



**TO:** Faculty Senate.  
**SUBJECT:** 3\_11\_2026 Senate Minutes.

Present: Professors Alexis, Auguste, Bhutta, Bloom, Carr, Chiou, Desnoyers, DiBattista, Di Credico, Eckelman, Godoy-Carter, Hamandi, Hill, Hinerman, Hodeghatta, Homan, Ingemi, Kevoe-Feldman, Lamin, Lykourinou, Maheswaran, McGivney, Musselman, Orr-Skirvin, Passas, Rejtar, Shrivastava, Sivak, Sobral-Campos, Spencer, Stefanik, Tjiptowidjojo, Walker J., Walker L., Young-Hong

Administrators: Winkelstein, Alshawabkeh, Auclair, Dyal-Chand, Isaacs, Jackson, Tsai.

Absent: (Professors): Bai, Hand, Ivanova, Lorette, Magowan, Muzny, Parameswaran.

Absent: (Administrators):

Call To Order: 11:45 a.m.

- I. The minutes for the February 25, 2026 Senate meeting were approved.

*The order of the SAC and Provost reports were reversed to accommodate the Provost's schedule.*

**II. PROVOST REPORT**

- The Provost continues to collaborate with Faculty Senate committees.
- Progress continues on development of the university's academic planning process. Faculty have been invited to participate in several discussions and focus groups.
- Approximately **150 participants** attended a recent Teaching and Learning focus group related to the academic plan.
- The Provost announced the **62nd Annual Klein Lecture**, titled *"The AI Authenticity Paradox: Why Machines Are Making Us More Human."*

- III. **SAC REPORT** (The SAC report has been posted to the Senate website.)  
 Chair Spencer reviewed the agenda and meeting protocols also noting.

- SAC has met once as a committee.
- SAC met once with the Provost.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.**

There were no questions regarding either position.

**IV. CONTINUING BUSINESS**

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM RESOLUTIONS**

(The report and presentation have been posted to the Senate website.)

Professors Louise Walker, CSSH, and Jack Thomas, Khoury, presented the committee's proposed resolutions related to academic freedom and institutional neutrality.

By unanimous consent, the Senate agreed to skip redundant resolution preambles in order to save time.

**1. RESOLUTION TO SHARE BEST PRACTICES WITH RELEVANT UNITS.  
PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS the Charge 1 asks the Academic Freedom Committee to research and recommend best practices for fostering viewpoint diversity and cultivating a pluralistic learning environment, while simultaneously supporting all community members' sense of belonging and engagement; and

WHEREAS the Academic Freedom Committee has presented 16 recommendations based on information given by Northeastern faculty in a response to the all-faculty survey and based on research of relevant literature; and

WHEREAS many of these recommendations connect to the ongoing work done by CATLR, ADVANCE and the Office of the Chancellor; and

WHEREAS the Academic Freedom Committee has produced a memo cover letter, included in Appendix G of its report;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate Agenda Committee deliver a memo, that shares the recommendations in Charge 1 for consideration for future programming, to CATLR, ADVANCE, the Office of the Chancellor, and any other parties that SAC believes would be interested in the research.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate Agenda Committee consider charging an appropriate committee next year with evaluating the feasibility of enhancing Northeastern's civil discourse curricula, including appropriateness of adding a "civil discourse" NUPath attribute and a "viewpoint diversity" TRACE student evaluation question.

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.  
Prof. Carr, CAMD, seconded the motion.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.**  
There were no questions.

The vote PASSED: 29-2-2.

