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AFC REPORT- Regents Meeting, ASU

Read by Penny Ann Dolin, AFC Chair

The faculty of the 3 Universities again welcome this opportunity to meet with the Regents and share positive developments and concerns as well.

On the positive side, the U.S. Department of State awarded a \$13.8 million cooperative agreement to ASU under the International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund, aimed at bolstering the assembly, testing and packaging capabilities in ITSI partner countries in the Americas and the Indo-Pacific. This part of the CHIPS act mirrors the central themes of the charter that guides Arizona State University, in that it strives to build a resilient international supply Chain.

The University of Arizona has been awarded a prestigious Delphi Award for their case studies in 2023, which highlights innovative and important policies, programs and initiatives instituted by these universities in support of their career track faculty. The faculty is proud of all of our colleagues, but want to acknowledge the excellence of our UA colleague (one of two in the US) inducted into the Inventor's Hall of Fame.

NAU is projected to achieve R1 research status in 2025 and has seen an increase of over 40% in the fall 2023 first year cohort of Indigenous students. NAU researchers have explained the remarkable recovery of the coastal Redwoods forest following the CZU lightning complex fire which burned thousands of acres in August 20203

Freedom of speech remains an important topic for all Universities. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the "free speech" movement that began among students at the University of California, Berkeley, and spread swiftly across the country. We believe free speech must be protected. As mentioned in an article in the New York Times Magazine, "The classroom is first and foremost, a place to train young minds toward a yearning for knowledge and a taste for argument — to be intellectually curious — even if what they wind up discovering challenges their most cherished convictions." We cannot support policies that restrict academic freedom and prevent certain topics from being taught.

"The development of science and of the creative activities of the spirit, requires a freedom that consists in the independence of thought from the restrictions of authoritarian and social prejudice." -Albert Einstein. Nurturing that should be the fundamental role of government, he felt, and the mission of education (Einstein, by Walter Issacson page550.)

A bill currently being considered in the Arizona House of Representatives proposes to alter the role of faculty and the nature of governance at Arizona's three universities.

We would like to address these changes currently being proposed in the legislature that would change the faculty's role from participants to consultants in shared governance, personnel and education matters, centralizing power with the university president and the Arizona Board of Regents.

Nearly all universities in the nation operate according to a standard of "shared governance". The term "shared governance" is used in universities and can mean different things to different constituents. In its simplest definition, it is decision-making that incorporates input from the governing board and administration (president and leadership), and the faculty. It should be a transparent process where all parties have a measure of influence on matters affecting the university.

According to an article in the AGB (Association of Governing Boards), the Board's responsibility is fiduciary and supervisory, and the primary responsibility for faculty is the curriculum. Shared governance is also a way of protecting the educational mission of a university from the restrictive and narrow viewpoint that might be held by a board or a specific individual.

This collaborative approach of shared governance is highly valued for several reasons, as it aims to leverage the diverse expertise and perspectives within the university community to make informed and effective decisions. There are many benefits of shared governance in a university, among them institutional integrity and stability, adaptability, Innovation, transparency and trust. For example, all three University faculties worked in concert with university administrations to successfully navigate and pass new General Education programs.

The Arizona Faculties Council, which represents the shared views of mutual concerns of all three University faculties, understands that our three Universities do not operate in lockstep and each have their own perspectives and Senate structures. We are not a monolith - the actions or positions of the faculty of one University do not necessarily represent those of the other Universities. We know we are at a somewhat pivotal moment as regards our shared governance model and hope for a practical and positive resolution.

Like democracy, shared governance is not always neat and tidy, but it represents the surest way to guarantee the best outcomes for our students, the community and the state of Arizona.

We profoundly appreciate the Boards support and look forward to continuing to work constructively together.

Are there any questions or comments you may have?