



Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen

2023-2024 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 3:00–5:00pm CST Via Zoom

Senators Present:

Mohamed Abdel-Raheem, Antonio Aguirre, Jair J. Aguilar, Mataz Alcoutlabi, Michelle Alvarado, Bruno Arthur, Roseann Bacha-Garza, Norma Beardwood-Roper, Ben Brown, Erica Buchberger, Joel Chirinos, Elizabeth Deven-Hernandez, Louis Falk, Marcus Farris, Fuat Firat, Chris Gabler, Suad Ghaddar, James Gleason, Cynthia Lopez Guerrero, Jonathan Guist, Marcela Hebbard, José E. Hernandez, Kip Austin Hinton, Wanrong Hou, Joseph Hovey, Pauline Jojo, Ulku Karabulut, Megan Keniry, Marisa Knox, Sanjeev Kumar, Dean Kyne, Kye-Hwan Lee, Qinyu Liao, Denise Longoria, Salma Mahmood, Ferenc Moldovanyi, Randall Monty, Noushin Nouri, Tamer Oraby, Cynthia Paccacerqua, Nilanjana Paul, Mahmoud Quweider, Monika Rabarison, Genaro Ramirez-Correra, Padmanabahn Rengasamy, José Antonio Rodríguez, Jack Ruelas, Jeannean Ryman, Clarissa Salinas, Silvia Solis, Laura Seligman, Hooman Tabatabai-Mir, Owen Temby, Mohammed Jasim Uddin, Viren Vejaya, Sarah Williams-Blangero, Aaron Wilson,

Guests Present: Guy Bailey, Jonikka Charlton, Giorgio Gott, Vivian Incera, Michael Lehker, Jaime Ortiz, Gian Gwen Palacios, Ala Quabbaj, Alma Rodriguez, Magalie Saucedo, Luis Torres-Hostos, Jeff Ward, Luis Zayas; Aziza Zemrani, Yahan W

Senators Absent: George Atisa, Sonia Chapa, Mircea Chipara, Ruth Crutchfield, Krista Jobson, Jeong Kim, Gladys Maestre, Pedro Martinez, Nancy Nadeau, George Padilla, Ricardo Pizzinato, Ahmed Touhami, Haiyan Zhou, Christian Zuniga

Guests

- I. **Meeting Called to Order at 3:05pm**
- II. **Report of FS Parliamentarian – Senator Falk**
- III. **Report of FS President — Senator Paccacerqua**
 - a. FAC report
 - i. [Senator Gabler] & I attended UT FAAC meeting.

- ii. UT System is currently working on a model policy to implement Senate Bill 18.
- iii. We should be hearing from them soon and with a copy of that model policy. And the idea is that all modifications to HOP policies at the university level would be going through established shared governance processes for review at the institutions. Then modified HOP policies will be sent to UT System, and they get reviewed and approved at that level. They do not go to the Board of Regents.
- iv. There will be more guidelines relative to Senate Bill 17 being sent to the university, so we should be getting those soon.
- v. UT System has purchased access to Coursera materials. to see if we can incorporate them into curricular activities for microcredentialing
- vi. One of the things we discussed and voted [on was] a statement on how to interpret professionalism and collegiality. And so, we can make a recommendation of how to interpret those concepts, and how they may or may not be incorporated into our policies.
- vii. Some of the issues that came up during the discussions. salaries, raises, faculty shared governance, the possibility of leadership trainings.
- viii. There's a group of UT institutions looking into what it means to be a Hispanic Service Institution. Finding out why UTRGV isn't in the HSI group, perhaps it's because we're already meeting that need.
- ix. The most contentious issues are always salary, especially in terms of inflation rates. There was a pretty big disparity on the percentage of merit increases available, and there was also a conversation as to what type of, you know, work gets rewarded as we assign these merits amounts to recognize faculty, labor and the other is just faculty shared governance. Some institutions are stronger than that, some are weaker. It changes depending on the leadership. There's always a shared commitment in trying to strengthen that across the board.
- b. Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs search committee is working. We have interviewed candidates, and we will be discussing those candidates in a meeting this week.
- c. Faculty concerns:
 - i. students are prompting faculty to discuss controversial issues, recording faculty, and then circulating video; One faculty member of "Faculty Watch List"
 - ii. How/when we're getting stipends/paid for work outside our regular salary

IV. Guest Presentations

- a. President Bailey
 - i. Pay
 - 1. We've tried over time to provide consistent pay raises
 - 2. Declining enrollments over past two years; borrowed from institutional reserves to continue pay plan

3. We're close to Emerging Research University status, which would mean more money
4. Insurance rates up, too
- ii. Enrollments
 1. Most states hitting CLIFF (declining number of high school graduates)
 2. Texas & Utah the only two states that are anticipating increases
 3. Pell Grants the main source of funding (state appropriates related to enrollment numbers)
 4. Built program list (PT Phd)
 5. Create system where students graduate with minimal debt
 6. West Virginia not an anomaly; seeing it in the Midwest, New England, Pennsylvania
- iii. Temby: How is merit determined?
 1. Bailey: set at college and department levels; university follows those policies
 2. [interruption from guest]
- iv. Harassment
 1. If you feel like you're being harassed at your job, that should go to the provost and then to president
 2. Tenure enshrined in law, on solid ground
- v. Paccacerqua: How do we think about the 2% given inflation and COL? A lot of our high rankings are outside of research.
 1. Bailey: As we move to new levels, we have another set of criteria to meet.
- vi. Firat: Text sent to me from Texas legislature says that universities can't grant tenure?
 1. Bailey: That was the bill, not the law. UT System policy will be out soon.

