

Speech

Welcome everyone to the 2017 UNI Fall Faculty meeting. My name is Tim Kidd and I am a professor of Physics who serves as the chair of the faculty this year. Today my job is to serve as host so that people behind me can tell you about what they feel is important to faculty know about in the coming year. .

Two weeks ago, the president made a state of the union address which showcased some of the excellent work going on at the university. We'll do a little of that here, but unfortunately time does not permit us to acknowledge all the great work done by faculty here. I'm going to see if we can find some new ways to promote our award winners and others who've done great work in the past year, those announced here today and the many, many who I am forced to omit. It's important to tell our story, and our faculty are the people students see day in and day out. The public should know more about all that we do.

Let us begin by acknowledging our new faculty. When I call your name, please stand so we can properly welcome you (again) to the ranks of UNI faculty.

Read List from agenda

Now, I'd like to ask our provost Jim Wohlpart to acknowledge some of our award winning faculty from the past year. Then I get to follow up with a few thoughts of my own.

Today, it seems that we have reached an age in which everything has become politicized. It seems like everyone has a strong opinion about everything, or at least they do on TV. I'm guessing that because I don't have cable, but I do have an uncle that really really does. I look to the field of science for perspective. It used to be scientists were the amazing people that transformed the world and helped win the big war. Then they became tools of the military-industrial complex that made bombs that killed babies and put mascara on bunnies. Now scientists I guess are trying to ruin the economy and maybe even fake moon landings from fifty years ago..

Looking at how the public has supposedly viewed scientists helps me try to maintain perspective in a time when it seems like public support for higher education is at an all time low and professors are vilified for brainwashing students and living large on the taxpayer's dime. Sadly I don't have those kind of superpower or the mansion to go with it.

I don't really believe most people want to cut out the heart of higher education. I do believe there is a minority who do, and unfortunately we are seeing Iowa follow the path of other states in cutting back on state support. This is sad. This hurts our students, especially our most vulnerable ones who face the choice of paying off debt instead of buying a house or working so many hours they can barely graduate at all. This hurts our faculty as we wonder who might be the next colleague to leave looking for somewhere with a brighter future. This hurts the entire state of Iowa. UNI is the place where our graduates stay and build the future of our state. UNI is the place where our graduates teach the next generation. UNI is the place students don't get lost in the crowd and receive the support and challenges they need to succeed both in school and beyond.

How does UNI do all this? That's our job, the faculty. We are the ones who work with students day in and day out. We challenge them in our classes and spend the extra time for those who need it. We involve students in research, giving them the experience they need to land their first job or get into grad school. We are scholars who push the boundaries of our disciplines and share our knowledge freely. The structure and support provided by our administration and staff make things go, and they provide opportunities for us to succeed. But at the end of the day every class is like a one room schoolhouse where the success of every student depends on one single professor to do their job well.

Except for secretaries.. administrative assistants... whatever their title. One good secretary is worth 3 professors. I learned very early that the only thing between you and complete and total failure is a good secretary to make everything work out. I'd like to thank Krista Herrera for making everything work today and Becky Adams from the physics department. She makes everything work every day.

Right now the outside world doesn't always look too friendly. Our board of regents asked for no increase to our funding from the state, aside from student financial aid. Sadly, they'll need it as the only way to make the numbers add up is to raise tuition. That's the starting point for negotiations, and zero is not a good start.

So the story sounds... not so good. Cuts to our budget mean cuts to our services and, eventually, cuts to our quality. Fortunately, I think I'm in a room full of smart people. Smart people who know how to solve problems. Smart people who know a thing about education. Smart people who know how to take

information, analyze it, and come up with solutions. Five years ago our university was facing similar budget problems, but we didn't have the leadership we do now and faculty weren't as aware as they are now. My department wasn't just on the cutting block, it was the only one that included the names of who was going to go. We could have sat back, watched it happen, let someone else make our case.

We decided not to do that. We fought with the best weapon at our disposal – education. Our union slowed things down and gave us the breathing room we needed to make our case. I still think our union is the reason we didn't end up in a spiral back to the Iowa Normal School. We used that time to tell our story. We didn't have to do it alone, either. Our graduates, our students, their families, and even a few companies joined in. Before long I think every politician in Iowa was getting hundreds of letters and emails telling them about how important our little program was and it worked. We didn't go low, we just told our story and it was good enough that I'm still here and so is our department.

Right now I think we are in a much better situation than five years ago. We have faculty that are aware and an administration that wants to work with us. We do important work that benefits all of Iowa, I think we just need to make sure we remind the people with the purse strings every once in a while. I hope we can work together to tell our story and get things back on track for our university and our students.

Thank you for all the hard work you do every day to make UNI a true comprehensive university with excellent teaching, scholarship, and outreach that has impact far beyond our classrooms. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are ever in need or better yet if you have ideas. I might not be the right person, but I hope I can steer you to them. And please don't hesitate to send a reminder message, this job doesn't come with a good secretary like my department does.

Thank you and I'd like to invite President Nook to say a few words or maybe more than a few