

**From:** Concerned Faculty <[concernedfacultyoftu@gmail.com](mailto:concernedfacultyoftu@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 2, 2019 3:38:15 AM

**To:** Concerned Faculty

**Subject:** CFTU Point-by-Point response to Clancy's email

President Clancy,

Your email of 6/27/19 to the campus community presents a grossly misleading account of the process that produced True Commitment and the state of the university in the aftermath of that process. We cannot allow this to stand. We reproduce the text of your email below; our comments are interspersed in **bold**.

Sincerely,

Concerned Faculty of TU  
100 strong and growing

\* \* \*

Dear University of Tulsa community member,

With the start of fall semester classes just two months away, I wanted to take a moment to bring you up to date on the progress we have made since the beginning of the year toward reshaping our curriculum.

As a brief recap, the university last year convened the faculty-led Provost's Program Review Committee (PPRC) to undertake, with the support of the academic deans, a review of all academic programs across the institution. Such efforts are a best practice in higher education, and at TU the endeavor was long overdue. Not only had the university been operating, even with a substantial endowment, at a financial loss for a number of years, but the Higher Learning Commission, which accredits institutions of higher education in our region, had identified a number of areas in which TU was falling short. To be clear, The University of Tulsa has full accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. Yet, our long-term financial health, our continued accreditation and the realities of a tumultuous higher education environment demanded that we find a sounder path moving forward.

**In your email to the university community of 4/12/19, you claimed that True Commitment will “allow us to remain in good standing with the Higher Learning Commission.” This remains unverifiable, since you refuse to allow faculty to read the HLC site visit report (although you have provided no reasonable justification for doing so). Here you state that HLC “identified a number of areas in which TU was falling short.” Although you continue to withhold the report, we know that one such area is football, because Barry**

**Friedman quoted from the report as follows in his *Tulsa Voice* article “Ego and Denial on 11<sup>th</sup> Street”:**

**The [HLC] team also noted that the athletics program at TU continues to lose a significant amount of money. While rather significant cuts were being made in expenditures in other parts of the university, the coach of the football team was given a significant raise. Within the context of the mission and strategic plan, the football program appears to be less critical than funding instruction programs and/or academic support.**

**If TU is truly in financial trouble—a claim that three economists who have seen TU’s 990s and audits strongly contest, given our enormous net assets—*why is athletics still being allowed to operate at a substantial and unsustainable loss?***

Over an eight-month period, the PPRC conducted a rigorous data-driven process to assess our academic enterprise, using data provided and verified by our deans with input from their department heads and faculties. The committee’s recommendations were then approved by Deans’ Council, the provost, president and unanimously by the board in April.

**You know very well that the PPRC process was *not* “data-driven,” since numerous programs have reported fundamental errors in the data. Nor was it “rigorous,” since your use of the data was arbitrary. This is obvious to anyone who has studied the individual data sheets included in the full PPRC report—previously a difficult thing to do, as the full report was (supposedly) available only in the Provost’s office, where it had to be read on the spot and could not be reproduced in any way. But it turns out that the report is freely available on the internet. For the convenience of all faculty, and in the spirit of “transparency” and “inclusiveness” that Provost Levit so frequently invokes, *we are attaching the full PPRC report to this email, including individual data sheets for all programs.* Now everyone can see for themselves your **tendentious and inconsistent use of the “data”!****

The recommendations include phasing out, over the next five years, lower-enrollment programs in the Colleges of Engineering & Natural Sciences, Business, Law, Arts & Sciences and the Graduate School, as we continue to plan for growth of other programs that are in high demand. To put these changes in perspective, since 2014 the undergraduate programs to be phased out graduated a total of 135 students collectively while some of our largest programs individually graduated 164 (psychology), 298 (finance) and 300 (mechanical engineering) in the same period.

To shape and implement these changes in the best interests of our students, faculty and institution, three university-wide task forces have been created and have begun work. These task forces, made up in large part by residential faculty volunteers representing all areas of our university, will meet throughout the academic year and

collaborate closely with the University Council, Faculty Senate and other appropriate committees and governing bodies in order to bring the PPRC recommendations to fruition.

**We do not recognize the legitimacy of these task forces, because we do not recognize the legitimacy of the process by which True Commitment was adopted. We remind you of the language of Article VI, Section C of the Faculty Senate constitution:**

**Except in emergencies, major decisions and plans of the administration that significantly affect the academic affairs of the University should be discussed with the Faculty Senate for an expression of views prior to implementation or submission to the Board of Trustees**

**We also remind you of the following language from Article II, Section A of the Faculty Senate constitution:**

**The Faculty Senate is authorized to consider any subject pertaining to the interests of the faculty and may make recommendations to the appropriate administrative officers on such matters as:**

- 1. University-wide curricular matters including the creation and retention of undergraduate and graduate programs.**

**True Commitment was not considered by the Faculty Senate, as any and all curricular changes must be. Nor was it considered by the standing university and college curriculum committees.**

As the details of implementation take shape, it is important to remember that TU is not navigating this territory alone. Our peer institutions from coast to coast share the challenge of adapting to changing demographics, disruptive technologies and new marketplace demands in ways that ensure fidelity to the educational mission while remaining relevant and competitive in the decades ahead. Sadly, numerous, albeit smaller, colleges had to shut their doors in the past few years before they could successfully adapt.

