May 18, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

I write to thank those of you who have been participating in discussions related to unionization. Unionization would change much about our working environment, and it is important for all of us to have accurate information as we participate in these deliberations. In that spirit, I offer some information related to concerns that have been raised in recent weeks.

Some of our colleagues have expressed frustration with the inability of faculty members to shape decisions at the University. At times, I have shared that frustration. However, faculty do have a significant role in shaping many core decisions. Our University Senate structure involves more than 250 faculty, staff, and students. Many more serve on senate committees that deal with critical issues related to our mission, student support, finance and planning, and faculty and staff affairs. As a former Faculty Consultative Committee chair, I know that faculty provide a critical voice in the University's governance process.

On this campus, senior administrators rely on faculty for their wisdom and advice. Many examples of consultation can be found in senate committee meeting minutes. Here are some examples of how faculty shape progress at the University:

1. The strategic plan of our Twin Cities campus was led primarily by faculty. Specifically, more than 100 faculty participated in shaping the core of the plan. Faculty, staff, and students worked together for more than a year to establish the priorities of our Twin Cities campus. Many more have submitted ideas to shape the Grand Challenges we want to address in our research and curriculum. And there are continued opportunities to get involved in these efforts.

2. President Kaler changed his view about the need for an external review of human research protections practices after conversations with faculty leaders. Faculty representatives have also played a key role in developing a response plan and in ongoing implementation. This work
will substantially change our work with human participants.

3. The Women's Faculty Cabinet urged the administration to systematically assess salary equity among faculty members. This led to a salary equity review process that was implemented by the majority of colleges and resulted in 83 salary adjustments in its first year. Provost Hanson has committed to making this an ongoing and institutionalized process.

4. Provost Hanson embraced a process of reviewing college constitutions that was initiated through faculty governance. This process prompted colleges to clarify how faculty participate in collegiate decision-making.

5. The Office of Public Engagement was guided by faculty members to establish a group to review promotion and tenure guidelines for community-engaged scholarship, expand faculty development offerings for faculty interested in doing community-engaged work, and insert public engagement-related items in the faculty activity reports.

6. Our classroom environments and technology are guided by the University Senate's Classroom Advisory Subcommittee. And the University's HelpDesk and computer management/device support consolidation, which will be completed next year, was a response to faculty feedback.

7. The Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs has worked with faculty to develop unit standards for promotion and tenure. Together we've established promotional reviews of associate professors to ensure clear communication about faculty members' progress toward promotion to full professor. A modified duties policy was negotiated by the administration and faculty governance leaders in the past year. Faculty consultation also led to a new way of requesting academic personnel plans that focuses on professional development opportunities for everyone who teaches.

These are just a few of the many examples in which faculty and administrators have worked together to improve our University. I know we can do better to enact shared governance, and I am committed to working toward that end.

Thank you again for your participation in this important conversation. People I respect deeply have views on all sides of
this issue. Ultimately, the decision comes down to two basic questions: Will unionization facilitate the work culture we want to have? Will unionization help us advance the kinds of excellence we seek? If there is any additional information I can provide you, please let me know.

Thank you.

Rebecca

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