

Dear Faculty Senate Colleagues,

Good Monday morning. I hope you have a great week, a productive week, and a rewarding week.

I want to thank you for your service as a member of the Faculty Senate and as a faculty member at Southeast Missouri State University. My wish for you would be that you feel appreciated, valued, respected, and rewarded for who you are and for what you do on this campus and in this life. If I have missed the mark in showing you my appreciation, I am sorry, and I would love for you to share with me how I can do better. To that end, I would like to have a conversation on Wednesday about how Faculty Senate is going for you. Do you feel like you are welcome, like you belong, and like your contributions are heard and valued? Or do you feel marginalized, ignored, or unappreciated? Do you feel like you can make a difference in Faculty Senate? Or do you feel like you drew the short straw in your department and you have to come to these meetings every Wednesday and waste some more time you don't have? I want to know either way, and I want to know what I can do and what we can do as a body to show each other more appreciation and respect—to show each other that we value one another.

And extending beyond that goal, what can we do as the representative body of the faculty at Southeast Missouri State University to show our colleagues—faculty, staff, and administrators—and our students more appreciation and respect? How can we encourage one another and support one another so that we do not grow weary or discouraged so easily? How can we, in spite of the financial mess we are in right now, make Southeast Missouri State University a place where faculty, staff, administrators, and students feel valued, supported, and built up? How can we make this a place where people feel they belong and where they want to belong and to spend their careers doing something that they believe matters?

So please think about your experiences in Faculty Senate and at Southeast as a whole. Think about what makes you feel valued and supported. Think about what keeps you getting up in the morning and coming back (besides the bills). Think about what success means to you as a faculty member and what kinds of things enable you to succeed. Think also about the things that make you feel unappreciated and unsupported. Think about the roadblocks to success and the sandbags and yes even the pebbles in your shoes. Think about your best days on campus and your worst. Then ask one or two or even more of your colleagues to think about these things too. Ask them to share their thoughts with you and really mean it. Then listen to what they say. And please come to Senate on Wednesday ready to share anything you glean from this exercise. In fact, I want to set aside time in my report at every meeting to hear from a few people on this.

If there is something you do not feel comfortable sharing in Senate, please email it to me, or let's arrange a time to meet and talk about it.

And one last thing. Please help me come up with the best way to hear from every faculty member who wants to be heard on this subject. Would it be surveys? Visits to departments? Faculty Senate office hours? A booth somewhere on campus? I am not above trying anything and everything to hear from our faculty and to learn what we can do to support them, to value them, to encourage them, and to help them be successful.

Thanks for reading. See you on Wednesday.

Jim