

Remarks to the Purdue University Board of Trustees
Friday, July 19, 2013

I think I know most of you, but for those of you who don't know me, I am David Williams, and I have been at Purdue for more than 40 years. I remember telling my wife shortly after we arrived in West Lafayette in 1973, "as soon as I get tenure we're leaving." Well, I got tenure rather quickly, but the ghost of the Wabash obviously got ahold of me because now you couldn't dynamite me out of here, and I care about this University very much. I have been involved with the University Senate for years, serving as the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, and most recently serving five years as the Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee. I have also served on the Advisory Committee for four Purdue Presidents. I strongly believe in shared governance and look forward to working with you and President Daniels this year.

I am joined this morning by Professor Patricia Hart, the new Vice Chair of the University Senate. Patty is a professor of foreign languages—Spanish to be specific—and in 2007 she received the highest teaching honor the University bestows—the Charles B. Murphy Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award—and was inducted into the Book of Great Teachers. I believe you will find Patty to be a wonderful representative of the faculty with innovative ideas for improving the University.

It is early in the summer and faculty who are not teaching are working on their courses and research. For example, I recently returned from six weeks at the University of Cambridge where I have been working on a research project for the last five years.

Even though the first meeting of the University Senate isn't until September 9th, we are busy with several projects this summer, including streamlining the ponderous number of University policies, and reporting our findings to the Senate at its first meeting. Another group of dedicated faculty has worked for the past year to develop long-term behavior modifications which will improve the health of Purdue employees and develop a culture of wellness on campus. This group will also report to the Senate in September. And a cadre of faculty and administrators is examining the opportunities and barriers for creating interdisciplinary undergraduate degrees to address emerging needs.

As the new Chair of the Senate, there are several issues that concern me, and I would like to briefly touch on three this afternoon. One is hate speech on our campus. Thanks to minority recruiting, frank and open dialogue, and leadership from the administration and student groups, things have changed for the better at Purdue regarding race since 1973. But we still have a ways to go. There simply is no place for hate speech on our campus. President Daniels has spoken to this by asking us to find a way to create a climate of respect and inclusion at Purdue in the way of a Purdue Creed.

Another issue that is important to me is to develop a comprehensive, centralized English language program for our international students. We simply cannot continue to admit a large percentage of our enrollment from foreign countries and graduate these people with poor English communication skills. In the long run this will damage our reputation. We have the people on campus with the expertise to change this. They just need to be charged with the task.

And a third issue that is important to me, and to a number of my colleagues, is establishing a permanent seat for a Purdue faculty member on the Board of Trustees. I would hope through my words and actions this year that I can convince you of the merits of this proposal.

Keith and Miranda, we are going to miss you, and on behalf of the faculty of Purdue University I wish you all the best in the future, and thank you for your service to the University. And further, on behalf of the faculty, I extend a warm welcome to Sonny and Kelsey.

Thank you.

David J. Williams
Chair
Purdue University Senate