

From: A. David Trubatch, President of the University Senate

Subject: Report to the Board of Trustees

Date: April 11, 2018

Thank you for the invitation to provide a report to the Board of Trustees.

Earlier this year, the Latino/a Caucus of Montclair State University brought to the attention of the University Senate that the citizenship and visa status of students was widely visible on Banner and Starfish to faculty members, and others designated as student advisers. The Senate promptly recommended a policy that students' citizenship and immigration status only be accessible on a 'need-to-know' basis. The recommended policy was adopted by the Administration, and University systems were changed to function in accordance with this policy. A link to the new policy was included on the "Immigration Update" page on the University Website, and The Montclairion Headline on February 21 was "Senate Helps Resolve Privacy Issue for Undocumented Students". The accompanying article included supporting quotes from University President Susan Cole. These public affirmations of the Policy provided a clear message to our students –including some who are particularly vulnerable– that the University is concerned for, and acts to protect, their well-being.

Last week, the University Senate transmitted a recommendation to the Administration that the University adopt a socially-responsible investment policy, with an initial focus on (i) divestment from companies whose primary business is fossil-fuel production, distribution, etc., while (ii) actively seeking investments that support sustainable energy production and "green" transportation. The genesis of this recommendation was a resolution by the Student Government Association (SGA) regarding divestment from fossil fuels. President Cole then asked the Senate to form a Task Force that would propose a responsive policy for the University.

The policy focus of the Recommendation followed directly from the concerns raised by the SGA. Beyond these particular policy recommendations, the Task Force proposed the establishment of a standing Committee to support ongoing review and development of investment policies consistent with the values of the University. The Task Force specifically proposed that the Committee would serve as a venue for students, and the rest of the University Community, to initiate consideration of emergent issues in relation to the investment policies and practices of the University.

The Recommendation was not your agenda for today's meeting. I look forward to the statement reaching the Board via the Administration.

While there has not been a recorded recommendation from the Senate regarding the University College, both the Senate and the Senate Executive Board have engaged in useful consultations with the Administration on the implementation of the new College, and the collateral effects of this reorganization. We have facilitated dissemination of plans for the College, and communicated concerns and feedback from the University Community to the Administration.

There are many reasons to believe that the establishment of the University College, along with the complementary assumption of additional advising responsibilities by the respective Colleges and Schools (for students who have declared a major), will provide effective support, and hence greater success, for our undergraduates. Nevertheless, the reorganization will require adequate funding for the necessary resources. In particular, President Cole assured the Executive Board that plans for expanded advising in the Colleges and Schools would be completed so that the necessary resources could be included in the budget request from each Dean, on behalf of their respective College/School. I ask that, as you consider the budget for the upcoming academic/fiscal year, the Board include the necessary funds for these plans, as they are key to making the establishment of the University College a net gain for all of our undergraduates.

I hope that these specific items, in addition to being timely, have provided some concrete examples of the exercise, and value, of shared governance here at Montclair State University.

I will close with a comment on the role of the Board in shared governance. As I have noted previously, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), in its 2017 Board of Directors' Statement on Shared Governance, stated that, regarding shared governance, "... boards need to ... understand its potential value in executing needed institutional change, and help ensure its effectiveness in strengthening the institutions for which they are responsible;" and, further, that: "Institutional policies that define shared governance should be reviewed periodically to ensure their currency and applicability." Consistent with the AGB statement, the Middle-States Evaluation Team suggested development of plans for "systematically assessing [the] governance system" here at Montclair State University.

While the conduct and content of shared governance is, rightly, left to the governance bodies (University Senate, College and University Committees, Departments and Schools), I suggest that the role of the Board of Trustees can be seen as analogous to its audit responsibility regarding the University's finances. The Board, and even the audit committee itself, do not perform the actual audit of the University's accounts. Instead, the Board ensures that adequate policies and controls are in place so that effective audits can be performed. Similarly, I encourage the Board to consider the policies and practices of shared governance at Montclair State University in order to ensure that they meet the institutional needs of the University and embody long-standing academic values, especially as we move forward with the development of our new Strategic Plan.