

Faculty Address September 1, 2011

It was 29 years ago, in 1982, that I began my association with UCA as an incoming Freshman. I came to UCA, not because of its reputation as an outstanding academic institution, not because a degree program drew me in, and not because I had visited the campus and was impressed by its facilities. I came to UCA because my best friend in our high school graduating class of '21 was going to attend and I had nothing better to do.

After a couple of years, she left, but I stayed. I stayed not because UCA was an outstanding academic institution, or because of a degree program, or because I was impressed by its facilities (in fact, a story I like to tell incoming Freshmen is about the time I got a Sloppy Joe for lunch at Christian Cafeteria. When I took off the top bun there was the handle to a pot, but I digress). I stayed because of the faculty. I had been fortunate enough to have had a number of professors who were able to take this awkward teenager and help her look beyond her small-town vision. I think you may know some of them: Gordon Shepherd, Rick Scott, Conrad Shumaker, Billy Smith, Gary Wekkin, Jim Shelton, and Paul Krause, to name a few.

Now I'm starting my 16th year at UCA. A lot has changed in that time. I returned home in 1996 to the combined department of Geography, Political Science, and Sociology, or GPSS as we affectionately called it. Seven of those years were spent as Chair of the Department of Sociology, working with the faculty of a growing department utilizing an operating budget that was actually \$1 less at the end of those seven years than when I started.

When my colleague, Ed Powers, was President of the Faculty Senate I remember teasing him and saying that I'll never be foolish enough to take on that position. Well, enough about my sensibilities. . .

The great thing about the Faculty Senate is that it is not just one person, but rather 25 active and engaged faculty who care deeply about the success of this University and the students we serve. I'd like to introduce to you the Faculty Senators for the 2011-2012 academic year. Please stand when I call your name.

Business Administration:

Summer Bartczak
Don Bradley
Jim Downey

Education:

Jud Copeland
Terri Hebert
Shoudong Feng

Fine Arts and Communication:

Lynn Burley, Past President
Kevin Browne, Vice President/President-elect

Lanette Grate

Health and Behavioral Sciences:

K.C. Poole
Lisa Ray, Secretary
Melissa Shock

Liberal Arts:

Phillip Spivey
Jay Ruud
Clayton Crockett

Natural Sciences and Mathematics:

George Bratton, Parliamentarian
Ben Rowley
Charles Watson

At-Large Senators:

Debbie Bratton, UC
Don Jones, LA
Amber Wilson, LIB
Brian Bolter, HBS
Doug Isanhart, BUS
Janet Wilson, President, LA

Part-Time Senator: Will be elected next week by the part-time faculty. Please encourage any part-timers in your department to participate in this election.

Now that you have met the faculty who will be representing you this year, I would like to provide you with an overview of some of the matters we will address on your behalf. Please be aware that many of the goals listed below are items that either arose at the end of last year or were identified this summer as major issues to be addressed throughout this academic year. The concerns you brought forth for the Senators at Tuesday's meeting will be reviewed and prioritized by the Executive Committee next week and shared with the Faculty Senate at our September 13th meeting. Many of those items will be addressed by either a phone call to the appropriate person on campus, a charge to the proper University committee, or a charge to a Faculty Senate subcommittee.

Last week, I was able to present many of these goals to the Board of Trustees. At the May Board meeting, the Trustees approved the Strategic Plan that was the end result of months of collaboration between members of all aspects of the UCA family. Again, we want to recognize Dr. Mike Schaefer and those committee members of SPARC for their hard work in guiding the University through a process of articulating where we are, where we want to be in the future, and identifying a path to get there. Now, however, comes the time to implement the initiatives that arose from the Plan. In addition, the University must respond to the Higher Learning Commission by May. A large portion of this response will relate to General Education issues

and university assessment needs, some of which were prioritized within the Strategic Plan. Thus, we see that this year the Higher Learning Commission response and the Strategic Plan initiatives will go hand-in-hand.

My goal for the Faculty Senate is to play an active role, where possible, in moving the university forward through the implementation of the Strategic Plan initiatives and in the completion of the Higher Learning Commission report. The July 14th Strategic Plan retreat I attended provided the UCA community a starting point for prioritizing “cost” and “no cost” initiatives, and offered me a way to envision the role of the Faculty Senate this year.

