

University of Dayton Fall Faculty Meeting  
Paul H. Benson, Interim Provost  
Friday, September 5, 2014 / Boll Theatre, Kennedy Union

### In the Intervening Time

Since July 1 I have been the University's interim provost. That is, I am serving as your provost in the intervening time, provost for the meanwhile. This is an unusual and interesting experience, I assure you. Not only is it an experience that I never anticipated as the last academic year concluded, but the experience of being in the intervening time, the perspective of being your chief-academic-officer-in-the-meanwhile through June 2016 is peculiar, out-of-the-ordinary. Like many intellectuals, what is peculiar or beyond the ordinary holds interest for me. Similarly, situations that generate cognitive dissonance and more than a little emotional ambivalence call for examination and reflection. Hence, I want to reflect this afternoon on being in the interim. For this is not simply the temporal structure for my own work life for the next two years; it is also the framework for our work together in this time. We are, together, in the intervening time. We are in-between. As I will explain, the more I have reflected on this circumstance, the more I think that it can be a good thing for us and for our university to be in-between.

Hopefulness about taking up our academic work as teachers and scholars in the meanwhile may appear ironic in light of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century origins of the term "Interim," when used as a proper noun (as in "The Augsburg Interim," "The Leipzig Interim," and so on). The term was used in the 1540s to denote a set of temporary arrangements made between the Roman Catholic Church and German Protestants in order to reconcile provisionally some of the primary theological and ecclesial conflicts between the young Protestant movement and Roman Catholicism until the Council of Trent could complete its work. In this instance "being in the meanwhile" was a circumstance framed by conflict, distrust, misunderstanding, even enmity, within a community of faith.

As we begin our own intervening time this academic year, our gathering today also is framed by an academic year in which we experienced deepening conflict, distrust, even enmity, within our university community. In recent years, we have experienced some gradual deterioration in working relationships on campus, the partial unravelling of shared academic vision and commitment, the increase of rumor, suspicion, and accusation, the degradation of trust. While we managed nevertheless to accomplish much remarkable academic work in teaching, scholarship, and academic partnership-building during this period, and, while UD's academic quality and influence have continued to advance, fear and distrust gradually have sown division among some of us. Such division fundamentally threatens our intention to be a university community formed and guided by shared academic and educational ideals and purpose.

My job in this two-year intervening time is to take action to restore the shared academic vision, the strategically focused commitment, and the strong institutional bonds that we have enjoyed in the past and that have diminished of late. While I have been working behind the scenes to begin to take steps to do this over the past two months, I regard today's meeting as the beginning of more public efforts to begin to foster common purpose, facilitate inclusive participation in decision-making, and rebuild trust. I will signal these beginnings in three ways in this talk: first, by describing some of the primary concerns that have divided portions of our academic community; second, by noting examples of some of the forms of constructive support for our academic mission that the Office of the Provost has funded and that afford a platform for further, strategically focused support for the quality of our teaching, research, and broader professional service; and third, by indicating throughout these reflections my own commitment, professionally and personally, as your faculty colleague and meanwhile-provost, to act with integrity, to consult collegially on major matters of policy, and to reach decisions that, based on the best information and the resources available to me, stand the best chance of advancing our shared academic priorities and values, not only as teacher-scholars but as members of a

university rooted in and inspired by Catholic and Marianist educational traditions. In short, these remarks will look back and then look forward.

### Academic climate

My contention about the deterioration of our common academic bonds and working relationships at UD rests in part on the results of the academic climate survey that was distributed to 1,427 UD faculty and staff with primary academic or research responsibilities in late April and early May, 2014. President Curran commissioned this survey through Richard Boyer, principal for the firm ModernThink, who designs and administers the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* "Great Places to Work" campus climate survey. The latter survey was administered at UD, you will recall, in 2009 and again in 2011. The academic climate survey that was conducted here this spring was a modified version of the standard ModernThink climate instrument. I want to describe what I take to be some of the central implications of UD's academic climate survey results. These results will be shared widely for review and discussion over the coming five weeks through processes I will outline later.

