

Thank you Chair Bridges, Vice Chair Fecher and fellow board members for extending the invitation to address the WSU board of trustees. My name is Jerry Hensley and I am currently serving as the chair of Unclassified Staff Advisory Council, I am joined today by Tom Fortener who serves as chair of the Classified Staff Advisor Council. Together we co-chair the WSU Staff Council.

My remarks today are intended to communicate thoughts, feelings and emotions of the entire staff at Wright State. You have been provided with a written transcript of these remarks as well as they will be published on the staff council website.

The staff of Wright State University appear to be targeted to absorb the majority of the upcoming reduction in force. As employees, we are mostly unrepresented by a bargaining unit and most of us have no job protections. We have traditionally been the soft place to land in times of crisis and reduction. It is important that the function of staff is widely understood and not simply represented by a spreadsheet or a budget book. The contributions of staff to the sustainability and financial soundness of Wright State seems to be a topic that gets drowned out by other conversations taking place around the campus community and in the media.

The staff of Wright State University are involved in the recruitment of students months and sometimes years before they set foot on the campus. We are the hands that carry their precious belongings up several flights of stairs on move in day. Staff are the ones processing their applications for admission, financial aid and assisting them in selecting their courses and majors. WSU staff are the ones who pick up the phone when they are in need of assistance while navigating the complexities of higher education. We, the staff, are continuously engaging students and their families as they matriculate. We are providing them with student employment opportunities and supervision that improves their soft skills and better position them for professional careers. It is this day to day interaction, the willingness to help them find a job once the coursework is complete and the degree is conferred that cements their citizenship in the WSU community and extends their lineage to include the Wright State family. The commitment of the staff of this university never ends as students become alumni, donors, graduate students, parents of future students and even employees of the university that they have grown to love.

We are the ones there to pick up the pieces when the plan A needs a plan B. When Thanksgiving arrives and students find themselves without their immediate family, it is mostly staff who provide a meal at Raiders Giving. The classroom is a critical component of a student's journey, but the hours spent there are consumed by the act of instruction and learning. The hours spent obtaining support services, working elbow to elbow as a student employee or simply working through the challenges that they face in trying to fulfill their hopes and dreams is what proves to them how valuable they are and that they belong at WSU.

I would like to close by making a few very specific points. First, thank you. Thank you for providing us a few opportunities to feel like we are welcome in your conversations. Thank you for your voluntary service and your commitment to a university in crisis. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of finding our new president. And overall, thank you for the promises you have made to create transparency, identify a single financial truth and establish a new culture that will fulfill the obligations to our students and achieve the levels of excellence that we as staff are dedicated to.

Second, there is a lot of work left to do. There are opportunities to grow. Can we evolve to a model of shared governance where staff have an actual voice? Is it possible to stream and record the board of trustees meetings so that staff can be engaged and not have to leave their posts and deny a student the services they provide? Can we get information out to staff in a timely manner, possibly before Cox Media Ohio? Can we better forecast our revenue and expenditures so that staff can go home and tell their families that their jobs will be there next week, next month or hopefully in the next fiscal year?

Lastly, I have been given a responsibility so great that it overwhelms me. I have been asked to convey the wide range of emotions that staff are experiencing. We are angry at the negligence and lack of accountability that has brought us here, we are saddened by the impact on enrollment and the students we care so much about, we are scared, very scared that what we are so invested in will divest itself of us. We are anxious, nervous, confused and untrusting.

But hear me clearly when I say this. The circumstances we face are largely no fault of the rank and file, the outcomes are disproportionately impacting us, and we are defenseless. It is our goal to ensure that the silence of our tears and the tremors in our voices do not distract us from the beating of our hearts that so passionately serve this institution. If instruction is the backbone of Wright State University, then the staff are the vital organs.

Thank You.