**2. RESOLUTION FOR THE FACULTY SENATE TO ENDORSE INSTITUTIONAL NEUTRALITY FOR THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS LEADERS.  
PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS the university's core mission is the production and transmission of knowledge through research, teaching, and learning—a mission that requires maintaining the university as society's preeminent space for open inquiry where

competing ideas are tested through evidence and argument rather than predetermined by institutional orthodoxy; and

WHEREAS official institutional statements on matters beyond the university's core educational and research mission create several interrelated problems: they imply institutional orthodoxy that chills dissent from faculty and students who disagree; they displace the individual expert voices that should be engaging these issues; they privilege the institution's voice in domains where it is not the scholarly expert; they risk societal perception of the university as a political actor rather than a knowledge institution; and they erode the legitimate authority universities have earned in their actual domains of expertise; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University has issued statements on events that do not directly concern the institution's core mission, which can lead to requests that the university opine on myriad events; and

WHEREAS institutional neutrality — meaning that the university as an institution refrains from taking positions on political, social, or policy questions except where they directly affect core mission or operations, while individual faculty, students, and staff retain full freedom to express their views — is a well-recognized [1] and long-standing [2] principle for maintaining universities as spaces for open inquiry and genuine intellectual pluralism;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate endorses the principle of institutional neutrality for Northeastern University, as described below:

- a) The university and its leaders may speak officially on matters that directly affect its core educational and research mission (such as academic freedom, educational policy, research funding, accreditation) and matters essential to its operations (such as legal obligations, campus safety, student access, institutional autonomy).
- b) The university and its leaders will exercise institutional restraint on matters that do not directly affect its core educational and research mission or operations (such as taking positions on social and political issues unless those issues threaten the mission of the university and its values of free inquiry).
- c) Boundary determinations — deciding whether a given issue relates directly to the university's core mission — will inevitably involve judgment and good-faith disagreement, with policies applied consistently regardless of viewpoint or political valence, and using shared governance mechanisms.
- d) Faculty, students, and staff retain full freedom to speak on any topic in their individual capacities, to conduct research on any subject, to teach according to their scholarly judgment, and to engage in civic and political activity. No individual should face sanction for expressing views that differ from any actual or perceived institutional position.

[1] As of late 2024, at least 148 institutions of higher education have adopted policies of institutional neutrality, including Dartmouth College, Yale University, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Tulane University, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, Stanford University, Syracuse University, Princeton University. Arnold, A., Shaw, E., Tenhundfeld, N., & Barbaro Simovski, N. (2025, March). The rising tide of institutional statement neutrality: How universities are rethinking institutional speech Heterodox Academy [heterodoxacademy.org/reports/a-revival-of-institutional-statement-neutralityhow-universities-are-rethinking-institutional-speech-in-2024/](https://heterodoxacademy.org/reports/a-revival-of-institutional-statement-neutralityhow-universities-are-rethinking-institutional-speech-in-2024/)

[2] The modern concept can be traced to the 1967 “Kalven Report” from the University of Chicago, which recommends a "heavy presumption against the university taking collective action or expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day" because it emphasizes that "the instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic." (Kalven, Harry (Chairman) "Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action." University of Chicago, November 11, 196.

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Maheswaran, COE, seconded the motion.

#### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

There were no questions.

The vote PASSED: 27-5-5.

### **3. RESOLUTION FOR FACULTY SENATE TO RECOMMEND THAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES ENDORSE INSTITUTIONAL NEUTRALITY FOR THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS LEADERS.**

#### **PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS the university's core mission is the production and transmission of knowledge through research, teaching, and learning—a mission that requires maintaining the university as society's preeminent space for open inquiry where competing ideas are tested through evidence and argument rather than predetermined by institutional orthodoxy; and

WHEREAS official institutional statements on matters beyond the university's core educational and research mission create several interrelated problems: they imply institutional orthodoxy that chills dissent from faculty and students who disagree; they displace the individual expert voices that should be engaging these issues; they privilege the institution's voice in domains where it is not the scholarly expert; they risk societal perception of the university as a political actor rather than a knowledge institution; and they erode the legitimate authority universities have earned in their actual domains of expertise; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University has issued statements on events that do not directly concern the institution's core mission, which can lead to requests that the university opine on myriad events; and

