

Dear Senators,

It has come to my attention that not only has President Seidel sent an email to the campus asking for “a moment to pause and reflect” regarding Faculty Senate Resolution 488, but he has also been contacting Senators directly. This is unprecedented. My initial perspective is that in his panic he is using his position of authority to intimidate you. You are justified in fearing retribution from this administration. Let us not forget that when two College of Health Sciences directors raised objections in the fall of 2023 to the management of that College by its then-dean, they were immediately terminated from their directors’ positions.

We also know from experience that this administration is not transparent. The College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources dean was dismissed with no warning in late 2023 and with no explanation. Last fall, the former Provost resigned with something like six hours’ notice, and no reason was ever provided to campus. And now we have the removal of the dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (with a weak, “we want to change direction” excuse). These were significant and abrupt changes in academic leadership at the University with absolutely no input from or consultation with those most directly charged with leading the academic mission of the University—you. Ignoring Regulations 1-4 and 2-8.

The President and Old Main hide behind the legal façade that they can’t discuss personnel matters, while they and the Board make them time and again in secret. Don’t be fooled by President Seidel’s latest mea culpa. This is how he and the Board, and the rest of Old Main operate. I know. I witnessed it myself as Faculty Senate Chair in one-on-one meetings with the President and as a member of the President’s Cabinet.

The President, the Board, and the rest of Old Main participate in shared governance in only a bureaucratic way—via the required participation of Faculty Senate in certain administrative processes (e.g., reviewing changes to SAPPs—and I’ve witnessed the administration completely ignore Faculty Senate input when they disagreed with it). They do not respect shared governance in a meaningful way, particularly with respect to changes in academic personnel.

I appreciate that many of you—especially those of you who are not tenured or on rolling contracts—fear this Resolution could negatively impact your careers. But you are not alone in this endeavor. I hope you’ve had the opportunity to read the letter from the Ellbogen Foundation (attached to Holly Krutka’s April 3 listserv message). The fact that one of the University’s oldest and largest benefactors is suspending new donations and reviewing prior donations speaks volumes. I also hope you read the Deans’ letter (attached to Chair Ray Fertig’s April 4 listserv message). They too put their careers on the line to state that “the abrupt dismissal of several senior leaders, absent transparency or meaningful engagement, has further eroded trust in the administration’s commitment to transparency and shared governance.”

This is not sour grapes or an overreaction to one specific event. This has been building for at least the past three years. This is an administration that claims it listens, but it really does not. Again, I speak from experience.

As long as your vote reflects the wishes of your department/unit, I encourage you in no uncertain terms to speak truth to power and send a clear message to the entire University community that this administration’s conduct is not acceptable.

Respectfully,
Bob Sprague, Faculty Senate Immediate Past Chair (Retired)