

**Report to the Faculty**  
**Sara Freeman, Chair of Faculty Senate**  
**April 22, 2020**

Dear Colleagues:

More time than three weeks feels like it has passed since April 1. Because of Covid-19 we are living and working in changed circumstances. We are dealing with the immediate shift to remote operations: we are even dealing well in some areas of our short term necessity by continuing to be thoughtful, prioritize our students, and have probing, supportive discussion in learning and governance spaces. We don't get to have much of a sense of certitude about what will be middle range and long term impacts of this crisis, but we're going to deal with those too.

On that front, early this month President Crawford requested that the leadership of both Faculty Senate and Staff Senate provide input about the principles and values that will guide Cabinet and the campus as we engage in "Dual Track Planning" for operations in the summer, academic year 20-21, and perhaps beyond. Senate discussed this on April 6 and on April 13 I sent the letter included at the end of this report to President Crawford. Ben Tucker has also provided the President with a response from staff.

I received a warm response from the President regarding our input. The President has also communicated with the campus about the plan to form an Operations committee and a Budget Adjustment committee. As this report goes out to you, Senate Executive has been scheduled to meet with the Cabinet on Thursday, April 23 (along with Ben and other staff members) to discuss the formation of those two committees. Senate and I are aware that there are many concerns faculty have about future operations and budget adjustments including, among many others:

1. what happens for faculty who have research or travel leaves or support next year
2. the timing of when contingent faculty might receive new contracts, especially in relation to any still ongoing searches
3. student difficulty navigating the wide range of faculty techniques and expectations in our emergency remote learning situation and the potential need for some standards and guidelines if we continue to have instruction in this capacity.

But the most important immediate issue is the formation of the committees, which needs to be done with the utmost attention to representation and effectiveness, ideally by governance processes rather than appointment. By the time we meet as a full assembly on April 29, I will know what has happened at tomorrow's meeting and will be happy to take any questions faculty wish to pose about the forward motion on dual track planning.

In the rest of this report, I will be precise about our April 29 meeting's procedure and content and then give an update about Senate's actions and continuing to work to the end of this semester.

### **April 29 Virtual Full Faculty Meeting:**

Thank you to everyone for your exemplary participation in and navigation of our first virtual full faculty meeting on April 1. We now know we can do it, though I heartily hope we won't have to do it much more. April 29 will not have the joint Town Hall aspect with staff, so there should be plenty of space for logging in to the meeting.

As before, I have kept the agenda extremely brief. There is one voting item, which is the proposal for a Masters of Public Health program that has come through Curriculum Committee. Because of the limitations of virtual meetings, Senate and the MPH working group created a Canvas site and comment period to allow for questions and discussion about the MPH proposal. I am happy to see people are actively engaging there already. The working group will host its virtual forums on April 24 and 28. Senate will do a final check on this topic at its meeting on April 27, then it will come to the floor of the full assembly.

I urge faculty to prepare questions and comments they know they need to raise on any of the items of business in advance. If you wish to notify me that you will be requesting to speak, I am happy to receive that information prior to the meeting. I will also recognize people in the meeting from the chat bar. It tends to work best if people signal in the chat bar that they want to be recognized by typing an X or a ? in the chat and then when I call on them unmuting and speaking (or typing and I will read it to the group). It is very overwhelming if people start posting their content in the chat bar before being recognized, because people do always track at the same rate, plus there are people who will dial in to the meeting and only hear what is said. Again, the chat bar will be monitored and is part of the meeting's proceedings, so we should not have side conversations on it.

Nonetheless, given all these caveats, we should have all the discussion needed about the MPH proposal. Should discussion conclude so that we can move to vote on the motion to approve, the voting will happen in Qualtrics after the meeting. Please also see below about the Senate action regarding changing the code language related to promotion. If needed, faculty can call for action related to that during the April 29 meeting as well.

### **Senate Business**

Senate has been doing work at virtual meetings and over email, monitoring and approving the actions of standing committees, and trying to keep direct updates coming to faculty about temporary and permanent policy changes. In the last three weeks, you've received updates about temporary ASC policies related to grading, withdrawal, academic sanctions, and Dean's List criteria for our spring and now summer virtual operations. The PSC guidelines about the use of student evaluations and the submission of tenure and promotion files under these circumstances have also gone out. IRB has sent an update about procedural updates and requirements as well.

The Senate action that most needs to be highlighted for faculty as this moment is a decision regarding the motion changing the code language about promotion that we voted on in the January 22 full faculty meeting. We had a split the original motion into two: one changing the

language and one establishing the timeline for implementation. In January we voted to change the language, and then needed to return to the implementation motion. Due to the interruptions created by Covid 19, Senate has concluded that sorting out the timeline for implementation of the new standards could not be accomplished this spring with clear enough faculty deliberation. Because of Covid 19, but also because this code change has a three-year history of debate and necessary delay, this code change has a lot of complication attached to it. Senate also continues to receive feedback that suggests we need more work to build an adequate sense of shared definitions and clarity about the new promotion language and timeline. Therefore, on this item of business, Senate decided to act as the executive body of the faculty and withdraw the pending motion about implementation, and also stop the approved motion about language change before it goes to the Board of Trustees. In sum, Senate is making the call that there will be no changes to the code language about promotion right now. Future Senates can initiate a new round of business on promotion language when able, but we will no longer be carrying over this business from 2017-2018. This Senate action means that people who will be up for tenure and promotion in the foreseeable future will be working under the code language that exists now, but, given the motion for phased implementation of the new language, that is the same situation they would have been in, in almost any case. This Senate action is something that the faculty can overturn at the April 29 meeting or within 30 working days of when Senate's April 6 meeting minutes post, should they choose. Thirty working days will extend into the early fall next year because we have not historically counted summer session days. But there is no request to discuss it and no motions brought the attention of this year or next year's Senate leadership, Senate's action will stand.