WHEREAS institutional neutrality — meaning that the university as an institution refrains from taking positions on political, social, or policy questions except where they directly affect core mission or operations, while individual faculty, students, and staff retain full freedom to express their views — is a well-recognized [1] and long-standing

[2] principle for maintaining universities as spaces for open inquiry and genuine intellectual pluralism;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate recommends that the Board of Trustees endorse the principle of institutional neutrality, as described below, at their next meeting.

a) The university and its leaders may speak officially on matters that directly affect its core educational and research mission (such as academic freedom, educational policy, research funding, accreditation) and matters essential to its operations (such as legal obligations, campus safety, student access, institutional autonomy).

b) The university and its leaders will exercise institutional restraint on matters that do not directly affect its core educational and research mission or operations (such as taking positions on social and political issues unless those issues threaten the mission of the university and its values of free inquiry).

c) Boundary determinations — deciding whether a given issue relates directly to the university's core mission — will inevitably involve judgment and good-faith disagreement, with policies applied consistently regardless of viewpoint or political valence, and using shared governance mechanisms.

d) Faculty, students, and staff retain full freedom to speak on any topic in their individual capacities, to conduct research on any subject, to teach according to their scholarly judgment, and to engage in civic and political activity. No individual should face sanction for expressing views that differ from any actual or perceived institutional position.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following a Board of Trustees endorsement, the administration, in consultation with Faculty Senate Leadership, establish in Spring 2026 a working group comprising faculty, administrative, and student representatives to:

a) develop guidelines for implementing the principle of institutional neutrality university wide;

b) develop an oversight or review mechanism, following shared governance norms, to ensure it serves its intended purpose of protecting open inquiry and intellectual pluralism;

c) steer the process towards implementation with target date of Spring 2027.

[1] As of late 2024, at least 148 institutions of higher education have adopted policies of institutional neutrality, including Dartmouth College, Yale University, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Tulane University, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, Stanford University, Syracuse University, Princeton University. Arnold, A., Shaw, E., Tenhundfeld, N., & Barbaro Simovski, N. (2025, March). The rising tide of institutional statement neutrality: How universities are rethinking institutional speech. Heterodox Academy [heterodoxacademy.org/reports/a-revival-of-institutional-statement-neutrality-how-universities-are-rethinking-institutional-speech-in-2024/](https://heterodoxacademy.org/reports/a-revival-of-institutional-statement-neutrality-how-universities-are-rethinking-institutional-speech-in-2024/)

[2] The modern concept can be traced to the 1967 "Kalven Report" from the University of Chicago, which recommends a "heavy presumption against the university taking collective action or expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day" because it emphasizes that "the instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic." (Kalven, Harry (Chairman) "Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action." University of Chicago, November 11, 1967: Kalven Committee: Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Lykourinou, COS, seconded the motion.

#### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

During discussion, Sr. Vice Provost Franko noted that the language referencing "spring 2026" in the "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED" paragraph was problematic give the timing of BOT meetings. The language was removed to provide flexibility in implementation timing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following a Board of Trustees endorsement, the administration, in consultation with Faculty Senate Leadership, establish ~~in Spring 2026~~ a working group comprising faculty, administrative, and student representatives to:

This section now reads:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following a Board of Trustees endorsement, the administration, in consultation with Faculty Senate Leadership, establish a working group comprising faculty, administrative, and student representatives to:

Chair Spencer noted senators would be voting on the revised text of the resolution.

The vote PASSED: 32-3-5.

