Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. Most importantly, thank you for what you do every day to make Coastal Carolina University the special place that it is.

As I contemplated my remarks for today’s forum on shared governance, many different approaches came to my mind. As I pondered them, I decided to address the topic in three segments:

1. Shared Governance in Higher Education Today;
2. My Career and Shared Governance; and
3. What I would like to see accomplished with respect to shared governance before I retire on June 30, 2021.

Let us begin with Shared Governance in Today’s Higher Education Institutions

As defined by the Association of Governing Boards, shared governance is “a set of guidelines about the various roles and authority of the board, faculty, and administration in such things as academic decisions, budget decisions, selection of the president, and other operational decisions.”¹

Shared governance has probably never been as critical to the survival of American Universities as it is today. While so much of “governance” was rooted in the academic freedom realm, today we have moved well beyond such a freedom. Higher education is under attack. Political forces, state support for higher education and parental views of higher education are probably at its historic lowest levels. Couple these with the ever-changing environment in which we live, a heavy focus on skills trade which lead to specific jobs, and just plain misunderstandings of what we do, the liberal arts-based education must fight for its survival.

How so? Just consider this. Last week, more than 13 academic programs at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point were put on the chopping block in order to fend off the declines occurring at the University.²

[PowerPoint No. 3]

As you can see from the PowerPoint, most of these programs are focusing on the traditional liberal arts areas. The threat is real. The true question is how we avoid such an occurrence on our campus. To me, an answer lies in shared governance.

In its December 8, 2016 newsletter, the publication Change Leader asked the simple question—Can Shared Governance in Higher Education Survive.³ Like forms of government—the executive, legislative, and the judicial—shared governance will only reach its full effectiveness when the three parties who constitute shared governance—faculty, administration, and the board—each realize that certain jobs and decisions much be intricately linked for the institution to succeed. A former provost at Idaho State University espoused that same sentiment, when he stated:

[PowerPoint No. 4]

“The key to genuine shared governance is broad and unending communication. When various groups of people are kept in the loop and understand what developments are occurring within the university, and when they are invited to participate as true partners, the institution prospers.”⁴

So why is this not happening in its purest form? Let me oversimplify. We are pointing fingers at one another. We have a tendency to view things from an adversarial perspective⁵, resulting in conflict run amok. The literature on conflict is ripe with stories and anecdotes about the inability to manage properly such conflict. All sides believe they are correct—despite the topic being discussed. Boards put pressure on the administration to get things done “yesterday” so they can fulfill their political mandates of those who appoint them to the Board. The administration

³ “Can Shared Governance in Higher Education Survive” The Change Leader (December 8, 2016), pp. 1-8
⁵ Ibid.
believes they must tackle such problems alone or with a select few confidants, often with little feedback from stakeholders, because their jobs depend on it, and because of the belief that the faculty will not accept new ways of thinking. The faculty, in turn, point to the dramatic changes that are inconsistent with how higher education and shared governance is supposed to work. Briefly, our institutions and higher education have become big businesses; and are sharing all the pains that big business manifests. Is this fair, it is the same academy in which many of us decided to shape and spend our careers? My guess, for the most part is the answer would be no.

To many, higher education may not be a big business in the classic sense. Precise elements and controls used in for profit operations generally are not used in higher education in their entirety. But denying the reality of the external influences that are inundating higher education today, we can either continue to fight for “yesterday’s rights,” or make adaptations that allow us the opportunity to hold onto those most sacred elements of our jobs, while at the same time recognizing the need to adjust to the ever-changing world in which we live. That is, as the Association of Governing Boards states:

[PowerPoint No. 5]

“Effective shared governance is one in which faculty, board members, and administrators actively engage to share responsibility for identifying and pursuing an aligned set of mission-driven sustainable outcomes and priorities.”

Think for a moment what this is saying. It’s not advocating that everything be put to a committee vote to handle the day to day operations of administering the institution, nor does it mean that any one group may have complete authority to rule with an iron fist. Rather, shared governance relies on sound communications so that distrust and discord are removed. However, that does not happen overnight—nor will it ever unless that trusting relationship is built. Let me explain how I have tried to build that trust with those who I have worked with, and for.

