

Hey Cal Poly Humboldt!

I don't know if it is because of the string of sunny days or a mental defense mechanism in response to the apocalyptic bleakness of national news, but I've found myself daydreaming about the future over the last couple days.

Following the last round of Senate ballots through the Appointments and Elections Committee (thank you, Jorge and Patrick!), we now have a new Senate Chair/General Faculty President Elect in Dr. Chris Harmon of the Chemistry Department and University Policies Committee. Congratulations, Dr. Harmon, and "thank you" in advance of your service. I look forward to Chris' tenure, not only because I'm 100% sure he is a more prepared and appropriate fit for the position, but also because I think it gives us an opportunity as a campus to reset our engagement with the Senate Chair role. Let's all make sure to think through how we can prepare and guide Chris through how we want to engage and be engaged by the Senate and shared governance on campus. Let's communicate our desires and expectations for change in our democratic context, such that it reflects what we want it to look like.

Similarly, we will be electing committee leadership and welcoming new Senators at our April 29th meeting (not tomorrow, but two weeks from now). Again, we will have some fresh faces joining our representative shared governance, as well as familiar folx in new roles. As we move toward those new terms and new work, we should, I think, pause to reflect on what those committees do, and how we can most effectively welcome and inform folx of their roles in those contexts, such that we can hit the ground running in the coming year and work towards a more perfect educational institution.

Democracy seems like such a fragile thing right now. I pick up the newspaper every morning and despair for the deterioration of what I had always assumed were unassailable norms. I feel helpless to confront them in a meaningful way. The thought that the work we do to prepare our students for their role as world-changing agents and leaders might eventually return us to even the horribly imperfect model of just last year, and hopefully something better, is a comfort to me, but it is also an abstraction that pushes the responsibility for change onto our students. The University Senate, as flawed and sometimes ineffectual as it seems, is one space in which we have the opportunity to bolster and reaffirm democratic stewardship of a public University, and that feels like another important space for us to make sure we are doing our best.

Allen Ginsberg had a line in his "Fall of America" Poems from 1969:

"Well, while I'm here I'll do the work — and what's the work? To ease the pain of living. Everything else, drunken dumbshow."

Let's do this work for each other.

jim