#### **4. RESOLUTION FOR THE FACULTY SENATE TO ENDORSE THE CHICAGO STATEMENT. PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS Northeastern University is committed to experiential learning, interdisciplinary research, and the pursuit of knowledge through free and open inquiry, which requires robust protection of freedom of expression for all members of the university community; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University ranks 253rd out of 257 institutions in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, earning an overall score of 46.8 out of 100 and a grade of "F" for its speech climate (reported by media outlets such as Newsweek, The Boston Globe, CBS News Online and The Huntington News), representing a decline of 75 places from the previous year; [1] and

WHEREAS recent events at Northeastern, including concerns raised by last year's Faculty Senate's Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee regarding university communications about demonstrations and free expression in AY2024-25, [2] and the controversy around a planned academic lecture in March 2025 that resulted in a deplatforming penalty from FIRE [3] demonstrate concrete problems that have resulted in reputational damage and diminished academic offering to the NEU community, requiring institutional reform; and

WHEREAS a question in the recent faculty survey demonstrates a majority of faculty have low confidence (61% "not very" or "not at all confident") that the administration would protect a speaker's rights to express controversial views; [4] and

WHEREAS the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago (the "Chicago Statement"), issued in January 2015, articulates core principles regarding freedom of expression that have been adopted or affirmed by over 100 colleges and universities, including Princeton University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, Boston University, MIT, and Stanford University, and represents a widely recognized model for institutions seeking to strengthen their commitment to free expression; [5] and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is broader than NEU's Statement of Free Expression in the Faculty Handbook because the Chicago Statement covers all university community members while NEU's statement covers only full-time faculty at NEU's American campuses (because the Handbook does not cover part-time faculty and does not cover faculty at NEU's Canadian and London campuses); and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is deeper than NEU's Statement on Free Expression because NEU's Statement clarifies that the university's responsibility to protect and support free expression is for expression that occurs "in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect" while the Chicago Statement recommends the fullest possible expression clarifying that "although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas;" and

WHEREAS a clear institutional commitment to freedom of expression will enhance NEU's reputation, support the academic freedom of faculty, enrich the educational experience of students, send a clear signal to the media, and uphold the University's mission as a global research university dedicated to teaching, discovery, and engagement with society;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate of Northeastern University endorses the “Chicago Statement.”

[1] Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), “2026 College Free Speech Rankings,” Published Online September 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/collegefree-speech-rankings>

[2] Northeastern University Faculty Senate Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee Report (April 2025), pg. 13-14 & appendix 7: <https://faculty.northeastern.edu/senate/wpcontent/uploads/sites/2/2025/04/ReportAcademic-Freedom-Ad-Hoc-Committee-AFC-April-16-2025.pdf>

[3] “Fire Letter to Northeastern University,” from Aaron Corpora (FIRE, Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy) to Dean James R. Hackney (Northeastern University School of Law), 25 April 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/researchlearn/fire-letter-northeastern-university-april-25-2025>

[4] 2025 Northeastern University All-faculty survey, question (Q276\_1), Likert-type, 5-point confidence scale, M=2.20, N=289. (Appendix C).

[5] FIRE “Chicago Statement: University and Faculty Body Support” (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/report-committee-freedomexpression-university-chicagoseptember-22-2021>

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Sobral Campos, CSSH, seconded the motion.

#### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

Sr. Vice Provost Franko suggested a clarification in the 4<sup>th</sup> WHEREAS paragraph:

WHEREAS a question in the recent faculty survey demonstrates a majority of faculty have low confidence (61% “not very” or “not at all confident”) that the administration would protect a speaker’s rights to express controversial views; [4] and

Instead of “a majority of faculty have low confidence” the wording should indicate a majority of faculty who responded to the faculty survey have low confidence.

The wording for this section now reads:

WHEREAS a question in the recent faculty survey demonstrates a majority of faculty who responded to the faculty survey have low confidence (61% “not very” or “not at all confident”) that the administration would protect a speaker’s rights to express controversial views; [4] and

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, agreed this change improved the text.

Chair Spencer, DMSB, noted that senators would be voting on the revised text.

Other discussion addressed survey interpretation, national rankings related to campus free speech, and the relationship between civility and free expression.

The vote PASSED: 27-8-5.

