

April 16, 2021 FC Chair remarks

Welcome Colleagues to our last faculty council meeting of the academic year 2020-2021. I think on or about this time last year, I was struggling to get my home technology to work in order to thank you for electing me to this position...little did we all know. It has been the most challenging of years and yet I do remain deeply grateful for your trust in me. I have a statement I want to read and then a few other things I want to talk with you about.

Over the last few days, I have been attempting to draft a letter to the campus, something to acknowledge what a fraught time we continue to live in and how particular communities on our campus are differentially affected by these events. The letter has been challenging to craft for several reasons. First, is that it becomes out of date almost by the hour.

The trial of Derek Chauvin is itself retraumatizing as we watch a seemingly endless video loop of George Floyd's killing. As we listen to his friends and family testify about the details of his time on earth, we have gotten to know a deeply human life filled with love and flaws, relationships lost and found, and kindness in the midst of deep struggle. He did not deserve to die unarmed at the hands of police.

But the violence just keeps coming, particularly toward unarmed Black men. First, we learned of a Black Army Lieutenant, on active duty, who was pepper sprayed in the midst of a traffic stop. Days later, again in Minneapolis, a Duante White, a Black, unarmed, twenty-year-old was killed in what is described as an accident, in the midst of a traffic stop that appears to have been unnecessary. Mass shootings three weeks ago, mass shootings last night.

In the midst of this comes the news that state legislatures across the country, including our own, are taking aim at people who are transgender, attempting to limit medical care and make schools even less welcoming for trans students than they already are.

What to write and, indeed what to say, in the face of such news— nothing seems quite right. Your work in the classroom and in your research changes lives, changes thinking, changes hearts. I deeply believe this and know that arcs do bend, however slowly. In the meantime, reach out to those who comfort you and those who you know may be particularly affected by current circumstances. Make your voices heard on the issues. Please reach out to me with concerns and ideas. Let's keep walking, even in sorrow and anger, together.

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Now, I wanted to update you on some late-breaking news from this morning's Faculty Assembly which met this morning. First of all, we were told that the UNC System is not planning on requiring mandatory vaccines. Their rationale is two-fold:

- a. they say that there has been no specific public health guidance on requiring vaccines
- b. they do not believe that as a state entity they have the legal authority to require them because the current laws about required vaccines delineate exactly which vaccines can be required by whom and to change the law would take too long.

As the conversation continued, there also seems to be concern that enrollment will decrease in system schools if vaccines are required. There was a lot of concern about vaccine hesitancy would increase if vaccines were required. From the discussion in the chat box, it seemed clear that different campuses see this issue somewhat differently. So that if this is to be a system-wide decision, it will be hard to get to one that pleases everyone. Certainly, as more and more campuses across the country move to require vaccines and perhaps new guidance comes out, this conversation may change. But that is what the position apparently is at the moment. There is strong encouragement to get students and everyone else vaccinated as quickly as possible and certainly many, many resources are being put toward that purpose. As you know, the Faculty Executive Committee meets regularly during the summer months and we will be tracking this issue closely. I know many people believe that vaccines should be required on our campus and I this is yet another reason that system campuses need autonomy to make decisions that best fit their needs and values.

Next, let's move to a moment of remembrance of our colleagues who have died in the last year.

On a happier note, our faculty elections have concluded and the election winners are posted on the faculty governance website. Thanks to all who agreed to stand for election. Getting involved and staying involved in faculty governance is something that has enriched my professional life immensely and I'm so glad to see so many people expressing interest, standing for election, and continuing to participate.

Now, I'd like to introduce resolution 2021-4 On Supporting a Safe and Inclusive Campus.

(Gavel to Vin)

Now, to our Provost.

Questions / Comments

Our next resolution grows out of, but is not limited to the situation at Fayetteville State. FEC brings this resolution and as we consider it, I want you to know, that I spoke with the Chair at Fayetteville State about our version of the resolution and he is supportive.

Gavel to Vin