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Walker's  
comments  
to Senate

Our Story

In the past month, we have been infused with information about the NC state budget and how NC's budget deficit will affect our university. As you know, Chancellor Ballard has been holding open forums for faculty, staff, and students within each academic unit and we both have involved standing University academic committees in budget discussions and have requested those committees to report to the Faculty Senate on a regular basis. Both the University Budget Committee and Educational Policies and Planning Committee are reporting to you today. We know that while the administration is planning for possible budget reduction scenarios, they do not know what the final budget cuts will be or what the legislature will decide relative to the UNC system. So, in the interim, we speculate, anticipate, and cautiously listen to the many sources of information about what might happen. In these times, the general public, who really does not understand about the academy or the culture of the university, often devalues our profession and calls us "elitists". Many of our taxpayers, outside the university, speculate and provide public statements about the university relative to the "easy" life of a university professor, who only

teaches 3 or 4 classes a semester. Little do they know about scholarship of our disciplines, the time it takes to teach our courses, the time involved in research, all activities that involve more than just "going to class" and providing grades and student credit hours for our students. We impart knowledge, stimulate new knowledge, and challenge students to do the same. As University faculty, we design curriculums that provide crucial background knowledge in a variety of disciplines. We conduct research, whether federally funded or not and publish in peer-review journals. We create art, music, dance, and theatre productions and challenge and mentor our students to do the same. We treat in medical and clinical settings, providing both academic experiences for our students at the same time that we provide valuable services to our community. We relate our coursework to these clinical and research experiences.

I have a recent example of why we need to be clear about what a University faculty member does. In the recent edition of East Magazine, you'll note a story about the Faculty Manual and yes, the Faculty Senate is mentioned there. While it was fairly accurate, my original intent in contacting the editor and seeking this media coverage was to showcase the Faculty Senate

and its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary . I tried to educate the editor, provide written documentation, including Henry Ferrell's book, but unfortunately the result was a story about the Faculty Manual and the University Policy Manual. While several of us attempted to edit the draft before going to print (including me, the Provost and the Chancellor's assistance Philip Rogers) the final published copy did not accomplish my goal of recognizing the Faculty Senate and its 45 years of shared governance. So... it is not only the general public that may misunderstand the vast responsibilities of University faculty.

Another aspect of the budget is to examine the efficiencies on campus to determine where the university may be able to save money. In accomplishing this task, we will need to examine our own units/colleges, etc. since UNC will be asking us to look for cost savings. We also need to be aware of the efficiencies on campus that allow us to do our business in an efficient and consistent matter. I believe that one of the best values for the money is the Faculty Senate and its standing university academic and appellate committees. While the Faculty Senate budget is minimal, look at

what happens that allows the university to provide a consistent process for the approval of curriculum, tenure and promotion processes, unit code development, and academic policies and procedures that involve both faculty and students! While you, as senators devote over 3 hours monthly to the legislative body of the faculty (Faculty Senate), the committees are meeting at between two and nine hours a month (or more) with committee work that provides valuable resources to the university (at no cost to the university) in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. This committee involvement is in addition to the faculty members' other teaching, research, and service responsibilities within their units. Our Faculty Senate and its committees are examples of the efficiency of our process and of the dedication of its faculty to engage in university service. This shared governance process has worked for the past 45 years with faculty providing a consistent and collaborative approach in discussing, researching, editing, vetting, and providing recommendations on the many academic issues/charges in one formal voice from the Faculty Senate to the Chancellor. Again, this process is tried and true and the formality and structure of this process allows for campus-wide input and vetting to take place.

Of course, faculty cannot and do not want to stop the emergence of new issues on campus that have an effect on the University faculty's teaching and scholarship. Contemporary issues often call for adaptation of our existing process/structure. It is the collaborative efforts on both the faculty and administration that make the University effective when addressing these issues. For example, we are now exploring how to incorporate online teaching requirements affecting the curriculum, peer reviews, and other policies into the existing committee structure of the faculty senate. This year, many of our university committees have worked on university wide issues involving online teaching standards and a university-wide academic integrity policy. As you will note on the agenda, we have been looking at the structure of our committees, to accommodate and truly represent the entire faculty and administration. As you will hear during the report from the Committee on Committees, there is current discussion about the relationship of the graduate school and the faculty senate. According to Robert Rules of Order, the first reading of changes to committee charges provides senators with the opportunity to declare their intent to propose revisions to the committee charges.

I welcome your thoughts on this important relationship. I encourage all of us to be reflective, forward thinking, and open-minded, to engage in discourse that is civil, respectful and productive, and to keep the best interest of the entire university in mind. I will not support fragmenting the faculty. The Faculty Senate is the legislative body representing both graduate and undergraduate faculty. This governance structure has worked for the past 45 years. We do not need to fragment the faculty, but to remain a unified strong body that provides outstanding leadership and education at many levels and to remain scholars and mentors. Together we can preserve our rich history and build on the many accomplishments as we move forward.