

April 3, 2025

Dear Faculty Senators,

I've seen the email you wrote to all faculty on Wednesday about my leadership at UW, and I would like to take a few minutes to respond. I want to first of all acknowledge your deep commitment to shared governance; I hear your frustration and am committed to working with you to address this topic that is critical to UW, and to every university.

On the first topic that seems to have catalyzed your letter, I am bound *by law*, and out of respect for former CEPS Dean Wright, not to discuss any specifics on the Board of Trustees action that removed him from his role as Dean. It is completely within their authority to take this action, it was deeply considered, and even if I would like to highlight other sides of this story that are not public, I cannot comment any further.

On the second specific topic in your letter, you expressed concern about how the case involving former CHS Dean Warren was handled, mentioning intimidation and threats, and a display of contempt. I have not heard any concerns about *my* behavior and do not recall any such event, but I am open to discussing it.

After an extended period of some months, when the Provost was handling the situation at CHS, updating me as it developed, I realized I must step in to help resolve the situation. I believe it was precisely because I personally and repeatedly met with and listened deeply to groups of faculty, staff, and students, for many hours in late fall of 2023 and early 2024 that action was then taken, leading to a transition leadership in CHS. Since then, I have followed up repeatedly with CHS faculty and staff to ensure that issues are being addressed, and involved myself deeply in the successful process to bring in Dean Hardigan. (I believe he is doing a great job of hearing faculty and staff and applying remedies to address long-standing issues.) In contrast to the tone of your letter, numerous people in CHS have thanked me for stepping in, listening to what was needed, and taking action.

That said, I have certainly learned from this experience. It took too long for me to understand the depth of the issues that needed to be addressed, and I endeavor to always be alert and listening for things that I need to hear to help me do a better job as President.

An overarching theme of your letter regards shared governance, which I understand is a deeply held value for faculty at UW. While I recognize that I, and my leadership team, can improve, I would like to point out a number of actions I have taken already. About two years ago I took the action to add faculty and staff senate leads to my cabinet, so that faculty voices are heard on every item that comes before cabinet, and items may be brought to cabinet by Faculty Senate Chair. I have created a faculty sounding board (on which Senator

Cawley serves), where any topic can be brought to my attention. I meet faculty senate at least semesterly, including just two weeks ago, and always have staff with me to help me take back any action items that need to be discussed. I meet with the Faculty Senate Chair nearly every month, on topics of mutual interest. It was my impression that these, among other steps had been improving the sense of connection and collaboration between us. As is to be expected, some of these meetings involved complex, sometimes contentious, topics, but I did not hear once in these meetings (in the last year at least) that there was little trust between the faculty and the President. Obviously more work needs to be done in this area, and I am listening.

I very much value our relationship, I take the concerns of the Faculty Senate seriously. Trust is essential, and where my actions or words may have contributed to a loss in that trust, I take responsibility. I'm committed to rebuilding our partnership through open dialogue and a renewed focus on shared governance. I would like to suggest that we enter into a set of meetings to hear you out further on this key topic, and others as you wish, and work towards better understanding, process to improve communication, and actions to address issues we find together.

I want to end with a note reaffirming the fundamental goals that we surely can all agree on: the overall health of UW, support for our great faculty, and above all, the success of our students. These are among most important things we can work on together. I am confident that with some steps such as those suggested above, or others you may suggest, we can focus our efforts on these topics in a collaborative, rather than adversarial nature, for the good of the institution. I stand ready to begin.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Aird". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ed