**5. RESOLUTION TO EDIT THE FACULTY HANDBOOK'S "STATEMENT ON FREE EXPRESSION"  
PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS Northeastern University is committed to experiential learning, interdisciplinary research, and the pursuit of knowledge through free and open inquiry, which requires robust protection of freedom of expression for all members of the university community; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University ranks 253rd out of 257 institutions in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, earning an overall score of 46.8 out of 100 and a grade of "F" for its speech climate (reported by media outlets such as Newsweek, The Boston Globe, CBS News Online and The Huntington News), representing a decline of 75 places from the previous year; [1] and

WHEREAS recent events at Northeastern, including concerns raised by last year's Faculty Senate's Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee regarding university communications about demonstrations and free expression in AY2024-25, [2] and the controversy around a planned academic lecture in March 2025 that resulted in a deplatforming penalty from FIRE [3] demonstrate concrete problems that have resulted in reputational damage and diminished academic offering to the NEU community, requiring institutional reform; and

WHEREAS a question in the recent faculty survey demonstrates a majority of faculty who responded to the faculty survey have low confidence (61% "not very" or "not at all confident") that the administration would protect a speaker's rights to express controversial views; [4] and

WHEREAS the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago (the "Chicago Statement"), issued in January 2015, articulates core principles regarding freedom of expression that have been adopted or affirmed by over 100 colleges and universities, including Princeton University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, Boston University, MIT, and Stanford University, and represents a widely recognized model for institutions seeking to strengthen their commitment to free expression; [5] and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is broader than NEU's Statement of Free Expression in the Faculty Handbook because the Chicago Statement covers all university community members while NEU's statement covers only full-time faculty at NEU's American campuses (because the Handbook does not cover part-time faculty and does not cover faculty at NEU's Canadian and London campuses); and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is deeper than NEU's Statement on Free Expression because NEU's Statement clarifies that the university's responsibility to protect and support free expression is for expression that occurs "in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect" while the Chicago Statement recommends the fullest possible expression clarifying that "although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas;" and

WHEREAS a clear institutional commitment to freedom of expression will enhance NEU's reputation, support the academic freedom of faculty, enrich the educational experience of students, send a clear signal to the media, and uphold the University's mission as a global research university dedicated to teaching, discovery, and engagement with society;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests the revision of the Faculty Handbook's "Statement on Free Expression" to reflect the perspective represented by the Chicago Statement, along the lines suggested in Appendix I, with the final language to be confirmed by the Academic Freedom Committee in consultation with the Faculty Handbook Committee, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of General Counsel, and that the Academic Freedom Committee shall present the proposed revision to the Senate in April.

[1] Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), "2026 College Free Speech Rankings," Published Online September 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/collegefree-speech-rankings>

[2] Northeastern University Faculty Senate Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee Report (April 2025), pg. 13-14 & appendix 7:

<https://faculty.northeastern.edu/senate/wpcontent/uploads/sites/2/2025/04/Report-Academic-Freedom-Ad-Hoc-Committee-AFC-April-16-2025.pdf>

[3] "Fire Letter to Northeastern University," from Aaron Corpora (FIRE, Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy) to Dean James R. Hackney (Northeastern University School of Law), 25 April 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/researchlearn/fire-letter-northeastern-university-april-25-2025>

[4] 2025 Northeastern University All-faculty survey, question (Q276\_1), Likert-type, 5-point confidence scale, M=2.20, N=289. (Appendix C).

[5] FIRE "Chicago Statement: University and Faculty Body Support" (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/report-committee-freedomexpression-university-chicagoseptember-22-201>

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Lykourinou, COS, seconded the motion.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

(The text on the ballot excluded the Whereas sections due to limited space...)

Sr. Vice Provost Franko noted concerns around timing given the amount of work that had to be done with various offices including the OGC. The committee agreed to remove “in April” from the resolution. The committee agreed with this change.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate requests the revision of the Faculty Handbook’s “Statement on Free Expression” to reflect the perspective represented by the Chicago Statement, along the lines suggested in Appendix I, with the final language to be confirmed by the Academic Freedom Committee in consultation with the Faculty Handbook Committee, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of General Counsel, and that the Academic Freedom Committee shall present the proposed revision to the Senate ~~in April~~.