My Career and Shared Governance

I began my academic career as an assistant professor in 1981. Being 26 years old and being called a professor was almost an oxymoron. But growing up in universities I quickly recognized

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those things that I could control and those I could not. I had wonderful mentors who taught me where the academic landmines were, and how to succeed. They drilled into me the importance of primarily being outstanding in the classroom, building my resume through relevant publications, being actively involved on my campus, and doing my part to accept but manage my service committees. With this advice, I began establishing and building my portfolio that would one-day lead to the two most coveted rewards I sought—promotion and tenure. Over the past 37 years in academe, I learned something from every title or position I held—assistant, associate, or full professor, associate dean, director, dean, provost, and now president. Through each new assignment, I realized how critical and fragile trust was. Now, I have used that word, “trust” several times thus far, so let me tell you what that term means to me.

[PowerPoint No. 6]

Trust is not something that is given blindly. Rather it is a compilation of behaviors that others see in us that earns their respect. It is the belief in a leader’s integrity and character. It is the competency one demonstrates when doing his or her work. It is being consistent and predictable, and having good judgement to handle situations. Trust also involves a level of openness that means willing to share ideas and information freely. Lastly, trust focuses on loyalty, which is one’s willingness to protect others from physical and emotional harm.

Trust as we know it is very fragile. Violate any of these key behaviors and the trust others have in you can vanish immediately. That is why when I taught leadership I would ask a simple question. What must every leader have to succeed? Well, it was kind of a trick question because to be a leader you had to have followers. People will not follow a leader who is not respected nor not trustworthy.

Throughout my career, I have held this tenet of continuing trusting relationships. Sure, there have been times when I have been burned by trusting others; but those setbacks have never undermined my core beliefs. That holds true regarding shared governance. There are decisions

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that I know belong to others, and for me to intervene is simply incorrect. For example, while the administration or I can make recommendations, it is clear that the curriculum belongs to the faculty. Yes, we may need to debate a course offering or a particular major, but one must recognize that those of you who have mastered your field of study know best as to the curriculum needs of tomorrow’s students. However, with that comes the responsibility of making necessary changes—even painful ones—to adapt continuously to the changes we see in our society.

Likewise, I have always held a simple belief that the home department has the most important voice in promotion and tenure matters. This, too, carries with it responsibility to effectively evaluate colleagues to assure that every departmental member is successfully performing his or her job. Too many times, I have seen departmental members abdicate that responsibility—instead either not confronting the deficiencies or shifting the responsibility to the administration in hopes they deal with it.

Let me be clear. For the administration or the Board to second guess the home department’s perspective, in my opinion is trampling on a sacred shared governance right of the faculty. It also gets us sued! Yes, there may be information that we in administration are privy to that the home department members are not—which could lead us to not recommending someone for promotion or tenure. That to me is understandable. However, I will not, when a home department says no, overturn that decision unless, of course, a violation of policy, or something more nefarious has occurred. I had that happen to me about 20 years ago, when a dean blatantly ignored a unanimous no vote on promotion and tenure by both the department and college committees simply because he wanted to keep a faculty member who did the dean’s dirty work and would stab his colleagues in the back. Never had a college committee filed a complaint with the Board of Regents level that challenged a dean’s, a provost’s, and president’s decision for violating the very premise of shared governance. We lost! Nonetheless, it was a lesson I never forgot and something I swore I would never allow as a decision maker.
Can an appreciation for shared governance and actively fostering it on campus be successful? While some of this may stretch the premise of shared governance, let us look at what we have accomplished at Coastal Carolina University by working together.

