Good afternoon.

Thank you for attending the first meeting of the University Senate. To all the returning Senators and representatives, welcome back. To all the new members, welcome to the Senate. Thank you to all for volunteering your time to serve. The University Senate plays an important role in shared governance. Your service commitment as a Senator and active participation in our committees, meetings, and deliberations will help ensure a productive academic year in 2019-20.

Some of you may know me already or have read the Q&A in Purdue Today last week. By way of introduction, I was elected to the Senate in 2015 and served on both the Equity and Diversity Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee. It is my pleasure and honor to serve this year as Chair of the Senate. It is my hope as Chair of the Senate that we are able to provide a voice for faculty, staff and students and to work productively with the administration to achieve Purdue University’s mission and strategic plan. I look forward to working with you on these shared goals.

While there are differing definitions of shared governance and approaches to leadership, I believe we achieve more when we work together collaboratively,
when we set aside ego and personal opinion to think of the collective whole, when we do not represent our self-interest, but instead expand our viewpoint and focus collectively on what will best serve our students and the University in the years to come. Purdue University, and the University Senate are only as good as the sum of our parts. I look forward to working collaboratively with the Senate and administration to move Purdue forward.

In that spirit, I hope to have a productive year and make forward progress on several initiatives and proposals. I imagine many more that will be raised throughout the academic year however, I would like to take the opportunity to discuss four items with you today.

First, I am pleased to announce, Purdue University has joined over 40 of our AAU and Big Ten peers to join the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine’s Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. From their website, “The purpose of the action collaborative is to bring together academic leaders and key stakeholders to prevent sexual harassment across all disciplines and among all people in higher education. The National Academy’s 2018 report found 20 percent and 50 percent of female students and
more than 50 percent of female faculty and staff experienced sexually harassing behavior while in academia. The action collaborative is designed to be an active space where colleges, universities can research and develop efforts that move beyond basic legal compliance to evidence-based policies and practices for addressing and preventing all forms of sexual harassment.” Christie Wright, Director of OIE is Purdue’s institutional representative and we are working with her to identify another institutional representative as well as to form an internal working group that will support this effort.

Second, as you may know this fall Purdue is undergoing a routine reaccreditation evaluation by the Higher Learning Commission. There has been much work done over the past year or so to prepare for this review. Please mark your calendars and share with faculty the dates of the HLC on campus visit is October 14, 15. More information will be provided in the Senate newsletter (authored by past-Chair Natalie Carroll) and Purdue Today regarding the visit and how you can be involved.

Third, as many of you may know, the University Senate has taken under consideration President Daniels’ proposal on civics literacy delivered at the
January Senate meeting. Last spring, Natalie Carroll (2018-19 Chair) led an effort to survey the faculty and students regarding the proposal, which was subsequently presented at the April Senate meetings. One of the findings from this survey was the question of our students’ existing knowledge of civics. Many thought having data regarding how our students match up (or do not) with national-level data that Daniels presented in his January Senate meeting remarks would be useful in considering this proposal.

In order to better assess where our students are at, over the summer I gathered a working group of faculty with disciplinary expertise to explore, and perhaps create, a psychometrically valid and reliable measure to distribute to the incoming freshman class during BGR. This working group included Prof Phil Vanfossen Director & James F. Ackerman Distinguished Professor of Social Studies Education in the College of Education; Professor Jay McCann in the Department of Political Science in the College of Liberal Arts; Professor Robert Browning, Director of the CSPAN Archives, and Director of the CSPAN Center in the Brian Lamb School of Education in the College of Liberal Arts, Frank Dooley, Senior Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, and Andrew Zehner from the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Effectiveness. The working group created
a survey which was distributed during BGR week. The committee is currently compiling the data.

At this time, I can report we had a 27% response rate and based on a ‘test of proportion,’ the respondents in various demographic categories matches the proportions in the population of incoming students. Survey items were pulled from the Woodrow Wilson national survey of 41,000 adults and the ‘gold standard’ in Political Science for assessing civics literacy, the National Election Survey. Just under 78% of respondents ‘passed’, which is defined by WW as 60% correct; this is compared to 36% of WW sample. Of course, there are many more questions the expert working group hopes to address in their analysis. Moreover, they are interested in developing an instrument and piloting the survey in political science courses. They are also working to dig deeper into the data. I ask for consent and support of the Senate to have this working group move forward, including Senate representation from the Education Policy Committee (EPC Chair Andy Freed will be soliciting representation) and a representative from the leadership in Purdue Student Government.
Fourth, a few weeks ago, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion hosted an all-day conference on “Maximizing Student Potential.” Although I was unable to attend due to illness, I had the opportunity to hear about the event from Professor Gates and from those who have attended who tell me that it was an outstanding event. Professor Gates and the ODI have a number of initiatives in progress and I anticipate the Senate will serve an important role in partnering with Diversity and Inclusion to advance and support those initiatives.

I look forward to working with the Senate and its various constituencies across campus to help move Purdue forward and usher in the next 150 years!

Thank you!