Hello!
I am Patricia Hart, a Full Professor in the School of Languages and Cultures with the specialty of Spanish Film and Literature. I am humbled to succeed David Williams, whose diligence and gentlemanly behavior led you to include the Chair of the University Senate as an *ex officio* member of the Faculty Affairs Committee. I will endeavor to merit to this responsibility. I am joined at this meeting by Professor Kirk Alter, from the College of Technology, the newly-elected Vice Chair. I am certain that as you get to know him, you will be as impressed as I am with his energy and intelligence. He comes to the academy after a very successful career in business as a contractor, and has made quite a name for himself at Purdue developing curriculum and working with students in meaningful ways.

I’d like to begin my remarks by telling you why the Land Grant University is so important to my family and me. Without it, it is possible that I would not be standing before you today.

My grandfather, Alfred Augustus Hart, graduated from the Utah Agricultural College in 1897, a scant 35 years after President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law. All 11 of his children went to college, and 9 became teachers, including my father, who was a Rhodes Scholar and professor of English literature. In turn, my siblings and I have eight college degrees between us. The Land Grant Legacy truly helped bring me here today.

Now me speak next about my priorities for this year. First, I would like us to continue to build on the projects that David Williams backed last year, in particular, English instruction and support for non-natives. Given the changing demographics in our country, if Purdue is to survive and thrive, we must attract international students and excel at serving them. If the current program shows good results, it should be expanded.

Another priority before us this year should removing obstacles in the path of students who desire to transfer into Purdue and between majors. These obstacles are expensive and discouraging to students, and slow down graduation. These roadblocks result in a great waste of time and money both to students and to the university as a whole. Let us make this the year in which we make genuine progress in creating a smoother process. President Daniels, I am committed to helping you in this matter.

Safety is on all our minds. Last year, I chaired the committee to evaluate the feedback after the terrible shooting of January 21, and I came away convinced that everyone must take personal responsibility for being educated and prepared for emergencies. The institution must also step up and take every reasonable precaution. I hope we will proceed quickly with the changes outlined by the implementation committee to infrastructure, in particular, by installing locking mechanisms on all classroom doors.

A special goal for me this year is to focus on the family. You will hear me talk about this throughout the year. We must strive for excellence as a family-friendly institution. As we hire the best faculty and staff from around the world, we simply must offer even better opportunities for high-quality childcare and partner hires. Excellent progress is being made, and it must continue. The news of a new childcare center on campus is wonderful, and the Dual Career Assistance Program is doing great things. Congratulations to all involved in making these things happen. When President Daniels began, he immediately recognized the need to strengthen these areas. A logical next step might be to house a “one-stop-shopping” resource center for
new and prospective faculty in the bright and impressive Dauch Alumni Center! That would send a real message to faculty we hope to recruit!

Together, we are all tackling the behemoth of student debt. Yet another cycle of tuition freezes symbolizes our progress and our dedication to our students. Every employee of the university has contributed to keeping costs low through minimal salary increases. However, our strategy for moving forward must include competitive salary raises if we hope to recruit and retain top faculty.

Lastly, let me say how pleased I am to be working with you. You are a very accomplished group of people, and Purdue is extremely fortunate in its Board of Trustees. Many universities envy what we have here. I hope I will live up to your high standards.