

Chair of the Faculty remarks for Faculty Council 11/5/21

Good afternoon – Welcome to our meeting of the fall 2021 meeting of the General Faculty. We have a very full agenda and I do not want to take too much time with my remarks. I did want you to know that on Wednesday, I was invited to return to speak with the BOT. I began my remarks with telling them that when I began the position, someone came to me and gave me this advice, “Remember who you work for. You work for the faculty who elected you. Not the administration and not any other entity.” I told them this was a guiding principle for me in the choices I make about what to say, when to say it, and to whom. I shared that with them, so that they would be clear that if I was sharing some difficult perspective with them, it was not to throw a bomb, it was because I work for you, the faculty.

I then went further to talk with them about the two issues we will spend the bulk of our time on today – the libraries and mental health and well-being on this campus. I will say a bit more about each of those areas as the meeting unfolds. However, I did want to tell you a bit about that conversation. In response, one trustee did tell me that they were deeply concerned about your well-being and, that the trustees as a body are engaged around the library issues. Therefore, that was positive.

I know that we are all very tired right now. It has been a difficult almost two years and the summer and this fall have been challenging in ways that extend beyond the pandemic. Later today, we will have a chance for open discussion about what we are seeing in our classrooms. We are a big group, but I hope you will feel empowered to speak your truth. We’ve also sent out a survey as of yesterday asking for your in-put in a more confidential format. As always, I am happy to talk by phone or hear your concerns through an email. We do have a “mental health summit” on the horizon. It is not my job to structure and plan that event. However, it is my job to make sure your voices are represented. The survey and today’s discussion are ways to do that.

Next, I am grateful to our guests that will be with us today both for our discussion of the libraries and for the mental health discussion. Please note that this is the third discussion faculty governance has convened about the libraries. So, we are trying to be very responsive to your concerns.

Finally, please be good to yourselves, each other, and the students and staff that you work with. These are simply not easy days, and we need to individually and collectively affirm one another. I am grateful for all that, you do and all that you are.

With that, I will turn it over.