

## **Faculty Address – General Faculty Meeting (January 20, 2016) – Douglas Reinelt**

President Turner, Provost Currall, Members of the Faculty, and Guests,

It has been an historic year at SMU as we celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the opening of SMU on September 24<sup>th</sup> and also the successful conclusion of the Second Century Campaign that raised over one billion dollars for scholarships, endowed academic positions, new facilities, and support for other programs.

As outlined in our Faculty Senate Centennial Resolution for the occasion, SMU has come a long way from its opening when it had two permanent buildings, 456 students, 37 faculty members, and a curriculum focused on liberal arts, theology, and music. We recognized the founding SMU President, Dr. Robert Stewart Hyer, for his vision to build Dallas Hall and embrace a broad perspective on education and the instrumental role of the faculty (past and present) in developing SMU into the strong institution it is today.

In my remarks to the general faculty at our fall meeting, I discussed the importance of shared governance and how change and progress can best be achieved by administrators and faculty working together to chart a clear path forward for the university. Today I would like to focus on four issues that the Faculty Senate has addressed or is currently addressing where collaboration is taking place. Other issues discussed by the Faculty Senate during the fall semester can be found in the booklet for today's meeting.

First, Faculty Senate representatives met with Associate Provost Linda Eads to review and prioritize a list of recommendations put forth by the Faculty Senate Ethics and Tenure Committee relating to the promotion and tenure process and later met with the Associate Deans from each of the schools. The original set of recommendations came from a lengthy and ambitious review process that compared SMU policies with AAUP and SACS standards and gathered extensive input from throughout the university and central administration.

During the fall, the groups mentioned above worked together to develop a University-wide format for all promotion and tenure dossiers. As part of the dossier, schools or departments are in the process of establishing guidelines for research and/or creative activity so that both candidates for promotion and tenure and members of the Provost's Advisory Committee have a better idea of what is meant by outstanding or high quality research in a particular discipline. It is expected that these guidelines will vary considerably by discipline and will not be so specific that there will be no flexibility in evaluating a candidate's record. Schools and departments are also in the process of developing a mentoring policy if they do not have one. Significant progress has been made due to collaboration between faculty and administrators.

Second, there have been many issues related to the Operational Excellence for the Second Century initiative (better known as OE2C). The Faculty Senate Executive Committee conducted an informal four question survey of faculty during the summer concerning OE2C changes. Most of the faculty responses related to Travel and/or the use of Concur, which had just been implemented. These comments were compiled and sent to the appropriate persons in the fall. Most of the issues that you highlighted have now been addressed. Responses to your

Travel/Concur issues can be found on the Faculty Senate website under “Useful Links for Faculty.” Requests for help with Concur can now be made through the help.smu.edu dashboard, which will allow SMU to monitor how long it takes to respond to your problems and hopefully improve response times as needed.

To increase faculty involvement in the OE2C decision making progress and to support the concept of shared governance, the Senate passed a resolution at our first fall meeting requesting that the President of the University appoint the President of the Faculty Senate as a voting member of the OE2C Executive Committee. Since many OE2C initiatives have a significant impact on faculty, the Senate felt that it was important to have an elected faculty representative on this committee. At the time of the resolution, the University President, Provost, Vice President for Business and Finance, and Vice President for Executive Affairs were the four voting members of that committee. President Turner agreed to the Senate’s request and I joined the committee in October.

As many of you know, there are three “Shared Services” OE2C initiatives that have been implemented this fall in the areas of facilities, IT, and finance. These three areas are now centralized as university services instead of separate school or college services. It is too early to judge how effective these transitions have been or determine what additional changes need to be made to make the shared services model work more smoothly.

My personal opinion is that the IT initiative is the most fully developed of the three. There are now 17 IT persons spread out across campus in 11 different locations. All campus requests go through a central help desk, which responds to the issue directly or routes it to the appropriate person (previously some schools had separate help desks). There are goals for response times such as addressing classroom problems within five minutes and they plan to use metrics to monitor their progress toward achieving these goals. There is also a new Academic Technology Council with many faculty representatives that helps to guide investments, annual projects, and other issues related to academic computing. I am optimistic that this partnership between faculty and administrators will work well.

The facilities and finance shared service initiatives are not as well-developed as the IT initiative. It appears that it has been more difficult to integrate personnel (some with limited financial experience from academic departments) into a cohesive all-university finance department. This has also likely been made more difficult because some of the new finance personnel are still embedded within their former departments even though they are doing very different jobs. I expect that there will be more progress on these initiatives in the months ahead.

During the spring semester, I am hopeful that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Administration can work together to make a survey to assess how OE2C initiatives are working. Feel free to contact me if you have particular OE2C concerns.

