Northwestern University
Minutes of the Faculty Senate
Guild Lounge and Videoconference
September 30, 2026

The Northwestern University Faculty Senate held its first standing monthly meeting of the 2026-2027 academic year on September 30, 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 June 3, 2026, 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.
2. The Faculty Senate approved a resolution on ICE and the affirmation of constitutional rights for all Northwestern employees.

Meeting Summary

I. Report of the Faculty Senate President

Before her report, the president asked the Senate to amend the agenda, moving "New Business" before "Breakout Groups: Committees," to accommodate a resolution submitted by two senators. The Senate unanimously agreed to the change.

The president then gave her report, which is below and in the accompanying slide deck.

The president discussed several issues the Senate addressed over the summer. Notably, a working committee of senators and members of the Provost's Office and the Office of the General Counsel have been engaging on a resolution passed by the Faculty Senate last year

to amend the Faculty Handbook to grant appeals to faculty removed from teaching and research. The Faculty Handbook is a joint document between the administration and the Faculty Senate. Thus, both sides must agree to any changes. Discussions are ongoing and the Senate will be kept apprised if the administration offers a counter proposal.

The president said the Senate leadership also talked a lot with the administration about what's happened to the program of African Studies and its move to the Office of Research. She said the Senate will continue to monitor the progress of that change.

A healthcare benefit survey was sent to all faculty and staff over the summer. The survey closes on October 9th.

The last update from the president was about upcoming fall meetings:

- Faculty Senate meeting with President Chiang on October 14;
- Faculty Assembly on October 28 from 4:30-6 p.m. in McCormick Foundation Forum; and
- Faculty Senate meeting on November 18.

The president then shared some history of shared governance at Northwestern. She looked at the General Faculty Committee—the faculty's governing body prior to the Faculty Senate/Faculty Assembly structure—to see how faculty participated in governance when the governing body and the administration were smaller. Many of the same issues the Senate discusses today—faculty salaries, curricular choices, the balance between academics and athletics, pressing social issues—were discussed decades ago, and the president urged senators to keep this in mind and to give everything they can to the Senate's important work.

II. Faculty Senate Orientation

The president then provided a brief orientation for new and returning senators (slides 12-23). She highlighted the new standing committee structure, which included the consolidation of the Faculty Rights and Handbook committees into one, a new remit for the old Survey

committee, which is now Community Affairs, an expansion of the Governance committees' mission into more policy-focused work, and the addition of the Facilities and Sustainability and Information Technology committees.

The president also shared her priorities for 2026-27, including further developing communication between the faculty and administration (faculty participation in decision-making, developing line of communication with the new President and Provost, and the Board of Trustees, sharing Senate activities with faculty and the broader community, like surveys and white papers/explainers), continuing the healthcare benefits change conversation, staying on top of the ever present issues of faculty rights and labor issues, academic freedom, salaries, and contending with AI in the classroom and the broader political context of teaching and learning.

The floor was then opened for questions.

Senators asked about communicating minutes to all faculty, which the president said she would consider. Senators also asked about how the Senate might address AI use among administrators but preventing students from using it. The president said the Senate should, and would, give AI and its impact serious consideration this year.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Ian Horswill (Computer Science), Debu Chakravarti (Ob-Gyn), Greg Beitel (Molecular Biosciences)

III. Ratify Standing Committee Chairs, Committee on Cause Members

A motion was made to approve the standing committee chairs and the members of the Committee on Cause. The motion was seconded and the floor was opened for discussion.

A senator asked how chairs were chosen and whether the administration was involved in any way in making the decision. The president assured the Senate that the administration had no part whatsoever in choosing the committee chairs. She said that in creating the new

committees she tried to balance experience with new perspectives, while also including a diversity of disciplines and perspectives among the chairs.

With no further questions, the Senate proceeded to a vote.

The Senate approved the following standing committee chairs:

- Andrea Graham, Associate Professor, Medical Social Sciences (Feinberg): **Budget and Planning**
- Nasrin Qader, Associate Professor, French and Italian (WCAS): **Committee on Cause**
- Danny M. Cohen, Professor of Instruction, Non-Tenure (SESP): **Community Affairs**
- Pouya Jamshidi, Assistant Professor, Pathology (Feinberg): **Educational Affairs**
- Jacqueline Babb, Associate Professor, Int. Marketing Communications (Medill): **Facilities and Sustainability**
- Ana Maria Acosta, Associate Professor, Phys. Thpy. and Hum. Mov. Sci. (Feinberg): **Faculty Rights and Handbook**
- Helen Tilley, Associate Professor, History (WCAS): **Governance and Policy**
- Branden Ghena, Assistant Professor of Instruction, Non-Tenure (McCormick): **Information Technology**
- Axel Mueller, Professor of Instruction, Non-Tenure (WCAS): **Non-Tenure Eligible**
- Pablo Durango-Cohen, Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering (McCormick): **Research Affairs**
- Cat Fabian, Clinical Associate Professor, Non-Tenure (SoC): **Salary and Benefits**
- Eric Sirota, Clinical Professor, Non-Tenure (Pritzker): **Social Responsibility**
- Karen Springen, Professor, Non-Tenure (Medill): **Student Affairs**

