Faculty Senate Report to BOT, April 18, 2024.

Good afternoon, Chair Isaac and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Our last faculty senate meeting of the 2024 academic year takes places April 23, immediately followed by the first meeting of the new academic year. At that time we will elect our new FSEC, including a new president, since President-Elect Kimberly McBride will leave for a new faculty position in Washington State. She has been a valued colleague in FS and in our academic programs. We all wish her the very best. She will be missed.

We have had an active year, especially in terms of curriculum and program review. Our RRC ad hoc committee has had fruitful meetings with administration regarding enrollment. Like you, we remain concerned that FAFSA complications will have serious consequences for our fall enrollment.

Discussion of college mergers has also been a frequent topic at FS and in meetings with administration. We appreciate the implementation timeline of fall 2025, that of JHCOE and CAL in particular. This is a significant departure from past college mergers which often took place without consideration of unintended consequences. We also see some positive potential with these mergers. For instance, there are numerous advantages for students to merging JHCOE with CAL. Previously, students training to teach in a particular area such as foreign languages, math, science, history, essentially completed double majors (though they were not labeled as such). They did the equivalent of the subject matter major in one college, and the teacher preparation program in another college. This merger will eventually make advising and course scheduling more efficient.

Program prioritization has obviously been an ongoing concern, particularly given the emphasis on cutting programs in the humanities and social sciences. In an April 12 list of 32 programs targeted for modification into one general major with concentrations, or exploration for elimination of the major or masters, I note that 16 are from the current CAL, 7 from the current JHCOE, 4 from COBI, 2 from HHS, 1 from CON, and 2 from NSM. Many faculty see this as a clear attack on the humanities and a devaluing of our disciplines as not worthy of a student’s full attention. While we fully respect and appreciate the value of UT’s professional programs, we remain concerned that students frequently choose to change majors from those professional programs and now will face limited options. Students who come to college not knowing what major to pursue may very well not choose UT because of limited opportunities to discover their true passion.

I clearly have a personal interest in the targets for prioritization. In a petition protesting the suspension of the French and German program, over 1100 individuals signed and commented on the importance of these languages. For example, one signer wrote: “Languages create opportunities, expand mindsets, cultivate intercultural communication, foster global citizenship, drive innovation and progress... It is very sad to see where UT administration is going - do not take away the opportunity to major in French and German from students!”

Another pointed out the limitations of AI with regard to languages: “I am a research mathematician and I need often to be able to read and understand papers in French. And no, google translate won’t cut it, because it’s not well equipped to translate a very specific genre on French with formulas interspersed. I think it is a great disservice to the students and to our community to cut foreign languages!”

One signer highlighted the current shortage of teachers in general and language teachers in particular: “I am a UT grad with a BA in Spanish. I am a high school and college teacher in Ohio. My German colleague is retiring. Where will I find a replacement?”

That French and German graduates are gainfully employed bears repetition: “I am a graduate of the University of Toledo’s French MA program and I am stunned that the university would want to do away with any foreign language program that is already established. I owe my career to my Master of Arts in French, and I think it’s a tragic choice to eliminate this opportunity for current students.”

“If the academia strip any more vital humanities, such as French and German languages, the University may have to rename the college to The College of Art and Letter; a lack of quality programs will not be enough to force plurality in the name. As a University of Toledo alumnus in French, Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts, every few years I am compelled to support and defend language programs from obsolescence — programs which have taken me far and wide. I have made an excellent living with two language degrees: I have worked in international pharmaceuticals, the chemistry industry, distribution, marketing and translation. Perhaps the University of Toledo should take a hard look at its internal business structure and change course from “this is academia and we’ve always done it this way,” to a real world business model where you have to actively market and sell your majors as products and services. “If you build it they will come,” is no longer a sustainable model in our global economy. You need active campaigns to market important languages like French and German with focus: learning languages is not for the sole goal to teach languages upon graduation, it’s about developing a skill set for future alumnī to be welcomed into the international business community, contribute to the world marketplace, and communicate knowledgeably with colleagues across continents. It’s unrealistic to assume global citizens will speak English. French and German language programs cannot support themselves solely by existing. **AI and google translate will never be enough to replace real human interaction. It’s the University’s responsibility to engage potential students and commit them to language programs. The University’s failure to market the importance of language instruction in French and German rests squarely on its own shoulders as a business failure.** We are in an era where knowledge of world languages is necessary and indispensable. Please reinstate French and German and consider advancement. You must market, engage, and promote these programs via social media and email to engage with future students. The only reason the University of Toledo’s Department of World Languages is not a top ten national program is simply because the **University has failed at every level to invest in and promote these programs.”**

If I am often highly critical of UT initiatives, it is because I have such faith in the potential of this institution to change lives and am deeply saddened when UT does not realize the value of its faculty and its disciplines. I am saddened when our students lose academic options to discover their aptitudes or develop new talents while we chase the latest trend or jobs predictions. Yes, higher education is at a crossroads, but I fear we are on the path to lower education if all we do is reduce a diploma to job training for jobs that may not even exist in the near future. As W.E.B. DuBois said: ““Education must not simply teach work, it must teach Life.”