

## **Chair of the Faculty Mimi Chapman Remarks for 4/21/2023 Faculty Council Meeting**

So, this is one of those full circle moments, but not quite. In April of 2020, I made opening remarks thanking you for electing me via zoom. My home internet was cutting in and out, making it not the most inspiring set of opening remarks. But soon after that, Lloyd Kramer and I were convening town halls at first masked and hybrid, then moving completely to zoom. Together with other members of the FEC, we launched surveys and pressed our administration for higher and higher levels of communication and transparency. And they rose to the occasion. In many ways that time seems fuzzy and distant, but I believe it has changed us as a faculty and perhaps prepared us for some of the storms we are currently experiencing.

For many issues we deal with in faculty governance, certain parts of the faculty are deeply engaged. Others weigh in with a question here and there and vote when required. But it is the rare circumstance where everyone needs to be deeply engaged – not necessarily in agreement but engaged. The pandemic taught us this and taught us that when we clear common outcome - the welfare of our students, staff, wider community, and ourselves – this faculty is willing to dig in, to disagree, to make time, to listen, learn, to try things, and to persevere.

Since the pandemic began, we've had to do that over and over. Regarding the tenure case of Nikole Hannah-Jones – over 90 units on campus wrote statements affirming the faculty's role in granting tenure and promotion - regarding the potential unplanned ousting of our chancellor – hundreds of faculty members came to an emergency meeting held during summer months to avert this - and recently of course new issues have and are surfacing every day. Last week more than 200 people participated in a town hall. As of my last look, almost 450 people have signed the letter some faculty members began distributing yesterday morning.

It has been my privilege and high honor to lead some of these efforts and in doing so, my goal has been not necessarily to represent your opinions– it is hard to adequately represent the views of nearly 4000 people – instead it has been to represent your right to participate in shared governance, your right to academic freedom that has made American higher education the economic power house that it is, your right to contribute to the public debate in whatever way you see fit without feeling that you will be punished.

Now it is time for me to turn over the reins to Beth Moracco, a highly competent and respected faculty member, teacher, scholar, and leader. Over the next two months we will transition together and on June 30<sup>th</sup>, I will step way back to let her lead in her own way and with her own voice. I would ask that you give her a little time to find her sea legs and her own style in this role. I remember being terrified when Lloyd was stepping down. He was patient and calming to everyone and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to be that person. And of course, I was right to worry. I couldn't be Lloyd who had the perfect historical reference for every situation, I had to find my own way. Beth will too and I'll be cheering her on from afar.

I've had lots of help along the way and so I want to say a few thank you's. First, to Helena, Kadejah, and Emma in the Office of Faculty Governance. I don't know whether another faculty chair has ever asked so much of the staff, planning special meetings at the last moment, figuring out technological solutions, getting campuses messages out over weekends or late at night. They have all been unflappable and completely supportive. They have been confidential and trustworthy. They have been dedicated and highly skilled.

To the members of the FEC, past and present, thank you. Knowing I had you all to talk to every other week both for advice and direction gave me confidence and I always knew that if there was something I wasn't paying attention to, you would be paying attention and would prompt me to act.

The secretary of the faculty is an extremely important role. It takes people with special skills and interests to do the kind of detailed work that the role often demands. I have had the great good fortune to work with two great secretaries who were very dedicated and highly competent in the role. The first was Vin Steponaitis and for the last two years, Jill Moore. I first met Jill when I was a PhD student. My now husband had spoken to her on the phone having not met her in person and decided to approach me in class with the following smooth opening line, "Are you Jill?" Over the years, Jill was a frequent guest lecturer in my MSW classes and respect her expertise and ability to explain the law greatly. During these last two years she has been a tremendous source of good counsel and good cheer. I am forever in her debt.

The Chancellor and I have walked these roads these last three years sometimes on opposite sides of the fence, but more often in a posture of at least mutual understanding and respect for one another's roles and viewpoints. I am grateful for the experience of working with you.

But my greatest thanks go to all of you, the faculty of this great university. You have sent me messages of encouragement and affirmation at times when I have felt very alone and worried about what the next step is. You've told me when I've gotten it wrong, helped me learn how to make it right, and accepted my apologies for those missteps. These are three years that have pushed me and changed me in ways that have made me a better person and better leader. Thank you, I am grateful.