Address of the 22\textsuperscript{nd} Faculty Senate
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Years ago, standing in line at the faculty social bar, I mentioned I was excited to be on the faculty senate. An older colleague behind me laughed and told me I was wasting my time. He said, the senate has no power, because no one listens to the senate. I added his laughter to the list of pre-tenure worries I carried.

It took 5 years, but I finally thought of the perfect comeback. What speaker has not had to struggle for an audience’s attention? Act III, Scene 2, of *Julius Caesar* portrays one of the greatest speeches ever imagined. It begins with a plea, “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.”

It may seem odd that Shakespeare would portray Marc Anthony as begging for an audience. After all, Marc Anthony holds everyone’s attention as he carries the dead body of Caesar. Brutus has just introduced Marc Anthony, and commanded the crowd to listen. The audience begs him to speak. And yet, Marc Anthony pleads for a hearing. It is not so odd.

As Shakespeare demonstrates, you may be given an audience, but you have to win the attention and consideration of an audience. An audience lends you its ears in exchange for something. The struggle started long ago and continues.
In 1984 the LMU "Academic Assembly" and the "Faculty Advisors to the President" voted to abolish itself. The Official history of the senate states of the occasion, "there was no voice raised in protest." The history also records the reasoning for the vote and the frustrations that gave rise to the faculty senate that followed.

All too often faculty have found themselves wondering if anyone was listening to the faculty voice on key issues; administrators have found themselves wondering which group or body really does speak for the faculty.

That may have been true at one time, but it is not my experience. I have had the pleasure of watching the senate fight for an audience, a hearing, and consideration. In the last few years, the senate has stubbornly and persistently worked to capture the ears of its own faculty and administrators.

Under the leadership of James Roe, the senate discovered the power of the subpoena. Some administrators felt free to ignore our motions and resolutions, but they were compelled to accept our invitation and answered difficult questions.

Led by Vicki Graf, the senate looked for willing partners and convinced those who would work with us that we would take our role in shared governance seriously. The senate reminded those who had not seen the light that they should consult with the senate before a decision was made, or face the senate
after. I am pleased to say the senate has consistently found willing partners in the administration. The CAO, the senior Vice Presidents, and the Deans have worked hard to build stronger relationships, more transparency, and clearer lines of communication.

A hearing—a genuine hearing—is never simply given to any one. And even when a speaker has an audience’s attention, a speaker must fight to hold it with each word.

Now that the Senate has attained a more prominent voice in dialogues within the university, a new challenge arises: what do we have to say? How will the faculty achieve and maintain a hearing? The two questions are linked. What we have to say and how we say it determines if our audience will listen. Before we discuss our message, let me tell you some things I know, and then confess some sins.

Some things I know.

- The senate is not a bulletin board where decisions made elsewhere are posted.
- We cannot exist solely as a department of faculty complaints.
- The senate is neither powerless nor independent of the institution that provides our intellectual home.
As I see it, the mission of the senate is simple:

- Amplify the voice of the faculty
- Give form and force to the curriculum
- Provide informed guidance through the administration of committees
- Defend academic freedom

If these tasks are achieved, the professoriate can fulfill its obligations and pursue its passions without distraction.

Something else I know. Distraction does not serve the scholar or the student. That is the senate’s theme for the year. On this campus, I do not worry about some outrageous act curtailing academic freedom. The opinion that the senate has no power does not concern me. Those who think the senate powerless simply have not been paying attention.

I chose this year’s theme, because I heard you talk about your lives, your dreams, and you frustrations. As a university, we have undergone significant growth. The influence of WASC and greater commitment to our mission has resulted in increasing workloads. As the university has grown, the pace and nature of our lives has changed. Simultaneously, expectations of Faculty have grown higher. As a result, we have a sense of being asked to do more, in less time.
Cura Personalis. Initially, the idea applied only to Jesuits. It was a directive to Jesuit superiors to look after each man in the community according to his unique gifts, challenges, needs and possibilities.

Cura Personalis cares for, and thereby makes a place for, all aspects of an individual, not merely the required or the most productive. The intrusion of the business of the university upon the mission of the university causes me great concern. I worry about disturbances of quiet contemplation and focused thought. If I worked at a state school, this would not be a concern. But this is a special place. A place of Cura Personalis.