Chair Spencer, DMSB, noted that senators would be voting on the revised text.

The vote PASSED: 30-6-5.

**6. RESOLUTION FOR FACULTY SENATE TO RECOMMEND THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ENDORSE THE CHICAGO STATEMENT.**

**PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS Northeastern University is committed to experiential learning, interdisciplinary research, and the pursuit of knowledge through free and open inquiry, which requires robust protection of freedom of expression for all members of the university community; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University ranks 253rd out of 257 institutions in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's 2026 College Free Speech Rankings, earning an overall score of 46.8 out of 100 and a grade of "F" for its speech climate (reported by media outlets such as Newsweek, The Boston Globe, CBS News Online and The Huntington News), representing a decline of 75 places from the previous year; [1] and

WHEREAS recent events at Northeastern, including concerns raised by last year’s Faculty Senate's Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee regarding university communications about demonstrations and free expression in AY2024-25, [2] and the controversy around a planned academic lecture in March 2025 that resulted in a deplatforming penalty from FIRE [3] demonstrate concrete problems that have resulted in reputational damage and diminished academic offering to the NEU community, requiring institutional reform; and

WHEREAS a question in the recent faculty survey demonstrates a majority of faculty who responded to the faculty survey have low confidence (61% “not very” or “not at all confident”) that the administration would protect a speaker’s rights to express controversial views; [4] and

WHEREAS the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago (the "Chicago Statement"), issued in January 2015, articulates core principles regarding freedom of expression that have been adopted or affirmed by over 100 colleges and universities, including Princeton University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, Boston University, MIT, and Stanford University, and represents a widely recognized model for institutions seeking to strengthen their commitment to free expression; [5] and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is broader than NEU's Statement of Free Expression in the Faculty Handbook because the Chicago Statement covers all university community members while NEU's statement covers only full-time faculty at NEU's American campuses (because the Handbook does not cover part-time faculty and does not cover faculty at NEU's Canadian and London campuses); and

WHEREAS the commitment to free expression in the Chicago Statement is deeper than NEU's Statement on Free Expression because NEU's Statement clarifies that the university's responsibility to protect and support free expression is for expression that occurs "in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect" while the Chicago Statement recommends the fullest possible expression clarifying that "although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas;" and

WHEREAS a clear institutional commitment to freedom of expression will enhance NEU's reputation, support the academic freedom of faculty, enrich the educational experience of students, send a clear signal to the media, and uphold the University's mission as a global research university dedicated to teaching, discovery, and engagement with society;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate recommends that the Board of Trustees endorse the "Chicago Statement" at their next meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following a Board of Trustees endorsement, the administration, in consultation with Faculty Senate Leadership, establish in spring 2026 a working group comprising faculty, administrative, and student representatives to:

- a) develop guidelines for implementing the principles of the "Chicago Statement" university-wide;
- b) develop an oversight or review mechanism, following shared governance norms, to ensure it serves its intended purpose of protecting open inquiry and intellectual pluralism;
- c) steer the process towards implementation with target date of Spring 2027.

[1] Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), “2026 College Free Speech Rankings,” Published Online September 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/collegefree-speech-rankings>

[2] Northeastern University Faculty Senate Academic Freedom Ad Hoc Committee Report (April 2025), pg. 13-14 & appendix 7: <https://faculty.northeastern.edu/senate/wpcontent/uploads/sites/2/2025/04/ReportAcademic-Freedom-Ad-Hoc-Committee-AFC-April-16-2025.pdf>

[3] “Fire Letter to Northeastern University,” from Aaron Corpora (FIRE, Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy) to Dean James R. Hackney (Northeastern University School of Law), 25 April 2025 (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/researchlearn/fire-letter-northeastern-university-april-25-2025>

[4] 2025 Northeastern University All-faculty survey, question (Q276\_1), Likert-type, 5-point confidence scale, M=2.20, N=289. (Appendix C).

