

University Senate Chair Report August 31, 2021

Greetings Colleagues,

Welcome back to a strange and exciting time at HSU. Somehow we are beginning another fall term during a continuing health crisis and the fact that the Senate is still meeting virtually speaks to the continued stress we all feel beyond that of our everyday lives. I would like to recognize the difficulty that we have all had and remind us that though we have all lived through pandemic together, everyone has experienced it differently - some of us having more challenges than others. *This year, I ask all of us to offer a little grace to each other (and ourselves) as we often have no idea the burden that our colleagues and students carry daily.*

I have another request. During my two plus decades at HSU, it has felt like we are always scrabbling to make due with meager resources. Colleagues from outside the University were always amazed at what we have been able to do and the quality of our graduates despite our budgets. This scarcity of resources has often created an us vs them atmosphere, pitting college vs college, faculty vs administration, students vs faculty, etc. I am as guilty of this as anyone. *My request is that we reset our expectations of each other, know that each member of our HSU community is deeply invested in the success of our University and is working to provide students with an exceptional education, and that we treat each other with the respect each of us deserves.* We have an amazing example of this type of working environment from this last year's Cal Poly self study. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students came together to create an outstanding prospectus, resulting in an unprecedented \$458M investment from the governor for Humboldt State to become Cal Poly Humboldt. This golden opportunity is due to all of us and speaks to what can be accomplished when our campus decides to team up and work toward a common goal. Thank you!

Lastly, I would like to address the ugliness that occurred last spring during the April 27th meeting. That meeting was both amazing and disastrous. It was amazing in that our colleagues from the Native American Studies and the Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies departments were able to craft a detailed policy on area F of General Education in a very short period of time. At that meeting, multiple people commented on the incredibly high quality and robust work done by members of NAS and CRGS. This was work to be celebrated and was passed by the Senate with 22 Yes, 0 No, and 6 Abstentions. ***Area F was passed by the Senate without dissent!***

Instead of recalling what a fantastic accomplishment our colleagues made, what is remembered of that meeting is the troll-like behavior exhibited by several faculty members in the chat, the lack of action by members of the Senate to stop what was essentially bullying of students, and the comments by faculty members outside NAS and CRGS, not understanding why they needed their potential area F course vetted by NAS and/or CRGS. These actions are not acceptable. Mistakes were made. I am sorry. But, as my dad used to say to me and my brothers when we were growing up, "Sorry don't feed the bulldog".

Numerous groups and individuals have put forth suggestions to hold both the Senate and individuals outside the Senate accountable for their actions or inactions. Thank you to all of you who have taken the time to provide these suggestions. I am organizing the suggestions as many of them overlap and I plan to bring these ideas to SenEx to create a list of potential actions to be taken by the Senate.

There are two small steps that we are already taking:

- 1. The chat will be disabled during virtual Senate meetings.** As the April 27 meeting proved, the chat can provide a forum for trolling behaviour. It is distracting, and takes attention away from those that are speaking. A colleague likened the chat as whispering during class or having some sort of side conversation during a lecture. If guests wish to speak, they can raise their Zoom hands and be recognized by a Senator, exactly as we would do it if we were face to face.
- 2. The first Senate meeting of the year will be a workshop on cross cultural communication.** Dr. Elavie Ndura will be providing a training workshop where senators will learn about each other and how identity can affect how we communicate with each other. It will take nearly the entire 2 hours of our first meeting and is meant as the initial training for Senate members, not the last.

I would like to thank all of you in advance for your work and dedication to HSU and our students. I would also like to encourage all of you to get in touch with me whenever you see something that I am missing, messing up, that I need help with, or even just want to talk. I am always open to chatting about anything and everything and would love the opportunity to hear what you have to say. I consider myself blessed to be a member of the HSU community and to have colleagues and students who challenge me, help me learn new things and ultimately help me become a better person.

Thank you!

Monty