

Remarks to the Board of Trustees

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Welcome from the Faculty Senate. It's probably cliché to say that universities are places that foster the free exchange of ideas and the development and dissemination of knowledge—knowledge meaning information informed by insight and the skills to apply it. We are proud to be engaged in these endeavors every day in a variety of forms. We develop and share knowledge with our students, communities, professions, and beyond. I focus today on how we do that here—every day—and how the faculty ensure that we are not only an institution of learning but a learning organization—a term I first learned in the another life working in the private sector.

As a learning organization, we are constantly evaluating what we do—particularly our curriculum—to ensure that it meets the changing needs of students, professions, and a democratic society. The Faculty Senate and our committees assist with this work by facilitating, in partnership with administration, curriculum development at the course and program level and by assessing our programs, courses, and teaching efforts. For example, the university is in the process of revising our general education curricula, which involves updating foundational learning outcomes, and working with units across campus to incorporate those outcomes into courses. We regularly vet proposals for new courses and programs to ensure they meet the mission of the university and to consider ways that courses meet requirements such as opportunities for student learning through service, intensive writing, diversity, and other initiatives.

Beyond the classroom, the faculty is very active in hosting and conducting campus symposia, lectures, talks, and conversations of all kinds. At the most visible, for instance, Jeffrey Johnson, Professor of English, heads up the Voyages of Discovery lecture series—maybe some of you heard Dr. Robert Ballard, the oceanographer who discovered the Titanic—last night. We invite you to a talk by Colson Whitehead in October. Mr. Whitehead is the author of *The Underground Railroad* and recent Pulitzer Prize winner. This is just an example of what we offer.

Some of our campus conversations are less visible but equally important. These are efforts by faculty and students to talk outside the classroom about timely and sometimes tough issues. On these occasions, we are committed to the free exchange of ideas and opportunities to hear diverse viewpoints. In an age when people can shop for perspectives that reflect only their beliefs, this openness to ideas is more important than ever.

The faculty is committed to these ideals and to encouraging student to learn to discuss issues civilly and productively. We do this work so our students will be the informed citizens who can advance knowledge, contribute to learning organizations, and help society continue to learn.

Thank you.