[5] FIRE “Chicago Statement: University and Faculty Body Support” (retrieved 19 September 2025): <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/report-committee-freedomexpression-university-chicagoseptember-22-201>The vote PASSED: 38-0-5.

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Maheswaran, COE, seconded the motion.

#### **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

Sr. Vice Provost Franko noted timing concerns in regards to the language specifying “spring 2026” and the committee agreed to remove that text to allow for flexibility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following a Board of Trustees endorsement, the administration, in consultation with Faculty Senate Leadership, establish ~~in spring 2026~~ a working group comprising faculty, administrative, and student representatives to:

Chair Spencer, DMSB, noted that senators would be voting on the revised text.

The vote PASSED: 28-6-5.

#### **7. RESOLUTION FOR NEXT YEAR’S SAC TO CHARGE A COMMITTEE WITH IMPROVING ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR FACULTY NOT COVERED BY THE FACULTY HANDBOOK. PROF. JACK THOMAS, KHOURY, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

WHEREAS Northeastern University is committed to experiential learning, interdisciplinary research, and the pursuit of knowledge through free and open inquiry, which requires robust protection of academic freedom and freedom of expression for all members of the university community; and

WHEREAS Northeastern University articulates its protection of academic freedom and free expression in the Faculty Handbook; and

WHEREAS the Faculty Handbook applies to only full-time faculty at NEU's American campuses, because the Handbook does not cover part-time faculty and does not cover faculty at NEU's Canadian and London campuses; and

WHEREAS if the Board of Trustees endorses the Chicago Statement, as requested in Resolution 6, which would improve the free expression rights of all community members, there would remain important elements of academic freedom to be endorsed for faculty who are not covered by the Faculty Handbook;

BE IT RESOLVED that next year's Senate Agenda Committee shall assign to an appropriate committee the charge of researching how to improve academic freedom for faculty who are not covered by the Faculty Handbook.

Prof. Louise Walker, CSSH, moved the motion.

Prof. Lykourinou, COS, seconded the motion.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

Discussion addressed differences in policy coverage for part-time faculty and faculty at global campuses.

The Vote PASSED: 33-2-2

**V. PRESENTATION**

**REPORT OF THE BELONGING COMMITTEE.**

(The report is posted to the Senate website.)

Professors Jennifer Cassano and Bridget Smyser presented the committee's final report.

The committee reviewed faculty survey data and identified six major themes related to belonging at the university:

- Leadership, trust, transparency, and accountability
- Structural and identity-based inequities
- Psychological safety and fear of retaliation
- Department-level climate variability
- Institutional strain and workload concerns
- Tensions surrounding belonging initiatives

Recommendations included:

- Establishing a consultation loop between the Ombuds Office and belonging governance groups.
- Expanding administrator evaluation processes to include additional leadership roles.
- Identifying departments with positive climates and documenting best practices for broader institutional use.
- Developing a consistent university-wide definition of belonging.

**RESOLUTION.****PROF. BRIDGET SMYSER, COE, READ THE FOLLOWING:**

BE IT RESOLVED that the university adopts the following definition of belonging:

“Belonging means that everyone is treated and feels like a full member of the larger community and is able to thrive through a culture of inclusivity, empowerment, and collaboration.”

Prof. Bridget Smyser, COE, moved the motion.

Prof. Veronica Godoy-Carter, seconded the motion.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

Senators discussed issues related to transparency, stakeholder engagement, and evaluation mechanisms for belonging initiatives. Some comments emphasized the importance of broader community consultation before adopting a formal definition. The resolution was tabled until there could be further discussion.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m. ET.

Respectfully submitted by Professor Heidi Kevoe-Feldman