



Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen

**2022-2023 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, March 7, 2023, 3pm – 5pm CST Via Zoom**

**Senators Present**

Khalid Aada, Jair Aguilar, Antonio Aguirre, Stephanie Alvarez, Andrew Anabila, Sonja Arredondo, Linda Belau, Grant Benham, Ben Brown, Mircea Chipara, Joel Chirinos, Louis Falk, Fuat Firat, Christopher Gabler, Christine Gerin, Sergey Grigorian, Federico Guerra, Jonathan Guist, Marcela Hebbard, Jose Esteban Hernandez, Kip Austin Hinton, Krista Jobson Pauline Jojo, Ulku Karabulut, Hale Kaynak, Megan Keniry, Marisa Palacios Knox, Sanjeev Kumar, Dean Kyne, Karin Lewis, Qinyu Liao, Michael Machiorlatti, Pedro Martinez, Theresa Mata-Pistokache, Randall Monty, Gerardo Munoz-Monaco, Cynthia Paccacerqua, Diana Paz, Emmy Perez, Monika Rabarison, Genaro Ramirez-Correa, Jack Ruelas, Jeannean Ryman, Miguel Salazar Manuel Saldivar, Andrea Schwarzbach, Hooman Tabatabai-Mir, Eloisa Tamez, Owen Temby, Ahmed Touhami, Mohammed Uddin, Paul Valadez, Jorge Vidal, Vejoya Viren, Sarah Williams-Blangero, Aaron Wilson, Christian Zuniga

**Senators Absent**

George Atisa, Roseann Bacha-Garza, Jameela Banu, Narayan Bhat, George Diaz, James Gleason, Ayleen Godreau, Tekla Hawkins, Jeong Kim, Kye-Hwan Lee, Hansheng Lei, Gladys Maestre, Robert Magee, Salma Mahmood, Lucia Carreon-Martinez, Nancy Nadeau, Rafael Otero, Nilanjana Paul, Riccardo Pizzinato, Padmanabahn Rengasamy, Clarissa Salinas, Dana Shackelford, Yingchen Yang

**Guests**

Myra Alvarado, Janna Arney, Bruno Arthur, Guy Bailey, Ed Cameron, Katherine Christoffersen, Glorimar Colon, Maggie Cronn, Amy Cummins, Orelia Erdem, Alex Garrido, Keri Gonzalez, Veronica Gonzalez, Seratna Guadarrama Beltran, Leonardo Longoria, Dania Lopez Garcia, Jose Campo Maldonado, Fidencio Mercado, Dania Ochoa, Jaime Ortiz, Lily Puente, Ala Qubbaj, Nancy Razo, Paul Sale, Mohammed Sikander, Silvia Patricia Solis, Alex Stehn, Murali Yallapu, Aziza Zemrani, Qing Zeng

- I. Meeting Called to Order at 3:02pm**
- II. Report of FS Parliamentarian – Senator Falk**
  - a. Reminder of Roberts Rules of Order
- III. Report of FS Secretary – Senator Guist**

- a. Approval of February minutes
  - i. The February minutes are not ready yet. Approval will be tabled for the April meeting

#### **IV. Old Business**

- a. ADM 00-000 Faculty Development Leave Policy
  - i. Comments/Feedback?
    - 1. President-Elect Paccacerqua: We are still pending a meeting between FSEC and the Faculty Development Leave Committee on this policy. Recommend that we table this until FSEC can report on that meeting
    - 2. Item tabled.
- b. ADM 07-106 Use of Animals in Research, Training or Testing Related Activities
  - i. Glorimar Colón, Executive Director of Research Compliance & Export Control is a guest to answer questions on this item
    - 1. Senator Gabler: Is the intent of this policy simply to codify in HOP the rules we have already been following? Is the Office of Laboratory Animal Resources a new office?
      - a. Yes, this is putting everything we have been doing into HOP to ensure we are consistently following existing rules & regulations. The Office of LAR has been in existence and is responsible for overseeing & managing animals used in research.
  - ii. Motion to move the policy forward: Senator Vidal; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Senator Gabler
  - iii. No discussion – Motion carries (42 Approve, 1 Decline, 9 Abstain)
- c. ADM 06-401 Academic Titles
  - i. Update: we are not going to use the “Senior Distinguished Lecturer” title at UTRGV and it has been removed from this policy
  - ii. Tabled until the next meeting to allow for additional feedback from constituents

