Remarks by the Faculty Senate President, Jeremy King –

“Thank you Provost Helms.

First, congratulations to today's awardees who’ve provided inspiration to propel the faculty through the rest of the academic year.

We may need it given the confusing headlines:

The world is flat and the cheap cost of storing and transmitting information will make faculty obsolete as Harvard-like education is brought to a world population.

OR

The world is not flat and those in the valleys need the personal attention of place-based faculty who can counter the erosion of social capital that is causing us to disengage from our neighbors and communities and go bowling alone.

A national fiscal gap of $11 trillion per year and growth of global debt at twice the rate of GDP over the past 25 years present immense fiscal pressures that require faculty to orient themselves as agents of centrally-planned economic development to generate revenue.

OR

Such efforts over the past 50 years have yielded products that are but incremental derivatives of design. We need faculty to refocus on the public goods in public education and on humanity’s big picture socio-economic, political and moral challenges as well as risk-laden fundamental research that really drive economic growth, true technological advance, and sustainable societies.

In sum: faculty are dead, long live faculty.

So, what IS the future of faculty? I knew Vice President Kelly Smith would point me to our most eminent modern philosopher to address that question.

And here’s what Yogi Berra said, "It's difficult to make predictions, especially about the future."

I can only suggest how to shape that future: by recognizing that all faculty share several responsibilities whose fulfillment or not will define our legacy:

1. Engaging important issues and stepping up to intellectually challenge weak decisions...that's what we'd demand (I hope) from our engaged critically-thinking students.

2. Considering solutions that haven’t been conceived of or haven’t been implemented before….that's the spirit we'd like our students to carry with them when they leave Clemson.
3. Providing leadership on issues—even if uncomfortable due to lack of experience or previous detailed knowledge...that's what we hope a Clemson education would do for our students.

4. Endeavoring to perform work for each area of our tripartite mission that is of distinctive or excellent quality like that we hope to see from our students.

5. Working with others in a transparent manner not merely to develop policy or implement strategy, but to try and enhance our culture. For, as the great Peter Drucker said, culture eats strategy for breakfast.

The Senate has been working to enhance that culture. We’ve made progress as a result of adopting the above principles—especially working WITH others….staff, students, the administration, the Board, and external stakeholders. How about a culture

- where we make conscious decisions to compensate faculty via a performance-driven market-based process that is supported by new tools to be operationally sustainable
- where there is more equitable valuation in the performance of the elements of the tripartite mission
- where faculty, staff, and students have primarily authored the institution mission statement.
- where faculty representatives are provided data and consulted on decisions for faculty hires to balance workload and strengthen strategic areas of scholarship.
- where the prospect of faculty being replaced by software in academic advising is averted
- where there is a uniform cross-campus expectation regarding faculty benefits

We’re not perfect—I’m sure we didn’t and won’t get everything completely right in these efforts.

But, I believe we’re moving in the right direction.

The Senate needs to keep moving due to the challenges facing faculty:
- The development of an uncertain renewed role for our School of Ed colleagues in moving the needle on K12 education in the State.
- The nationwide movement to commoditize faculty via non-place-based virtual delivery models to reduce large swaths of higher education to job training and to promote a monolithic model of higher education for everyone.
- Our own inability to define and hold the frontier of assessment of our own enterprise, and instead surrender this task to publishing executives who really are poorly qualified for this task.
- As faculty celebrate our 50th anniversary of integration, we find evidence that black male athletes in major championship athletic conferences lag behind in degree completion, institutional cultures emphasizing academic eligibility over degree completion, and growing medical evidence of the risk of “routine” sub-concussive head trauma associated with some sports in their current form.
- Ensuring an accessible but fiscally sustainable university, which involves the
confluence of faculty workload and evaluation, faculty-generated revenue streams, and issues (yes, that are still with us) surrounding the security, development, freedom, and status of lecturers.

Your fondness for difficult problems and questions is probably why you BECAME a faculty member. These issues are good reasons to REMAIN one, and should not be sources of dismay or disengagement. Rather, they should be sources of professional urgency and fulfillment. There’s never been a better time to be a faculty member!

The aforementioned challenges are upon us. THEY can shape our future as we REACT to them, or WE can shape our own future in RESPONDING to them by working together.

I believe our administration and Board is committed to the latter. With Senate elections a month or two away, please consider working with them, serving your colleagues, and creating the future for Clemson faculty.

I wish you a safe and rejuvenating holiday break!”