The academic climate survey results indicate to me that, notwithstanding some variations in perception and attitude across academic units, the University Libraries, UDRI, and other areas reporting to the Provost's office—including significant variations between faculty and staff perceptions—three areas of serious concern are in evidence across the University. First, the role of faculty members in shared governance of the University is not clearly stated, publicized, or understood (cf. survey item #24). A second, related concern is that the Provost and the Provost's leadership team have not done nearly enough to ensure that the policies and procedures of the University are transparent (cf. survey item #63). These two concerns suggest that our faculty, in particular, do not feel that they are consulted sufficiently on important academic and educational policy decisions, and that they do not understand what opportunities they have for genuine involvement in academic

deliberations at the university level. This description resonates with what many faculty have told me in recent years.

Third, faculty and staff members alike do not feel that Marianist values guide decision-making throughout the University in daily practice (cf. survey item #22). In the ModernThink consultant's own interpretation of the survey results, which you will see along with survey data, Mr. Boyer writes, "Many faculty and staff believe the University of Dayton is at a critical juncture given changes of the last several years at Dayton and the larger challenges impacting higher education as a whole." He goes on to say, "There continues to be concern that the focus has shifted to a 'corporate' model characterized by more 'top down' administration, accompanied by a belief that this shift jeopardizes the Marianist heritage and values."

The core themes that I have identified explain, in my judgment, other concerns that also arise prominently in the survey results for faculty, such as the concern that the University's system for addressing feedback and complaints is not effective (cf. survey item #28) or that the Provost's office does not work effectively with the deans and other unit heads to allocate resources appropriately (cf. survey item #61). While it is not my purpose today to review carefully all of the main lessons that one might seek to draw from the academic climate survey, I note these points because they offer confirmation of my claim that significant distrust and suspicion of academic leadership have grown in the UD community, especially (although not only) among faculty, and that this distrust—were it to persist—is such as to threaten our core institutional values regarding the role of faculty members in shared governance and regarding the realization of Catholic and Marianist values concerning community-building, inclusion and personal dignity, service and justice in University decision-making.

### Shared governance and the national context

It should come as no surprise to you that concerns such as those that emerge from last spring's academic climate survey are becoming increasingly common throughout American higher education. The ideals and practices of American colleges and universities across the entire spectrum of post-secondary educational institutions in this country are increasingly perceived as facing some of the most serious challenges and threats they have experienced since the Second World War. These challenges range from shifting financial models for higher education to profound changes in pedagogy and technology and also to the changing expectations of governing boards, the general public, federal and state legislatures and agencies, and employers regarding the aims and value of college education. As a country, we face crises of access to affordable, high-quality higher education and growing obstacles to effective support for students' academic success in college, to say nothing of the grave challenges confronting early childhood and K-12 education. Running throughout all of these challenges is deep faculty concern nationwide that the system of shared governance that was forged in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that apparently reached its zenith in the 1950s and 1960s has eroded steadily over the past forty years.

The concern about the decay of ideals and practices of shared governance throughout the academy often is accompanied by laments about excessive expansion of academic administration in scale and institutional power. Thus, Benjamin Ginsberg, Professor of political science at Johns Hopkins, writes in his 2011 book, *The Fall of the Faculty*,

. . . universities are filled with armies of functionaries—the vice presidents, associate vice presidents, assistant vice presidents, provosts, associate provosts, vice provosts, assistant provosts, deans, deanlets, deanlings, each commanding staffers and assistants—who, more and more, direct the operations of every school. Backed by their administrative legions, university presidents and other senior administrators

have been able, at most schools, to dispense with faculty involvement in campus management and, thereby to reduce the faculty's influence in university affairs.<sup>1</sup>

(If I recall correctly, I was a deanlet or deanling at one time.)