#### **V. Guest Presentations**

- a. Guy Bailey, UTRGV President
  - i. Provost Search: three candidates visited campus. We received good feedback from a wide range of campus community members and did extensive “off-list” referencing. One candidate, Luis Zayas, was invited back for additional interviewing. After additional feedback, a decision will be made.
- b. Guy Bailey, UTRGV President and Veronica Gonzalez, Senior VP for Governmental and Community Relations
  - 1. Legislative Session: On the issue of DEI, UT System is taking a strong lead on this. Bills have not yet been filed. The deadline to file bills is this Friday. There will be bills filed on CRT, DEI, and Tenure. Bills change in committee. To give an example: A bill prohibiting property purchases by people from China, Iran, Russia,

and North Korea was changed due to pushback and has been amended to allow for the purchase of land as a homestead.

- a.** DEI: Universities are putting a hold on DEI policies to show that we can regulate ourselves without legislative mandates and have made clear that we hire on merit. Legislation may still go forward on this. A concern seems to be with DEI as a litmus test and quotas.
- b.** Tenure: focus is more on post-tenure review. Bills could essentially codify the policy in place at Texas A&M regarding the procedure that is followed which would be a better outcome. The 1<sup>st</sup> version of a bill to come out may include language to eliminate tenure but amendments are already in the works that would change this and 99% sure this would not be a part of any final bill.
- c.** CRT: Not sure how this will formulate. UT System does not seem to be overly concerned about this particular issue.

## **2. Questions/Comments from Senators**

- a.** Senator Tabatabai-Mir: Expressed sensitivity to these issues. His family is from Iran and there is great sensitivity to the issue of targeting people from specific countries
  - i.** Bailey: We do have people from all of the targeted countries (with possible exception of North Korea) and so the administration is also very sensitive to these issues.
- b.** Senator Paccacerqua: One of the DEI bills also deals with function of higher education. It changes language as to who it is we are serving in terms of access and equality and minimizes the function that knowledge has in higher ed. Would like to ask that this specific language be tracked as this is potentially some of the most damaging language in some of this legislation.
  - i.** Gonzalez: The legislator that brought this bill forward is a freshman member and as such, there seems to be very little chance of this advancing but we will definitely keep an eye on this.
  - ii.** Bailey: This is right – it matters who files a bill. The ones we really need to focus on are those that will be filed the rest of this week. If they are filed by a committee chairman these are usually the bills that have traction.
- c.** Senator Hinton: Language and rhetoric is important. This acronym (DEI) is something that until recently had been used by a relatively small group of people and has been adopted because it sounds like jargon that can be made to sound scary because they're not saying the words, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" which are things that are

very hard to be against. We need to be sure that the meaning doesn't get lost in the acronym.

- i. Gonzalez: A lot of this is rhetoric and it doesn't mean this is going to translate into policy. Acknowledges that in Florida this has a little bit but Texas is different and doesn't necessarily know that the same will happen here.
  - ii. Bailey: The process is a little more complicated in Texas for getting bills passed so this makes things like this harder to get through and become law.
- d. Senator Firat: First would like to express his hope that the original administration position that these attacks on tenure and academic freedom are mere political theatre has changed and these issues are now being taken seriously as they are clearly real. Would like to ask that the FSEC is consistently informed as to what the administration is doing to stand against these attacks on the academy.
- e. Senator Gabler: Rhetoric is not harmless. Words are powerful and influence policy. Universities that are putting a hold on DEI are yielding to these extreme points of view without pushback and he takes issue with this approach. We cannot rely on the idea that at the end of the day the legislature won't do anything that harms higher education too much because they see the importance of being able to attract high quality faculty. These extreme groups want to erode higher education and will gladly oversee a brain drain. We are seeing a pattern of embracing the uneducated and this has been a pattern throughout history.
  - i. Gonzalez: The fight was really at the polls when people voted. We are actively educating our representatives on these issues. All of the arguments, including all of those that you make, are absolutely being made.
  - ii. Bailey: None of the UT System schools have yet put a hold on DEI programs. The one thing that they have done is adopt the Chicago Statement by which they agree to review DEI policies but right now there have been no policy changes in UT System schools, including ours.
- f. Senator Alvarez: How can faculty with policy expertise in these areas help? We have a lot of experts that can assist with the language and rhetoric. Are the legislators from our area really committed to defending these issues?
  - i. Gonzalez: A group including FS President Hinton met with representatives to make sure they understood our position and as these bills progress

