



Vision Statement for the 2014-2016 Administration

Arthur C. Jones, Faculty Senate President
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Guiding Theme: *Transcending Our Silos*

- *Stepping up to Shared Governance and Faculty-Staff-Student Collaboration*
- *Championing Safety, Access and an Actively Inclusive Campus Culture*
- *Exploring Global Models of Community Engagement, Civic Responsibility and Public Good*
- *Visioning New Channels for Encouraging and Supporting Interdisciplinary Teaching and Research*
- *Forging Communication and Continuity Across Faculty Senate Administrations*

Dear Senators:

During the past year, as I settled into my role as Faculty Senate President-Elect, I began thinking about a framework for the work of the Senate that I would propose when I became President. As the months passed and as I solicited feedback from faculty colleagues, I decided that I would frame our work around a symbolic guiding theme that would serve as the framework for a set of subordinate, interconnected themes. Now that I'm beginning my term as President, I want to share with you the guiding theme that I am advancing and ask that you join me in organizing our work together using this framework. I've outlined it succinctly at the top of this letter, above. Let me elaborate by sharing the back story.

In my experience as a practicing clinical psychologist and scholar with an intercultural orientation, symbols have always carried enormous power. I have found that symbols, for both individuals and for communities, tend to be self-generating powerhouses in which interconnected themes emerge. These themes evolve naturally (sometimes in nonlinear, unpredictable ways) into richly meaningful goals that – as we reach for them – have the potential to be personally and collectively transformative. Symbols appear in many places in the culture – in dreams, visual images, spoken and written verbal expression, and in songs, just to name a few examples.

Rather than entering into a detailed set of definitions of symbols, themes and goals, let me offer just one instructive example of these constructs in action that I hope will suffice for now to lay the groundwork for the framework I am advancing. As many of you know, I have spent much of my time over the last 20 years exploring – through scholarship and musical performance – the cultural and psychological underpinnings of the songs called spirituals, created and first sung by enslaved Africans in America in the 18th and 19th centuries. One of my favorite songs in the spirituals tradition is one that many of you will be familiar with because I've introduced it in several settings at DU: *The Welcome Table*

*I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, hallelujah,
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days!*

The guiding theme of this song – the welcome table – carries tremendous symbolic power. One immediately imagines a metaphorical table that is the gathering place that welcomes and includes all who come to it for nourishment (of the mind, the body, the soul). As the original slave composer conjured up this symbolic guiding theme, the lyrics (subordinate themes) likely followed. The lyrics elaborated on the guiding theme. Slavery was anything but welcoming, but *in the imagination* one could assertively claim a future (“one of these days”) in which everyone would in fact be invited to join a genuinely democratic community and in which every person’s multi-layered needs for nourishment would be met. By embracing such a goal, one would be motivated to engage in a determined struggle to achieve it. And if enough folks joined the fight, they would maximize their chances of inching closer to their goal. This elaborate series of subordinate themes was all set in motion by the construction of the initial guiding theme (the welcome table).

In similar fashion, on several occasions this past summer, I closed my eyes and tried to picture an image that might symbolize the guiding theme that would be most appropriate for the work of the Faculty Senate at this point in our history. Nearly every time that I engaged in this exercise, the image that emerged was of a silo. Each time I found myself rejecting the image. I wanted to challenge it, to confront it, to make it go away!

There is no need for rocket science to explain why this image kept coming up for me. It is hardly an image that is uniquely connected to me personally. It’s in the air at DU, seemingly everywhere. Many of us have used the word “silo” in our conversations, as a metaphorical representation of our fragmented, decentralized institutional culture, in which we often

operate as a federation of loosely connected academic and administrative units rather than as one university. Increasingly, many of us want to break out of these confining structural barriers.

This segmented institutional culture is highly compatible with the academic preparation most of us engaged in as graduate students. We entered graduate school in separate departments, each of which was associated with a specific academic discipline, often housed in a stand-alone building. That was certainly the case for me at the University of Iowa in the late 1960s and early 70s. I estimate that I spent at least 75 percent of my waking hours in the Psychology Department, which was housed in a building known as the Spence Laboratories of Psychology, named after the legendary Iowa psychologist Kenneth Spence, a pioneer in the conservative classical conditioning branch of behavioral psychology. (For Spence, even B.F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning was considered radical!).

