

I am Purificación Martínez and it is my honor to serve as Chair of the Faculty for this academic year. I congratulate the Chair of Trustees Shook, Vice Chair Poole and Secretary of the Board Smith on their election to leadership positions. The faculty wishes the three of you much success. I also would like to take a moment to welcome to the Pirate Nation Trustees Cassie Burt and Dave Fussell. We are excited to have you as one of our own.

ECU started in person classes two weeks ago, and despite a few bumps in the road, here we are, doing what we love, teaching and researching. As you can imagine, there is some level of anxiety among my colleagues regarding their chances of getting sick by coming to campus. However, not a single person has told me that they want to move online. We do not want a repeat of last academic year.

I hope that all of you, as I do, belong to the 47% fully vaccinated North Carolinians. I do not harass people when talking about vaccines; I simply mention that they are safe, that they work and that they are widely available. Pitt county in general, and ECU in particular, have low vaccination rates. Those of us vaccinated must constantly talk to our neighbors, families, and friends about the vaccine. The message is not difficult to pass, just what I mentioned above. Vaccines are the best tool in our toolbox to fight the virus.

Since the beginning of August, the Faculty Officers and the administration have been working together to figure out how to adapt our reopening plans, written before Delta made its appearance in our shores. Every week around the table, they discuss the data and allow us to see the eagle's view on how ECU is doing. We, the Officers, share with them the struggles that our colleagues are experiencing as they navigate the day to day. Many of the decisions made by the administration have come from candid conversations with the Officers. The Chancellor and the rest of the senior administration can expect a responsible and calm engagement on this topic. All of us must work together to keep the Pirate Nation healthy.

Besides working on Covid-19 related issues, as Chair of the Faculty I am in the middle of organizing the meetings of all the Faculty Senate committees. As they begin their work, I am asking them to keep in mind my call to action to all faculty which I articulated during this year's Faculty Convocation. I called it a sort of manifesto. What I told my fellow faculty members is that we might not be able to change international, national or UNC system policy. However, I reminded them that the faculty at ECU can make a difference, because local actions bring global changes. This is what I proposed to them:

First, the faculty will continue working on advancing the ambitious university agenda regarding issues of equity and diversity. As faculty we can do this through the Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the most needed and anticipated ECU's Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The Faculty Senate Committee will begin its work where the Senate left it last year. We began the process of revising the Faculty Manual. Now those changes must come alive, and we must evaluate what procedures in other areas of university life need to be changed.

Second, the faculty will continue to stand up for better working conditions for our fixed-term faculty colleagues, putting particular emphasis on securing longer contracts when they have a demonstrated record of excellence. Last year, we revised parts of the Faculty Manual, now it is time to make sure that those changes are approved and become a reality. Besides this, we will begin work on other parts of the manual to ensure that subsequent appointments and advancement in title for fixed term faculty are standardized around the university.

Third, the faculty will continue to argue for the need for a more transparent and inclusive budget process. Increased transparency is necessary for the faculty to be able to give meaningful feedback about ECU's expenditures and priorities. We the faculty want to ensure that the taxpayers'

money is spent for what they meant it: excellence in the academic enterprise, excellence in teaching and research.

Fourth, the faculty will continue to advocate for replenishing the faculty numbers. Years of hiring freezes and the aging of the faculty ranks are not without consequences. The most immediate one is a currently exhausted and overworked faculty. The particularly worrisome one is that, without new faculty, the advancement of knowledge will be irreparably damaged. And our region will suffer from it. A diverse, passionate, and secure faculty body is necessary to attract students, to create innovative solutions to old and emerging problems, in other words, to live.

Fifth, the faculty will participate in designing the future of ECU. By our engagement in the search for a Provost, whether we are in Health Sciences or Academic Affairs, we will ensure that our leaders understand that we the faculty know that no one is more important than the other, that all of us share common purposes and goals, that we respect and value one another.

Sixth, again regardless of divisions, the faculty will work toward ensuring that the new integration between ECU and Vidant will fulfill societal expectations of an Academic Health Center by :
“leading the way in educating a new generation of health professionals, making scientific breakthroughs and providing cutting-edge patient care.”

As you can see from these priorities, the faculty is responsibly engaged in the governance of the institution, we understand the part we play in its success. We also understand and respect yours. In this, my first remarks to you this academic year, I want to extend my hands and my arms to you. Let’s work together toward ECU’s betterment.