Remarks to the Purdue University Board of Trustees
Professor Patricia Hart
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Good morning!

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 have led you to include the Chair of the University Senate as an *ex officio* member of the Faculty Affairs Committee. I will try to rise to this responsibility. Professor Kirk Alter, from the College of Technology, the newly-elected Vice Chair, is away on professional business today, but will join us at all future meetings. 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 am also delighted that we start the year with our new Provost, Debasish Dutta, who brings sterling credentials and was overwhelmingly recommended by the faculty during the interview process. Thanks, President Daniels, for listening to faculty voices, and welcome, Provost Dutta. What a wonderful start for the year! We have all the ingredients for outstanding collaboration between faculty and administration.
Now let me take a minute to tell you why the Land Grant University is so important to my family and me. Without it, it is probable that I would not be standing before you now.

My grandfather, Alfred Augustus Hart, graduated from the Utah Agricultural College in 1897, a scant 35 years after the Morrill Act was signed into law. [Here is a picture of him and his sister in the military uniforms that students wore at that time]. There he learned all the latest about animal husbandry, field drainage, and the newfangled machines that would eventually toil alongside his workhorses. At that time, there was no such thing as Extension, so when he returned home to rural Idaho, he was a resource for the rest of his life for neighbors for miles around, helping them to prosper through more productive farming. But as an “Aggie” he also studied art, music, and ideas—those classics that the Morrill Act mentions—and developed a love of learning that he inculcated in his children. All eleven of them went to college and nine became teachers in one way or another, some continuing to farm in the summers. Grandfather turned Dickens and Shakespeare into bedtime stories that my father in turn told his kids. A Rhodes Scholar and professor of English literature, my father literally passed on the Land Grant legacy that brought me here today. It is thrilling to me to continue this family tradition at Purdue. What we teach now will transform generations. This is an obligation to be taken very seriously.
With that introduction, let me speak next about my priorities for this year. First, I would like us to continue to build on a vital project that David Williams introduced, English instruction and support for non-native students. Given the changing demographics in our country, if Purdue is to survive and thrive, we must attract international students and serve them well. If the program shows the good results I expect, it should continue and expand.

Another priority before us should removing obstacles in the path of students who desire to transfer into Purdue or between majors. These roadblocks are costly and discouraging to students, and slow down graduation. They result in a waste of time and money both to students and the university. This adversely affects our enrollment goals. President Daniels, let’s roll up our sleeves and make this a year of genuine progress!

Safety is on all our minds. Every employee must take 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 the appropriate locking mechanisms on all classroom doors. The students want them, their parents want them, and the faculty want them.

We must strive for excellence as a family-friendly institution. You can expect to hear me talk about this more during the year. As we hire the best faculty and staff from around
the world, we simply must offer opportunities for high-quality childcare and partner/family 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, but we are not finished. To recruit top faculty from around the world, we must offer competitive services.

Together, we are 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, but our strategy for moving forward must include competitive raises. Where there is waste, it must be eliminated. Where innovation is an improvement, we must embrace it. At the same time, money must be budgeted for those things that guarantee preeminence. Most important of these is outstanding faculty, and the staff they need to support them.

Finally, 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. I hope I will live up to your standards.

Do you have any questions for me?