The Spence Labs – as we called the building – even housed its own specialized psychology library, so that psychology graduate students and faculty members had little incentive to venture outside the building. That was about as narrowly segregated as one could get, mirroring the numerous segregated grain silos that were spread across the countryside in the geographic area that encircled Iowa City! Even then, something in me rebelled against this unnatural system of self-imposed intellectual and social segregation.

I find myself encouraged that some scholars of higher education, and particularly liberal arts education (including Chancellor Chopp), are continuing to highlight the fact that the natural world outside of the academy is not structured along segregated disciplinary lines, and so our academic culture will be increasingly more isolated and less connected to external cultural and environmental realities if we insist on maintaining these outmoded ways of conducting our professional work.¹

At the same time, I have sensed the presence of a *zeitgeist* of sorts in the air, a collective yearning to break out of our normal ways of operating at DU. I have not tested it systematically, but there are signs that we are edging close to a “tipping point”² in which a

¹ See especially the new book by Wesleyan University President Michael Roth: [Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters](#), New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, and a recently published volume of essays edited by DU Chancellor Rebecca Chopp, with Susan Frost and Daniel Weiss: [Remaking College: Innovation and the Liberal Arts](#), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

² Malcolm Gladwell, [The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference](#). New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

critical mass of us are ready to engage in a series of personal and collective actions that can be transformative for us as an institution as we move to *transcend our silos* in a variety of ways.

For these reasons, I am advancing *transcending our silos* as the guiding theme for our work in the Senate this year. This guiding theme generates several interconnected subordinate themes, each of which has the potential to motivate us to work for transformative institutional change:

Stepping up to Shared Governance and Faculty-Staff-Student Collaboration

As a Senate, one immediate opportunity is embodied in the hard work we have engaged in these last four years in creating a revised Appointments, Promotions and Tenure (APT) document that outlines a creative structure for a new way of doing business as a faculty, which Chancellor Chopp has recently characterized as a document that could possibly set the standard for universities nationwide. When these new structures and procedures outlined in the APT document are implemented, we will have seriously deconstructed some of the hierarchical silos that have previously separated tenured and tenure track colleagues from those appointed in non-tenure track lines. Building on this, the work of our ad hoc tenured faculty performance review committee has the potential to produce some creative recommendations for ensuring that tenured faculty members can continue to grow and be productive professionally throughout the length of their careers.

In the midst of this work, we have discovered an unexpected but refreshingly positive spirit of collaboration with the administration and members of the Board of Trustees that hints at possibilities for genuine shared governance at a level that some of us have not experienced before (more on this as we report progress on the final approval process for our revised APT document).

So I will be extending a challenge to those of you who may have accepted a seat in the Senate simply because no one else in your unit wanted to do it. I will be challenging you to join us in *stepping up* to new opportunities for shared governance, including opportunities for more collaborative work with students and with our staff colleagues. And most importantly, we must respond to the invitations our new Chancellor has issued for participation in her current listening tour, followed up by engagement in dialogue with her at the planned Chancellor roundtables with the faculty that are scheduled throughout the current year. I

have also invited her to attend one of our Senate meetings this fall.

Championing Safety, Access and an Actively Inclusive Campus Culture

As we come out of our physical and symbolic silos and begin to work together to address substantive campus wide concerns, we can't begin to do any effective work without committing ourselves to the task of ensuring that our campus environment is safe and inclusive. This won't be easy, because there are serious challenges involved. Like all university campuses, we as faculty will need to do our part in creating a campus culture in which we stand together – as a whole community – to diminish the frequency of substance abuse and the potential for acts of sexual harassment and sexual violence. So we will need to be informed about the hard work that is being done by the Title IX coordinator and working group, and seek ways in which the Senate can join in a collective campus commitment to preventing and responding effectively to sexual harassment and sexual violence.

