

University Senate Chair presentation September 10, 2012

Good afternoon Senators and visitors

Thank you for your service to the students, faculty and staff of Purdue University. Thank you also for your confidence in me to work with the administration on the many issues facing us. I encourage you to communicate your thoughts to me on any issue. In this report to the faculty I will be saying some things that may make some of you uncomfortable but I think that they have to be said.

This is most definitely not a normal year. Indeed, I predict that the next 9 months will be rather different and there will probably be faculty who are going to be very unhappy and those that are fine with changes likely to affect all of us.

I recently addressed the board of trustees and provided them with my assessment of the role of faculty and the role of administrators. You all have access to this document on the senate website. I believe I made it clear that this institution has moved gradually toward a position where faculty are more tolerated, than venerated. A 58% increase in administrators over the past decade is disturbing. What is more disturbing is the fact that we as faculty, have less resources to deliver the education demand that represents about \$750 million of the \$1.8 billion in revenue this institution bring in. Combined with the grant income that is generated by faculty, well over 50% of the revenue of Purdue university is a direct result of faculty effort.

Despite that, over the past few years, virtually every department on this campus has seen a constant stream of cuts. Indeed, there are a number of department that actually have a lower budget today, than they had 3 years ago. Yet, last year Purdue achieved a bonus because of the large number of foreign students entering the institution paying a premium. The story we hear is that the university has done a stellar job of containing costs resulting in much self-directed kudos to the administration. I am sure that this is the message that has been communicated to the incoming president.

So what do I see as being wrong with this story? First, I think that it's somewhat bogus. I don't know for sure, but something is not right. How can an institution see a huge increase in administration, a reduction in total teaching individuals over 10 years, a bonus in foreign students, significant increases in research funding and all we see at the faculty and department level are cut, cut, cut. I am starting to identify some examples of where I see inconsistency and I will point out in good time. What I would appreciate from many of you is first hand data on how your departments have responded to the continuous cuts. I am currently requesting the same information from every administrative unit of the university. I intend to present a report in a month or two that documents the cost of operation, the number of positions, the increase in hires and an overall faculty evaluation of these units. I have made official requests for data and I will be requesting the BIER committee to work towards a goal of a better understanding of how administrative units operate and how they have been affected by the cuts that I believe have reduced academic departmental capacity.

I know that one of the things utmost on your minds is what will be the impact on Purdue of the next president. I think it's rather odd when I think about it, but most of the previous presidents of Purdue probably visited once or twice before they became the president. What they knew about Purdue was obtained from a few senior members of the administration and probably the board of trustees and they may even have met with one or two distinguished professors. The advantage they had was that they had all spent a lifetime in academia – they knew every nook and cranny of academia, they knew how to read between the lines of administrative speak, they had often been department heads, deans, vice provosts, or even provosts and they knew exactly how to work the system and achieve their goals. We accepted them not really as equals, but we were mostly content to follow along or not with the amazing new strategic plans that befell us all upon new leadership. We memorized the new key words that reflected the new regime like “preeminence”, we did wholesale substitutions for “Discovery” to

“Discovery with Delivery”, spent the required number of faculty hours repaginating and re-organizing our school strategic plans, and hoped that the President would do great things for our institution.

And then we ended up with a politician as president. He had no background in the comings and goings of academia – he had never been a department head, or a dean. He probably never taught a university course, and probably never delivered a final exam to a bunch of students. He certainly never went through the tenure process, and he certainly did not grow up in an ivory tower although he did spend some formative years in one or two. So, where does that leave us?

First, I would say that Mitch Daniels will know more about this institution, its high and low points, will have met more faculty and thought much more about the nature of the institution than probably all of the previous 5 presidents combined. He will have had 6 months to work out what is going on behind the scenes trying to work out what is reality and what is not. We as faculty, will have had the most access to a future president in the history of this institution. It is incumbent upon us to make the most of that. Every one of the voting faculty senators will have the opportunity to meet with Mitch and talk with him before he becomes president. Every one of you will have had several months to carefully consider and develop suggestions for improvement or change to any aspect of the institution. If you want me to consolidate those suggestions you can always send them to me - many already have. One thing that I hope he will do, is encourage the next governor of Indiana to appoint a faculty member to the Board of Trustees just as Mitch Daniels did at IU.

There are only a very few top level institutions that have taken on a professional politician as president – not that anyone who claws their way to the top of a university is not a consummate politician anyway. But there are clearly advantages and disadvantages. So here is the way I see it. Mitch Daniels is making a strong attempt at being open minded in his evaluation. He is allowing himself to be scrutinized by the faculty and he has so far been forthcoming in his responses. He is a very accomplished individual and the bottom line is that I, as a faculty member of a great university want him to succeed. If he fails, we will all fail with him as many of you will still be here when he leaves in 5 years. That really is a key issue isn't it – we as faculty are mostly focused on the long term. This university is what gives us the credibility we crave as academics – you would not be here if you didn't care about academic status. All I can say is, he had better succeed in maintaining the standards of this institution. That is the least I expect.

