

Transcript of BZS remarks and Chancellor Blank response at June 9, 2015 UW-Madison Special Faculty Senate Meeting

Bassam: I am Bassam Shakhashiri; I am a UW-Madison professor of chemistry and the first holder of the William T. Evjue Distinguished Chair for the Wisconsin Idea.

In the Fall, I will begin my 46th year as a faculty member here (applause.) My proudest professional achievement is being a tenured faculty member at UW-Madison (applause.)

We belong to this university. This university belongs to Wisconsin.

Chancellor Blank, I ask you and I ask every other tenured person in this room and on our faculty and staff to improve the connectivity that we have with the citizens of Wisconsin.

Just about everything we have been hearing about and talking about in the past few weeks have centered mostly on one issue, maybe two issues.

We are not a special interest group. We are a *very* special interest group. We have a social contract with the citizens of Wisconsin.

There are three elements that are in play, Chancellor Blank and fellow faculty and staff members: the element of trust, the element of confidence, and the element of respect. And they are missing from the conversations that we have. We do not reflect, truly, who we are, what we stand for.

My question is, we must improve the connectivity with the citizens of Wisconsin. Not only with those who are elected officials in Wisconsin; some of them were our students. I can tell you that none of the people, who are players now, were in any my classes (laughter.)

We are the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We're not the University of Wisconsin-Madison-19%-supported-by-the-state-of-Wisconsin.

We belong to this institution and the institution belongs to Wisconsin. And we must work very hard, harder than what we have been doing, together, to reach out to every corner of the state as we do successfully around the world, so that the citizens of Wisconsin, the voters of Wisconsin, who trust us and have confidence in us and respect us understand more than what this singular issue is that is the focus of today's discussion.

This is the true Wisconsin Idea. As Abraham Lincoln said, whose statue is in front of Bascom Hall, where the famous plaque [sifting and winnowing] is that I and so many other people have quoted over the years, and shall continue to quote, as President Lincoln said: "Public sentiment is everything. Without public sentiment, nothing can succeed. With public sentiment nothing can fail."

My question is, what are we doing, preparing ourselves and acting to meaningfully connect and communicate with the citizens of Wisconsin (applause.)

Blank: Thank you for that, those comments and for that question. I see a number of people waiting to speak and I'm going to take your comments and your questions as an injunction to me and to everyone else here to continue to support the Wisconsin Idea as fully as possible and would be

happy to talk to you afterwards about some of the things we are doing and any ideas you might have to do more. Thank you.