

Concerned Faculty <concernedfacultyoftu@gmail.com>

Tue 11/12/2019 12:42 PM

**A MESSAGE FROM CONCERNED FACULTY ON TOMORROW'S VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE**

Looking ahead to tomorrow's vote, we encourage our colleagues across TU to continue asking themselves the questions that have circulated so widely since the announcement of True Commitment in April. The most basic one is this: do we have confidence that the university's future, under the direction of President Clancy and Provost Levit, is in good hands?

Over many months, we have raised concerns about True Commitment's design flaws, and about the secretive process by which it was created. Since April, as we have learned more and sought constructive solutions for these problems, we have also raised concerns about the president and provost's use of university resources and funds, about their protection and advocacy of the core mission of the university, about their treatment of those who disagree with them, and about their basic commitment to principles of academic freedom and shared governance.

During a recent 30-day period, and at the invitation of the Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate President Scott Holmstrom and Vice President Jennifer Airey solicited the contributions of the university's faculty and others in the creation of a proposal for TU's future. More than one hundred faculty representing all five colleges accepted this invitation in good faith; they contributed time, effort, and ideas to this proposal, and many of their ideas were incorporated into its recommendations. This plan, tirelessly and painstakingly assembled by President Holmstrom and Vice President Airey, was not only feasible in the fiscal terms set out by the Board, but was designed, as they told the Board, in light of "the need to reunite the campus community." After six months of campus unrest and upheaval in the wake of True Commitment's roll-out, and untold damage to the university's reputation, they recognized the urgency of restoring trust among all university stakeholders, including students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, trustees, and others. As President Holmstrom and Vice President Airey described the situation to the Board, the failure of President Clancy and Provost Levit to develop True Commitment with respect to faculty consultation and overall shared governance practices "has fractured relationships, decimated trust, hindered our efforts to come together to find solutions, and ceded time and money in the interim."

Even though this plan represented both a broadly supported vision for TU's curriculum and a constructive, collaborative model of shared governance, President Clancy and Provost Levit did not advocate for its adoption. At such a late hour, when presented with an extraordinary opening to reach a mutually agreeable consensus on urgent curricular matters and, in a single stroke, establish a new sense of trust within the university's angry, exhausted, fearful, frustrated, and deeply divided campus community, President Clancy and Provost Levit let it pass. Instead, they decided to proceed with True Commitment, which the president insisted, in his November 7 email, "remains our best path forward."

This decision is harmful to the entire university, but not, in light of the president and provost's record of recent months, particularly surprising. Its rationalization, however, added insult to injury.

The president and provost responded to the chorus of criticism that they failed to respect shared governance simply by denying that any such failure took place. Instead, they have hailed a small cadre of "university first' citizens" who served on the Provost's Program Review Committee and "met the challenges with a bold plan" to transform the university for the long term. This, apparently, is their idea of shared governance.

Of the service of these unelected "university first' citizens," however, the president's email did not mention the disabling requirements of a sweeping—and now thoroughly discredited—nondisclosure agreement which forbade any discussion of PPRC committee work with other TU colleagues. Perhaps just as telling, several of these PPRC members have become firm opponents of True Commitment—a process that seems to have begun early on, as they doubted the accuracy and relevance of some of the data they were given, as they realized that the PPRC had been ordered to ignore crucial qualitative criteria about the value and purposes of the university's programs in general, and as they came to resent the ethical quandary to which the provost's legal constraints subjected them.

The Faculty Senate recognized the president and provost's actions to seek board approval and to implement True Commitment for what they were: violations of the Senate's constitution. This resolution passed overwhelmingly on August 29, an official acknowledgement that shared governance guidelines—which, ironically, the administration itself strengthened just one year earlier in an attempt to demonstrate its reformed commitment to shared governance to the satisfaction of an accreditation agency—had been violated.

We invite our colleagues to consider the implications for academic freedom and shared governance when administrators both violate basic policies and subsequently—and following official censure by the Faculty Senate—celebrate such a secretive, autocratic process itself as the very ideal of the university's collaborative culture.

We also invite our colleagues to consider the risk to TU's accreditation when the university's already-fragile standing in shared governance is exacerbated by the actions of the president and provost. These are matters of grave concern, which we place alongside our fundamental belief that everyone at TU desires to work in an institution where trust and respect have a real opportunity to flourish—not simply as empty slogans, abandoned when they become inconvenient, but as values we defend, protect, and practice in daily life. Without trust, there can be no academic freedom. Without respect, there can be no shared governance.

We have been heartened in recent months by the expressions of concern from so many people at TU, from students and alumni to full-time and adjunct faculty to the most vulnerable at-will staff members who want to believe that this university we all love is living up to its

potential. Tomorrow—and every day after that—we hope our colleagues will continue to stand up, and speak up, for its brightest future.

Concerned Faculty of TU  
(CFTU)