

Faculty Council Meeting, October 11, 2019

Opening Comments

Lloyd Kramer

Professor of History and Chair of the Faculty

Welcome to the October meeting of the UNC Faculty Council; we've had another busy month of Carolina activities and I want to begin by noting why we have reasons to celebrate events that will strengthen future faculty work. In recent weeks we've received very good news about major gifts to Carolina, including a \$25 million gift from the Hussman family to what will now be called the Hussman School of Journalism and Media;

An anonymous donor has committed \$25 million to the College of Arts & Sciences for the specific purpose of supporting future graduate students; new funding for graduate students is a pressing need in the College, and this gift offers new opportunities to deal with a funding gap with peer institutions that offer better support for their PhD students.

The Morehead-Cain Student Scholarship program has received a \$10 million challenge gift to match new gifts for Morehead-Cain student scholarships; and the arrival of more talented students will enhance faculty work too. So people are continuing to make major contributions for the future of our University.

In other good news, which will also strengthen UNC in the future, I want to mention the celebration of the opening of the Carolina Latinx Center on Oct. 4. This Center, which is now located in Abernethy Hall, has developed through the hard work of many colleagues, including Paul Cuadros in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media and the Center's Director Josmell Perez. The Latinx Center offers new opportunities to explore the importance of our Latinx community at UNC and far beyond.

Another long-developing project has come to fruition with the official launch of UNC's new information and news website "The Well," which is providing constant updates about UNC events, people, and faculty/staff issues. The creation of the "The Well" marks a turning point in campus communications because the historic "University Gazette" will soon disappear. Like many other print publications, it is now giving way entirely to on-line communications and "real-time" updates.

I want to thank Jane Calloway and others for their work in developing innovative ideas for "The Well," but I also want to give a special thanks to the people who have produced the now-disappearing University Gazette in recent years. Imaginative leadership and writing have come from the editor Susan Hudson, the senior editor Gary Moss, and the senior content manager Scott Jared; they have worked very hard to maintain a high quality print and on-line publication; and they will continue to work on University news in other ways.

I want to remind you that tomorrow is University Day; Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz will discuss his views of the University and public service; and our colleague Giselle Corbie-Smith in the Department of Social Medicine will receive the 2019 Edward Kidder Graham Faculty Service Award. I hope many of you can attend this event at Memorial Hall; you should plan to gather near the Old Well at around 10:30 am; and please note that faculty can nominate colleagues for the 2020 Graham Faculty Service Award through Oct. 21.

A special election for the General Education Oversight Committee is also taking place now, and all members of the voting faculty have received a ballot via email; you have until midnight on Oct. 21 to cast a ballot.

In other news that affects faculty, I want to note that Harry Smith has stepped down from the position of chair of the UNC Board of Governors; and Randall Ramsay has now become the chair. Chair Ramsay also serves with Wendy Murphy as co-chair of the search for a new UNC-system President; and their committee is collecting input from UNC faculty about the presidential search. You have until Oct. 14 to respond to questions that we sent out from the Office of Faculty Governance earlier this month.

Meanwhile, the budget impasse continues at the state legislature, and so there is no new information on salary increases that might enhance faculty support; the current plan of the General Assembly provides for a paltry $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% increase for UNC faculty and staff. This is a major problem, but not something we can solve here.

Finally, I want to mention an issue of major concern that has attracted attention from many faculty colleagues as well as our top University administrators. I'm referring to the US Department of Education's strong critique of our Title VI-funded Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, which is managed through our Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies.

As you know, the Education Department charged that the Middle East Studies Consortium has been violating the terms of a Title VI grant by focusing too much on culture and the arts rather than on pure language instruction and by putting too much emphasis on positive views of Islam while overlooking the mistreatment of other religious groups.

Our Vice-Chancellor for research, writing on behalf of the University, clearly refuted the key criticisms by showing how many students are taking language courses, how full-time faculty are involved in teaching our courses, and how our students go into many different careers and professional fields; and his defense of our Middle East programs is valuable and essential. But I also want to stress that most faculty see this government critique of our Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies as a challenge to our core values of academic freedom and intellectual autonomy.

The claim that cultural traditions and the arts are less important than other "geopolitical forces" for understanding other societies is a specific ideological judgment about what faculty should be teaching or how they should approach or analyze the role of languages in human cultures. Similarly, the charge that programs and outreach activities have focused too much on the positive aspects of Islam and Islamic religious traditions is another ideological judgment about the content of our programs.

To put this most simply, I think that we must continue to explain why the faculty view this critique of our Middle East Center as a disturbing, unusual intervention by a government funding agency in how faculty should interpret the languages, cultures and religions of other societies and in how we should understand and teach the meaning of national security. The Education Department has, in effect, issued a critique of important academic ideas about the role of culture and "soft power" in international relations. But it's also worth noting that the Title VI funding has recently been renewed and continued for the 2019-20 academic year.

So amid the good internal news that I've mentioned, I think we have to recognize that we are working in a complex political and cultural context that will continue to provide bad news that can affect our work and our goals as faculty members. But now I want to give the mic to Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz, so that he can offer some good news to celebrate as we honor this year's Hettleman Fellows.

Comments at University Day Celebration

October 12, 2019

Lloyd Kramer

Professor of History and Chair of the Faculty

I'm honored to serve this year as Chair of the Faculty, and I appreciate the opportunity to work with our University leaders, including Interim Chancellor Guskiewicz, Provost Blouin, Interim President Roper, members of the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees as well as those who represent our hard-working staff, our great students, and the faculty in all units of the University.

I bring greetings on behalf of more than 3800 talented faculty colleagues whose wide-ranging activities and achievements place them among the best teachers, researchers and contributors to the public good in the entire United States. We understand that we are building on traditions of great teaching and scholarship that our UNC predecessors have developed over the past two centuries, but we also understand that we must go beyond our past history as our University becomes more diverse, more global, more technological, and more engaged with the challenges and opportunities of our own time.

Although the professors at UNC-Chapel Hill pursue very different research and teaching interests, we share a deep commitment to the value of public education and public universities. We are therefore privileged to work at this first Public University because we recognize that higher education and well-informed scholarship contribute essential services to the social and cultural vitality of our state and nation.

As faculty members at this constantly evolving university we believe that our core academic values express and strengthen the human actions that sustain a democratic society, which include ongoing debates about all ideas and the use of fact-based evidence in public discussions and public institutions.

Our mission and responsibilities have never been more important, and we strongly affirm and celebrate the enduring public importance of this University because we also affirm the political processes and human rights that undergird democratic societies. Happy Birthday to UNC as we move forward "with the public and for the public" in twenty-first century North Carolina.