

Bruce Cairns's Remarks to Faculty Council on April 21, 2017

Good afternoon everyone – and welcome to the last Faculty Council meeting of the 2016-17 academic year.

I apologize for not being able to give these remarks in person but my physicians preferred that I not share my acute viral bronchitis with all of you, and so I'd like to thank Secretary Steponaitis for reading these remarks on my behalf.

To ensure these indeed are my remarks, rather than Vin's, I have prepared thirty pages of small font, single lined notes for him to read verbatim.

Fortunately for you and for him he is not under any obligation to follow these instructions at this, my last meeting as Chair of the Faculty.

However, if I am allowed a few moments, I would like to say that it has been my honor to serve as Chair – the last three years have been one of the most exciting, challenging and rewarding times to serve in Faculty Governance at UNC-Chapel Hill.

We have had to address a lot of issues over the past three years – perhaps the most important being the ones that lead to our probation with SACS.

I don't just mean the 70 reforms that we put in place or the changes in administrative structure in advising, athletics and oversight but rather the need for us as a faculty to come together and talk about what really matters to us – our role in being leaders at this University.

To be sure, we have addressed a number of other issues over the past three years – a new President of the System, increased scrutiny of our programs and faculty, and a rapidly changing and uncertain political and economic environment. And of course many of these challenges remain and may become even more difficult in the future.

But I would also ask you to look at what has been achieved over the past three years – what you in Faculty Governance have achieved.

We have faced our toughest challenges head on, endured intense self-reflection and invested countless hours of time to ensure that the legacy of this great University continues.

In the face of withering criticism (some deserved, some not) we have persevered and been forged like steel to ensure we come out stronger, more focused and more ready than anyone else to tackle the challenges yet to come.

You should be proud – we remain one of the greatest institutions in the world because of your work and the work of your colleagues. And by great, I mean being truly committed to being the greatest Global Public Research University in the land.

Students continue to flock to Carolina, you all – our faculty – are incredibly accomplished, winning the most prestigious awards and securing record amounts of grant funding. Due to the

efforts of our wonderful staff, the University is as beautiful and as functional as ever. Our capital campaign is off to a wonderful start and we have an outstanding strategic framework for the future – “Of the Public, For the Public and Innovation Made Fundamental.”

In other words, we are living up to our commitment to the people as embodied in our state motto – “Esse Quam Videri.” To be rather than to seem.

But our institution has even an older motto – “Lux et Libertas.”

Light and Liberty – but for whom? The select intellectual few? Those who can afford it? Or only those who agree with us? No, we must be the institution that provides light and liberty for all – whether in the classroom, the laboratory or in the field, we have an obligation to serve all the people in and outside of our institution.

So we have addressed that as well – given voice to the vulnerable, discussed issues of diversity and inclusion (the culmination of which we will hear today) and tried to help the University serve everyone in our midst. It is only with this commitment to service that we truly fulfill our obligation to the University.

With that, I would like to thank all of you for your service as faculty members and for your role in Faculty Governance.

I would also like to thank Chancellor Folt and Provost Dean for their leadership. I would also like to thank the Board of Trustees for their service and support of Faculty Governance. I can assure you all that without their commitment and support we would not have gotten through the challenges of the past or be as well positioned for the future as we are now.

I would also like to thank all of you who ran for office in Faculty Governance – especially Lloyd Kramer and Leslie Parise. It is not an easy decision and the University thanks you for your service and sacrifice.

I would also like to thank Joe Ferrell, Vin Steponaitis and Katie Turner and the Office of Faculty Governance for all the support you have provided me and the faculty over the years. I am also grateful to Peter Mucha, who stepped in as interim Chair of the Faculty when I could not serve.

Finally, on a personal note I would like to thank my wife Ellen, the rest of my family, Ron Strauss, Eunice Sahle, and Carol Folt for their support during my time of greatest need – I don’t think I could have made it without you.

I’m sorry I can’t be there today to thank everyone in person, so instead I would ask you one last favor. At this time, I would like everyone to please stand up, talk to the people around you, thank them for their service, wish them well and tell them you look forward to seeing them at commencement on May 13th.

Thanks very much.