Dear University Faculty,

On Monday, March 11, 2024, the Senate Council, acting on behalf of the University Senate, passed a **Resolution for an Extended, Careful, and Effective Review of University Regulations.** This resolution is a response to President Capilouto's Friday email and requests that he engage in true shared governance and collaborate with the University Senate and Senate Council. We are sending this to you to explain the importance of this second resolution and the reasons for it.

The University Senate Resolution is **important** because President Capilouto's communication with campus continues to fail to offer sufficient data or analysis to justify the changes to our governance structure that we are bracing for. As President Capilouto notes, he has heard from 240 individuals across campus and offers a summary of some anecdotes from these constituencies. Senate Council members have now heard from over 250 individuals, many of whom participated in the interviews with the President and their respective Deans. Contrary to his account of takeaways from his discussions with faculty, the faculty perspective provided to the University Senate members has consistently and forthrightly raised serious concerns and objections about the following:

1. The supposed necessity to act quickly to change our existing governance structure.
2. The purported inefficiency of existing University Senate processes.
3. The supposed lack of sufficient voices in the existing University Senate governance structures.
4. The lack of transparency in the work completed by Workgroup 5 and Deloitte consultants.
5. The probable diminishing authority of the University Senate as the educational policy-making body.

The **reasons** for this resolution are based on concrete examples and data provided by faculty and senators, corresponding to the issues above:

1. *The supposed necessity to act quickly to change our existing governance structure.*

    Current governance structures provide strong oversight that allows for agile responses to changing circumstances.
    -   Recent examples given included: the University Senate's fast-tracking of proposals in response to special circumstances, such as its approval of TEK, UK's reaccreditation Quality Enhancement Program; the creation of the Department of Engineering Technology (supported by funding from Toyota); approval of the Lewis Honors College; and the naming of the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.
    -   Additional examples of nimbleness were: selective admissions standards; University Senate-led mediation processes to work out problems within and across programs; and the University Senate's swift action to approve degree programs in collaboration with BCTC and other partners.

2. *The purported inefficiency of existing University Senate processes.*

The claim of inefficiency ignores the University Senate's effective track record.
- Between 2016 and 2023, the average duration of days for the University Senate approval steps, including time in councils, committees, and final University Senate approval, was 117 days (less than one semester). An average of approximately 77 days was spent outside of the University Senate process, in the SASCOC and CPE final approval stage.
- Last year, the University Senate processed 787 curricular and program proposals, not to mention the additional proposals for rule changes, retroactive withdrawals, or department or educational unit name changes, which significantly increases the total number of proposals processed by the University Senate.

3. *The supposed lack of sufficient voices in the existing University Senate governance structures.*

   Both empirically and in common perception, the current governance structure of the University Senate facilitates ample diverse representation required for effective educational policymaking.
   - University Senate Composition includes: Faculty (94), Staff (30, including Staff Senate Chair), and Students (19, including Student Government Association President); the University Senate's voting membership is established by the Board of Trustees.
   - University Senate Committees include over 70 non-senator faculty, staff, and student members.
   - Administrative staff serve in leadership positions on University Senate committees, including the Chair of the Health Care Colleges Council (Associate Dean Romanelli) and the Chair of the Graduate Council (Associate Provost Kenney).
   - As described in the Senate Rules, the President and the Provost choose 22 individual staff members to serve on University Senate Committees, ensuring administrative and staff perspectives are included.
   - University Staff Senate and University Senate members participate on a joint advisory committee.

4. *The lack of transparency in the work completed by Workgroup 5 and Deloitte consultants.*

   A majority of faculty expressed concerns about the methodology and lack of data presented by Workgroup 5 and the Deloitte consultants to the Board of Trustees.
   - During the February 23, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting, faculty members were left with many questions and concerns about the unscientific methods and lack of data used to evaluate the University Senate.
   - The University Senate Resolution approved on **February 26, 2024** called for the President of the University to uphold the principles of shared governance

and requested, among other things, that the President partner with the University Senate in true shared governance. Unfortunately, the President is currently not upholding those foundational values of shared governance, values that he conveyed to campus on May 3, 2021 and May 12, 2021.

- The University Senate Council requested data in the approved February 26, 2024 University Senate Resolution and has not received any data, including data supporting claims made in the presentation by Workgroup 5 and Deloitte to the Board of Trustees on February 23, 2024.

5. *The probable diminishing authority of the University Senate as the educational policy-making body.*

Overwhelmingly, faculty object to potential changes in the University Senate's responsibility as an educational decision-making body.

- An overwhelming number of constituents share concerns that this move lays the groundwork for major changes similar to those occurring in institutions in Florida, Georgia, and West Virginia, which have led to the elimination of essential programs and threats to tenure and academic freedom.
- The faculty has made it clear that they want to retain the University Senate's and their faculty decision-making authority for educational policy, including admissions at the department and college levels.
- Faculty recognize that current University Senate governance structures **absolutely** correspond and are in compliance with SASCOC standards:
  - As stated in our email to campus on March 4, "Approval by the faculty ensures that programs, including programs offered through collaborative arrangements, contain appropriate courses reflecting current knowledge within a discipline and include courses appropriate for the students enrolled." (SASCOC Resource Manual 2024, p.98)
  - SASCOC 2018 and 2024 standards clearly identify components of "academic programs," which *GR IV.C.1* has expressly incorporated as required for oversight by the University Senate Rules. Each of these SASCOC-required academic program components is and has been directly and necessarily handled by the University Senate Rules
- We are hearing concerns from you about the possibility of Deans controlling local college programs either directly, or indirectly through the current budget model. Many have voiced that the current budget model incentivizes Deans to pit college and department programs in direct competition with each other. The University Senate above the colleges provides equitable advocacy, protection, and coordination among college faculty programs.

The University Senate and Senate Council remain dedicated to transparently communicating our concerns to the campus community. Our commitment lies in prioritizing our students and upholding academic integrity and excellence.

The University Senate is open to evaluating and assessing our current processes. We are willing to evaluate and determine whether there are better ways to incorporate the perspectives and expertise of staff members and students, whose input we have always valued and integrated into our procedures.

Once again, we offer our time, energy, and resources to a process that involves genuine collaboration, *evidence-based* decision-making, and a partnership between the administration and the University Senate.

Together, let us explore avenues for enhancing our work without dismantling the valuable structures and authorities we hold dear. Many of you share our belief that the current University Senate structures are crafted to secure optimal educational outcomes for our students, both in the present and in the long term.