

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Executive Committee

DATE: March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: Public Sharing Information about Deaths of Faculty and Staff at PFW

Whereas, through most of its history IPFW and PFW had been able to retain faculty and staff so that many people spent a significant proportion of their professional careers at our institution,

Whereas, many faculty and staff made significant and lasting contributions to our institution and were valuable and respected members of our community,

Whereas, when a community loses a member, acknowledging their passing and their impact on the lives of people around them and the institution in which they worked is a normal human act,

Whereas, research on grief and mourning shows that people need to mourn the losses they experience, and that reconciling loss into one's life comes as a result of mourning,

Whereas, death announcements are the most basic way of notifying people who may not know a death of a campus colleague, particularly a retired colleague, has occurred,

Whereas, for many years we could count on receiving timely information about deaths of members of our community,

Whereas, we have lost some truly amazing people in the last few years, and the tragedy of their deaths was exacerbated by the fact that without a centralized way of disseminating this information, people were not able to receive notifications in a timely manner,

Whereas, a few years ago one newly-arrived university administrator unilaterally made the decision to stop sharing this information, thereby obstructing the natural starting point for people's mourning—awareness that a death has occurred,

Whereas, this policy change was made without seeming regard for what is known about how humans try to cope with loss and what the campus community at large wants, and only serves to maintain a death-denying, mourning-avoidant attitude about one of our shared experiences as humans—the fact that we must endure losses;

Whereas, we have to know about losses in order to support each other in mourning them and trying to heal from them, and when we do not acknowledge the tragedy of loss, we miss opportunities to support each other, and to teach us all how to come together in grief or healing,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the university returns to past practices of sharing information about deaths of members of the community through a centralized email notification,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Communication and Marketing develops and makes available to Senate EC a memorandum that explains the process for submitting this information for dissemination by the September 2022 Senate meeting (or sooner),

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that since the university also refuses to acknowledge deaths of students, the Senate Student Affairs Committee works to develop a set of recommendations for how to best handle that process for student deaths, regardless of the circumstances surrounding such deaths.