Two highlights:

I. Advancing Purdue’s Equity and Diversity Goals:

About three years ago, we established the University Senate Equity and Diversity Committee. Since then, this committee has been one of the most active committees in the Senate, and we even have more Senators wanting to join the committee than we have spots available.

One of my goals as the new Senate Chair is to continue supporting the advancement of equity and diversity issues at Purdue.

To that end, one thing that will provide us with the information we need to be more effective is for the university to conduct a climate survey with the support of the Senate. The last climate survey was conducted 10 years ago, and it provided very useful information. The survey also had a strong response rate with 65% of the staff; 57% of faculty and 38% of students competing the survey. This survey also revealed some disturbing data: [and I quote] “Approximately 24% of staff; 37% of faculty and 40% of students reported experiences of being recently harassed or discriminated against on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity or age with the majority of those instances occurring on campus.” [end quote] (p. 19). This survey does not provide much detail on the kinds of harassment or discrimination individuals experienced, and since the Equity and Diversity Committee was established, we have been hoping to assist in a follow up survey that will provide opportunities for individuals to elaborate on some key questions.

We are in conversation with Interim Provost Akridge about the possibility of conducting this new climate survey, and I hope we can count on your support to see this to fruition this academic year.

Considering the current climate in the country with an unprecedented increase in the number of hate based attacks, there is a strong sense of urgency to conduct this new climate survey, and use that data to conduct more effective and responsive education programs.
And, related to responsive education programs designed to increase faculty cross-cultural competency, I would like to thank Provost Dutta for recently supporting our proposal for a faculty professional development program that we call “Faculty Retention and Success through Intergroup Dialogue and Inclusion Alliance.” This proposal was spearheaded by Associate Dean, Klod Kokini, and it involves top scholars from across the university who are experts in addressing equity and diversity issues.

This 3-year project will enable us to conduct specially designed workshops and what we call “intergroup dialogues.” These dialogs are especially designed to help faculty become more critically aware and responsive to equity and diversity issues in their own working contexts and teaching practice.

II. Kaplan/Purdue Deal:
The second item I wanted to highlight--and speaking of climate--has to do with the Purdue/Kaplan deal.

As you aware, I sent a letter to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and to the Higher Learning Commission in opposition to the proposed deal. I sent a copy of this letter to the Board’s Chair, Mr. Berghoff, and to President Daniels. You are also aware that the University Senate held an extraordinary meeting on May 4th and passed a resolution against the Purdue/Kaplan deal by overwhelming majority.

We continue to be very anxious about this proposed arrangement as there was no impact study conducted and faculty was not consulted. We gathered dozens of questions from concerned faculty, and shared them with President Daniels. We look forward to reading the responses to these questions since there is still much we do not know about how the proposed deal will affect existing regular programs and our existing on-line programs (as well as those that were being developed).

In the near future, I think it would be useful for the leadership of the University Senate to have a conversation with the Board of Trustees and the university central administration about shared governance in order to improve the collaboration between the University Senate and the Board.