Larry Gerber, former chair of the AAUP's Committee on College and University Governance and Professor Emeritus of history at Auburn, offers a more nuanced account of the history of faculty governance in American higher education in his new book, *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance*. Gerber traces the history of the rise of practices of faculty governance through the century following the end of the Civil War and, like Ginsberg, describes growing criticisms of faculty governance that have gained momentum since the mid-1970s, with public calls for greater economic efficiency and nimble, managerial responses to changing demands for a well-educated citizenry and workforce-ready graduates. Gerber's historical analysis indicates, however, that "arguments in favor of the application of business methods of management to higher education have been voiced since at least as far back as the late nineteenth century."<sup>2</sup> Gerber also observes that there have been many battles among faculty in the past century over which faculty members should be regarded as eligible to participate in faculty governance structures. Battles over shared governance are hardly limited to those between faculty and administration. In addition, Gerber comments that a live question remains as to

. . . whether, in fact, a belief in, and commitment to, shared governance is really widely held among faculty members. The rapid expansion of college administration that has occurred over the last century and more was not only a result of the increasing size and complexity of American institutions of higher education; it was also at least in part a product of the desire of many faculty members to avoid

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Larry G. Gerber, *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance: Professionalization and the Modern American University*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, p. 2.

administrative responsibilities for both the formulation and implementation of policies.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, while the issues that have surfaced at UD are serious and call for concerted dialogue and active resolution, we are hardly alone among universities in confronting problems regarding shared governance and transparent decision-making grounded in institutional norms and mission-based values that faculty and academic administrators together embrace.

Before I turn to consider some of the actions the University has begun to take in response to concerns raised in the academic climate survey, I must point out that the survey results in each academic area reveal much of which we should be proud. For instance, 77% of survey respondents across the University strongly agree or agree that their department is a good place to work. 80% of survey respondents strongly agree or agree that their supervisor supports their efforts to balance their work and personal life. 81% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they have a good relationship with their supervisor.

#### *Initial steps to restore trust*

Some of the first steps President Curran and I have taken to begin to rebuild trust between faculty and university administration concern the processes through which senior administrative searches and appointments are made. In my last weeks as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, I consulted broadly with the College's Executive Council and, through them, with the College's Council of Chairpersons and Program Directors, in the process of selecting an interim dean to replace me. This process was not merely for the sake of appearances; the comments I received directly influenced my decision to appoint Jason Pierce, then chairperson of the Department of Political Science, as interim dean.

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<sup>3</sup> Gerber, *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance*, p. 8.

The Executive Committee of the Academic Senate (ECAS) worked closely this summer with President Curran to identify qualified and interested faculty nominees to serve as representatives on the search committee for the next Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services. This process was not window-dressing; President Curran selected the faculty representatives for the committee from among those nominated. I followed the same procedure and worked with ECAS to field nominations of faculty representatives for the search committees for the next dean of the School of Law and the next dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Once more, these processes resulted in valuable information that directly influenced the composition of these search committees. In addition, I have initiated these dean searches in such a manner as to underscore the importance of search committees' responsibilities to seek input broadly from faculty, student, staff, alumni, community, and trustee constituencies.

The Educational Leadership Council was revived by President Curran, Provost Saliba, and former Senate President Carolyn Roecker Phelps last year and has been involved in regular meetings and extended dialogue throughout the summer with President Curran, Vice President Joyce Carter, Vice President Tom Burkhardt, and me about the academic climate survey and about health care benefits for 2015. On both issues, concrete and substantial changes in decisions have been made through this dialogue. Additionally, President Curran and Senate President Krane have developed plans for the Senate to discuss the results of Board of Trustee meetings with the President and Interim Provost immediately following the conclusion of those meetings. Increased opportunities for members of the Senate to interact with Board members are being planned. The agendas of the Academic Senate and of the Educational Leadership Council for the new academic year include many policy matters and administrative issues on which faculty and senior administrators will deliberate together.

