

I am not a member of the Faculty Senate.

I was once, in 2012, for about 3 meetings. But I couldn't follow the conversation. Not because it was over my head necessarily, but because it was beyond my ability to hear.

I am disabled, or "differently abled". I was born moderately to severely hearing impaired. Hearing aids, historically, have been limited in their effectiveness. Therefore, I learned to *get by* with a combination of lip reading, sound, and filling in the gaps with context. But the lip reading is critical. I cannot maneuver without it. If I cannot read lips, dialogue – especially in large rooms such as this one – sounds like the adults from the Peanuts animations.

Because of my disability, I cannot watch cartoons, I cannot follow a movie in a movie theater, I cannot hear what is being said by all of these speakers who speak at the podium, because their backs are to me. I cannot hear in large, dark meetings, like plenary, because the low lighting or distance from the speaker occludes my ability to read lips. I cannot hear people who have strong accents, or keep their faces down, or have facial hair covering their upper lip, or don't have facial hair but don't move their upper lip much when forming words. I cannot hear you trustees when your microphone is too far away; I cannot hear you when your faces are cast down. I cannot follow audiobooks, or the audio recordings of any of the Governing Board meetings. My vocabulary is stunted because I cannot hear new words for what they are. My ability to learn a foreign language, like Spanish, which I would so love to be fluent in, is severely stunted. The reason that I have a bachelors in mathematics isn't because I was a natural mathematician. It's because math was the only subject matter where all necessary components of the lesson were written down on a chalk board or an overhead projector.

Because of my disability, I am not a Senator. The two-dozen faculty are arranged in a long, narrow room where turned heads block my line of sight to faculty when they speak. I tried, and I couldn't follow enough of the conversation. There are no current accommodations that would allow me to participate fully as a member of the Faculty Senate.

Dr. Blake insinuates the faculty have a problem. Ostensibly, that problem is that we are not diverse enough. And based on Dr. Blake's words to Teresa, where she said she will shut down the hiring of 23 faculty this year if the problem isn't 'fixed', well, this must be a really, really serious problem. Okay, then.

Really, really serious problems deserve really serious attention, including a thorough understanding of the problems, and an understanding of the cause of the problems. If you cannot define the problem and understand where breakdown is happening, then your solutions probably aren't going to be very effective either. And if the problem so grave that Dr. Blake would rather shut down all of the faculty hiring instead of proceed through our current hiring practices, then faculty – all of us who are fully committed to true intersectionality – should be allowed an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in solving that problem.

And that goes beyond two members of Faculty senate. I understand that trustee Miyamoto motioned to table the discussion of the *ad hoc* committee until February when all of the Senate would have a chance to meet. My understanding is that motion passed 3 to 1. It's not February yet. Senate hasn't met yet. So I ask two things. (1) I ask that you continue to table that discussion until February. If the problem(s) are so serious as to warrant the shutdown of the hiring practices, then the problems cannot

be rectified in two weeks. After all, I don't believe anyone – other than Dr. Blake – has actually seen the data that would help define the problem and inform the discussion. In fact, if anything, I suggest an independent study to help with this, so we actually can rely on data, instead of anecdotal stories that may not be indicative of the larger truth. If we are going to solve this problem, let's do it the right way. And the right way is going to take time and a conversation of more than five people.

Second, I ask that when this comes back in February, that the ad hoc committee be changed into a steering committee that will allow the participation of many more faculty members than just two from Senate. As I previously stated, my own disability precludes me from consideration, but I'd love to give a voice to the special needs populations, which is probably also underrepresented in the faculty. In that way, we can truly be better together. Dr. Blake has already stated that the problem is serious enough that it would warrant shutting down the current hires. So, let's take this problem seriously and take the time to really analyze it, understand it, and fix it. Let's do it right so that the solutions will reap benefits for decades to come. If Dr. Blake shuts down the hires this year so that we can get a real solution in place, then so be it, because as Dr. Halcon and Dr. Blake have suggested, it's just too important to try to solve it any other way.