Chair of the Faculty Remarks to the ECU Board of Trustees
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I bring greetings from the faculty! I would like to share some things that are happening on campus and some faculty concerns. We are in the middle of the fall semester, and many classes are having their first major test of assignment at this time. I just gave a test to my senior physics majors yesterday.

We are currently examining the role of the student opinion survey, SPOTS, in the evaluation of our teaching. Many of you are aware that we recently developed and implemented a new student survey based on principles of good teaching. Now we are considering how to best use the survey results in the evaluation of our teaching. In the past, we used the student survey as a measure of teaching effectiveness. We all know that is not the case. The student survey measures student satisfaction with the instruction, which may or may not be an indicator of teaching effectiveness. We are currently developing a process to follow up on concerns indicated in the student survey and more accurately measure teaching effectiveness.

We are very excited about our new mission statement. The Faculty Senate endorsed the statement at our last meeting. “To be a national model for student success, public service and regional transformation.” This captures what East Carolina University is all about, and the faculty is all in on it. After all, the faculty, staff, and students at ECU are the ones that will make this mission succeed. One way that we transform our region is through our teaching. By graduating students with critical thinking skills and leadership experience, we elevate the potential of eastern North Carolina. Do not overlook the impact of our scholarship and public service on the region as well. Our work solves problems in the region and brings innovation and economic opportunity. Just look at what our health sciences have done to transform Greenville.

I am concerned that with declining resources and more emphasis on teaching, we may neglect the other aspects of the faculty workload. Teaching our students is critical to our mission, and we are committed to it. Our scholarship is critical as well. It is important that our scholarship be included as part of our workloads. Not all faculty members contribute to the mission in the same way. Some are gifted teachers and do better teaching more classes. Some are productive scholars and public servants and require a lower teaching load in order to be productive. Our system allows for this, and we should fight to keep it that way.

We are at a critical time for our university. Over the next five to seven years faculty from the baby boom generation will begin retiring, and we will have to replace them. About 50% of the ECU faculty are baby boomers or older. This situation is not unique to ECU. It is a national trend. We have a terrific opportunity to remake our university by hiring the right faculty members. There are many challenges presented by this situation. We will have to compete nationally with other
universities replacing their aging faculty. The way that we implement our new mission statement will determine the type of faculty member that we attract. I am worried that if our university continues to face budget cuts and salary freezes while other states are investing in higher education, we will not only find it hard to compete for the best faculty, we will lose many of the promising young faculty members that are here today.

As you are probably aware, the younger Gen-X and Gen-Y people do things differently than the baby boomers. This is true of younger faculty as well. Young faculty tend to cross disciplinary boundaries in their scholarship. They mix their teaching, research, and service activities. They tend to favor nontraditional engaged scholarship, scholarship capable of transforming our region. I am excited about this, but there are challenges. They systems we use for allocating resources and measuring output are not adapted to this type of work. We need to consider changes.

As I said, this is an important time for ECU. We have a complex set of challenges before us, and our decisions will have long-term impacts on our university. The faculty stand ready to meet this challenge.