You will have many opportunities in the next five weeks to review, discuss and interpret results of the academic climate survey for the University and for your unit. First,

the academic deans, the Director of UDRI, and Associate Provosts Bickford and Vanderburgh will convene multiple sessions this month at which faculty and staff will discuss summaries of results for their units. These summaries have been prepared by the ModernThink consultant, Richard Boyer, to ensure that information is presented in consistent, accurate, and transparent ways. These sessions and follow-up mechanisms for offering interpretations of the survey and recommending actions in response are being structured so as to invite active participation from faculty and staff, as well as to protect those who might prefer that their comments remain anonymous.

Second, these uniform summary reports, along with all of the quantifiable survey results for each academic unit and for the University as a whole, will be posted on a secure University web page by the end of the day today, so that every benefits-eligible faculty and staff member on campus can review the survey data. Owing to standard personnel practices, the results for the six statements on the survey that specifically concern former Provost Joe Saliba's work individually, as opposed to the survey items that refer to "the Provost and his leadership team," are not being shared. No good purpose would be served by sharing those data, as the survey was administered before it was decided that the Provost's appointment would not be renewed, and Dr. Saliba no longer is in a position to make decisions for the Provost's office.

Third, after the initial rounds of discussion and review of survey data have taken place, President Curran will issue a public, written statement to all University employees that attests to his seriousness about having the University respond in meaningful and concrete ways to the results of the survey. Each academic dean, the director of UDRI, and the associate provosts will develop plans with their units, and actions upon those plans will get underway in the current academic year. I will take responsibility for actions related to academic climate university-wide. Finally, the University will administer the standard, nationally-normed ModernThink climate survey in the 2015-16 year. I will be happy to discuss with the Academic Senate, the Educational Leadership Council, the Faculty Board,

and other representative faculty bodies additional ways to respond to last spring's survey results.

### Academic momentum

While the foregoing reflections on the past year may seem to sound a reactive note, I want to share briefly my reasons for looking forward to this interim, intervening period with confidence and trust in our capacity for engaging in outstanding teaching, research, and professional service, as well as our capacity for reconciliation and renewed collegiality.

First, over the past four years (i.e., for faculty appointments that began in 2011 through the current year), the Provost's office has funded 54 new, full-time faculty lines, in addition to hiring replacements for most faculty positions that became vacant through retirements or for other reasons. This count also does not include existing faculty positions that were converted to full-time or tenure-line positions with new monies. For 2014-15 alone, six such conversions were funded. At our meeting today, we welcome 54 new, full-time faculty members, the largest incoming faculty class of which we have record. For appointments that will commence in 2015, I have authorized 40 full-time faculty searches, 13 of which are for new faculty lines. Although these numbers, by themselves, tell only part of the story of our investment in building faculty strength, they are significant for the stark contrast they exhibit with many of our peer institutions, who have had extended faculty hiring freezes or reductions in the wake of the recession. The academic talent of our new faculty colleagues is evident to everyone who has worked on these searches.

In addition to this striking investment in faculty positions, the Provost's office has supported curriculum design, pedagogical experimentation, and assessment of new courses for the Common Academic Program since 2010 with over \$800,000 in faculty development monies. This financial commitment was made in response to analyses that indicated that, when the former General Education Program was begun in the early 1990s, not nearly

enough support was committed to faculty work on curriculum development, pedagogical discussion, and evaluation of early pilot courses.

Major investments also have been made, in cooperation with the deans and the Center for International Programs, in faculty development to advance intercultural and global initiatives in curriculum and research, including funding for 32 faculty participants in the Global Education Seminar since 2010. The Provost's office has made substantial commitments over the past four years to support the participation of 40 faculty members in the eLearning Fellows Program, and, with the College, also has supported the creation and on-going funding for the Diversity Across the Curriculum Faculty Workshop, in which 40 faculty members have participated since 2010. Financial commitments to these three faculty development programs alone have amounted to \$600,000.

In addition to working with deans' offices to fund many individual faculty requests for research support, the Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs has spent in the past four years \$3,200,000 to fund graduate assistantships that directly support new research initiatives. The Provost's office also has filled the major gap in the annual budget for UD Research Council summer research fellowships left when the Ohio Board of Regents cut funding for these fellowships. Through the work of Associate Provost Deb Bickford and Dr. Steve Wilhoit in the Learning Teaching Center, the Provost's office also created and funded the UD Research Fellows program, as well as the highly effective AsPIRE program to assist tenured associate professors in developing plans to prepare future applications for promotion to the rank of professor.

