

Dear members of the Board of Trustees,

This will be the last time I bring greetings on behalf of the ECU faculty. The president of the SGA and the Chair of the Staff Senate serve for only one year. The Chair of the Faculty, although elected yearly, traditionally serves for two. Let me tell you a secret, if someone is in this position for less or more than 2 years, something is deeply wrong at ECU. This leadership rotation at the student, faculty and staff level might seem extreme to you, but in my opinion, it is the only way to grow a diverse body of leaders.

I assume that all of you have seen the report that the AAUP released yesterday about the UNC System, [“Governance, Academic Freedom, and Racism in the UNC System.”](#) The report describes and I quote “a pervasive and overtly partisan political control of the system” end of quote. Full disclosure, I have served in AAUP in many positions from local to national. I will be honored if you approach me with questions about AAUP. In the fall, I willingly accepted to be interviewed by the special team. I will be perfectly honest with you, I told them, 18 months ago, I would have given you a scathing report about ECU, but we are in a different place now. One question they asked me: Does racism exist at ECU or the UNC system? YES, that is why we created the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Another question: in the past, has the Board of Trustees interfered with ECU governance? YES, the Stanton Smith era is a dark moment in our history. Nothing is peaches and cream over here (pun intended), but I am tired of being click bait for the national press. I want the administration, the Trustees, and the faculty to work together, quietly, meaningfully.

And work we have done. This is what we, faculty, Trustees, and administration have dealt with this past year: Revisions to Part 8 of the Faculty Manual, the selection of a new provost, the reorganization of the university, a pandemic, budget cuts, ECU Health. Part 8 of the Faculty Manual equal to the reorganization of the university? Absolutely! 50% of the faculty at ECU thank you for approving a revision that offers them more job security and closer ties between job performance and contract length

Some of these tasks have been daunting. However, from a faculty perspective, the most important tasks that we, the faculty, the administration, and the trustees accomplished together, always take place at this time of year: the awarding of degrees to ECU students and the granting of permanent tenure to a select group of well deserving faculty members. The investment that ECU makes in these faculty members is significant, that is why you, the Board of Trustees, with the authority and responsibility to oversee the financial health of the university, are the final and definitive signature in a long list of recommendations that started in October in a meeting of the tenured faculty in their respective

departments. Their names are in front of you because we, their peers, and the administrators who supervise them believe that they are excellent in teaching, research, and service. That they are key to the success of our academic enterprise. And because of that we tell them that unless they neglect their duties or the university experiences significant financial distress, their position is secured at ECU. Those select few names get to you after a 6 year process and 3 different dossier where they have documented their growth.

Who is getting permanent tenure today? I don't know all of them, but I know Almitra and Juan, my colleagues in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

Almitra is a military brat from Eastern North Carolina, who never exhibited any interests in learning Spanish until her elderly grandmother moved in with them. Love is what first made her want to be fluent in the language. Now she studies the unique challenges in language acquisition that Heritage speakers such as herself experience.

Juan is from a tiny village in Galicia, Spain. Spanish is not his first language either. He works on comparative textual media of manuscript and digital cultures; affects, religion, and aesthetics in relation to subjectivity; and race in medieval texts and modern historiography related to the Middle Ages.

Those of us in Foreign Language Education at the University level suffer from the incorrect perception that we only teach conjugations of verbs and lists of vocabulary. Yes, we teach a foreign language, but above all, we teach about a different culture in a foreign language. With our work we provide a much-needed skill to our students: the capability to function in multicultural, multiracial, multilingual world. Nursing professors teach others how to save lives. Foreign language professors teach others how to live productive and successful lives. Both are needed in a university. And in order to do our work well, we must have the protection of tenure. First, because we must have the freedom to address complex, sensitive and at times unpopular topics without fear of persecution. The classroom must be a safe space to explore and examine ideas with care and objectivity. Employers want employees with analytical and problem-solving skills, team players in a diverse group. That is what happens in the classroom. At least in Almitra's and Juan's classrooms, which I have observed on more than one occasion.

How would Almitra and Juan celebrate today, the date in which tenure was finally awarded to them? My husband got an expensive watch with the date engraved on it. I got a tattoo, others get jewelry, or buy a car, or make a down payment for a house, knowing that their livelihood is now more secure.

Parenthood might have been delayed until the tenure decision, ... Today you become part of a higher

education ritual that exists in its current form since 1940. A ritual that ensures that this old institution will continue providing first rate education for the foreseeable future. We, the faculty, administration, and Trustees make sure of it.

As Chair of the Faculty, it makes me proud to be here with you in this room when you approve their names. Students will celebrate next Friday. Faculty will be celebrating today. That is what I love the most in my job, the constant renewal, the constant joy, the constant growth.

You will have noticed that I have not said a single word in Spanish, that is because I saved them for the end. This song was very popular when I was a little girl. I sang it often, it made me feel cosmopolitan. I am not a good singer but what the heck, it is my last day with you. Here it goes: Adiós amigos, goodbye my friends, ciao ciao amigos, arrivederci, auf Wiedersehen. Thank you.