

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

Subject: Report to the Board of Trustees – As Prepared

Date: December 21, 2018

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

Just before the last time I addressed you –at your April, 2018 meeting– the University Senate had made a Recommendation that the University adopt a socially-responsible investment policy. Following that Recommendation, along with input from President Cole, at your June meeting, the Board established an Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investment, which includes a representative of the University Senate, Devon Johnson, nominated by the Senate, and recommended by the President of the University. Earlier this fall, the Committee began its work.

The Senate has formed a complementary Committee on Socially Responsible Business Policies and Practices, charged with considering of the impacts of University within the broader social and environmental context in which we operate. In particular, The Committee serves as a point of contact for members of the University community, including the Student Government Association, and other student groups, to bring issues of social responsibility to the attention of the University Senate –and thus into the sphere of shared governance– as they emerge.

In a separate matter, following inquiries by the Senate, and discussions among the Administration and the Senate Executive Board, as well as other advisory bodies of the University, the Administration presented a draft Policy on Use of Legal and Preferred Names, earlier this fall. In a subsequent Recommendation, the Senate endorsed the adoption policies and practices that allow an individual member of the University Community to be known by, and identify themselves, by a preferred name. The Recommendation also included specific feedback and suggestions meant to clarify and strengthen the Policy as it is adopted. I look forward to a finalized Policy going into effect soon.

The development and implementation of a Preferred-Name Policy touches on the fundamental policy life-cycle process at Montclair State University. While the business of policy development may not be as headline-grabbing as other University business considered by the Senate, it affects, even underlies, almost all the others, as well as practically all aspects of the University. After discussions with the Administration, and consideration by a Senate Task Force, the Senate made a Recommendation on Policy Development, Review, and Dissemination (passed at the May, 2018, senate meeting). Subsequently, President Cole asked the Office of University Counsel to compile and index current policies, including pruning of obsolete and old versions of policies, and to prepare an accessible compendium of University policies. Moreover, my understanding is that the Office of Counsel is refining a template for University policies, which would support systematic policy development going forward. The Senate –and members of the University who are inclined

to pay attention to such issues– look forward to an update from the Administration on the progress of the Office of the Counsel later this Spring, and to the further development of a policy life-cycle process suitable to the University, given the size and complexity to which it has grown.

Looking ahead, the Provost recently announced a re-examination of general education here at Montclair State, with a concomitant pause in the operations of the General Education Committee and a “freeze” on adjustments within the current framework during this re-examination. Of course, general education is a central part of the undergraduate education mission of the University, and plays a key part in shaping the overall undergraduate experience at Montclair State. Therefore, careful, periodic review, refinement –and occasional reinvention– of the Program is certainly warranted.

At the same time, issues of curriculum are at the heart of shared governance. That is, within the regulatory and institutional constraints under which we operate, development of the content and structure of the curriculum is a central responsibility of the Faculty. The professional staff, librarians, specialists, and Administration, play essential roles in those operations that bring the curriculum to life for students. Organized deliberation by the Faculty regarding assessment of the current General Education Program, and plans for the future, including input from other stakeholders, will require coordination among bodies, and an overall structure, that facilitates the gathering, reporting and dissemination of data, findings, and proposals, as well as a path for recommendations and responses.

In consideration of this need, I note that the Senate does not, by itself, constitute shared governance at our University. Instead, the Senate, and the Senate Executive Board, are bodies that participate in the oversight and organization of shared governance on behalf of the constituents of the Senate, across the University Community. In this role, I am bringing to your attention the planned undertaking to re-make General Education here at Montclair State. As I have noted previously, ‘best-practice’ guidelines (for example, from the the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges) provide that governing boards have a role in ensuring the effectiveness of shared governance due to its importance in the execution of necessary institutional change.

Please note that my comments are made with an awareness of the distinct, complementary roles of the Board, Administration, faculty and other staff of the University. Specifically, the conduct and content of shared governance is, rightly, left to the governance bodies, while certain institutional, legal and fiduciary responsibilities lie with the Administration and Board. Again, I encourage the Board to consider the policies and practices of shared governance to ensure that they meet the needs of the University and embody long-standing academic values.