

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY
Senate Chair's Report
Senate Meeting, March 27, 2018

The Right of Discussion

“Each member of an assembly has the right to express his or her opinion freely without interruption or interference provided that the rules of debate and decorum, which are applicable to all members, are observed. This right to speak freely is as important as the right to vote.” (*American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*. New York: McGraw-Hill, c. 2012. 20.)

There was much debate after our March 6th Senate meeting about issues of decorum. In particular, calls for *mea culpas* from various members of our University community, myself included, regarding the exchange between Senator Gold and Interim Vice Provost Braithwaite. Rather than dedicating time at this week's meeting to further discussion of the incident, I am hopeful we can move forward and on to the current business at hand.

That said, I do want to stress that the manner in which we treat each other is, of course, extremely important. It is our shared responsibility to allow for broad discussion and to interact with one another from a place of respect and decency at all times. My sense is that campus overall is having a difficult time managing this at the moment, particularly in light of the tensions caused by the budget cuts. I am struck by the level of anger and blame I see all around me (faculty versus administration, which college is *really* responsible for our budget situation, etc.). Last week our CFA chapter President addressed the Board of Trustees, citing the “very difficult and disturbing situation” at HSU, while our students were themselves on campus physically menacing each other and the members of the WSCUC site visit team. We are certainly functioning in a time of heightened stress and anxiety, and it seems to be playing out everywhere.

Even in this moment of profound struggle, I found myself submitting a message to the WASC team's confidential email address, in which I wrote very sincerely that I've never been more excited to be working at HSU. I feel that we are at long last on the cusp of true, transformative change here - creating a climate of accountability to our students in particular. I truly do see our problems as challenges to be faced, with the continued overarching goal of doing what we do even better.

My greatest disappointment in leading the Senate over the last few years, and honestly, the reason I decided not to pursue a second full term as Chair, has been my inability to break through the pervasive "us versus them" attitudes at HSU. As I've mentioned many times, our fairly unique Senate structure allows for the possibility of true shared governance. My hope for the full demonstration of that via the Senate has yet to manifest itself, and so I am making a conscious effort to put my energies into areas where I am hopeful that I can help make meaningful, significant change. I have found that taking positive, proactive action is more effective and personally satisfying than engaging in finger pointing, distraction and deflection. I sincerely hope that we can move through this period of discord and begin the serious work ahead, both as individuals and as a larger collective.

Thanks, as always, for your service on the Senate.