through the process we can meet with them further to be sure we are explaining the language so they understand the importance and impact it can have since they are not experts in higher education.

- g. Senator Uddin: Echoing the thoughts of Senator Gabler, we would absolutely be losing a lot of quality people as a result of some of this legislation
- h. Senator Chipara: Is there any feeling that grants and financial aid for students may be cut or reduced?
  - i. Bailey: No. More likely to increase than decrease.

c. Janna Arney, Executive Vice President & Provost

- i. Yields her time to the previous discussion due to its timeliness and importance.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

a. Professional Faculty Committee, Senator Jorge Vidal

i. “Non-tenure Track Policy Draft”

- 1. This is pretty close to the guidelines we have been using. There are some positive changes. Much of the discussion centered around timelines for promotion to a higher level. The years in rank before eligibility for promotion have either been maintained or decreased. There is also the addition of an option for early application for promotion.

a. Question: Senator Hebbard: Why is the title Distinguished Senior Lecturer not on the list?

- i. Vidal: The thought was there were too many steps and with the four that we have that aligns with other UT institutions. This is still something that could be negotiated in the future, but this was part of the give and take of negotiating the policy.

b. Question: Senator Alvarez: Concerned that there are a few departments that continually hire OYAs and it is the same person that is continually hired on these OYAs. Not good for students or for the faculty member. This seems to be very unjust. Is there some way to address this?

- i. Vidal: This is a good point but this is not something covered by this policy because this policy is about evaluating faculty, not about hiring faculty. But this is definitely an issue that should be followed up on.

b. Technology Enhanced Education Oversight Committee (TEEOC) – Senator Randall Monty

- i. The team led by COLTT is moving through the process of evaluating new Learning Management Systems. We will be deciding between Canvas and

Blackboard Ultra. Testing has been taking place and a lot of feedback from users compiled.

- ii. There has been attrition on this committee. Down to two members so if there is any interest, please consider serving on this committee.

- 1. Questions

- a. Senator Falk: How close is Blackboard Ultra to Blackboard?

- i. Monty: The logic behind the UI and how things are organized is very similar to Blackboard but the technology behind it is much more advanced. What would be the easiest transition is not really going to be a part of the decision. The decision will be made on what will provide us with the best usability and user experience going forward.

- b. Senator Paccacerqua: Can you review the timeline and what resources will be available for faculty to assist in making the transition

- i. Monty: Timeline will be staggered. Some faculty will begin piloting the new program in the Fall. Then in the Spring, entire programs will switch over. There will be some time when students will be using different systems at the same time. By Fall of 2024 the entire institution will adopt. This is the goal but not set in stone yet at this point. There are numerous resources offered by each of these companies to assist in learning the new systems.

- c. Ad-hoc Sustainability Committee, Senator Chris Gabler

- i. The committee decided to draft a HOP policy like the UTSA and UT Dallas models as is required by Regent's Rules. Will take from these what we can and form our own policy. Will consult all relevant stakeholders. Hope to have the document ready for first review by the April meeting with the goal of having it ratified and in effect by Fall 2023

- d. Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS), President-Elect Cynthia Paccacerqua

- i. A very productive meeting in learning the different conceptions of what faculty governance is by system level chancellors. There is clearly work to be done in addressing this. It is clear that they don't understand why we should not trust their behind the scenes work at the legislative level. Right now we are doing that but there are historical reasons for this hesitation.

- ii. Presentations by AAUP. They and TCFS are doing a lot of work advocating with the legislature. Urges us to get involved and join AAUP if interested

- iii. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board – main function is to translate legislation into higher education policy. The commissioner of THECB presented. Highlighted some of the good things happening in this legislative session including resources going to teaching professions,

nursing, a tuition freeze, etc. Did speak to him on the side and would be happy to have discussions with interested groups about some of the challenges he sees we may face going forward.

