

There are a few times in the life of a Faculty Senate when you get to celebrate. Today, we welcome not only our new Vice Chancellor for Communications, Tisha Benton, but also our new Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement, Tyvi Small. [pause] We are very, very glad to have you here, and I want to publicly thank Interim Chancellor Davis who, with President Randy Boyd, put in many hours behind the scenes and then made Vice Chancellor Small's cabinet appointment public on December 19, 30 days after our last meeting here, when we passed a resolution asking for the restoration of this position. Thank you, Chancellor Davis, for listening and making us part of the solution, and thank you, Vice Chancellor Small, for answering the call to serve.

Last May, when I first addressed this body, I talked about leading from 3 guiding values: Academic Excellence, the Dignity of Work, and a Culture of Respect and Civility. I'd like to give you an update on how we're doing.

#1: Academic Excellence

We have an exciting new collaboration with Athletics and the Thornton Center that includes honoring faculty members for their contributions to scholarship and community at the remaining home basketball games. Steph Bohon has already been up on the jumbotron, and soon, you'll see Chuck Maland, Shaina Destine, Bill Fox, Greg Stein, and past Senate President Joan Hemminway. Stay tuned for other ideas in this initiative to lift up our efforts to educate in front of the biggest public audiences we have. Look for Brooke's tweets on faculty accomplishments, which she does for us even though she HATES Twitter, at @UTFacultySenate! She's providing DAILY content about your colleagues' work, and sometimes their quirks, like who among you loves the Golden Girls, Neil Diamond, or is a synchronized swimmer. That may seem frivolous, but one of the myths we're trying to bust this year is that faculty are unengaged in the world or unapproachable. UT Communications now has over 40 faculty stories in the queue, and we'll continue to work with them to put the excellence in teaching, research, and service of faculty at the center of the university's story, because that is what makes our mission possible. Looking ahead to Vol Core, we are about to have a chance to bring into being the most engaged, vibrant curriculum we can imagine. The chief responsibility and authority of this body is over that curriculum, to which we will turn our attention today, at the next meeting, and beyond to work with the Undergraduate Council as they teach Vol Core to the departments. The first of those sessions will be Feb 7, 1:30, and it will be recorded on Zoom. Robert Mindrup will tell you more shortly.

#2: The Dignity of Work

The dignity of our work has taken some hits in public and within the institution, particularly in intimations that we don't work hard or that we don't want to be reviewed when we objected to a third form of committee-work-intensive post-tenure review enacted before the most recent one had even gone into effect. Though we are stuck with it for the moment, thanks to Provost Manderscheid's efforts, it's less onerous than it initially seemed, we'll monitor its cost as we work toward a reversal, and it will not go into effect until this coming November.

One of the ways we are making sure that the dignity of our work is recognized is by getting our Faculty Handbook up to date. Senator Michelle Kwon and Vice Provost John Zomchick have been working with our Faculty Affairs committee and the Office of General Counsel to do just that. We'll have more voting today, and you can expect a regular stream of sections for the rest of the semester, on our way to a whole updated document by May.

We are ready to help administrators make a full and bold defense of what the university is and what professors do. Most of the public doesn't understand the difference between K-12 and university tenure and doesn't value either. Public hostility to tenure is taking form in bills across the country, most recently Iowa, and we need to be ready if they come to our legislature. Having spent this last weekend with Bonnie Ownley at the UT Advocacy meeting in Nashville, I think we can expect a tough legislative season given Gov. Lee's turn to vocational education. But issues where we can likely make the case for the value of our flagship land-grant institution are around the opioid crisis, national security, quantum computing, and the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of our "workforce ready" graduates. To borrow a line from last night's Washington Post superbowl ad: "knowing keeps us free," and higher education has a crucial role to play to secure our nation's future.

The case for faculty will be easier to make as we show that student success isn't a separate division but the thing that happens in our classrooms. Recognizing the whole professor—teacher, scholar, servant to the community—honors the dignity of our work in public in ways that *make* the case for the university. Student credit hour production will never capture your advocacy and extra time poured into the success of our students.. I've also asked Provost Manderscheid to begin a conversation about the status of full-time non-tenure track faculty. For some full time, PhD holding colleagues, that pay is only \$36K a year.

Finally, I want to encourage you to honor your work by honoring your rest. This rate of change, crisis, and the time you put in (estimates suggest over 62 hours a week for most of you) stresses the body. To help, two of our colleagues, Joan Hemminway and Casey Sams, will be offering faculty Yoga and Meditation classes on Fridays, starting Feb. 15, at 2:30 in AMB 209b, and running every Friday through March 8. Joan's yoga and Casey's meditation will help us all take stock and take care of ourselves so we can do the work that inspires us. Please, join us for as many of these as you can.

#3: A Culture of Respect and Civility

These ideals were violated so often in the last year by hate, fear, and anti-semitism, that it is a challenge and an act of hope to imagine re-establishing them. One event and one effort cannot, but United at the Rock, launching Feb. 20 will include a 17-agency community partners volunteer fair; a pilot of our colleague Joe Miles' Intergroup Dialogue work, which fosters better listening and communication skills across disagreements; painting the rock (of course); words from our new VC, Hillel leaders, and other community and campus leaders; and, thanks to Angie Batey, a final song (rehearsal at 1:30 in the music building for any who want to join) from our UT ensembles and Knoxville area choirs. I know that's not everyone's thing, but it's TOTALLY my thing and I'm unapologetically, unironically thrilled about it. [Sheet music available](#)

for any who want to join in. Painting and the volunteer fair start at 3, with an official welcome at 4 and a closing ceremony at 5. The next night, Chad Goldman hosts the Vol Means All Scruffy City fundraiser for the Pride Center at the KMA, rsvp at Chad@chadgoldman.com. As a follow up, on March 6, 4-5 in the Student Union, 272, this Senate will sponsor a panel on Free/Hate speech, with Rob Blitt, Mike Martinez, Jioni Lewis, and Michelle Christian with Frank Lancaster from our Office of General Counsel, with Sen. Todd Freeburg moderating (thanks to Sens. Westerholt and Mahadevan for help with publicity). Then in the fall, United at the Table, a long-table community dinner on ped walkway, which Tyvi's office is shaping, will bring us back together to talk about where we are and where we're going.

"We are not yet what we shall be but we are growing toward it...This is not the goal, but it is the road." With that in mind, I'd like to leave you with this gift, shaped by Candace White's PR 370 class, and created for us by VFL films directors Barry Rice and Link Hudson, with Grey Mangan, our student cinematographer. The final will be out in the coming weeks on various UT SM channels. You may recognize the voice; it was a true volunteer offer from our VC for Athletics, who wants faculty to know he appreciates and respects what you are do.