24 January 2020

Greetings from your Senate Officers:

As we prepare and look ahead to the faculty meeting on **February 6, 2020 at 3:30 PM in Dede III**, the Senate Officers felt it was important to provide a special edition of the Officers’ Musings to provide further context to the work which has been completed thus far and stress the importance faculty engagement throughout this process.

As we all know, the realities facing higher education are daunting. At Indiana State, we have begun to experience these realities with lower enrollment, and consequently, a shrinking budget. With demographic shifts and increased competition for students, Indiana State can no longer rely on first-time freshman students, directly from high school as our sole (or even dominant) source of new enrollment. While these students will continue to be a major driver in our enrollment, we must begin to chart a new future for ourselves which include a more diversified approach to the type of learners we recruit, retain, train, and graduate.

While these challenges are difficult to address, they are not impossible to overcome. Last year the SEM Council was composed in a way that would include faculty leadership. Drs. MacDonald, Hawkins and Guell have been focused on these challenges as well. Their insights, when combined with the administration’s foresight and decision to investigate solutions to these challenges allows us to strategize before the brunt of the demographic shift hits higher education in the mid-2020’s. Indiana State University has a real opportunity to set ourselves up for success in the years and decades to come, if we are collectively able to adopt a mindset of agility, nimbleness, and solution-focused problem solving. However, mindset itself is not enough. We must transform our institution into one that is not only filled with nimble, solution-focused individuals, but is also nimble and solution-focused in structure and policy.

With this context in mind, the Faculty Senate leadership informally gathered the Provost and a small group of faculty leaders composed of current Faculty Senate Officers, previous chairs of the Faculty Senate, faculty familiar with the Indiana Commission of Higher Education, and faculty representation from across the colleges and library. The group convened prior to the start of the Spring 2020 semester with the goal of informally discussing the challenges, potential solutions, and the best structure by which to engage and connect the faculty in the process of institutional transformation. A complete list of those who attended the meeting can be found below:

Azizi Arrington-Slocum

Shelley Arvin

Carrie Ball

Liz Brown

John Conant

Ryan Donlan

Lindsey Eberman

Kent Games

Bob Guell

Tim Hawkins

Chris MacDonald

Jin Park

Randy Peters

Joe Sanders

Virgil Sheets

Erik Southard

Mike Licari

Diann McKee

At the meeting a number of ideas were generated, including adding the flexibility to offer 8-week courses as a standard format and to offer them year-round. Conceivably, this could enable some faculty in chosen programs to create flexible, year-round schedules. Additionally, several non-negotiables, including faculty control over the curriculum and the maintenance of tenure and promotion, were discussed. Finally, the group discussed potential pathways to formalize discussions and pathways for potential action based on discussions and recommendations. Several ideas were suggested including the creation of a taskforce or charging the standing committees of Faculty Senate with tasks and actions related to institutional transformation. Ultimately, the group came to a consensus that a University-wide taskforce was the best potential option because of the agility of the taskforce model and the required work of the taskforce outside of the traditional academic calendar. We also agreed that whatever proposals come out of any such taskforce would go through faculty governance process, beginning with the existing standing committees, for approval. Although the idea of a taskforce was the consensus of the group, the Faculty Senate Officers and Provost have not yet initiated the creation of a taskforce.

The next step in this process is the faculty meeting on **Thursday, February 6, 2020 at 3:30 PM** in Dede III. The goal of this meeting is two-fold. First, to provide a background of the opportunities which are in front of the University, and second, to provide opportunities for faculty members to engage in the process through the contribution of innovative, solution driven ideas to transform Indiana State University and build a stronger, more resilient institution focused on serving the needs of the learners who choose State.

If you are interested in contributing to the long term health and future of the institution and would like to be considered for roles on any potential taskforces, ad hoc committees, etc. please complete the Qualtrics form in the link below:

<https://indstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8kNMwyEKzomIvI1>

Thank you for your dedication to the success of Indiana State University. In order to effectively chart a positive course for our University, we all must work together through innovative, solution-minded thinking and action.

Your Senate Officers for 2019-2020 and their contact information are:

Chair: Chris MacDonald, Professor and Chairperson, Department of Applied Clinical and Educational Sciences, Chris.MacDonald@indstate.edu

 Vice Chair: Robert Guell, Professor of Economics, Robert.Guell@indstate.edu

Secretary: Kent Games, Associate Professor of Applied Medicine and Rehabilitation, Kenneth.Games@indstate.edu

Please contact one of the Officers or your Senate representative(s) with any questions or concerns.