

Personal Statement – Donie Bret-Harte

I accepted a nomination to serve as President-Elect of the Faculty Senate for the 2017-2018 academic year. I am an Associate Professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Biology and Wildlife and the Institute of Arctic Biology. I earned my Ph.D. from Stanford University, and first came to UAF as a postdoctoral fellow with F. Stuart Chapin, III in 1998. After becoming a research assistant professor in the Institute of Arctic Biology in 2003, I was promoted to Associate Professor and moved into a tenure-track position in 2009. I was awarded tenure in 2013. My research focuses on the interactions between arctic plant species and nutrient cycling in tundra ecosystems, and the response of arctic vegetation to climate change. I am also the Principal Investigator on the Cooperative Agreement with NSF that funds the base operations of the Toolik Field Station, and have extensive responsibilities in the management and oversight of that facility. I currently teach scientific writing for graduate students and plant biology for undergraduates in the Department of Biology and Wildlife.

I was first elected to the Faculty Senate in 2006, and represented research faculty until 2009. Following my transition to tenure-track faculty in 2009, I served as a faculty senate alternate from 2009-2011, and as a senator representing the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics from 2012 to present. I have served on the Faculty Affairs Committee (3 years) and the Graduate Academic & Advisory Committee (GAAC; 7 years), where I have been Chair since 2012. In 2013, I also served as the faculty senate's representative on the SNRAS-CES Merger Structure Committee. Thus, I have a fairly long experience with the Faculty Senate and its Administrative Committee, and am familiar with the broad range of activities that faculty engage in as we fulfill the university's core missions of teaching, research and service. I have also served on various other university committees, and am currently on the search committee for the UAF Chancellor position (I cannot attend the April Senate meeting because I will be interviewing semi-finalists for the Chancellor position on that day). I also engage in professional service both nationally and internationally, including proposal review, panel service, and manuscript review for journals.

Right now, we are facing the most challenging budget environment that I have seen since I came to UAF. The cuts that have already occurred, and projected further declines in the budget that are expected, have created a lot of uncertainty and difficult choices. It is critical for us to have a seat at the table, through shared governance, when options that affect faculty are discussed by the university administration. We need to advocate for faculty-driven growth in the core missions of teaching, research and service, rather than simply accepting cuts handed down by the administration. We need to advocate for clear and transparent decision-making processes concerning program review and budget choices that incorporates our input, and where the reasons for decisions are communicated to us. I am willing to serve as President-Elect because I believe that I could be effective in promoting good communication within the Faculty Senate, and between the Faculty Senate and the administration. I will represent all faculty, if I am chosen as President-Elect. I believe that we can achieve positive change, even in a difficult time, if we work together, and I would appreciate your vote. I also believe that both of the other candidates are well-qualified, and I will support whoever is elected.