

## Opening Remarks to the CLA Faculty Senate by Chair Michael Johnston

March 7, 2023

Welcome to the penultimate meeting of the CLA Faculty Senate for the 2022–23 Academic Year. We have an important set of items on the agenda for today, and we have what promises to be a packed schedule for our final meeting, which will be held in April. So stayed tune for announcements about that. But today, I want to extend a particular welcome to all of our guests who are joining us. As you may know, by tradition the CLA Faculty Senate sets aside one meeting each semester which we designate the All-Faculty Meeting. Each and every meeting is always open to the entire faculty, and we hope the guests who are joining us today will want to join us at future meetings. But we set one particular meeting aside each semester to address issues we think are likely to be of wide interest among the faculty. You may remember the all-faculty meeting from November, when we heard about the CLA Budget and had a q&a with Dean Joel Ebarb and Senator Melinda Zook about the Cornerstone program. Today, we will be hearing from Dr Lisa Mauer and Dean Wei Hong about the COACHE Survey, which is certainly of interest to many of us, as it touches on our understanding of our place within the College and the University, and reflects the level of faculty job satisfaction. Dean Hong will also be addressing questions the faculty submitted about climate and retention within the College. We are certain that this is of interest to many of you. And we will also get an update from Lori Sparger about the space planning commission. Finally, as part of the Graduate School Mentoring Fellows Initiative, a university-wide initiative, the CLA's mentoring fellows compiled a report on the state of mentoring grad students within the College. We just received the report today, so I

have not had time to digest it, but I did want to mention that it is now available for circulation and discussion, and we hope to include time in the April meeting to address it.

And there is still much more work ahead of us before we scatter for the Summer. In April, we will be hearing from the Senate's ad hoc committee on hiring practices across the College. This committee has been compiling the results of the survey you all filled out, and they are currently meeting with department heads and the CLA administration to discuss the issues from the survey. They will report to us at our final meeting of the year. We also anticipate hearing from the Faculty Affairs Committee about their work on Paid Parental Leave policies in the College. And we are in discussions with the representatives from Purdue University Indianapolis about the opportunity for them to present to us about the potential role that the CLA might play in this new campus. So the year is not nearly done.

But for those of you who are joining us as guests, and really for all of you who are here in service to your department as Senators, I want to thank you for your commitment to shared governance. The American Association of University Professors, the AAUP, which is the professional organization that defined standards of tenure in the early twentieth century and which remains the primary national organization advocating for standards of shared governance, writes, "The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process." Here at Purdue, of course, the University Senate exercises this power for the university as a whole. But here in the CLA, this body plays a key role in these very areas that are college-specific. And according to our bylaws, the CLA Faculty Senate is to "consider, discuss, and advise the dean, the president of the university and its board of trustees concerning any and all matters deemed by it to affect the welfare of the faculty of the

college.” So this body needs to play an essential part in the intellectual life of the CLA. We are the body by which the will of the faculty is relayed to the administration, and we are the body through which the administration communicates with the faculty. We have, throughout this year, raised issues of, or given input about, hiring practices, the Cornerstone program diversity and inclusion, curricular changes, and the promotion process for clinical faculty. And we have brought the ideas of the faculty on these pressing issues to the administration. In short, I take very seriously this Senate’s role in, to return to the words from our bylaws, advising the dean on any and all matters we feel affect the welfare of CLA faculty.

Thank goodness that we in Indiana have thus far been spared laws meddling with university curricula, but we’ve seen it happening across the country. Public universities in Oklahoma now have to account for every dollar spent on diversity initiatives. In Florida, Governor DeSantis is moving to ban public universities from spending any money on DEI initiatives or on the teaching of what he calls “critical race theory.” And, as many of you no doubt saw recently, DeSantis replaced the Board of Trustees at New College with a slew of his political allies who have voiced the express desire to remove diversity as a university value. If such moves do come to Indiana, the CLA will be squarely in the center of the fight. And it will be this body that will be one of the key groups needing to step up and fight for the rights of faculty to teach and publish in their areas of expertise.

So, given our remit as the voice of the faculty within standards of shared governance, and given some of these worrying national trends in higher education, it is incumbent on us in the CLA Senate to step up and assume leadership in this body. Last year, we had to scramble to fill the Chair and Vice Chair positions. And the prospects so far for replacing me, as Chair, and Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, as Vice Chair, are, if I can be blunt, not looking good. We have

individually invited close to twenty of our colleagues and have universally been declined. Of course, everyone has a good reason, as so many of us are so active in our research and in the classroom that such forms of volunteering can seem like just one extra burden. But I hope that those of you here today who care about shared governance and who care about making sure that the faculty's role in shaping the research and teaching missions of the CLA remains primary, will consider running for Chair or Vice Chair. As a reminder, the Chair of the Senate does not need to be a Senator, so if you have a colleague who would make a good leader, send us their name, or speak to them directly. We need new leaders to step forward if the voice of the faculty is going to be represented.