

Personal Statement of Gordon Williams

I am an associate professor of mathematics in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. I was raised in Anchorage, Alaska, received my B.A. from Hampshire College, my M.S. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and my Ph.D. from the University of Washington. Having met my wife in graduate school I gave up on my longtime dream of coming back to Alaska, and concentrated on finding us jobs close enough together that we could live under the same roof. I secured a job at Moravian College in Pennsylvania and later joined her at nearby Ursinus College. In 2009 my mostly abandoned dream was realized when we were hired here.

While I haven't served long as a senator, I have served on a number of university-wide committees, including Student Academic Development and Achievement, Honors Faculty Advisory Committee and the Research Advisory Committee (which I co-chair with Jamie Clark). Also, while working on behalf of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics I have taken a leadership role in developing proposals that have come before the senate and in securing agreement on those proposals from faculty in different departments and from administrators. A key part of the success my colleagues and I have had in this area is by being as inclusive as possible in the development of the proposals and by making sure that various stakeholders' concerns are adequately addressed. I think that as president-elect and faculty senate president this habit of inclusion will be vital.

I have chosen to accept nomination for the position of president-elect because I'm deeply committed to the University's mission and as a tenured faculty member I feel an acute sense of responsibility to speak out as an advocate for my peers who don't enjoy the same protections I do.

UAF is at a particularly challenging juncture. The budget situation is disastrous, the board of regents is imposing problematic policies, demographic shifts are leading to declining enrollments at the same time that we are being asked to help increase them, and relations between faculty governance and statewide administration are less than ideal (although we continue to have good relationships with UAF administration). These realities present difficult obstacles for the senate to overcome as we continue to strive to improve the ways in which we serve the mission of the university.

I believe it is the responsibility of faculty members not only to perform our professional duties of teaching, research and service, but to also act as stewards of the institution. This means we must hold ourselves to high standards and work together to develop effective policies and programs to benefit our students and community.

As a governing body we have a lot of strengths. We possess a wide range of points of view, a variety of experiences and expectations, and differing views about the best course of action. This diversity is a great asset. As faculty, we are uniquely well-positioned to identify what problems need to be addressed and how best to address them. So we need everyone's participation and viewpoints to develop meaningful answers to the problems we face. It is through our commitment to our shared process that we derive confidence in our decisions.

I anticipate that the next few years will bring a number of difficult discussions and decisions and that we will need to be prepared to react in a timely manner to changing circumstances. It is especially important at such times that we be efficient, responsive and coordinated. However, it is also critical that Faculty Senate does take the time to deliberate and that the procedures in place for Faculty Senate decision-making are followed.

I have two main goals. First, I want to continue the development of mechanisms for Faculty Senate to respond to new challenges in a timely manner while ensuring diverse viewpoints are heard and the academic integrity of the institution is protected for the benefit of our students. I also want to take a more active position defending and protecting the roles of faculty, faculty governance and shared governance at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.