

**Chair of the Faculty Mimi Chapmen opening remarks
October 1, 2021**

Hi Everyone, welcome to our October faculty council meeting. This month's meeting finds us almost midway through the semester. I'm not sure whether I would describe us as thriving or surviving – perhaps a little of both depending on the moment. But, what I do know is that we are all trying our best – faculty & staff – to readjust to life on campus and to carry on in the midst of the continued uncertainty that we are all living with in so many aspects of life.

Today we have full agenda and on it is a discussion of our libraries. As someone wrote to me today the libraries and all that they represent are at the heart of any great university. When budget realities encroach on our libraries, it impacts all of us, both psychologically and practically. I know the choices and plans put in place have not been easy ones to make or design. I am thankful to Elaine Westbrook for her dedication to making the very best plans possible and for taking time to talk candidly with us about those choices today.

As you know, within faculty governance we have had some challenges related to honorary degrees and awards. The BOT had made a change taking all responsibility for distinguished alumnae awards and honorary degrees out of the hands of the faculty. Indeed, they chose not to honor many of the faculty choices that were put forward for this year's distinguished alumnae awards that will be given on University Day. Together, Jill and I revisited the decision with the new board chair and vice-chair. They were receptive and at last week's BOT meeting, at least for this academic year, the rules were changed back. There is still work to do on that front to make sure that the Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee and the BOT is on the same page as we begin the nomination process this year. But I am grateful for the chance to communicate productively with Chair Bollicek and Vice-Chair Preyer on this subject. We have also invited the Trustees to our Faculty Council meetings.

Next, I want to acknowledge the death of a student at UNC Wilmington early this week. A nineteen-year-old who had decided not to be vaccinated was taken too soon by COVID and its complications. As a mother, I know how difficult it is when adult children make choices that are far too risky. I grieve for him and for his family. To our student leaders, thank you for the work you have done to move us to the very high student vaccination rate that we have achieved on this campus. We will be hearing further updates on our campus COVID status today from both the Provost and from Dr. Amir Barzin who has agreed to meet with us.

Finally, I want to close with a quote from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin that I keep on my bulletin board as a reminder during these not quite normal days:

We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown. Something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability and this may take a very long time.

With that, let's go to our first agenda item which is to introduce Dr. Leah Cox.