

Presidential Candidacy Statement John Nolt

Philosophy

I have heard it said that Faculty Senate should concern itself with faculty affairs alone. I disagree. I see the Senate, in addition, as a forum in which the fundamental values of the university are open to inquiry, debate and action. Thus, for example, I recently brought before the Senate a resolution concerning coal procurement—a matter, it might seem, of the details of purchasing policy, but a matter affecting, in my view, the moral character of the university—and hence very much within the purview of the Senate.

I also take a broad view of the university's purpose: universities exist not only for the creation and dissemination of knowledge but also for the creation and dissemination of beauty, integrity and conscience. A university is not a corporation. To the extent that it apes corporate values, its unique worth is squandered. Faculty cannot be good role models for young people unless we lead, not merely frantic professional lives, but the lives of free human beings and responsible citizens.

Challenges

Current trends are making such role modeling more difficult. In more that 28 years at UT I have seen expectations on faculty productivity continually rise, pressures for accountability continually increase, standards tightened and re-tightened, and salaries, measured in real dollars, drift downward. To this trend there must be some limit.

Salary compression and inversion are also taking their toll. This past year, my department, Philosophy, hired two new assistant professors at salaries considerably higher than that of my good friend and able colleague, John Davis, a J.D./Ph.D. who had been here since 2004. John promptly found a more remunerative academic post elsewhere. That means for my department a new search at best, and a lost line at worst—in either case, more work for the rest of us. John's story is not unique. Failure to retain good faculty is both disruptive and inefficient.

Compensation problems, as we know, are not confined to faculty. Everyone who labors for this university should have the basics of a decent life: medical coverage, retirement benefits and a living wage. Not everyone does.

A university should recognize that faculty have lives external to it—and that they *should* if they are to serve as humane role models for their students. Many of us are parents, partners and caregivers. A university should honor—or, at the very least, make provision for—these extracurricular responsibilities. Here are two of many possible suggestions: we might coordinate spring break with Knox County schools, which would save a good bit of expense and difficulty for many faculty and staff parents; we might also adopt a clear and effective policy on spousal hiring.

UT has made significant progress toward gender equality in salaries, yet actual equality remains a mere hope. Women are, moreover, under-represented in many of our units.

Most discouragingly, despite official pronouncements to the contrary, many of us sense a slippage in the university's post-Geier commitment to ethnic and racial diversity. The discomfiting fact that George White was denied tenure, despite his many contributions to the university community, deepens this suspicion. How can we be ready for the world if we are not even ready for the diversity of our home state?

I am concerned, too, about the recent expansions in central administration. While it is true that we have been administratively lean compared to peer institutions, understaffing is not confined to Andy Holt Tower. Faculty workloads have never been heavier. Relief is needed in many places.

Finally, though we have made some environmental progress—often, embarrassingly, at the initiative of *students*, rather than faculty or administrators—we are still far from being a sustainable campus and very far from being an environmental leader among American universities. Most of us teach some aspect of sustainability. But we send a mixed message to the extent that we do not model what we teach.

I offer these remarks not as a litany of complaints, but as a list of challenges. These are issues the faculty must address constructively, creatively and cooperatively with campus and system administrators, the trustees, the governor, the legislature and the people of Tennessee. The current campus administration is on the whole, I think, the best during my time at UT. Chancellor Crabtree has repeatedly emphasized his commitment to shared governance, and on many crucial issues the faculty and the campus administration are in reasonable accord. Where there is disagreement, there is nevertheless good will and openness to dialog. Opportunities for improvement abound. Let's not let them pass!

Qualifications

I came to UT in 1978. Elected to the Faculty Senate in 2005, I have served since then on the Budget and Planning Committee. I have been member of the Committee on the Campus Environment (formerly the Chancellor's Committee on the Environment) since its inception in 1999. (The committee was appointed by Chancellor Snyder, following a recommendation of a 1997 report entitled "The Greening of Big Orange," which was written as a College Scholars project by two of my students, Mary Anne Peine and Jamie Pizzirusso.) Since 2003, I have served as co-chair (with Mary English) of that committee. Under our direction, the committee drafted UT's first campus-wide environmental policy, which was promulgated by Chancellor Crabtree in Spring 2004. To aid in that policy's implementation, we spent the next year researching and writing the 2005 UTK Environmental Progress Report (see <http://www.cce.utk.edu/default.htm>). Our current effort is directed toward the development (in collaboration with ORNL) of a 25-year energy plan for the campus.

The plan will be completed this summer. I have served on the Campus Master Plan Committee since 2005 and the Make Orange Green committee since 2006. I was also a member of the steering committee for the 2005 Environmental Semester.

This year I am working to enhance the university's prominence in environmental matters by organizing a national conference on Energy and Responsibility, to be held in Knoxville, April 10-12, 2008 (http://isse.utk.edu/energy_and_responsibility/).