

Hi Cal Poly Humboldt University Senate!

I hope that y'all are finding your respective grooves in this 4th week of the Spring Semester of 2024. Thank you all so much for the work you are doing to support each other in fostering educative spaces. There's a lot coming up in this week's meeting, and I appreciate your taking the time to also engage in shared governance towards a more just University.

This week we will have a presentation from Peggy Metzger from Financial Aid on a series of changes in Financial Aid awards that will be happening concurrently over the next cycle of allocations. Please be sure to take some notes and spread what we learn from Peggy as there will be clear implications for many of our students, and the more that we can collectively advise and assist them, the better. She's always one of my favorite presenters on campus, combining rich knowledge with comprehensible delivery. Thank you, Peggy!

We'll also be working through a number of legislation readings (first and second) including a "Priority Registration Policy", an "Office Hour Policy", and a pair of CBC actions related to the establishment of a Committee on Committees, and the inclusion of Designees as potential co-chairs of the USFAC. Thank you to the committees who have been working on those resolutions, and to everyone who has provided feedback on them. Hopefully they will serve to improve our governance structures moving forward.

Finally, I would like to share a reflection I have been mulling over the last week following a series of experiences that were discomfiting to me, and ask that y'all hear out my often flawed thinking and provide some feedback:

We are really smart people. All of us, regardless of our respective designation or community on campus, are educated, and passionate, and committed to knowledge and criticality at a truly staggering level. In many cases we are also, rightfully, proud of the knowledge and expertise that we have pursued and accrued through our own passionate studies. We (or at least I, but I hope some folks might resonate with me here) existentially self-identify with our pursuits, interests, and the stuff that we think is important to discuss in classrooms and labs and conference rooms. They become a part of how we describe ourselves; when asked about myself, I say I am an Art Teacher, and I view much of the world and my interactions in it through that named lens.

I don't want to come off as assailing this tendency, or preaching self-righteously (I certainly will be retaining my Art Teacher-ness for as long as I am allowed). What I ask, though, is that we take some time in those interactions we have with our colleagues, friends, and community, to consider the partisanship that our own theoretical and disciplinary self-identifications can affect in our discourse and actions. If I allow my attachment to Art Education to justify any and all action that I take or text I generate, I run the risk of carelessly othering and even outright hurting those who I perceive to be questioning or threatening my thing.

I guess what I am advocating for, and requesting feedback on, is a proposal that we all make an effort to take a second, whenever we feel backed into a corner about the stuff we love and spend our lives working for, to check to make sure that we do not forget or deny the humanity of those that we find ourselves in opposition to. I'm not suggesting that we give up on passionate advocacy for and defense of what we think is right, but that we maintain and support and protect the emotional and physical safety of those we find ourselves in disagreement and dissensus with, such that we can all be whole and ready to passionately advocate during the next moment of dissent (or, who knows, maybe agreement!).

Again, I don't want to be a hugely condescending jerk here (though, if it walks like a duck...). I just worry sometimes that when we are really excited about really important stuff, we run the risk of forgetting that we hopefully care about each other and need each other to keep this immense and complex venture running. Beyond that need, tying our individual health and care in a web of respectful mutuality might serve to protect us (read: me) when we inevitably mess up. Let's, please, do what we can to be good to one other while we do our darndest to communicate and work toward our often disparate, but more often intrinsically aligned positions.

Thanks for coming to my Ted Talk, see you all tomorrow,  
jim