

# Northwestern | FACULTY SENATE

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year and welcome back for winter quarter 2024. I wanted to take a few moments as we push deeper into this quarter to provide you with a brief update on what the Faculty Senate has been up to so far this academic year.

Last fall on October 13th, 2023, the Senate, the Office of the President and the [Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy](#) co-hosted an event on Free Expression and Academic Freedom. Northwestern President Michael Schill provided opening remarks and introduced [Dr. Jonathan Friedman](#) the Director of Free Expression and Education Programs at [PEN America](#), who delivered a captivating and thought-provoking keynote lecture entitled “Academic Freedom in Peril: State Censorship, Its Implications for Students, and Possible Solutions.” Reflecting today on the subject matter in the context of what has happened in the world and higher education since, events like this, which serve to foster discussion and rally faculty around shared concerns, are crucial to the continued functioning of our University and are important for the health of higher education in the face of increasing attacks on academic freedom.

A topic that has consumed a significant fraction of the Senate’s attention over the past year has been the planned construction of the new Ryan Field Football stadium. Concerns over the project were amplified over the summer due to the hazing crisis that emerged within the Athletics Department, a topic that was debated separately in a special summer session of the Senate (for further details see [August 9, 2023 minutes](#) and the record of [Senate resolutions](#)). The Senate focused largely on questions related to the financial implications of such a huge project (estimated at \$800 million) and the impact it might have on the academic and research mission of the University. Chief Operating Officer of Northwestern Luke Figora attended the [November 2023](#) meeting of the Senate to answer questions, while at the same meeting the Senate debated and voted to approve a [resolution](#) to ensure the new stadium does not harm the University’s mission. This resolution was sent to University President Michael Schill and Chair of the Board of Trustees Peter Barris.

A Faculty Assembly was held on December 12th, 2023, where President Michael Schill provided a wide-ranging state of the university address and engaged in a Q&A session with attendees. A video recording of this meeting is available [here](#).

Our first Faculty Senate meeting of 2024 took place on January 10th, with the major focus being a presentation by Provost Kathleen Hagerty and Chief Financial Officer Mandy Distel on the University’s finances. This presentation has been an annual tradition in the senate and provides an excellent opportunity for faculty to learn more about the financial structure of our institution and gain insights into its priorities and health. Details of the discussion, including a copy of the slides presented, can be found [here](#) within the minutes of that meeting. A related version of this presentation to the Senate is planned for an upcoming Faculty Assembly, with dates and details to follow.

Lastly, we unveiled a revamped [Faculty Senate website](#) that is now much more clearly organized and focused. The goal was to provide a better interface for faculty to learn more about the Senate and to provide easier access to various resources of value to both senators and the broader faculty at large. The new site also features a [feedback option](#) and we welcome hearing from you. Special thanks go to the Senate’s Past-President, Ceci Rodgers, for conceiving of and leading this effort.

Regards,  
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Faculty Senate President

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