

Senators and guests,

I want to first start off by saying thank you to President Jay Golden. Although Jay only served in his role for 9 months on our campus, he has clearly demonstrated a care for faculty, staff, and students. One of the things I have appreciated about him in the short time I worked with him, was that I always had a seat at the table no matter how much support or resistance I gave him. Even if he moved in a direction differently than what I recommended, at the end of the day I was never left out of a conversation. It's a reminder that it takes a thick skin to be president and to allow faculty to have a seat at the table. I am sorry to see his tenure end as early as it did.

As my humanities friends will tell you, reality and truth are only part of the public perception of the events in our lives. I am willing to cede that there may be a reality that the faculty, staff, and students did not see that required such an abrupt departure. However, at this point the perceptions put the future of our university at serious risk. As a human being I of course have concerns for Jays future, but my role as senate president means my concerns for the future of our institution must be even greater. Nobody can deny the perception is a President well-liked by Faculty, Staff, and Students made a value judgement that was disliked by donors who have loud voices in our community and was then dismissed by the Board of Regents for that judgement. My greatest worry is for the next person who steps into the permanent role of president at our university.

I worry that they will be able to effectively and quickly make decisions without a constant fear of losing their job because they have displeased the board. I worry that they will second guess themselves around each corner for fear of an angry donor. Finally, I worry about a taller hurdle of trust the next president will have to pass with our university community to demonstrate a commitment to shared governance and not just commitment to select members of Wichita State Community.

At a time where we are dealing with significant budget cuts, a pandemic, and now a controversial resignation of the university president the Board of Regents has a responsibility to rebuild the trust with Faculty, Staff, Students, and the larger WSU Community. I believe this will mean careful consideration of how the search process moves forward, who is appointed as interim president, and how the various constituents of our campus are engaged moving forward.

With that said, I do want to publicly acknowledge that I am pleased that Dr. Muma has agreed to once again step into the role of Acting President. In my short time as senate president and before that, I have seen a commitment from Rick for shared governance, transparency, and an inclusive campus that cares for our students. Wichita State has some critical decisions to make over the next months, and his deep knowledge of our institution, and his past experience as acting president will make him an invaluable asset during this time.

Alex Sternfeld-Dunn  
Faculty Senate President