FIELD NOTES

from the Faculty Senate President

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Colleagues,

In August, I shared four commitments: stewardship, advocacy, collaboration, and alignment. September's *Field Notes* described where I represent faculty and how I approach those conversations. This month, I want to focus on what happens after a concern reaches me.

My training in communication studies encourages me to think of advocacy as a relational cycle: *listen → learn → elevate → connect → pursue → report → listen again*. Some issues yield a fix. More often, complex problems require sustained attention as we learn more. "Sending a message" is not a complete or effective way to capture all of what advocacy means in the Faculty Senate President role.

Testing Center capacity is a good example. Since fall semester began, concerns have surfaced in committee discussions, Senate Open Forum, and one-on-one conversations with me. Hearing the issue through several channels suggested a broader problem worth investigating.

I called Testing Center Director Russell Reynolds to learn about operations, demand, and constraints, then shared what I learned with Faculty Senate. I have since highlighted the issue with Senate and university leaders, brought it into the Artificial Intelligence Readiness Team of Teams, and discussed space constraints with the Backfill Space Planning Team.

Each conversation has revealed another part of the system. Space is limited and testing demand uneven across time. Assumptions about academic assessment are changing, while available financial resources, online instruction, staffing, new technology, academic integrity, and generative AI all intersect with the question of test proctoring capacity. With no comprehensive solution immediately available at scale – and questions about when and where proctored testing is most appropriate still open – progress requires us to keep learning and identify where action is possible.

On this matter, I'm now in the elevate-to-connect phases of the "advocacy cycle" I described. I plan to connect Russell directly with Faculty Senate in the spring and consider where faculty practice, resources, and collaboration can improve outcomes. Our curriculum, instructional design, and assessment choices are part of the system and must respond to real constraints as well as educational goals. I'll also pursue more information about unique practices in our schools and colleges, as well as what other capacity we can leverage at the university more broadly.

Sponsored projects administration offers another example. Faculty concerns about supplemental pay led me into a monthly process-improvement group, where I am learning more about those teams' systems, and I'm planning to gather perspectives from the staff and faculty managing sponsored projects actively in the Spring.

So, advocacy can mean raising an issue, connecting people, bringing a concern into a cross-functional group, or other things. The voting and advisory roles I have that described in September also let me carry faculty perspectives into decisions as they develop. Across these moves, I am trying to understand faculty experience accurately, make it visible where it matters, and stay with an issue long enough to learn what action is possible rather than simply demand change without a clear path forward.

Senators, caucus chairs, committees, and individual faculty help me recognize patterns that require attention. If something you see points to a broader concern or opportunity for advocacy and productive, please speak up. You do not need a solution; I welcome the conversation.

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