

Opening Remarks to the CLA Faculty Senate by Chair Michael Johnston

January 10, 2023

Welcome back to what I hope will be an invigorating and productive semester for all of you in the CLA. I hope that you all had a restful break. As we begin 2023, it is worth reflecting briefly on the business we conducted during the last semester, and looking ahead to what we can anticipate for this semester. Last semester, we had informative briefs from the Writing Lab and our foreign language placement services; from Lori Sparger on undergraduate enrollments; from Kirke Willing on the CLA's budget; and from Dean Sorin Matei on research grant activity among the faculty. A signal pleasure was being joined by then President-Elect, and now President, Mung Chiang at our December meeting. But we not only listened, we generated discussions and participated in them. We discussed the role and trajectory of the Cornerstone program with Prof Melinda Zook and Dean Ebarb. We had vibrant discussions about diversity issues, particularly paid parental leave policies. And we began helping to shape the promotion requirements for clinical faculty. Beyond this, we conducted our usual, important business of approving new courses and approving the slate of graduates from our College.

As we look to this semester, we will continue to be busy. Today, we will carry on with our tradition of spirited discussion between us, the faculty, and the administration, as Dean Reingold has kindly agreed to a q&a with us all. And we will continue to work on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, as we hear from Birgitta August about the status and experience of black students at Purdue. We will also hear from Sen. Andrew Flachs about the work that the DEI Committee has been doing. As we look to future meetings, we will continue our discussion of the promotion guidelines for clinical faculty at our March meeting, so I hope that you have all been sharing these documents among your colleagues and collecting feedback. I know that we in English will be discussing these in two weeks at our January faculty meeting. We will also be hearing from the Educational Policy Committee with proposed modifications to the undergraduate social diversity requirement.

And you may well remember that, as I discussed at the last meeting, the Agenda Committee of this Senate has formally launched an ad hoc committee to discuss hiring practices

within the College. A few weeks before the end of the semester, the Agenda Committee made a formal charge to five volunteers from among the CLA faculty. We asked them to talk with colleagues from departments that are hiring this year, and talk to department heads, and talk to the administration. Ultimately, we hope that they can help discern precisely how faculty feel about current practices in hiring and can foster a dialogue with administration when shortcomings are perceived. They are only beginning their work, so I do not want to get out ahead of them here, but please do be on the lookout for emails from them, and if you have things you would like us to direct to them, please reach out to me or Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler who, as Vice Chair of the Senate, is the head of the Agenda Committee.

Finally, later in the semester, we hope to have a presentation about the results of the COACHE survey, so this certainly looks to be a busy semester. And, as always, I want to encourage Senators to be in regular contact with their faculty. Please do be in the practice of emailing our agenda and post-meeting information to your colleagues, all of which is posted on the website. And please do keep them informed at faculty meetings. And, most importantly, if they have issues they want to bring to our attention, please do encourage them to write to us, or to fill out the Qualtrics survey, or to relay their concerns to you.

The last issue I need to address here is about filling leadership roles for the next academic year. In the Fall semester, I replaced Senator Nancy Peterson, my colleague from English, as head of the Nominating and Elections Committee, as she went on sabbatical. She is back at the helm of that committee, and she, I and Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler have already begun discussing the need to begin thinking now about committee members and chairs for next year, as well as nominations for Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair. I want to encourage you all to consider running for leadership for next year's Senate. While being Chair is not an easy job, it is an entirely rewarding job. In this position, you get a nice bird's-eye view of our College. I have really appreciate the chance to work with faculty from across the CLA, many of whom I would not have otherwise encountered. And Senate leadership offers a good opportunity to develop rapport with the administration, as well.

As I have outlined here, the Senate is doing essential business for the College, and we need new leadership for this momentum to continue. So please begin thinking about this now. Senator Peterson will be speaking more about this at future meetings and will likely be

contacting individuals, as well. I can only encourage you to consider taking on a leadership position in the Senate. We've all recently witnessed, shall we say, some of the more interesting aspects of democracy, as Representatives Matt Gaetz, Lauren Boebert, and others huddled in a corner and conspired against the nomination of Kevin McCarthy to be Speaker of the House. I'm sure most of you saw the Representative from Alabama get fish-hooked by another representative on the hallowed floors of Congress as he verbally accosted Matt Gaetz. I can assure you that nothing so exciting comes with being Chair of the CLA Senate. But we do important work here. So if you care about faculty governance, and you care about the faculty's voice being represented, and if you care about liaising with the administration to set educational policy, then please do consider putting your name forward.