

FacultyLine

**Office of the University Faculty, 138 Fawcett Hall (775-2039 / 775-3560)
Faculty Line #221, August 31, 2017**

Colleagues,

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2017-2018 academic year.

We also welcome the 7th President of Wright State University, Cheryl Schrader, to her first academic year with us.

Our University has been the subject of a steady stream of media coverage over the past few months as we have transitioned towards a leaner budget. To be sure, we were on the brink of a financial crisis. This crisis was due, in large part, to years of allowing major unbudgeted expenses to be covered through spending of our university reserves. Our reserves, at \$162 million in 2012, were on a path towards depletion in 2018.

At this time, the crisis appears to have been averted. Our Board of Trustees demanded action. Budgets were adjusted. Administrators have stepped down or retired. Curtis McCray was appointed interim University President to oversee transition towards new practices. Staff positions have been eliminated. Some faculty appointments have not been renewed. We sympathize with the valued members of our community impacted, most often through no fault of their own, by these final-hour decisions.

In hindsight, most acknowledge that this situation should have been addressed much earlier. However, due to the emergency nature of the looming crisis, actions were taken quickly over the past few months without opportunity for Faculty consideration and recommendation. While the Faculty Senate Executive Committee does not necessarily agree with all of the actions taken, we can agree that action was necessary. This academic year, all members of the university community should act to help identify consequences of these actions, recommend better practices where possible, and find better ways for us to use our resources efficiently.

What can you do? The most important thing that faculty can do is to continue to see to the success and progression of our students. Administration and the Faculty are in complete agreement here – the budget crisis must not negatively impact the quality of the education or the experience that our students receive. We must also guarantee that austerity measures do not negatively impact junior faculty as they progress towards promotion in a less resource-rich environment. If you notice any potential problems introduced by the new budget and austerity measures, please document the issue and bring it to the attention of your Dean and Faculty Senators for consideration.

President Schrader has only been with us a short time, but her actions so far have been heartening. She has moved aggressively on budget issues and focused on fiscal processes, but has been responsive to delaying issues that require input from the Faculty and other University constituents. She has taken steps to learn our academic programs and students (through 33 departmental visits over the last few weeks). She is laying the groundwork to have visionary conversations regarding our University Mission and developing consensus towards a Strategic Plan that aligns our budget to that mission.

Provost Sudkamp continues to earn our confidence in oversight of the health of our academic programs and budgets. Using the University's formal search waiver process, President Schrader has appointed Walter Branson as the University's chief business officer. Although the Faculty Senate continues to have grave concerns over any use of the search waiver process, we accept that President Schrader was clear during her search process that she might need to quickly bring in a CBO to help modernize our business practices. In short, we see every reason for guarded optimism regarding the direction of our administrative leadership.

There is much more to say on these and other issues of general interest, but I will leave these items for future FacultyLines. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee will do our best this year to keep you informed of the major issues before the Faculty Senate. Please remember that the Faculty Senate is a representative body. Let your Faculty Senators know where you stand on the issues so that we can fairly and accurately represent the Faculty in our recommendations and official opinions. Faculty Senate meetings are open to all. The first Senate meeting of this academic year is Monday, Sept 11, at 2:30pm, in the Student Union Endeavor Room (E156 SU). The Faculty Senate looks forward to hearing from and questioning President Schrader and Provost Sudkamp on the state of the University. We invite you to join us.

Travis Doom, Professor

Faculty President