

Address to the General Faculty Meeting of ASU  
February 2, 2018

Barbara Howard, Chair, Faculty Senate

[Salutations to the Community of Appalachian State]

It is a great honor to address you this afternoon as Faculty Chair on behalf of the Faculty Senate and the Faculty of Appalachian State at this Spring General Meeting of 2018.

Without a doubt, there are challenges, as there always are, faced on many sides at the state and federal levels in education in general and higher education in particular. There have been controversy and lively debates among faculty across the University System around issues of freedom of speech, academic freedom and shared governance, among others. Faculty at all campuses across the NC University System join us through Faculty Assembly in seeking solutions and common ground with administrations and legislators.

At Appalachian, your Faculty Senators work diligently to bring faculty issues to the table. WE are fortunate to have an administration that seeks to work with us as well. Working within a complex committee structure that extends across the campus, senators serve as a voice of the faculty at the table when issues are investigated, debated, and addressed. Faculty have voice in a wide range of university policies that directly affect faculty working conditions, their academic work with students, and the use of resources to support our core work. Faculty Senators as well as other faculty members serve on many committees in all areas of the university and are added to any *ad hoc* or standing committees in an effort to continually strengthen our shared governance at the University level. Over the course of this academic year alone, faculty now have seats at the table of appropriate administrative councils, committees, and meetings that impact the academic life of Appalachian. We are grateful to have an administration on this campus that welcomes us to these seats and is open at all levels to include faculty.

Shared governance comes with the responsibility to purposefully engage in these conversations. Just as academic freedom does not represent a *carte blanche* to work independently of any academic or curricular parameters, so shared governance does not represent a demand to be heard without active engagement and listening. Academic freedom comes with the responsibility to teach students at the highest level of standard with appropriate oversight and feedback to meet course and program demands. Shared governance requires that faculty accept the demands of engagement by stepping up to offer unique perspectives during discussions. It is not intended to sway our policies in one way or the other, but rather to work collaboratively at all levels of the university to share the responsibility of governance.

There are many opportunities beyond serving on committees that allow you to add your voice to the work of the university. Our Provost and Chancellor offer open forums to listen to faculty

and student voices. One such opportunity will be the Forum on Distance Education that will be held on February 13 from 1 – 3 PM in Tree Top Room #169, Plemmons Student Union. This interactive session will solicit faculty feedback on the prioritization of the twelve recommendations presented by the Task Force. Recently, the Provost offered three opportunities to solicit faculty feedback on use of the Watauga High School facility. Regular Coffees with the Provost open up dialogue between faculty and administration. The Budget Forums seek to provide information as well as feedback. There are many other opportunities available to faculty as well .By opening conversations and increasing transparency, our faculty, staff and administration are seeking to build bridges that will result in stronger decisions and continuous improvement to move Appalachian to the true summit of academic excellence for all students.

We are also working to extend collaborative efforts with the Staff Senate. We appreciate the leadership of Carole Greene in these efforts. I hope you will join Faculty Senate in extending such collaboration as Appalachian seeks to become a community rather than a loose organization of silos.

I encourage you to seek out additional opportunities that are presented to serve on university committees. We will be holding elections this Spring. Nominations for university committees and seats in the Senate will be solicited. Please consider where your talents lie and share them with the larger university community. Add your voice by voting. Communicate with your departmental faculty senator to express any ideas or concerns you have.

Add your voice to the faculty survey sent through email this week by the University System. This is an instrument that solicits important faculty perspective on university, college and departmental work, and only takes a few minutes. I can assure you, our administration will take our input seriously. Later, the COACH survey will also solicit your opinion in a totally different direction. Please respond to this as well.

Today, we will be holding another vote – an historic one. We will be voting at the end of this meeting to end the requirement of using paper ballots to make changes to our Faculty Constitution by allowing electronic voting. This proposed amendment to our Constitution is not proposed lightly or without significant work on all sides since 2008. You were sent a copy of the proposed amendment twice. We will be posting it as well as reading it prior to the vote. Please consider all implications and make a responsible choice as you fill out what may be the last paper ballot to be used at Appalachian State in a General Faculty Meeting. If this vote passes, see me for souvenir ballots as this historic landmark is reached!

Thank you for your time and attention.