

# NEW ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR DON TAYLOR ON WELCOMING PRESIDENT PRICE AND THE COUNCIL'S FULL AGENDA THIS YEAR

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When Vincent Price walks to his inauguration ceremony next week, he'll follow behind Sanford School Professor [Don Taylor](#), who will lead the procession and carefully carry the 37 inch-long silver sterling mace weighing more than seven pounds.

The new chair of the Academic Council, Taylor's vanguard position in the procession is a symbolic measure of the faculty's role in shared governance at the university. But it's also a real sign of one of the assignments facing Taylor and the council this year.

"Welcoming the new president to Duke and our culture of faculty governance will be one of our important tasks this year," said Taylor, who succeeded Professor Nan Jokerst on July 1. He will serve a two-year term.

## TWO DECADES AT DUKE

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-- Don Taylor

"I was on the presidential search committee, and I've found Vince to be very open to dialogue. I expect he will continue to be eager to consult the faculty on the issues and using us as a sounding board. I'm looking forward to being part of what I think is a big opportunity for the faculty to help Duke chart its future course."

The first Sanford School faculty member to serve as council chair, Taylor brings a long history of university service to the position. He served a term on the Executive Committee of the Academic Council from 2013-2015 and for the past two years was the chair of the University Priorities Committee, which assesses the university's long-term academic priorities and ensures they are aligned with the budget.

Taylor also is experienced in working with trustees, having been a member of the Business and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

He said he wasn't looking to become council chair but eagerly takes on the role.

“When the nominating committee asked me to consider being council chair, I thought it was an honor,” said Taylor, a frequently cited scholar of health care policy. “And it is an honor. I think faculty governance is important, so if you think something is important and you have a chance to step up, it's the right thing to do. I have benefited a great deal from Duke, and this is a way to give back.

“I came to Duke 20 years ago after a post-doc in England, so it's essentially the only place I know,” Taylor said. “But I think we have a comparatively strong system of faculty governance, where at our best faculty bring good insights into the running of the university, and a strong faculty role actually helps our president, provost and other university administrators to do their jobs and achieve our shared goals for Duke.”

A native of Goldsboro and a UNC-Chapel Hill graduate, Taylor said “if you had told me when I was an undergraduate that I would work for more than two decades at Duke, I would have said you were crazy. But I've come to love Duke.”

“I have come to understand Duke as a North Carolina success story, and this was not something I was familiar with growing up in eastern North Carolina. I am eager to help tell that story, and help determine what the next phase of the University will be.”

Part of the unique platform afforded to Duke, he said, comes from the university's opportunity to continue its commitment to embracing its place in North Carolina and in the U.S. South while continuing its rise in global prominence, a commitment that was called upon this summer with the controversy about the R.E. Lee statue at Duke Chapel.

In a blog written after President Price ordered the statue removed, Taylor said he believes the action is best understood as the “beginning of a new chapter” in the university's history where we have an opportunity to provide a model of how “difficult issues can be navigated truthfully, respectfully and openly.”

Taylor will lead his first council meeting [Thursday at 3:30 p.m. in Westbrook Bldg.](#) The opening session will feature several topics that may come up

throughout the year: New Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement Abbas Benmamoun will discuss faculty development and diversity, and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Jennifer Francis will deliver a report on the growth of master's programs at Duke.

The masters' degree report follows several years of faculty discussion about the effect of additional master's programs have on university education and services. Francis will update the council on her findings and discuss concerns about the intellectual basis for the new programs.

In addition, Professor Lori Bennear will report on the work of the University Priorities Committee. One of the committee's focuses this year, Taylor said, "will be doing a deep dive into the finances of the university institutes and centers."

Finally, Fuqua School Professor Gráinne Fitzsimons, vice chair of the newly appointed Commission on Memory and History, will outline the steps the commission will take in devising guidelines for university leaders to make decisions related to the naming of university facilities and monuments on campus. Fitzsimons is also vice chair of the Executive Committee of the Academic Council.

Another issue on the council's agenda for later in the year involves non-tenure track faculty members, Taylor said. A committee chaired by Gavan Fitzsimons is looking at the rise of non-tenure track faculty to "describe at the granular level how the rank distribution has changed. In some cases, the changes are purposeful and part of a deliberate strategy by the hiring unit, but in other cases it's likely the marketplace led the way. We need a fuller understanding of the facts and that is the goal of the report."

He said he expects a report from Fitzsimons and his committee in the spring.

Taylor also expects the first-ever salary equity review for non-tenure track faculty. The council conducts such a study every other year for tenure-track faculty.

"Studying salary equity of the non-tenure track faculty could be more complicated," Taylor said. "The way units record these faculty can vary and so compiling the data could be difficult since such a report has not been done before. However, we think it's time to take a look at this issue as all faculty are important to Duke."