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

- Nasrin Qader, Associate Professor, French and Italian (WCAS)— Chair

- Nick Cianciotto, Professor, Microbiology-Immunology (Feinberg)
- Kent Grayson, Professor, Marketing (Kellogg)
- Mark Alznauer, Associate Professor, Philosophy (WCAS)
- Sameer Ansari, Professor, Radiology (Feinberg)
- Laura Beth Nielsen, Professor, Sociology (WCAS)
- Angelique Duenas, Assistant Professor, Medical Education (Feinberg)
- Keith Tyo, Associate Professor, Chemical and Biological Engineering (McCormick)
- John Bailitz, Professor, Emergency Medicine (Feinberg)
- Debabrata (Debu) Chakravarti, Professor, Ob-Gyn (Feinberg)
- Jacqueline Stevens, Professor, Political Science (WCAS)
- Shawn Vondran, Professor of Instruction, Non-Tenure (Bienen)

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Jackie Stevens (Political Science)

IV. New Business

Senators Helen Tilley (History) and Eric Sirota (NTE, Law) presented the following resolution:

> WHEREAS constitutional protections are the bedrock of democratic governance, and when specific rights and court orders are ignored, trust in government plummets and democracy itself is at risk;
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> WHEREAS a spring 2026 analysis of 11,400 detainee lawsuits against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) found that federal judges ruled in 90% of the cases that the detentions were illegal;
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> WHEREAS the problems judges identified in these cases include: absence of due process, unlawful use of force, unlawful search and seizure, unlawful arrest or detention, unlawful profiling, unlawful denial of legal counsel, untrue testimony (perjury), and unlawful violations of court orders;

WHEREAS the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits law enforcement, including federal officers, from entering non-public spaces (such as residence halls, classrooms, faculty offices, etc.) without a judicial warrant;

WHEREAS Northwestern University has yet to provide substantive guidance on this issue of continuing importance to the safety of members of our community, including students, staff, faculty, and Evanston and Chicago residents;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That the Faculty Senate calls on Northwestern's leadership

First, to insist that no Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers are allowed in any non-public spaces on either the Chicago or Evanston campus without a signed judicial warrant.

Second, to provide Know Your Rights trainings for students, staff, and faculty regarding constitutional protections against *unlawful search and seizure*, *unlawful suppression of speech and assembly*, *unlawful use of excessive and unreasonable force*, and *unlawful punishments that are cruel and unusual*, as well as constitutional amendments that protect everyone's *right to due process*, *right to legal counsel*, and *right to privacy*.

Third, to protect student, faculty, and staff records; to require legal review before responding to an ICE information request; and to establish a contact person or office responsible for handling inquiries and trainings.

Fourth, to adhere to existing city and state "welcoming city" laws that serve to protect everyone's constitutional rights.

Prior to discussion, Senator Tilley said the "Whereas" statements were meant to provide some context for legal scholars and the resolutions get into what other peer institutions are doing, specifically the constitutional rights of private institutions.

A motion was made and seconded to approve. The floor was then opened for discussion.

Senators generally spoke in favor of the resolution. There were detailed questions about strategy and implementation, like whether a resolution was the right approach and whether the resolutions were pointed in the right direction. More broadly, senators agreed that clear, consistent information on how to handle ICE enforcement was greatly needed. Still others looked at past legislation from the Faculty Assembly and the Faculty Senate as touchstones for the faculty's position on matters like this.

With no further questions, the motion was voted on and approved with 61 yes votes, 3 no votes, and 2 abstentions.

Senators who spoke during this portion of the meeting: Andrew Leone (Accounting and Info Management), Kasey Evans (English), Marcela Fuentes (Performance Studies), Branden Ghena (NTE, McCormick), Ana Aparicio (Anthropology), Jarrett Linder (Pediatrics), David Kalainov (Orthopedic Surgery), Seth Lichter (Mechanical Engineering), Danny M. Cohen, (NTE, SESP), SonBinh Nguyen (Chemistry), James Fitzgerald (Neurobiology), Frank Sweis (Libraries), Wendy Murray (Biomedical Engineering), Jackie Stevens (Political Science)

V. Breakout Groups: Committees

Given that an hour was allotted for mingling and there were only twenty minutes left, the president asked to adjourn and mingle with committees. The Senate unanimously agreed.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jared Spitz
Secretary to the Faculty Senate