The passing of Justice Scalia presents a challenge for our republic. Our sitting president is bound by the constitution to appoint a successor to the bench, and our Senate has gone on record as being steadfast in their refusal to even interview any prospective candidates put forward by the president.

Alternatively, the president could try the gambit of utilizing a recess appointment to try to foil the Senate blockade. To me, neither the refusal to respect the integrity of the advise and consent process nor the idea of a recess appointment are honorable solutions. Compromise, communication, and collaboration for the good our tripartite system seems, to me, in the best interest of the people.

This, then brings me to my topic of discussion today. But first, I have to share something that I shared with President Daniel’s privately recently. In my time as Chairman I have come to truly respect and appreciate the members of this board – the Purdue family is very fortunate to have this board, and I feel very fortunate to have come to know you over this past year. Thank you.

So why the Supreme Court reference? Over the past several months the InterCampus Faculty Council, consisting of representatives of the governing bodies of the faculty of each of the campuses – the West Lafayette University Senate, the Calumet Faculty Senate, the Fort Wayne Senate, the North Central Faculty Senate, and faculties of the School of Engineering and Technology and the School of Science at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, have met multiple times and have crafted a resolution which now has passed all of the governing bodies of each of the campuses. The West Lafayette Senate passed its resolution in the form of Senate Document 15-6 Resolution on Collaborative Decision-Making. The IFC Resolution is IFC 15.6 Collaborative Decision-Making. Both documents can be found on the Senate website, http://www.purdue.edu/senate/meetings/index.html.

The subject of this resolution, ratified at all five governing bodies...some would say that in itself is an achievement, is: Collaborative Decision-Making While the University Senate and Regional Campus Faculty Senates are In Session.

The resolution reads:

WHEREAS: The Senates in the Purdue systems have well-established mechanisms for examining, recommending, and approving initiatives, both large and small, and

WHEREAS: The representative structures within the Purdue system are the Senates, and

WHEREAS: The best way to institute major changes is to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by true shared governance, and

WHEREAS: Using these established structures will give the administration the security that a legitimate, broad, and balanced voice of the faculty is being heard, and

WHEREAS: Shared governance will yield the most productive results and will help avoid unintended consequences in any part the Purdue system, and

WHEREAS: The open and transparent discussion of major issues in the Senates is likely to discourage haste in important matters, and
WHEREAS: The creation of ad-hoc committees with hand-picked faculty members who are designated to “vet” significant policy change is not sufficient, and

WHEREAS: Such groups can give insights, but cannot ever be said truly to represent the faculty, and

WHEREAS: A resolution to this end has already been approved by the Purdue Intercampus Faculty Council,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The President, the Provost, the Board of Trustees, Chancellors, and the rest of the Purdue administration develop and announce all major changes that affect scholarship, teaching, and organization (emphasis added) of Purdue while the University Senate and the regional campus Faculty Senates are in session.

All major initiatives should then progress openly through the appropriate committees and then be discussed on the respective Senate floors before they are adopted.

(END)

So what is the impetus of this resolution? A desire for collaboration, a desire for a conscious and calibrated effort to recognize the calendar and functioning of the senates, and a genuine attempt to build a calendar for major initiatives that maps out the logical sequence and timing required to move through the senates. This is not obstruction, nor is it that old canard of faculty being unable to move quickly. It is simply a twofold request: first to consider the timing of a 9-month faculty body with only 7 senate meetings, and a 12 month administration, and the senate-bypassing nature of ad-hoc committees.

No one like recess appointments, and no one like obstruction…and no one is accusing anyone of doing so. The senates are simply asking that the development and announcement of all major changes that affect scholarship, teaching, and organization of Purdue fully include the senates and respect the timing, the procedures and the processes.

I respectfully thank you.

Kirk Alter

Purdue University

Senate Chairman