

Opening Remarks to the CLA Faculty Senate by Chair Michael Johnston

April 11, 2023

Hello to all of my colleagues across the CLA, and welcome to the final Faculty Senate meeting for this academic year. As you will see on the agenda, today we will hear from Prof Katie Brownell, from the History Department, who will present her committee's report on hiring practices in the CLA. I want to draw particular attention to this presentation, for I think it represents the highest standards of faculty governance and captures the very *raison d'être* for this Senate. At the beginning of the year, we circulated a Qualtrics survey, asking CLA faculty what they wanted their Senate to address in this academic year. Far and away, discontent with hiring practices was the number one issue raised by the faculty. As someone who believes in shared governance as a guiding principle for how universities should be run, I made a personal commitment that the Senate would address this issue. So the Senate developed an ad hoc committee to discuss hiring practices with faculty and administration, and today's report will be the result of that effort.

Now, in many ways, our hands in the CLA Faculty Senate are tied. According to our own bylaws, this body is responsible for setting graduation requirements and for approving curricular changes. This is a fairly strictly limited remit. But we also have a vital role to play in representing the voice of the faculty across numerous areas of interest. 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." Hence, we have committees devoted to DEI concerns and to faculty affairs. In this capacity, we represent the will of the faculty, which is relayed directly to the administration through us. So when we, the faculty, take issue with a certain initiative or direction of the CLA, this body is the means by which such concerns are formally raised. Of course, the will to raise such issues of concern depends upon you all, as Senators, taking the initiative. And the efficacy of our voice depends upon the administration's willingness to listen. But in an ideal scenario, this Senate would have a seat at the table for making decisions about the direction of the College.

So I want to underscore that today's presentation about hiring practices comes from the CLA faculty itself. The faculty raised concerns about this issue in the opening Qualtrics survey, and we, the Senate, listened, by forming the ad hoc committee which will address us today. But you also raised concerns about paid parental leave policies, and again, we listened. You may remember that the Senate addressed these issues last academic year, but reached an impasse. Our DEI Committee brought them up again in the Fall, and we similarly reached an impasse. So we then asked the Faculty Affairs Committee to do a more thorough investigation into paid parental leave policies. They have spent a lot of time meeting with faculty, department heads, and the administration, in an attempt to clarify language around this issue. And once again, I am proud of the way our Senate worked. We took issues of faculty concern and we acted upon them,

Of course, as the university and our college continue growing, new concerns continue arising. Looking forward to next year, we will need to be active in monitoring, and speaking up about, any potential role CLA faculty might play in our new Purdue-Indianapolis campus. We had hoped to have the team overseeing the transition for the new campus address us today, but our schedule ended up being too full to be able to accommodate them. But this will remain a pressing issue for next academic year. And, as we head into next year, we will need to study and

digest the results of the COACHE survey, which we heard about, preliminarily, at the last Senate meeting. We, as a Senate, will need to think through the results of the survey and decide where there are places for improvement, and how the Senate can work with the administration to make those needed changes.

And as we look to next year, issues of the climate for URM faculty will no doubt remain a top priority. In particular, next year's Senate will need to continue pressing the administration about the promised equity hires. And no doubt faculty will continue to have questions and concerns about Cornerstone and about the increasing emphasis on STEM within the CLA. These are all issues we discussed at various points during this past year, but certainly there is more to be said. The fact is that we, as a faculty, care deeply about the curriculum of our college and about our intellectual trajectory. During this past year, I have tried to make the Senate a place that nurtures this care and concern through the mechanisms of this formal institutional venue.

It is clear that there is a lot of work to be done. As I have said in my opening remarks at the past few Senate meetings, we need volunteers to assume leadership positions for next year. The Chair and Vice-Chair each only serve a one-year term. So my term us up at the end of the academic year, and so is the term of the Vice-Chair, Jennifer Kauffman-Buhler. I have made appeals at the opening of each of the past two Senate meetings. I have sent personal invitations to numerous colleagues. I have sent an email to the entire faculty. And as of yet, no one has offered to step forward to serve as Chair or Vice-Chair. As a reminder, the Chair does not need to be a Senator, so please do encourage any of your colleagues you think might be good in the role. And please do consider volunteering.

It is not an onerous role, and Jennifer and I stand by ready to help you transition into the leadership position. I will be on the Senate next year, and am more than happy to assist any new leaders. The position does not come with any perks or any great glory. But it is a crucial job, and we need volunteers who are willing to give of their time and talents to ensure that all of the CLA faculty continue to have a voice in advising the administration. If no one steps forward, then I honestly do not know what happens to the Senate next year. We will have 40+ senators with no leader. I do not want this to happen, and surely there must be two from among the 400+ faculty in the CLA who are willing to sacrifice a few hours per week to help stand up for the voice of the faculty.

On a less dour note, I want to end these remarks with some gratitude. When I stepped into this position, I had no idea what I was doing, but last year's leadership team—Pat Boling, Rebekah Klein-Pesjova, and Bradley Dilger—got me up and running just in time for the first meeting of the Fall semester. Behind the scenes, I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the Agenda Committee with Jennifer Kauffman-Buhler, the committee's chair, as well as Monica Trieu and Harry Bulow, the faculty members of the committee, Matt Morgenstern, the grad student representative, and Rachel Rosen, the undergraduate representative. All of our committees have done excellent work throughout the year, and I want to commend them. I won't bore you by reading over all of their names, but a big shout-out to Associate Dean Joel Ebarb for heading up the Curriculum Committee and the Grade Appeals Committee, Prof Will Gray for running the Educational Policy Committee, and Prof Nancy Peterson for the Elections and Nominating Committee. Special thanks go to Prof Andrew Flachs for chairing the DEI Committee, which undertook a lot of heavy lifting in the Fall getting discussions about paid parental leave underway, and then initiating the Spring's town hall q&a with Associate Dean Wei Hong. And another special note of thanks is due to Prof Nush Powell and Prof Stacey Connaughton, who headed up the Faculty Affairs Committee. They did, simply put, a ton of

work this year. They shepherded the revisions to promotion for Clinical faculty; they interviewed Dean Reingold for a year-end report, about which we will hear today; and they picked up the torch from the DEI Committee about paid parental leave policy. So Nush and Stacey deserve an extra dose of all of our gratitude for the hard work they did this year.

But above all, I want to thank the Secretary, Ian Lindsay, and the Vice-Chair, Jennifer Kauffman Buhler. None of us knew what we were doing when we started this job in August. But together we figured things out. Jennifer is over in Pao among the artists, while Ian is over in Stone, among the social scientists, while I am in Heavilon, among the Humanists. So it was a tremendous privilege to get out of my silo and to get to know both of them and to work with them this year. We enjoyed meeting, sharing a drink, and strategizing about how to make the Senate work. So thank you Jennifer and Ian for helping to form such a fun and productive team.