

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

Once again, I am delighted to be able to address all of you on behalf of ECU's faculty. First allow me to thank the University Affairs Committee for their unanimous approval of revisions to Part VIII.I.I. of the Faculty Manual. I hope that later today the entire Board will show similar support for what is a great step forward for the faculty at ECU. As a member of the committee that drafted those revisions, it would be my honor to join Dr. Hayes in answering questions should you have any.

The official installation of Dr. Rogers as Chancellor is just around the corner, March 24th. I do not recall Dr. Staton's 2017 installation, although it seemed quite similar to Dr Ballard's' in 2005, which I attended. I remember the faculty processional to Wright Auditorium, the speech by Dr. Catherine Rigsby, then Chair of the Faculty, the fried chicken on the mall. I heard Dr. Rigsby talk about being invited to a very elegant gala. I do not know what plans exist for the upcoming installation. I have been thinking about a speech just in case I am asked to give one.

To tell you the truth, I do not get this American custom of installation ceremonies for Chancellors a year after they assume their positions. I understand a discrete ceremony at the time of appointment, accompanied by a tasteful picture with the leadership team. The dictionary says that to install is to put someone in an official or important job. In my view, that happened on March 2021 when Dr. Rogers sat at his desk for the first time.

The same way I wonder about the installation, I wonder about making sure that ECU does not project an excessive Chancellor-centric image. No one could argue

about Dr. Rogers' immediate and decisive role in crafting a new path for ECU: ECU Health, the launching of the Public Phase of an ambitious fund-raising campaign, the hiring of a new Provost, the restructuring of the university at the division level. However, those decisions were not taken in a vacuum and will not become reality in a vacuum either. ECU Health was the result of previous initiatives, failed, I grant you, but real. Decisions about reorganization came after endless hours of interviews and research from a dedicated group of administrators, faculty, and staff. Provost-elect Coger received the support of all ECU constituencies. ECU must continue to change because we, collectively decide on our path. I worry about unrealistic expectations placed on the Chancellor or the new Provost. They cannot do it all. They cannot do it alone. One ECU cannot be the wish of a single person, it must be our common wish.

Trustees, administration, and faculty should constantly keep in mind that we will only thrive if each one of us responsibly exercises the roles that we have in this messy and wonderful enterprise that is shared governance. Let me offer you a couple of concrete examples of what I mean. First, faculty members make up the bulk of the committee that will prepare a formal proposal to the Faculty Senate about the reorganization at the division level. Second, key Faculty Senate committees are coordinating their work to create, with the administration, the necessary policies and procedures that will facilitate the recruitment and retention of adult learners.

Third, how wonderful it is to see that what worries us, the faculty, is the same as what worries you, the Trustees: what exactly is Project Kitty Hawk, what does the new funding formula mean for ECU, when are we going to have a clear picture of

what ECU Health is and what it means! Your questions are our questions, what better demonstration that we are one ECU!

Yesterday, Dr. Mitchelson finished his presentation to the Health Science Committee with one of his favorite sayings: are we good? That got me thinking. Yes, and no, that would be my answer.

Yes, because ECU's retention and graduation rates are so high that it is difficult to imagine how we can perform better with the new funding formula.

But at the same time, no. Think about what Director Julie Cole discussed with you yesterday: because of lack of staff or training for them, faculty spend almost 50% of their time managing grants, instead of doing the research.

No, because after years of budget cuts, the faculty and staff ranks are decimated.

No, because we do not have a sustainable way to support start up packages to hire excellent faculty.

No, because faculty and staff salaries continue to be low, and we cannot compete for candidates. A few months ago, one of you told me that they were not worried about academics at ECU. We the faculty are. Without more resources, we are not sure how much longer we can continue providing a first-rate education, much less begin to serve a different population of students altogether. While preparing for a 2% cut scenario, it is difficult to see where those resources will come from, but we cannot continue doing more with less.

All of us want to think that Higher Education's malaise is just part of the great resignation wave, you heard this yesterday as well. However, experts in the field have argued that this is not the case, that the real problem is disengagement, a

based on a palpable sense of betrayal over how decisions in Higher Education have been made since the pandemic started, and how faculty and staff members have been treated as a result of those decisions.

On Wednesday, after my students and I spent 3 hours dissecting with meticulous care a masterful piece of Latin American cinema, one of them felt compelled to defend the director and their work. This defense took me by surprise. I suddenly realized that sometimes critical thinking, precisely what we are supposed to do as educators, is somehow interpreted as meanness. We the faculty prove our commitment to ECU by teaching, mentoring, researching, writing. We also do it by questioning and asking to be part of the decision-making process.

Installations might make us feel good, but as ECU's recent history shows, they can be empty gorging exercises. It is only by investing and supporting faculty and staff so they can support the students that ECU will thrive. I am hopeful and pessimistic, critical and supportive at the same time. I am committed to ECU, and I need to see and feel that ECU is committed to my success and wellbeing as well. There is still a lot of work to do in that regard.