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# THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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WASHINGTON, DC

March 31, 2014

To the GW Faculty:

The Faculty Governance Task Force has been engaged for the past several months in a process to review our system of shared governance at GW and recommend possible changes. Over the past three months, we have met with more than 600 faculty members in two dozen meetings, and consulted with the Faculty Senate, Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom Committee (PEAF) of the Faculty Senate, to better understand governance at the university and the challenges and opportunities to improve our governance process. These meetings have provided valuable input that has shaped and changed our thinking on both the substance of and the process for making changes to the governance system. I am writing this letter to you as we are now beginning to formulate our recommendations. We are looking for your input through the upcoming faculty survey and our website listed below.

By way of background, in May of 2013, the Board of Trustees adopted Vision 2021, the strategic plan that will carry GW into its third century. The plan was developed after extensive collaboration and consultation with the faculty, administration and trustees. In addition, the planning process included students, alumni and other members of our community. This plan is designed to allow GW to compete and thrive in a rapidly changing higher education environment. Upon completion of the plan, the Board began to review all of the university's governing documents and processes to ensure their alignment with the new plan and with current best practices. The Board reviewed and amended the University Bylaws, which were presented to the Board in May and adopted in June of 2013. The Board also passed a resolution in May of 2013 calling on the next Chair to form a committee of trustees, faculty and administrators to review and recommend any appropriate changes to the Faculty Code and other associated governance documents. Finally, the Board directed the President and his administration to move forward with the detailed planning and execution of the Strategic Plan.

The Faculty Code is established and approved by the Board of Trustees by virtue of the authority vested in it by the University Charter. The code, along with other subordinate documents, defines the governance relationships between the Board, the faculty and the administration. This shared governance system has served the university well for decades and will continue to serve us well in the future. As the new Chair of the Board of Trustees, I formed the Faculty Governance Task Force in the fall and we began our review process in December. The review process comprises three phases: school based discussions; town hall feedback meetings and faculty survey; and final recommendations. You can find links to the governance documents of the university, notes from Task Force faculty meetings and electronic means to provide confidential feedback at [www.trustees.gwu.edu/governance](http://www.trustees.gwu.edu/governance).

In the first of these three phases, the Task Force discussed governance with the faculty of each of GW's ten schools, listening to the comments and opinions of faculty across many diverse roles and disciplines. Following the first phase, the Task Force composed a draft list of guiding principles based on the key issues that surfaced in the school based meetings with faculty. These principles include: expanding

participation in governance for all full-time faculty; promoting academic freedom for all faculty as the university expands globally and online; aligning appointment, promotion and tenure criteria and procedures with the university's aspirations and ensuring consistent and transparent processes and high-quality results across the entire university; defining a consistent and appropriate role for the faculty and administration in the selection, performance appraisal and retention of Deans and other senior academic administrators; and creating a consistent framework of faculty titles, policies and procedures across the university, while providing for unique needs of each school, department, center and institute.

The Task Force then began the second phase and held a series of six town hall meetings on the Foggy Bottom, Mount Vernon, and Virginia Campuses, receiving robust feedback largely in support of further exploring each of these areas of reform. The Task Force also met again with the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Senate's PEA and Executive Committees. Additionally, we received input from the Council of Deans and the President and the Provost. We are now approaching the end of the second phase and the beginning of phase three of the process. The Task Force will be conducting an electronic survey of the faculty to gather additional input and begin to formulate its recommendations.

From my initial meeting with the Faculty Senate in the fall to meeting with hundreds of faculty this winter, I have been encouraged by the passionate dialogue and heartened by the degree of care that GW faculty of all types express for the university. The members of the Faculty Governance Task Force agree that the university can only aspire to be as good as its faculty. In addition, the highest quality faculty is driven by the caliber of its individual members, their leadership, the environment in which they work and their motivation and engagement. As the Task Force formulates its recommendations, I want to encourage all of you to participate in this important dialogue through the survey or through our website.

Sincerely,

Nelson Carbonell, Jr.  
Chair, Board of Trustees