A report that summarizes the results of a comprehensive study of the experiences of staff and faculty women and staff and faculty of color has recently been released. It indicates strongly that we have some major work to do in eliminating the barriers to inclusion that many of our faculty and staff colleagues experience daily. The good news is that as a campus community we've been motivated to collect these data. We have an opportunity to build on this work by joining with other campus partners in ensuring that the recommendations attached to this report are implemented. As the concept of inclusive excellence implies, we are more excellent academically and in multiple other ways when we welcome a diverse array of campus community members into an inclusive and welcoming campus climate.³

Later this calendar year, the faculty group studying the legacy of John Evans in connection with DU's sesquicentennial year will release its report. The recommendations will likely spark some contentious but necessary dialogue about some of the uglier parts of DU's history. I learned years ago as a practicing psychologist that sweeping family secrets under the rug is comforting in the short run, but disastrous in the long run. I believe we can come out of our dialogue with an opportunity for genuine healing as a campus community.

³Damon A. Williams, Joseph B. Berger and Shederick A. McClendon, [Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-Secondary Institutions](#). American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2005.

Finally, the results of a study of student experiences at DU (with a particular focus on students of color, international students and gay and lesbian students, whose responses to the most recent campus climate survey reflected heightened experiences of alienation and isolation at DU) will be released early next year. This report will provide an opportunity for the Faculty Senate to join in a campus-wide commitment to create a genuinely inclusive campus climate for all students, who should be at the center of our efforts. We are here to serve students, and we owe them our commitment to serve them well.

Exploring Global Models of Community Engagement, Civic Responsibility and Public Good

As we enter into the task of bringing our professional work more in line with our public image of “a great private university dedicated to the public good,” we have an exciting opportunity to make more visible the public good work that current faculty members are engaged in as we also learn more about creative models for public engagement, teaching and scholarship in a global community. In October, Dr. Barbara Holland, a major scholar in this field who has proposed ideas for institutionalization of community engagement on university campuses, will be giving an address at DU, at the invitation of the DU Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning. As good fortune would have it, Dr. Holland will deliver her address on October 24th at 10 am, and we will have our Senate meeting immediately following. This will give us an opportunity for fresh discussion and engagement with some of the ideas that Dr. Holland has presented to us, building on the discussions we had last year.

Visioning New Channels for Encouraging and Supporting Interdisciplinary Teaching and Research

Potentially, one of the most exciting silo-busting transformation activities will be the elevation of interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship as a normative practice rather than an aberration. We will need to begin examining the structural barriers that hold us back in this area. We already have some dynamic practices on campus, for example the IRISE program, the Joint DU-Iliff Ph.D. program and the new major in Gender and Women’s Studies. It’s time for us to envision ways in which we can do more, and can work with our academic

leaders in the administration (Provost, Associate Provosts, Deans) to join with and support us as we expand our efforts.

Obviously this is an ambitious vision statement, but I want to reiterate what I wrote at the outset. With the establishment of our guiding theme, the subordinate themes will evolve naturally as we begin the work, and the actions that follow may sometimes take us in unpredictable directions. What I am proposing is that we set the theme in place as a framework, and allow ourselves to be open to where it may take us, taking advantage of the natural action plans that emerge along the way.

Much of the work will be difficult. We will have disagreements and conflicts about directions and priorities. If we all commit to acting in a spirit of good will, with the health of our institutional culture at the center of our sometimes disparate passions and perspectives, I believe that we can withstand these conflicts and even be better as a result. And if we truly are approaching the kind of “tipping point” that Malcolm Gladwell has described, a few small actions may well take us further than we might have imagined. What I do know is that without a guiding vision we risk accomplishing little of value in the context of our increasingly transformative aspirations.

I am very aware of how short a two-year Faculty Senate administration is. In line with this awareness, I am reviving a practice that Don McCubbrey began a few years ago when he was Faculty Senate President – a council of past presidents that meets periodically to compare notes, share advice, and commit to continuing the threads of work that have gone incomplete because of time pressures or other deterrents and to continuing current progress into the next administration. I am excited about drawing on the collective wisdom of these campus leaders as well as the wisdom of all of you, my fellow elected representatives of our community of DU faculty members. I am honored by the opportunity to work with you, and I look forward to rolling up our sleeves together as we begin.

Thank you for reading this long missive. In addition to saving some time in our short formal meeting this week, my aim was to give you as complete a view as possible of my vision for our work together this year. I hope that I have accomplished that goal. Please email, call, or approach me in person if you have comments, questions or simply have an interest in engaging in further dialogue about the framework I am advancing here.

My best to you,

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