

University Senate Chair Report September 28, 2021

Last Friday, members of the Senate Executive Committee met with CSU Faculty Trustee Romey Sabilius during his visit to our campus. One question that he asked of us was (paraphrasing): How are things going with a brand new administration, top to bottom? It is an interesting question to ask, as Trustee Sabilius was sitting across from the Provost as he asked it, and admitted that it is a difficult question to answer while sitting with members of the President's cabinet. It is also an interesting question in light of our unprecedented state support to become the next Cal Poly.

Clearly, our administration has been brilliant in articulating a vision of a Polytechnic future to CSU and state leaders. They have also been brilliant in how to engage the campus community to be a part of the polytech self-study. Students, staff, and faculty were included from the beginning. Faculty and staff were tasked to co-lead or sit on every one of the working groups alongside administrative leadership. As you go through the lists, you see long serving department chairs, former chairs of the senate, union leaders, etc. This really was a brilliant move: to call in the folks on campus who have the institutional memory, who know what has succeeded and what hasn't at HSU, and to empower them to help shape the future of HSU. This is a beautiful example of shared governance, and we can point to it as an example of how the campus community can pull together in the same direction toward a shared vision.

Which brings us to this last week. Several initiatives were announced since the last Senate meeting that surprised faculty members. These initiatives, cluster hires and lecturer budgets, are ultimately good for the campus AND come from the very best of intentions. Likewise, I was reminded by President Jackson this week, that HSU is being watched very closely by the entire state and we really do need to "make this layup". I couldn't agree more. To use the basketball analogy, we need to make this *open court layup!*

To this end, I am hopeful that we will continue to use the self-study model of shared governance for impactful decisions, including those around the cluster hire initiative and lecturer budget reductions. We need our administrators to include faculty, staff and student *leaders* from the start of unprecedented initiatives like these. Learning from the perspectives of long serving HSU stakeholders early on may avoid the panic and confusion that comes from any announced plan that may not yet be ready to go public.

Likewise, faculty, staff, and students must engage with University level decision making. Ask your colleagues to join a University level committee. Mentor a colleague to become the next generation of campus leaders. Let me know if you want to chair one of the Senate's standing committees next year. There are many ways to lead and just as many openings that need your expertise.

So, this brings me back to my answer to Trustee Sabilius's question. I told him that I believe that our President and his cabinet have a vision that we all believe in and that this has been enlivening for the

campus. The difficulty that I see so far is how to best communicate from the highest levels of leadership to the folks that are on the ground serving students. My hope is that by pulling those of us who have long been in the classrooms, department offices, and student-facing services into every decision-making process, our collective knowledge will help to get us pulling in the same direction on these and future initiatives.

Thanks,
Monty