

Senate Chair Remarks
Cheryl Cooky, Ph.D.
April 20, 2020

Good afternoon. I hope everyone is doing well, or as well as can be expected given the unprecedented times we are in. I feel like I have finally grown accustomed to the 'new normal' of remote learning, Zoom meetings, social distancing, and shelter-at-home. I never envisioned delivering my final Senate remarks from my kitchen on Zoom, however most of us probably never envisioned the times we are in.

During times of crisis, I find that there is a clarity that is only achieved when the fog of the everyday grind is lifted, and the reality of our mortality is brought into focus. It makes one realize what matters in life and what doesn't, what is important and what is trivial. In these times, things that would typically be bothersome, perhaps sitting in traffic or getting cut off while waiting in line, seem relatively insignificant. We just do not have the energy or capacity to worry about the trivial every-day annoyances we might encounter. Instead, our energies are focused on what truly matters... and what truly matters is brought to bear in vivid and visceral ways.

As I reflect back on this past year serving as Senate Chair, what truly matters has been brought into sharp focus. As you all know, I have been guided by a philosophy of leadership defined by collaboration and collective goals. I am pleased to say this past year we have continued to build trust and improve connections with the administration. I have seen firsthand the benefits of having a seat at the table and having our voices heard. The Senate has provided important advisement on a number of issues, and that input has had a real impact in shaping decisions and policies. The positive, collaborative relationship we have with the administration and the Board of Trustees is even more important now as we navigate our way through uncharted territory. I believe the Senate will continue to be in good hands as we transition leadership to Chair Deb Nichols and Vice Chair Steve Beaudoin. Their proven leadership as co-chairs of the Purdue Global Special Committee is evidence of the effectiveness of collaborative and collective efforts.

This past year, we have had a number of important resolutions come out of committee that are having a positive impact on the Purdue community and the Purdue experience. We have also been able to advise on a number of important changes, especially regarding COVID-19, and the opportunity to do so is a result of the trust and collaborative relationships the Senate has with the administration. Moreover, today we are voting on several resolutions, including a change to the degree requirements. This year-long effort would not be possible without the members of the working group, which include a diverse group of students, administrators, faculty and Senators working together towards a common goal. I am proud of this effort and today the Senate has an opportunity to further enhance the quality education we provide here at Purdue.

While there is much more I had hoped to accomplish this spring semester, including college-level discussions on intellectual property for example, that have now been placed on the back-burner given the challenges posed by COVID-19, I believe we all should be proud of what we have accomplished this year as a Senate. I am deeply appreciative of the leadership in PSG, PGSG, APSAC and CSSAC. I wish to thank each of the Standing Committee chairs and all the Senators and faculty who serve on standing committees and faculty committees. To all the administrators who serve in an advisory capacity on those committees, I thank you as well.

The Senate is only as strong as the sum of its parts, and this year we have been particularly strong as an organization. We will need to continue to be strong, working together alongside the administration. Your time and effort, your willingness to work collaboratively and as a team is needed now more than ever.

Yesterday, I was reminded of this as I watched the first episodes of ESPN's *The Last Dance*, a documentary film about the Chicago Bulls' run for a sixth NBA title. As a Chicago native who grew up with the 1990s Bulls team, I must admit I was a bit taken in by the nostalgia of the era. Re-living the joy of watching Jordan flying through the air with seemingly little effort was welcome a reprieve in the time of COVID. Yet, what struck me in that retrospective was not so much the joy of watching the athletic prowess of Michael Jordan, undeniably the best men's professional basketball player of all time, it was the way in which the success of the Bulls was defined not by one player but by the team and the coach, working together, driven by a shared goal: to win a sixth championship. The Bulls would not be the dynasty they were without Scottie Pippen, Toni Kukoč, Dennis Rodman, Luc Longley, Ron Harper, Steve Kerr, Phil Jackson as coach... well, you get my point here. We are stronger as an organization, we are stronger as a University, when we work together as a team towards a shared goal. This requires sacrifice, compromise, effort, and an unwillingness to be distracted by the noise of the trivial.

Although my term as Senate Chair is coming to an end, I leave confident in the incoming leadership and in the membership of the Senate. I know we will continue to be successful and to continue to demonstrate to our colleagues and to the University that the work of the Senate matters, that it has an impact, and that it makes a positive difference.

It has truly been my pleasure and honor to serve as your Senate Chair. Thank you for your confidence in my leadership, your support and trust, and your willingness to collaborate. I am proud of what we have done, and look forward with optimism towards the future despite the challenges we will face. Given the pandemic, we have a rough road ahead however, I believe in working together as a team the Senate can be a *difference maker*.

Thank you.