Under the Strategic Plan No Cost Initiatives:

1. Issues of transparency and communication continue to be of central concern to all involved. While I’ve seen positive progress in vertical methods of communication on campus:

- Development of the Board of Trustee sub-committees, and
- Invitations for the Presidents of the SGA, Staff Senate, and Faculty Senate to attend the summer Board retreat.

Recently, there have been a couple of areas of major “slippage”:

- Failure to provide the President’s Residence Committee and the Board of Trustees with timely information so they may be better able to make informed decisions, and
- The organizational structure published this summer does not provide a line from the faculty of the University College to the Provost. We can’t have faculty on campus with no recognized link to the Chief Academic Officer.

These are forms of vertical communication that will be addressed this year.

It became apparent last year that another area of communication that needs to be addressed is our horizontal communication.

- To that end I’ve asked the Faculty Senators to meet with their Deans to get a feel for goals and needs at that level.
- Also, I’ll start meeting with the Academic Council, which is made up of Chairs and Associate Deans. One of our Senators is a Chair so we should be better able to share information at this level.
- This summer the Presidents of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government Association began monthly meetings. These have been more useful than one might imagine as we identify shared areas of concern and need across campus.
- Finally, last year then President Lynn Burley established a Faculty Concerns site on the Faculty Senate web page. We’ll continue to expand it this year.

2. A second “no cost” activity is the development of a diversity statement for the Faculty Handbook. A subcommittee of the Senate was charged with this task at our first meeting on August 25th. In truth, while a diversity statement for the Faculty Handbook is a “no cost” item, we recognize the implementation of a minority recruitment program will, potentially, be quite costly. As departments and colleges work to develop a minority faculty recruitment plan, hard decisions will have to be made throughout all of the UCA family regarding any allocation of resources to this item.

Under the Strategic Plan Cost Initiatives:

1. Last year a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate outlined the various tasks that should be taken to make sure the University is prepared to respond to the concerns expressed by the Higher Learning Commission. This year the Faculty Senate will play an active role in the report that is due in May. Co-chairs, Deans Hattlestad and Lee have developed a framework and I'll be meeting with a Senate subcommittee next week to begin the task of clarifying the role of the Senate in the completion of the final report.

2. The third prioritized item to come out of the Strategic Plan retreat this summer was a goal to address faculty salaries. I want to emphasize that this did not originate from the faculty, but rather a gathering of the UCA family. We recognize that to be able to best educate and retain our students we must first recruit and retain our faculty. To this end, I asked the Senators to discuss with their constituents this past Tuesday, the preferred form of any raise allocation. This Fall, we will investigate options leading towards a faculty salary increase to be part of the 2012-2013 budget, which is due by March of this year.

3. Along the same line of faculty salaries are faculty benefits. Last Spring a subcommittee was set up to address the woefully outdated sick and maternity leave policy. The fact that we still address illness and parenthood through a "sick leave" policy demonstrates just how out-of-date it is. We are currently drafting a new Medical, Parental, and Military Family Leave policy that we expect to bring before the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Senate in time for the Board to review in the Spring.

4. At the end of last year, a request was made to investigate the feasibility of establishing an annual faculty award for part-time instructors. While there was not enough time to tackle this item last year, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate already has been charged with this task for this year.

Finally, I wanted to remind everyone that with the Board of Trustee support of the Faculty Handbook's Chapter 3 revisions last May comes the creation of the Senior Lecturer/Senior Clinical Instructor/Senior Laboratory Instructor positions. However, no one will be able to apply for these positions until departments and colleges create the promotion guidelines. Past President Lynn Burley, as Chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee, intends to investigate the possibility of creating a tenurable line for these Lecturers/Instructors. While at first pass this may seem like a fairly easy position to define, there will be numerous scenarios that will need to be addressed first. Please be willing to engage in this conversation when it arises.

This year as President of the Faculty Senate will fly by. Already I'm starting my List of Things to Accomplish in next year's role as Past President and Chair of the Faculty Handbook. One of the tasks I hope to tackle is a thorough review of the 53+ committees in the Faculty Handbook and the university-wide ad hoc committees of which there are too many to count.

I'd like to close with a short reference to Sociologist Robert Merton, who when discussing various forms of strain resulting from the structure of society classifies the Ritualist as one who has forgotten the goal, yet clings to the rituals. So, this year, let's not get so caught up in the

minutia of daily deadlines and tasks that we forget our ability to open a world of possibilities for our students through education.

Who knows, right now you may have in your class the Faculty Senate President of 2040!

Thank you!

Janet K. Wilson
Faculty Senate President