

Colleagues—

As you may know, the Board of Trustees has made several changes to its agendas over the last several months, and AFA has expressed its concern that these changes have the effect of limiting faculty speech. We are encouraged that Board President Fishman has been responsive to the faculty's concerns about these changes. We encourage the faculty to continue to communicate directly with the Board on this issue, or to contact AFA so that we may advocate with the Board on your behalf.

Last fall, the length of all reports, including that of the Academic Senate President, was limited to three minutes. The faculty expressed its disappointment with this limitation, and Board President Fishman has increased the length of reports to five minutes.

Then, at the December Board meeting, a number of faculty members who attended with the intention of making public comments about the impasse declaration found that, despite their desire to speak on different topics, their comment cards were grouped together on a single topic. The effect of this was to limit the number of faculty members able to speak because each topic has a limit of 20 minutes. After several faculty members again expressed their dissatisfaction to the Board, President Fishman took pains to assure attendees at the January special topics Board meeting that the trustees would hear as many comments as possible and that the Board values the college community's perspectives. At that meeting, the public comments period was extended to 40 minutes.

Despite the fact that it seemed progress was being made, a few days before the February Board meeting, it was announced that, for the first time in our memory, public comments on non-agenda items would be moved to the end of the Board meeting (public comments on agenda items were moved toward the beginning of the meeting rather than being allowed just before the specific agenda item). Faculty members who had intended to speak were unable to do so due to this change. We are encouraged that, again, Board President Fishman has heard the faculty members who have voiced their concern about changing the longstanding time for public comments. We hope that the Board will be responsive to those concerns.

Speaking and writing to the Board of Trustees are important all the time, and especially so now. It is critical that the Board hear from the faculty about our programs, our concerns about our beloved institution, and our experiences supporting ourselves and our families in Sonoma County. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, March 13, at 4 p.m., in Bertolini. We hope to see you there.