

Members of the board – thank you for taking a moment to hear on a faculty member’s view on the direction of the university and strategic plan. I am an assistant professor in Mechanical Engineering and the former faculty trustee. I was attracted to FL Poly 4 years ago because of the strong focus on a project based curriculum and not having a tenure system. The latter was because I felt that it meant faculty could focus more on students and the curriculum, and also focus on meaningful research. The ability to focus on industry and applied research, as well as the local Florida economy was something that spoke to me since I am a product of the Florida education system and a long time Florida resident. I feel that what has been proposed by the administration for faculty evaluation is a tenure like system without the benefits of tenure. It creates increased administrative burden, hurts our faculty recruitment efforts, and takes faculty attention away from students and the curriculum. In short, I feel it does not meet the mission or focus of this institution, which we have promoted to the state and to students and their parents. It also detracts from faculty focusing on industry driven and applied research, as well as research for the local Florida economy, as it does not incentivize faculty to go after these. It incentivizes faculty to be externally focused and to build mini-research empires. There is far less focus on the institution and the state.

It also has another impact that I would like the board and others attending to consider. First, whatever the faculty working conditions are that you create, these will be the student learning conditions. You cannot divorce the two from each other. We teach classes, mentor students, involve them in our research, and give them advice. There are other roles that are involved in these throughout the university, but not to the extent that faculty are. The student-learning environment is critical to the success of groups that are under represented and nontraditional in STEM education. As someone who is both a minority and a female engineer, I can attest to this. At several points along my path, I can name several teachers and professors that were able to

focus their time and attention on mentoring and guiding me. Mentoring through industry projects and undergraduate research is an excellent way to achieve this and faculty should be recognized for these efforts in their evaluations. I believe I speak for many of the faculty when I say that on top of wanting a project based curriculum that is student focused, with meaningful research that impacts the state of Florida, I also want a diverse and inclusive student learning environment. Faculty member's focus needs to be first and foremost on building the institution and incentivized to create the type of environment where mentoring and student focus are rewarded. Be it in the curriculum itself or in research endeavors. On our quest for quality, let us not sacrifice these other elements and distract faculty members from this mission. Let's be innovative in how we deliver our STEM curriculum, how we elevate the economic landscape of Polk County, and how we partner with industry in delivering meaningful research solutions. I am asking those present to consider these things and help us, the faculty, with a working structure and contract articles (via our collective bargaining agreement) that focuses on items that supports our institutional mission, not detracts from it. Thank you for your time.