant threat to the foundational principles of American higher education, including the autonomy of university governance, the integrity of scientific research, and the protection of free speech;

Whereas, the Trump administration and aligned political actors have signaled a willingness to target individual institutions with legal, financial, and political incursion designed to undermine their public mission, silence dissenting voices, and/or exert improper control over academic inquiry;

Whereas, the Big Ten Academic Alliance represents not only athletic competition but also a longstanding tradition of academic collaboration, research excellence, and commitment to democratic values and shared governance;

Whereas, the Big Ten Academic Alliance includes 18 universities with thousands of instructors serving over 600,000 students;

Whereas, the preservation of one institution's integrity is the concern of all, and an infringement against one member university of the Big Ten shall be considered an infringement against all;

Be it resolved that the Northwestern University Senate urges the president of Northwestern University to formally propose and help establish a Mutual Academic Defense Compact (MADC) among all Big Ten Academic Alliance member institutions with the shared objective of protecting academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and the integrity of the research enterprise against unlawful legal, financial, and governmental interference.

Be it further resolved that under this Compact, participating institutions shall commit resources, including legal, financial, and public affairs support, to coordinate collective, strategic responses on behalf of its member universities.

Appendix C: Faculty Letter to NU Admin

April 17, 2025

To: President Michael Schill and Provost Kathleen Hagerty

CC: Board of Trustees Chair Peter Barris

From: Concerned Faculty

We come together as concerned faculty to ask that you take forceful steps to meet the challenges of the current crisis and strongly defend Northwestern against the ongoing and intensifying attacks on higher education. Bedrock principles of a democratic society, due process, and the rights of free expression and association are now at stake. These attacks threaten Northwestern and other institutions across the United States. In light of this assault, we urge Northwestern's leadership to **take these steps:**

- 1. Legally contest the federal funding freeze and refuse to comply with unprecedented demands that threaten academic freedom and university self-governance.** Freedom from political interference has allowed US universities to stand as leaders in producing cutting-edge knowledge across fields—medicine, science, humanities, engineering, and social sciences, among others. The entire country, indeed the world, benefits from the scientific and medical innovations produced by American universities. We call on you to stand up against intolerable threats to interfere in the conduct of teaching and research, and to refuse any further requests to turn over personal data and academic, disciplinary, and personnel records to the federal government.
- 2. Be a leader among peer institutions in condemning attacks on universities.** In addition to condemning attacks, use all opportunities to assert the value of higher education visibly and publicly. Be forceful in making the case for the enduring values that are central to institutions of higher learning and the many contributions the sector makes to our society. Insist on the importance of independent voices to a functioning democracy and civil society, highlight the value of the diversity that exists in our institutions, and encourage free expression and vigorous debate within our community.
- 3. Support our international students, staff and faculty** by taking the following steps: avoid voluntary cooperation or information sharing with Immigration and Customs Enforcement or other

federal agencies charged with facilitating deportation or other forms of immigration enforcement; maintain the enrollment of international students in the event of visa revocation, legal status termination, detention, and/or deportation; allow any such students and scholars to continue their studies and research remotely, if necessary, ensuring that if enrollment is contingent upon funding through teaching or fellowships, they can continue their coursework, research, and teaching appointments; communicate timely information to international students and scholars, including immediate notification of changes in their legal status; and provide legal counsel for students and scholars whose visas have been revoked without due process.

4. **Work purposefully and proactively with other universities** and Northwestern's alumni networks, taking and creating opportunities to develop coordinated opposition to these anti-democratic attacks.

Thank you for your efforts to stand up for Northwestern and our shared values.