My friend Brian Treanor puts eloquence to this concern when he notes,

    We cannot simultaneously expect faculty to have the on-campus presence of an Oxford don, the classroom impact of Mark Van Doren, the publishing success of Ralph McInerny, and the service commitments of my Jesuit friends. Add responsibilities to family and friends, and some measure of private life—all of which should be taken very seriously by institutions purporting to espouse the education and health of the whole person—to this mix and things get downright Sisyphean. Something has to give.

We are not the type of community that shirks our obligations. If we were a bit more selfish, we might find time for our selves, our families, and the adventurous wanderings of our own mind.
Because we already give our time freely to our students, our classrooms, our colleagues, and our university, added distractions and duties leave us less time to think, observe, and write.

I promised to share some things I know and confess some sins. I do not know if distraction is a sin against anyone or anything. Theology can give me a ruling later. Yet when I recall the struggle to think and profess freely, when I think of the number of silenced scholars, when I imagine the knowledge lost; I know distraction is a sin against the sacred freedoms and tasks we now enjoy.

Lean close so you can hear my sins of distraction, if for no other reason, than to be able to say you heard a Mennonite make a confession.

- I have agreed to serve on too many committees that would probably be more efficient without me.
- I have taken the precious time of others talking when I should have listened.
- When given a printout of power point slides, I sat as the presentation was read word for word, when I should have walked out the door.
- I allowed myself to be distracted by busywork that I should have protested.
- At other times, I have taken pleasure is conspiratorial thinking when my critical skills could have been better spent.
- I have been distracted by coffee prices and the lack of parking when I should have helped Matt Dillon revise the handbook.
These are my sins of distraction against the sacred freedoms and tasks of the professoriate. I do not use the word lightly. The task as professors is so essential to the public interest that society has set aside a special class of privileges to assist us. No other group can claim the freedom of speech afforded to professors. No other group enjoys the security of tenure. No other group is charged with the task of thinking, given time, and the right to be left alone, in exchange for knowledge. Distraction should never minimize this privilege.

This year, the senate will remain focused upon our theme, and attend to issues that reduce distraction so that professors can focus on research that serves teaching, and teaching that serves the community. The senate proposes the following agenda,

- Revision of the handbook, as it shapes our academic life and defines our freedoms and obligations.
- Review Rank and Tenure procedures to protect the rights of our junior faculty, ensure the future of the professoriate, and thereby maintain the health of the university.
- Work collaboratively to retain a diverse, dynamic faculty.
- Review senate committees to determine which are active, viable, and identify opportunities for reorganization.
- Continue to explore our obligations and opportunities in shared governance.
Of course, the unexpected happens. When saying so long, my grandfather would always add, “enjoy the tornado tomorrow, or the next day.”

The senate cannot anticipate everything. We need your help.

- Senators, continue to bring the concerns and suggestions of your constituents to the senate.
- More importantly, share the good work you do and the things you learn in the senate with those you represent.
- Faculty, if you discover gaps or errors in the handbook, let us know.
- If you are aware of a committee that is drifting, tell us.
- If you see ways to hold the attention of our partners in shared governance, we need to hear it.

By the same token, I am not going to fuss over a spark in the outhouse when the barn is on fire.

Earlier, I used the word sacred to describe what we do. I know this may sound like hyperbole, so let me leave you with this final thought. In 1837 Ralph Waldo Emerson described the American Scholar. Little did he know that the battle for intellectual freedom would be lost for another 64 years. The professorate could not claim a victory until 1901 when Edward Ross, professor of economics was fired by Ms. Stanford for his views of the gold standard. The Ross case gave rise to the AAUP, which then codified the American concept of academic freedom in 1915.
Back to Emerson who describes the task of the American scholar in soaring terms. You will note I have corrected Emerson for his lack of gender sensibility, the scholar is that individual who must take up into herself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. She must be a university of knowledges. If there be one lesson more than another, which should pierce her ear, it is. The world is nothing, the individual is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all, it is for you to dare all.

Emerson continues,
In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let her hold by herself; add observation to observation, patient of neglect, patient of reproach; and bide her own time,--happy enough, if she can satisfy herself alone, that this day she has seen something truly.

More hyperbole? Perhaps. But if we do not believe this of our selves, who will? If we do not defend our work and our student’s future against distraction, who will? What power are we entitled to if we do not work to be heard?

As faculty, let us add observation to observation. Let us work together to see something truly, and now that we have a hearing, let us not waste it.