At TU, we are fortunate to have significant strengths upon which to build:

- Our \$1.1 billion endowment, which gives us a [financial security](#) that many of our peer institutions can only envy (It is important to understand, however, that the endowment is a collection of individual funds established by donors for specific purposes, such as named scholarships and faculty positions. The university spends only the earnings on the endowment, and only on the things originally agreed upon with our donors.)

- Our 125-year history of service to our region, and the reputation our faculty, staff, alumni and students have earned as a university of high academic achievement
- Our diversity of academic programming, which ensures that we are not overly reliant financially on any one school, college or program
- Our dedicated faculty, staff and loyal alumni

These strengths give us the ability and confidence to make bold changes. We recognize that the curriculum revision before us will impact all of us in varying ways and requires more of some than of others. However, updating our curriculum is neither radical nor irresponsible.

**But it is “radical” and “irresponsible” to eliminate 40% of existing programs in haste and secrecy, and to do so in a way that flouts established procedures of faculty governance. This is especially true given that the suppressed HLC report noted the “fragility” of shared governance at TU, and that Article VI of the Faculty Senate constitution (quoted above) was drafted and overwhelmingly approved by the faculty in response to HLC’s concerns.**

Some of you may have heard concerns that students will no longer be able to study the arts and humanities. TU remains committed to the liberal arts, and Henry Kendall College will continue to offer 25 bachelor’s degrees, eight graduate degrees, five unique minors and one certificate firmly rooted in the college’s sciences, arts and humanities. None of our distinguished arts and sciences faculty members are losing their positions, and all will continue to teach. We recognize that a solid grounding in these [arts, sciences and humanities](#) is essential for every student, and we remain committed to our Tulsa Curriculum and the broad-based liberal arts foundation that has been the hallmark of TU for decades.

You may also have heard that TU is becoming a “trade school” or that TU degrees will no longer be recognized by other universities. These are not realistic concerns. Schools such as Rice University and Washington University in St. Louis have offered innovative majors for decades, while many dozens of respected schools allow students to design their own majors, double majors and minors. We also promote double majors and minors and offer opportunities for students to design their own major. In addition to providing a rounded, liberal arts education, TU is committed to ensuring that our students graduate with the skills, experience and knowledge that Oklahoma and our country need to compete in the 21st century.

**It is *shamefully misleading* to compare TU, a university that has eliminated core liberal arts subjects and will now effectively offer a major and minor *only* in Spanish, with Washington University—which has entire programs in Classics, East Asian Languages and Cultures, Germanic Languages and Literatures, Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies, and Romance Languages and Literatures—and with Rice, which teaches Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Chinese,**

**Greek, Latin, German, and all Romance languages but Romanian.**

For academia, disruptions of the type that we face today are new. Colleges and universities have been uniquely shielded from many of the seismic transformations that have roiled healthcare, journalism, retail enterprises and countless other sectors of the economy during recent decades.

**Non-profit universities are *not* a “sector of the economy.” Yet you and the Board of Trustees continue to treat TU as if it were a for-profit enterprise! And you do so in bad conscience, judging by the fact that the 30-page document calling for investment in the “Tulsa Enterprise for Cyber Innovation, Talent, and Entrepreneurship (TECITE) Cyber District” (attached to this email) was *removed from the internet* after one of our members linked to it in an email to you.**

We appreciate the widespread support and feedback we have received for the important endeavor we are undertaking. We also understand and hear the concerns shared by some faculty, students and alumni, especially in the disciplines most impacted by these changes. Our hope is that through continued dialogue and engagement in the committee processes put in place, those who may be skeptical of the changes that lie ahead will play a part in helping improve and strengthen our approach and its implementation. Together, we must all build on what works best for our students, now and in the future, and ensure that TU remains an excellent university for many more generations.

**Where can we find public expressions of the “widespread support” you speak of? We are aware of *widespread condemnation* from faculty, students, alumni, and community members. Almost 7,500 people have signed a petition calling for a halt to True Commitment. A Facebook group that opposes True Commitment has over 1,900 members. True Commitment and your administration have been excoriated in local, regional, and national publications. And how is “continued dialogue” possible when there has been *no* dialogue to begin with? How can you rebuild trust when *no trust was cultivated or valued* throughout the PPRC process and, apparently, the long planning of True Commitment in consultation with EAB and others? You, Provost Levit, and the Board of Trustees have turned a completely deaf ear to our legitimate concerns with True Commitment. *It’s time to stop pretending that True Commitment is anything other than a dumpster fire.***

Sincerely,

Gerard P. Clancy, M.D.  
President