Third, as outlined in a pending Faculty Senate resolution, the University Curriculum adopted by a vote of the faculty as a whole in 2010 encountered significant difficulties in its implementation making it very difficult for students to graduate from SMU in four years. Since that time, there have been numerous modifications and stop-gap exemptions that have allowed students to

graduate in a timely fashion, but some of these changes have had a negative impact on the viability of important courses of study and have undermined SMU's goal of having a well-rounded curriculum. None of these modifications to the curriculum were voted on by the faculty as a whole or by a committee elected by the faculty.

Last fall, with a new round of modifications to the University Curriculum on the horizon (again, without a vote of the faculty as a whole), the Faculty Senate decided it was important to get involved. The Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee has taken a much larger role in developing and restructuring a revised 2016 University Curriculum than might normally have been expected. They have worked with Associate Dean Peter Moore, the University Curriculum Committee, and others to improve the general education curriculum.

The Faculty Senate will vote at our next meeting on this new curriculum. We understand that the Senate does not normally have a role in approving curriculum and that our vote is in an advisory capacity. We also understand that the development of this curriculum was necessarily rushed and was not drawn from a source of faculty input as wide ranging as would normally be desirable. For this reason, the Senate will also consider a second resolution that requests that Provost Currall lead the faculty in a thorough review of the University Curriculum with the goal of developing a new curriculum to be voted on by the faculty as a whole by 2019.

Fourth, there were a number of racially antagonistic and racially biased incidents that occurred on campus or were associated with SMU students during the fall semester. These incidents led the group "Concerned Members of the Black Community at SMU" to develop a "Strategic Plan for Improving the Black Student Experience." President Turner met with these students to discuss their plan and has started conversations with faculty and others about how progress can be made on many of their goals. The SMU Student Senate is also moving forward on improving the black student experience and has established an Ad Hoc Committee on Inclusion and Diversity to address many of the issues from a student perspective.

The plan put forth by the black students outlines ten goals to create a more united and culturally sensitive campus. Three of the goals directly relate to faculty: mandatory sensitivity training for all faculty and staff, increasing the percentage of the Personal Responsibility and Wellness I course (PRW1) that is dedicated to cultural education, and increasing the number of black professors until at least 10% of the faculty is black.

I read Ta-Nehisi Coates book "Between the World and Me" over the break to try to gain a better understanding of some of the issues. The book received the National Book Award and the author received a MacArthur Award in 2015 (often referred to as a genius grant). The book is a letter to his teenage son about being black in the United States. He describes the fear that he felt growing up and the need to always be on guard.

He tells his son that the price of an error is always higher for you than your [white] countrymen. When my teenage son and his friends floated down Turtle Creek on inner tubes less than a mile from the SMU campus, there was no expectation that the trip would end badly even when confronted by the security guard at the Dallas Country Club. Ta-Nehisi argues that the consequences would likely be more severe if a group of black teens did the same thing.

In my view, gaining a better understanding of many of the issues that black students face on a daily basis would be a positive aspect of sensitivity training for faculty and staff. While the black students requested that this training be conducted by an external group, we have several faculty and staff within the university with expertise in this area that may be able to do a very good job facilitating this training. Many faculty members will likely think that this training is a waste of their time as they are not racist, but not being a racist is different from actively working to end racism. Racism is less overt and more subtle than it used to be and we can all benefit from sensitivity training.

While changing clothes in the locker room after exercising at the Dedman Center, I overheard a white student say to a black student who had just finished working out, “What athletic team are you on?” The student responded that he did not participate on an athletic team. Actively working to end racism means that you are willing to join a conversation such as this one and perhaps make it a teachable moment about assumptions and judgement.

The second goal that relates to faculty is increasing the portion of PRW1 that deals with cultural intelligence education to one third of the course including discussions of micro-aggressions and bias incidents. After talking with a PRW1 faculty member, I discovered that they are already addressing some of these issues within the course. We also discussed the importance of faculty members creating a trusting environment so that students feel free to discuss difficult and sensitive topics. Faculty should have a major voice when changes to the PRW1 curriculum are being discussed.

The third goal that relates to faculty is increasing the percentage of black professors. While we can show that the percentage of black professors and black students at SMU is comparable to our peer institutions, we should not be satisfied with this fact. It is a difficult challenge given the low percentages of black Ph.D. that graduate in some disciplines. It will require a commitment at the department level and incentives at the university level.

The challenges that SMU faces in developing a more united and culturally sensitive campus are not unique to our campus. It is part of a broader conversation taking place at other universities and cities across the country and through the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

Students, faculty, and administrators need to work together to make substantial progress on many of the problems that disproportionately affect minority communities. The Faculty Senate has invited the Student Body President and student leaders of the Ad Hoc Committee on Inclusion and Diversity to attend next week’s Senate meeting to discuss ways in which we can collaborate to improve the college experience for black and other minority students.

As with all of the problems discussed above, I believe that shared governance of the university with cooperation and engagement between different sectors of the university is the best path forward. This will make SMU an even stronger institution than it is today and further develop a community where everyone has an opportunity to succeed and realize their full potential.

Thank you.