

Faculty Council Meeting, September 13, 2019

Opening Comments

Lloyd Kramer

Professor of History and Chair of the Faculty

I'm pleased and honored to welcome you to this first meeting of the UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty Council for the 2019-20 academic year. When people ask why I'm serving as Chair of the Faculty Council, I stress the same point I make with each colleague who joins our UNC community. I believe that the faculty must be deeply involved in the governance of the university because our work expresses the core mission of higher education: teaching, research, and service—so we have to care about what is happening in American Universities in general and at UNC in particular.

Our connected missions require the policies, vision, and hard work that are embodied by Faculty governance. We may complain about specific aspects of our work or institutional policies, but when we compare our social positions to the social and economic positions of most people on the planet or even in North Carolina we can see that we're very privileged people. And these privileges, in my view, carry responsibilities for the kind of institutional and public engagement that comes partly through faculty governance.

So this is my pep talk for the new year: we all have opportunities to make a difference; and I thank you for being part of the Faculty governance process. I look forward to working with you and with all the people who care about this University—both on our own campus and far beyond. I want to work in constructive ways with our University leadership team—including of course Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz and Provost Bob Blouin, as well as various deans and other administrative colleagues.

I also want to listen and learn from the other essential groups in our UNC community, including the staff members who manage and creatively facilitate all of the many activities that take place at our University. And I value my conversations with the talented students who come to UNC as well as the alumni and retired faculty: everyone has views that matter.

As faculty members one of our main responsibilities is to stand firmly for the core academic values of tolerance and openness to all people and different points of view. These values extend from the classroom to our own departmental cultures to the debates of Faculty Council. We'll be discussing and debating important university issues today and in future Council meetings. But no matter which issues or disagreements emerge, I believe that as faculty we must defend *free speech and academic freedom* as essential to the history and continuing development of university life.

I particularly want to affirm the value of the liberal arts for student education at UNC and elsewhere. At the same time, I want our University to serve the needs of our state far beyond our own classrooms; and I hope to strengthen faculty exchanges with people outside the university who want to learn more about what we do and from whom we also need to learn as we seek to strengthen the University's place in the state.

I hope that we can develop more interactions with members of the Board of Trustees, with the UNC System's Board of Governors, with government officials, and with other people around NC whose views and policies influence our work and institutional vitality. Faculty views and engagement will be essential as we look for new funding, diverse ways to interpret the University's mission, and future leaders in numerous University positions.

The search process that will lead to the appointment of a Chancellor has begun, and I encourage you to attend one of the public forums on the "traits we need in a University Chancellor," which will take place on Sept. 17 at 3:30 pm and on Sept. 18 at 5:30 pm.

As I noted at our pre-semester Council Orientation meeting, we're living in an era when too many public leaders dismiss the value of scientific knowledge, academic scholarship, cultural diversity, the arts and humanities, and our international exchanges with people around the world.

I believe that as Faculty we must therefore constantly explain how our core University values enhance and express the core values and processes of a democratic society. Democratic institutions can never be taken for granted, and the university must be one of the foundations of democratic life. The University's strength depends on the work of all our colleagues, including both fixed-term and tenured faculty; and I want to conclude my comments today by asking Nancy Fisher from the Department of Microbiology and Immunology to say a brief word about a special fall-semester initiative for our Fixed-Term colleagues.

Now I want to pass the microphone to Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz for some remarks about our current situation and for some introductions of new people who have joined our UNC community.