

FIELD NOTES

from the Faculty Senate President

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Hello, colleagues.

Relationships are a crucial part of the work of shared governance. When faculty leaders have regular contact with colleagues across the university – especially with senior leadership – faculty perspectives can enter important conversations earlier, useful information can come back to Senate and our faculty colleagues, and we have more opportunities to shape decisions collaboratively.

This month, I want to tell you about some of the regular meetings, teams, and one-on-one conversations where I represent faculty, along with the approach I bring to those spaces.

Faculty Voice in the Room

As Faculty Senate President, I represent faculty in a wide range of university settings. I serve on the Provost's Leadership Team alongside the deans of our colleges and schools, Academic Affairs leaders, the President of the Council of Chairs and Directors, and the Faculty Trustee. The team considers pressing strategic questions and the long-term health and vitality of our academic enterprise.

I also serve in voting roles on the President's Cabinet, the University Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (UPBAC), and the Faculty Employment Handbook (FEH) Committee. The Faculty Compensation Committee brings together Human Resources, Administration Branch and Academic Affairs leaders, and faculty representatives; this year, our work includes examining compensation for Category II faculty. I attend regular Board of Trustees meetings and submit a Faculty Senate President's report for each meeting. These groups are formal parts of university governance and management.

My work also connects me with colleagues through cross-functional efforts on emerging and priority issues, including university strategy working groups and the new Artificial Intelligence Readiness Team of Teams (ARTT).

Each of these roles present an opportunity for advocacy: to bring faculty interests, expertise, and varied perspectives into discussions while recommendations and decisions are still taking shape.

Relationships That Support the Work

Formal committees and leadership teams are only part of the picture. I also meet regularly with the President, Provost, and President's Chief of Staff, and maintain recurring conversations with Faculty Affairs leadership, including the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs. I am establishing regular one-on-one and small-group meetings with other Academic Affairs and university budget leaders.

Those conversations build trust and mutual understanding, first and foremost. Doing that helps create better channels for raising concerns, testing ideas, understanding constraints, and finding opportunities for progress. When an issue comes before us, we can invite the people closest to the work to share information directly, answer questions, and help Senators understand the choices and challenges before us.

Being a proactive, curious partner helps us problem-solve in real ways. When faculty raised concerns to me this summer about sponsored-project administration and supplemental pay, I met with leaders in the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs (OSRP) and Sponsored Projects Accounting and Compliance (SPAC). Those conversations led to my participation in a recurring process-improvement group focused on making the management of funded faculty initiatives clearer and more effective.

And the exchange goes both ways. On September 17, for example, I will speak at an Administration Branch town hall about Faculty Senate's role and priorities, while taking the opportunity to learn from colleagues whose work supports the university in distinct from our own as faculty.

Aiming Toward Shared Purpose

I take from Arthur Brooks's (2019) *Love Your Enemies* a useful premise: disagreement can be vigorous without becoming contemptuous. Different perspectives and values give us more to work with when we listen seriously, clarify interests, and test our assumptions.

Universities are complex, and our constituencies will not always begin from the same place. We can still aim together at excellent education, strong academic programs, responsible stewardship of resources, meaningful work and healthy workplaces, and a university capable of serving students well for the long term.

The ethic I bring to this kind of work can be summed up this way: *listen with goodwill, be forthright about our differences, and keep our sights squarely on excellence.*

I welcome your questions, engagement, and ideas, too.

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Reference

Brooks, A. C. (2019). *Love your enemies: How decent people can save America from the culture of contempt*. Broadside Books.