In its final two meetings of the year, Senate will receive all the end of year reports from standing committees and focus on providing good continuity for next year. We will also decide the recipient of the Walter Lowrie Award. Please nominate people for this award!

This is my last report to the faculty as Senate Chair. I am preparing my final report to the Board of Trustees this week as well. I feel it is an honor to serve as Senate chair: the work is thrilling, albeit with many highs and lows. I now move on to the Budget Task Force, and truly look forward to working with all of you in a range of governance, instructional, and collegial capacities in coming years.

Finally, congratulations to the newly elected Senators, members of FAC and FSC, and our incoming Faculty Senate Chair! The garden of governance has been reseeded for a new cycle.

Sincerely,

Sara

## Appendix I

### Letter to President Crawford from Faculty Senate Chair, April 13, 2020

Dear Isiaah:

After discussion with the Senate at our April 6 meeting, consideration of conversation on the Faculty Governance list, and my own reflection, I am providing this input.

I have shared a draft of this with Senate, and Senators have generously helped me shape these points.

The most important point to emerge from Senate discussion **is a call to create a faculty-staff governance committee** to collaborate in the off-cycle budget and operational decisions that may need to be made so we can think holistically (though rapidly) about our programs and their future. There was strong interest in this committee being separate from but in consultation with the Budget Task Force, the Faculty Salary Committee, and the Senate. This is because there is a desire for a faculty-centered committee that will not be constrained by the need to 'stay in its lane' and speak only to one aspect of our functioning so that creative solutions can emerge that might cross the usual lines within our labor structures, such as job sharing, temporary redistributions, or other type of work re-imaginings that would allow us to come together to protect the liberal arts nature of the institution, as well as the livelihood of as many people in our community as possible.

A separate committee would also make a bit of space for the Senate to preserve its integrity related to its role (as outlined in the Code) when or if tough decisions are made that may have a negative impact on some of our colleagues. The Senate must retain its role of speaking against decisions if needed and giving voice to any colleagues who feel they have been harmed.

In response to your two questions in your original email:

**Question 1:** From the faculty/staff perspective, would you recommend any revisions, additions or removals from the summary of guiding principles as we consider dual-track planning and any necessary budget reductions in this very challenging and uncertain environment? Would you prioritize certain principles over others?

Among the principles listed, I would put absolute and maximum importance on the first two ("Maintain centrality to mission and adherence to Puget Sound's core values" and "Preserve quality of educational experience for students"). I see already in your leadership that these are the lodestars.

I would put next emphasis on "encourage the innovative deployment of resources." I urge us to "balance the budget with long-term benefits in mind" and I would like to encourage that in adhering to that value we might deemphasize or temporarily take off the list some of the other values. In this situation being too responsive to economic and market conditions may cause us to cut off our nose to spite our face; and to focus too much on competitiveness in the higher

education market in the short term might cause us to do undue damage to our liberal arts model. Likewise, the forward movement of the strategic plan may need to have a longer timeline and not drive some of the off cycle budget decisions.

As I look at the University's Core Values, I would rank **Courage, Respect and Inclusion** as the top three for us to embrace while we engage in dual-track planning around the Covid-19 crisis. **Creativity** would come next, especially as regards our support of contingent faculty and staff during this period. **Shared sacrifice** comes up as an important value to faculty and this whole community, but with the note that many have felt at previous times when that value has been invoked, such as during the 2008 financial crisis, that the sacrifice made by the administration was not equal to the sacrifice made by the faculty. It is important that the choices we make are equitable, which means attending to the way in which budget decisions impact members of our community differently, even when 'on paper' certain cuts and reductions appear to be the same.

In the Senate meeting on April 6, the other values to emerge were:

- Transparency during all phases and at all levels
- Full access to information
- Commitment to offering a curriculum that represents our full liberal arts values, across disciplines.

**Question 2:** What do you see as the key areas of input needed from faculty and staff leadership to inform our decision-making?

Key areas where input is needed:

- The duration of remote operations and the date for return to in-person operations
- Policies regarding work from home and technical access and support
- Changes to any aspect of compensation
- Actions related to the employment of contingent faculty
- Actions related to the retention or layoff of staff members
- The development of any new initiatives or consolidation of existing programs in light of the crisis

There is also strong support among Senate for student input to inform decision-making.

Finally, I will highlight the adaptive, forward-thinking ideas that faculty are putting forth on the Faculty Governance list, especially from Gwynne Brown, Lisa Wood, and David Sousa. There is ample evidence that faculty are ready and willing to help address the impacts of the crisis for our operations in creative, mutually supportive ways. This strengthens the call for a consultative committee.

Thank you for your partnership and focus during this truly upending public health crisis.

Sara

**Appendix II**  
**Values Document from President Crawford**



**Principles to Guide Budget Decisions**

- Maintain centrality to mission and adherence to Puget Sound’s core values (see below)
- Preserve quality of educational experience for students
- Maintain competitiveness in the higher education marketplace
- Use strategic plan to drive resource allocations
- Encourage innovative deployment of resources
- Expect maximum operating efficiency and effectiveness
- Expenditure levels must be within available revenues and responsive to economic and market conditions
- Balance the budget with long-term benefits in mind

**Core Values**

We believe in the transformational power of a liberal arts education, where students come first and learning and holistic development is an absolute priority.

**Excellence**

**Justice**

**Leadership**

**Creativity**

**Respect**

**Courage**

**Inclusion**