

Prepared Remarks for February 17, 2025, Purdue University Senate Public Meeting

It is important to have both private and public meetings of the Senate. This monthly meeting is a public meeting of town hall style, where anyone can join, including the media. At the January public meeting, one local media outlet misreported what I said. At a city council meeting last month, another local media misreported what Mayor Erin Easter said. Words that were not uttered got reported in print and online. When each misreporting was discovered by the speaker and then corrected by the media days later, unnecessary confusion had already been created. Therefore, to ensure accuracy, today I will be reading from written remarks that will be distributed to any inquiring media. In the allotted 10 minutes, I will cover four topics.

Topic 1: Undergraduate admissions:

As you all know, here's the equation describing the relationship between applications and enrollment: two different concepts. Enrollment equals applications times admissions rate times yield rate. As a hypothetical example with round numbers, if the number of applications is 80,000, the admissions rate is 40%, and the yield rate is 30%, the enrollment of undergraduate freshman would be 9,600. Clearly, an admissions rate of 50% and a yield rate of 25% would lead to the same enrollment through an admission rate of 25% and a yield rate of 50%.

Yield rate is the percentage of students among all those admitted who choose to accept a university's admission offer instead of those of other universities. Yield rate can only be predicted with imperfect accuracy. In the above hypothetical example, a slight fluctuation of yield rate, say by 3%, would add almost 1,000 to the enrollment due to the large base numbers.

Purdue's yield rate last year jumped to around 30%. To put this in perspective, according to public data, at the other large public university in our state the yield rate was 18%.

The number of applications and yield rate are both reflections of market demand by students and parents, one before admissions decisions are made and the other after. Admissions rate is the only variable directly under our admissions office's control: reducing that rate means becoming more selective.

Over the past several years, Purdue's admissions rate has gone down from about 70% to just under 50% last year. It will likely be 40% or less this year. To put this into perspective: according to public data, the other large public university in our state continues to hover just under 80% admissions rate, and slightly lower rate at 75% for in-state applicants.

As for Purdue, in light of both the record high number of applications but also the anticipated yield rate, and given the physical facility resource we must ensure for each student, we will lower the admissions rate to whatever point it takes to avoid over-enrollment, while ensuring as many qualified in-state applicants are admitted as possible: for example, last year our in-state admissions rate was 74% while out-of-state was only 45%.

Topic 2: Childcare

As promised last time, here is the answer to the question about one of the child care facilities used by some of our colleagues.

After concerns were raised by several parents at the Early Care and Education Center on the west side of our campus, Purdue engaged with the childcare partner and provider, Early Learning Indiana (ELI), to discuss the concerns and to respond appropriately. ELI has provided an update on actions they are taking to address the issues, including the following:

- They held open office hours with the CEO on Jan. 21 (where eight families showed up).
- They will establish a PUECEC advisory committee by the end of February.
- They commit to improved communication from the center to the families.
- They have launched a search for a new food vendor.
- Along with Purdue's Administrative Operations, they will assess the current playground equipment and will announce a plan and timeline for playground updates by the end of March.

Purdue Human Resources will continue to work closely with ELI with regular check-ins and quarterly business reviews to ensure compliance with contracts and expectations.

Topic 3: Federal government directives and court orders

This has been a key point in many people's minds, and impacts hundreds of public and private universities across all states. [A communication was sent by our EVP for Research, CFO and Provost last Thursday](#). Thank you for your continued focus on research. We are very proud of the scholarly quality and societal impact of our colleagues' work. I'd like to reiterate several points here.

First point: The situation consists of multiple parallel tracks and each changes continuously. We have a team that is closely tracking them in order to be compliant and are tabulating on a public website. Because the government directives and court orders we have received as of last Friday all concerned government sponsored research, the core team naturally consists of the following:

- Patrick Wolfe, Provost
- Karen Plaut, EVP for Research
- Chris Ruhl, CFO
- Steve Schultz, General Counsel
- Ian Hyatt, Chief of Staff
- Alysa Rollock, VP of Ethics and Compliance
- Amy Boyle, VP of HR
- Julie Rosa, VP of Communications
- Ken Sandel, Associate VP for SPS

along with Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Heads, and Directors of Institutes and Centers, who are in constant conversation with each other. This team continues to work hard for you.

Second point: At any given moment, there are many questions that we don't know the answers to, just like you. And we cannot execute on hypothetical directives that have not been given to us.

We forward information, which is agency specific, to the relevant Principal Investigators whenever we receive it. These include stop or cease work orders as well as an NIH directive that would reduce the indirect cost rate for NIH funded grants. Right now, the NIH guidance is under a court's temporary restraining order.

Third point, Purdue will continue to follow our principle of "people first," and will continue our core support for research. We also have longer-term strategies to support and grow our research enterprise. These strategies include further growing our industry partnerships and funding as well as philanthropic fundraising for research programs and facilities. These strategies have been consistently and actively pursued at Purdue. In fact, the largest 5-year capital campaign in Purdue history was announced two days ago.

Topic 4: Freedom of expression

Per long-standing practice and the [Board of Trustees' official policy](#) at Purdue University, unless directly requested by the government, we do not make public comments on behalf of the entire institution on any social-political topic, including court proceedings and state legislations covering such topics. While perhaps not always the most expedient, this practice and policy have proven to be a positive one for the university in the long-run.

Such institutional neutrality maximizes the freedom for all the individuals at the university, more than 110,000 of them in our system, to exercise their individual freedom of expression on any topic they choose.

We do welcome and carefully listen to input from members of the university community, and may find useful channels of communication to relay such input to decision-makers.