[PowerPoint No. 7]

- An increasing perception of shared governance (+25%), faculty, administration, and staff relations (+23%), and senior leadership (+21%) from 2013 to 2017 among faculty surveyed by the Great Colleges Survey
- A faculty manual that cites and (largely) aligns with AAUP recommendations
- An effective faculty senate, 16 faculty standing committees, and other university-wide committees and advisory bodies
- Elected representatives from all colleges and the library as well as the associated faculty
- Operating without interference and with autonomy concerning those areas entrusted to the faculty, for example, educational policies, course and program development, and P&T
- College-level shared governance in the form of college curriculum, policy/handbook/bylaws, and P&T committees
- A compensation plan and improved promotion salary increases that minimize compression
- The creation of the title of senior lecturer, with faculty status, for qualified lecturers
- A post-promotion review process for senior lecturers to recognize and maintain exception teaching
- A more effective nomination and election process overseen by a faculty committee with the support of IR
- A strategic plan that emphasizes faculty professional development, participation, and excellence
- “Bottom up” budgeting that allows faculty and departments propose programs that reflect their expertise, experience, and contributions to student academic success

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9 My appreciation goes to Dr. Renee Smith, Chair of the Faculty Senate at Coastal Carolina University for compiling this list.
• Participation in search committees for senior administrators (recently: Diversity officer, dean of students)
• An faculty ombudsman to assist in resolving problems and maintaining lines of communication—and soon to happen, a staff ombudsman
• Faculty representatives for the BOT standing committees, and
• A president and provost who represent academics and the faculty with the BOT and with the state government

We should all be proud of these accomplishments, but never so that we stop our pursuit of excellence.

So, let me end with what I hope to see in the near future

In discussions with Drs. Smith and Sanjines, we have brainstormed several items that would be the next stages of our evolving shared governance on our campus. Let us look at these possibilities:

[PowerPoint No 8]

• Create opportunities for the BOT to meet the faculty (introduce the faculty representatives to the BOT)
• Lobby for a faculty seat on the BOT
• Clarify/strengthen the office of the ombudsman to resolve conflicts
• Create a process for faculty to have a committee of their peers hear “minor” grievances and make recommendations to the administration
• Strengthen shared governance in the academic administrative structure (department-chair-dean) to mirror the shared governance that already exists in the elected governing bodies (senate, standing committees, provost)
• Ensure that all decisions in colleges are not “top-down” and that important academic, faculty, and program decisions and planning are generated at the department level
• Encourage transparency in performance evaluation by making general information about all faculty publicly available (CVs) as recommended by the AAUP (Policy Documents and Reports, p. 103)
• Support the professional development of department chairs to help them balance their responsibilities as both members of the administration and coordinators of shared governance in their departments,
• Improve the administrator evaluation process, and
• Reward participation in shared governance (service) in the P&T process so that there is broader participation among the faculty

These are some challenges that I encourage us to assess how they can make CCU an even better place to work—an institution where shared governance becomes the benchmark for other universities to model.

[PowerPoint No. 9]

However, another element is equally important to mention. That is, your involvement. There is only so much that the Board and Administration can do without you. Too many opportunities are missed to promote comradery on our campus. Let me just give you a few examples of recent happenings where I believe we missed the proverbial boat. Two weeks ago, we held an event for our new faculty members. Sadly, only about five or six new faculty attended. When we have attempted to have an event involving Board members and our faculty, again, attendance is woefully poor. Moreover, Tuesday night this week we celebrated the 2018 HTC Distinguished Teacher Scholar Lecturer award winner, Dr. Jennifer Boyles. To be frank, I was embarrassed by the lack of faculty attendance. Here is one of your own colleagues being honored, and our faculty cannot show up. What message does that send to the honoree; and to HTC representative who looked around the room and saw, if we are lucky, 30 attendees? I have seen dwindling attendance at town hall meetings I have held, as well as those meet and greets that I previously held; and the Provost holds now.

What message does that send to us? Are you saying you are not interested in such events and maybe it is time to stop them? Surely not having them will save time and money. Is that what we want to do—to let apathy creep into our academic lives where we are a collection of independent individuals who simply draw a paycheck from this institution? We will never have the kind of workplace we all desire until we each commit to making our workplace and our support for one another the best that it can be.
[PowerPoint No. 10]

I am confident when that happens you will see all aspects of this campus thriving and our commitment to our students abound.

[PowerPoint No. 11]

That is my dream for what genuine shared governance can achieve.

Thank you.