These academic initiatives are not sufficient; we must find ways to do more and to achieve greater impact, even as academic revenues are projected to encounter new constraints. Yet the nature of the investments that have been made in expanding the faculty, in funding for new research and graduate initiatives, and in support for creative faculty leadership of the renewal of our university-wide curriculum and pedagogical practices to serve the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century UD graduates suggests that we have a solid

platform upon which to launch new strategic initiatives in education and scholarship. My hopefulness is buoyed by the knowledge that the University is likely in the course of this year to receive some of the largest gifts we ever have received to advance new, cross-unit academic programs and support valuable community partnerships.

### *Academic planning in the meanwhile*

Implicit in my reflections on the institutional circumstances leading up to this intervening time and my comments about our forward academic momentum is a clear acknowledgement of the many academic challenges we face in addition to realizing more effectively the ideals of genuinely shared governance and accountability. Enrollments in some academic departments have grown dramatically without proportional growth in their faculty. The learning support needs of some international students, along with many of our domestic students, are substantial. The demands of truly inclusive, intercultural excellence in student learning and faculty scholarship are matters to which we must devote more concerted, goal-oriented work. In some areas of the University, teaching and research facilities continue to require major investment. We need to be more aggressive in creating new academic programs and launching research collaborations that draw upon areas of distinctive faculty strength, while at the same time supporting current signature programs more effectively. There is little question that we will need to make difficult decisions in the coming years about reallocation of resources among academic programs and units.

I will have more to say in the course of this year about how we can plan intelligently and wisely for our collective academic future and the education of our students. What is most important to bear in our minds today, in closing, is that the work of creative academic planning, of prudent and strategic allocation of resources, of restoring confidence and vital participation in shared governance, and of repairing torn relationships is work that, in this intervening time, we must take up together. In his recent book, *Higher Education in America*, Harvard's former president and University Research Professor, Derek Bok, notes

that “the existence of common values and norms that are understood by professors and administrators alike as fundamental to the academic enterprise” enable the highly independent, autonomous members of universities to function coherently and cooperatively a good deal of the time.<sup>4</sup> He cautions that the work of defending and explaining these common values is difficult and urges universities to appreciate that “preserving basic values is a collective enterprise.”<sup>5</sup>

At UD, we are guided not only by academic values that should be realized in any American university worth the name, but also by the distinctive values of our sponsor, the Society of Mary. These are values without which the University of Dayton would have less of note to contribute to higher education. In a document entitled, “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” we read that Marianist organizations work “in and through community.”<sup>6</sup> Marianist communities “are marked by openness, cooperation, mutuality, collegiality and a sense of service.”<sup>7</sup> At the same time, “as powerful and efficacious community building is in a Marianist organization, it is not an end in and of itself. Community must also be outwardly focused—attentive to and engaging the mission: *The community itself is a primary instrument to fulfill our mission.*”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Marianist organizations are “to be contemporary in engaging the world”; hence, we “need to be able to read the signs of the times and to respond to these with faithfulness and alacrity.”<sup>9</sup> Such vision and responsiveness “demands courage, a keen flexibility and an abiding recourse to providence.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Bok, *Higher Education in America*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Bok, *Higher Education in America*, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Society of Mary, “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” October 2, 2013, p. 7. Available through the Association of Marianist Universities’ web site at <[http://marianistuniversities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/marianist\\_administration.pdf](http://marianistuniversities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/marianist_administration.pdf)>.

<sup>7</sup> “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” p. 11 (italics in the original).

<sup>9</sup> “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> “Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration,” p. 7.

Contemporary American universities, in general, are not naturally well suited to realize such ideals. I believe, however, that the University of Dayton has the capability, resourcefulness, imagination, discernment, will, courage, and faith to do so. Please join me in this good work.