

[Note: These are my intended remarks at the University Senate meeting on 1/22/2024. Because of volatile weather conditions, I opted to forego delivering these live.]

I begin by stating the obvious. Purdue University is a decidedly unique and broad talent pool. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators have converged on this campus since at least September 16, 1874, year by year creating an ever improving finely cut gemstone. One of the great leaps in the advancement of this university was to establish shared governance in February of 1964 through a University Senate model. What better use of an already vetted talent pool?

On this note, I'd like to particularly thank, for their hard work, members of the eight University Senate Standing committees as well as the members of the fourteen Faculty committees reporting to the Standing committees. Much of the work they do goes unseen, but it is significant and vital to the operations of Purdue University.

Let us all take their example and remember that shared governance operates most efficiently when every member of the University Senate pitches in, and we demonstrate the continued value of our role in Purdue's ongoing success.

As a side note, according to Senate documents, the first meeting of the University Senate was November 16, 1964. I will not be chair, but the Senate meets this fall on November 18th when we will be 60 years and two days old. I'd like to suggest to Vice-Chair South, and Provost Wolfe, that we have a reception near that date to honor the milestone of our shared governance. I don't know what the budget might be, but 60 years *is* the diamond anniversary.

In terms of the business ahead of the University Senate this semester, I ask each of the committees to do their best to bring your currently in-progress Senate Document proposals to either our February or March meetings so that we might close our Senate business in April with a clean slate. It's doable, but not efficient to introduce Senate documents in April, which then languish until we meet again in September.

And finally, we are all here with an academic mission in service of creating intellectual, artistic, and economic opportunity. We have shared purposes that

bring great value to our community, this state, and to the nation. With that said, it is not news to you that Higher Education is facing cultural and political headwinds. Administrators, faculty, and even students are under scrutiny. And there is real irony in that some defenders of free speech are proposing limiting free speech on campuses. I have no special insights for this body or the university community at large, but I have a small suggestion. Know your true story. Be able to tell the true story of why and how you are here to learn and teach and serve. I cannot think of a discipline taught on this campus that can't ultimately be linked to something with political and/or cultural impact. It doesn't matter if it's Engineering or Theater. Agriculture or Kinesiology. Because everything we do affects people. And promoting learning, by design, asks people not to be satisfied with what they think they already know.

But how do you communicate this to critics beyond the perimeters of a college campus? Know your true story. Make it part of your practice to effectively communicate why you are a learner and/or why you are a teacher. Be able to articulate the gaping difference between advancing critical thinking skills vs. indoctrination. In my field, it would break my heart if someone claimed that teaching the Bible as literature was an act of pushing a religious ideology. It would break my heart all the same if teaching Margaret Atwood's novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, were accused in the same way. Or if both were taught in the same course. But it's not enough to have a broken heart. You must know your true story, and well before you are asked you must be fully prepared to tell it.