Now, it would be wrong of me to not bring up some concerning issues that the senate is going to deal with this year. The core curriculum is winding its way through the system. It's not a matter of what your opinion of going in this direction is – it's a matter of us making sure that the outcomes are acceptable to us. Each college and our regional campuses will have to weigh everything carefully as they work their way through the issues. The proposal to move Purdue to a trimester system is still on the books. If it ends up being a reality, there is no doubt that this will have a lot of impact on the faculty. It is likely to change the employment status of almost every member of the faculty. Other decisions made recently will also have a large impact on the university and the senate. The agreement to hire an additional 107 faculty in the college of Engineering over the next 5 years will increase the number of engineering senators by about 5%. That will mean a gradual reduction of several senators from other colleges. It will also put major pressure on the infrastructure of the university.

The senate leadership has received notice from a large cohort of faculty from one department for a request for comprehensive review of issues surrounding the behavior of a number of administrators over what I will call “combat” between faculty and administration. All I will say on this particular issue is that this is not going to be a one act play. Administrators cannot act irresponsibly and they most certainly cannot get into “win at all costs” mentality.

Indeed, I believe it is time to have a wholesale change in the management of the entire university grievance system. It is currently run by administrators for administrators. Faculty are in fact at

the mercy of a system that has become inherently unfair. The perception that the faculty committees have any influence is clearly questionable. While there is an ombudsman for students who have troublesome issues, there is no ombudsman for faculty. As it currently stands, the only group that assists faculty with support is the Purdue Chapter of the American Association of University Professors. The members of AAUP spend an enormous amount of time working with faculty. I strongly advise faculty members who find themselves in conflict with department heads, deans or administrators never to meet without an AAUP rep present to witness the meeting. I am going to be proposing that an ombudsman be appointed who reports only to the president and who cannot be manipulated by other administrators, but has the power to insist on administrative compliance with regulations and can also negotiate in a reasonable manner. I will of course be requesting this based on the knowledge that Purdue must severely reduce the number of administrators it currently has— I am absolutely not asking for an increase in administrators — but a significant reduction and realignment to get back to a reasonable balance. Replacing 5 or 10 administrative positions with one ombudsman seems to be a reasonable initial solution.

Last year, then Senate Chair Morry Levy announced the appointment of a committee to review specific cases of possible prejudicial treatment of faculty. A number of cases have already been added to the docket. I have confirmed the continuation of this committee chaired by the past chair of the senate. The committee has been charged with reviewing the grievance policies, dismissal policies, and the role different administrative groups play in faculty conflicts. The committee will report its recommendations to the Senate for amending current policies and procedures for fairness as well as compliance for both parties in the best interest of the University.

The last thing I am going to say at this point on this issue, is that over the past year, there has been a very disturbing trend of the administration to hire lawyers to either protect the sometimes bad decisions they are making or put undue pressure on certain faculty. This trend of bringing in lawyers at early stages can only be viewed as wasteful at minimum and draconian at worst. If leadership needs to consult with lawyers on so many issues, perhaps there needs to be a new set of leaders. I believe if the alumnae knew what the university's legal bills were for the past year alone I think that there would be a misunderstanding that the university has too much money — or alternatively, too few leaders who can negotiate fair and reasonable settlements. While I hesitated to bring this issue up in public, it appears that the only way to get something serious done about this is to address it here on the senate floor. Administrators are highly paid individuals and should be chosen for their ability to keep the wheels turning, facilitate the educational and research missions of the institution and, if we could only hire the best and smartest, bring some innovative ideas to the table. Perhaps it's time to review many of our senior administrators. If the faculty demand incredibly high standards for their hires, should we not demand the same intellectual standards from our administrators? It's good to have continuity, long-term knowledge of the institution and even a long track record as a faculty member, but there should be no basis for hereditary administrative peerages. I will say the same to faculty — pay attention to your role as faculty and make sure you are pushing the intellectual limits and not dragging down the standard. We too have a major obligation to ensure that faculty are not asleep at the wheel.

I want to end on a positive note even though I have aired some necessary dirty washing.

I was initially uneasy about the selection of Mitch Daniels as our next president. I kept my mouth shut — I was actually in Europe at the time of the announcement. In the mean-time, I have had the opportunity to spend many hours with the next president. I no longer have any concerns as to whether Mitch Daniels will listen to the faculty. He is listening. I have no concerns that he will not have the absolute best interests of Purdue University in everything he does. I don't suppose I will agree with all his actions, and it's highly likely that if we don't agree we will put up a pretty decent fight to change

his mind. But what I do know is that if we as faculty want Purdue University to increase its national and international recognition, then we will continue to do what we have been doing for years – be tough but fair teachers, publish high quality papers on our discovery in top journals, and be recognized for the academic excellence that we the faculty have sole control over. If we do that, then let's hope Mitch Daniels flies the Purdue flag and uses his influence to raise a few billion dollars to allow us to keep the cost of education down, but the quality high. This is my hope and expectation for our next president.

I thank the senate for your patience.

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