- iv. UT Tyler is looking at a raise for faculty passing post-tenure review. This has been received positively by our administration as an idea and plans to keep this on her plate as she takes over as FS President next year
- e. Provost Search Committee, Kip Austin Hinton
  - i. Luis Zayas returned to campus for a finalist visit. Dr. Bailey considers him the leading candidate. FSEC and WFN had the chance to meet with him today and it was a positive meeting.
    - 1. Question:
      - a. Senator Falk: Was asked to look into whether it was disclosed that this candidate has a personal relationship with the chair of the search committee (Dean of School of Social Work, Luis Torres-Hostos)?
        - i. Hinton: Yes, it was, and Dr. Torres-Hostos has distanced himself from all discussions involving this candidate.
- f. Discussion:
  - i. Senator Fuat: Regarding legislative issues previously discussed, it seems that other than AAUP, TCFS, and groups like that, we are just sitting back and watching what is taking place. Are we going to sit back and watch or are there other actions we can take? We should begin talking about what actions should/can be taken by academics.
    - 1. President Hinton: Thank you for that comment and the urgency is certainly understood.
    - 2. Senator Fuat: One thing we can do is charge the Committee on Academic Freedom with looking into this.
    - 3. President Hinton: Has been in touch with them regarding some legislative issues and can ask them to look at this as well

## **VII. New Business**

- a. ADM 07-304 Institutional Base Salary HOP Policy
- b. ADM 06-701 Organized Research Units
- c. ADM 06-502, 503, 504 Appendix E
  - i. Please distribute all of these to your constituents for review and feedback
- d. Reminder to institute Senate Elections in your departments if there is an upcoming vacancy
- e. Start thinking about Officer Elections and please consider self-nominating if interesting in serving the FS as an officer
- f. Senator Ramirez Correa: Faculty in the School of Medicine has requested that we consider the issue of 360 Evaluation which involves cross evaluation where you are not only evaluated by your supervisor but faculty also review supervisors. A lot of faculty in the School of Medicine feel intimidated in expressing their opinions of administration.

- i. Senator Falk: We do have this in place with periodic administrative reviews.
  - ii. President Hinton: Chair evaluation results are available on MyUTRGV – Menu Item → Institutional Reports: This is where chair evaluation results for the chair of your department can be found for review. Deans are evaluated according to HOP policy but dean evaluations are not available to faculty. These are only available to supervisors of the Deans which means only the Provost and the President. A major policy change would be required to change this.
- g. Questions/Comments:
  - i. Senator Paccacerqua: The FS used to do administrator reviews every three years. This hasn't happened in a while, probably due to COVID, but this is something we should work on resuming.
  - ii. Senator Alvarez: A group of senators has been working on a resolution for greater support of the B3 Institute looking for a recommitment from the administration for B3. We have a draft that they would like the FSEC to look at and discuss. Solicited feedback from faculty and students on the matter.

**VIII. Report of the President-Elect, Cynthia Paccacerqua**

- a. Nothing additional to report

**IX. Report of the President, Kip Austin-Hinton**

- a. Order FS shirts at the link included in the agenda
- b. Faculty Travel Funds: Administration is aware of the need to increase travel funds and is working toward this.
- c. Chair Evaluations and Dean Evaluations (see previous comments under New Business)
- d. Questions/Comments:
  - i. Senator Tabatabai-Mir: Regarding Travel Funds – has been contacting the Faculty Success office regarding his application for additional travel funds. It is very difficult to get a response regarding the status of applications. Is there a way for FS to look into this or help improve this process?
    - 1. Senator Paccacerqua: It is unclear how the Office of Faculty Success is currently organized and suggests that the FSEC look into this. In addition, the FSEC will be meeting with this committee to get clarification and offer feedback on the policies regarding how these funds are distributed.

**X. Meeting adjourned**

- a. Motion to adjourn: Senator Lewis; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Senator Tabatabai-Mir
- b. Meeting adjourned at 4:51pm