V. Report of FS Secretary – Senator Monty

- a. Approval of September minutes
 - i. Motion to approve: **Gabler**, seconded by **Firat**
 - ii. Approve: **47**; Do not approve: **0**; Abstain: **3**
 - iii. September minutes are approved.
 - iv. Create policy for recorded meetings

VI. Report of President-elect — Senator Gabler

- a. FAC report
 - i. Affirming/chilling to learn that faculty at other institutions are dealing with many of the same things that UTRGV faculty are concerned about
 - ii. High admin turnover across Texas (UT system not as bad as other systems)
 - iii. Political interference, reproductive rights, salaries... are all making it hard to attract top talent to Texas, students and faculty

- b. SB 18
 - i. New tenure law is close to TAMU policy
 - ii. Ten new ways to get fired with tenure; vagueness in law is to allow universities/systems to have their own policies
 - iii. In our HOP
 - 1. Define ambiguous terms well
 - 2. Define and guarantee due process; what steps must happen and who is involved in the process
 - 3. Specify severity, intent, and frequency of inflammatory violations
- c. SB 17
 - i. We have a long way to go towards providing faculty with the kind of guidance they need
 - ii. This bill has very explicit limits and carveouts for behavior
 - 1. All teaching and research on DEI is OK; that is not prohibited by this bill
 - 2. Carve outs by federal grants
 - 3. Must still follow existing federal laws
 - 4. Offices that promote intellectual and experiential diversity are allowed, but we need guidance on what that means
 - iii. Be careful not to over-comply
 - 1. Optional trainings can stay, just can't be mandatory
- d. Political climate:
 - i. Recent political interference, for lack of a better word, is hurting recruitment. So lots of universities, including ourselves. And we've seen this firsthand with our searches. We're having a harder time recruiting students to Texas, and we're having a harder time recruiting faculty and administrators to Texas because there is concern about political interference. There's concern about reproductive rights. There's concern about salaries. There's concern about a lot of different things that's making it harder to attract top talent to Texas.
- e. First: SB 17 discussion about not being able to ask questions that might be offensive to a student's values?
 - i. Gabler: SB 16 was defeated and removed; that kind of prohibition does not apply re SB 17

VII. Report of Past-president

- a. Falk: tabled

VIII. Old Business

- a. Paccacerqua: So this is just a reminder of what the bylaws were about. It's trying to codify the practice of running elections in the Faculty Senate. We're bringing these up to establish efficiency in the Senator election process.
 - i. We need the elections to be completed and done by a certain date, so that we can get all the Faculty Senate Executive committees members elected by the new Senators, so that we can do the work during the summer

without being interrupted. It is purely and specifically about efficiency, human resource management, and then to avoid internal conflicts that might develop if elections are not conducted in a way that follows the instructions from the Constitution. And so we want to streamline it and centralize it.

- ii. Gabler: It's good to have black and white guidelines on how this is meant to be, to ensure parity across academic units, and to make sure that things don't, that, you know, this prevents the possibility of groups picking these without a democratic process.

b. Falk: [redirects off-topic question]

c. Bylaws Elections and Terms

- i. Motion to have bylaws: Keniry; Seconded: Tabatabai-Mir
- ii. Approve: **39**; Do not approve: **5**; Abstain: **2**
- iii. Submit amendments before next meeting
- iv. Solis: How about earlier so that we have time to introduce those changes?
- v. Have comments in my Halloween; gives FSEC enough time to make revisions and send updated draft to FS
- vi. Karabulut: Some faculty in comments noting that they can't vote.

d. Committees

- i. Aguilar: I've been replying to FS emails, but EC has not responded.
- ii. Paccacerqua: Two types of committees, university-wide academic standing and faculty senate
 - 1. Reviews FS committees and chargers

IX. **New Business**

- i. Firat: Other people should get involved in faculty affairs, feels like a lot of our Senators are in this position because now one else in their department wants to do it. Time to return to college-level senators (rather than department-level)?
- ii. Paccacerqua: Committees are people who volunteered. If you don't have time, let us know so that we know who can do what. Senate is a place for representing interests and being transparent and accountable with that representation.
- iii. Hebbard: How do you know who can/should respond?
- iv. Paccacerqua: FSEC has those data! Faculty who served in these roles over the past four years.
- v. Ghuddar: What to do if doing more than one of these service activities?
- vi. Monty: Survey is trying to figure out university service at the level of the committee work, not the individual.
- vii. Seligman: Who is this for? Does this survey actually provide information that useful?
- viii. Paccacerqua: Purpose is for this to be a resource for departments and programs to use when determining their own service workloads.

- ix. Gabler: Academic units define service obligations and how we're evaluated. We want to make the whole service picture more equitable.
- x. Hinton: Let's faculty know what they're getting into when they're asked to be on these committees.
- xi. Keniry: Can we include IRB and other committees?
- xii. Seligman: So is that really the goal, because I find it hard to imagine how that could happen, because faculty do lots of service outside of the institution. And there's just so many types of service that faculty might get involved into their own profession.
- xiii. Paccacerqua: Had limited to FS-recommending committees; didn't want to overstep.
- xiv. Monty: Use current survey as proof-of-concept
- xv. Gabler: Would be great to have this at college and department levels, as well.
- xvi. Motion to continue with this project: Gabler; Seconded: Abdel-Raheem
- xvii. Approve: **37**; Do not approve: **3**; Abstain: **2**

b. Committees

- i. Move to table breakout sessions: Gabler; Second: Wilson
 - 1. Friendly amendment: Gabler, committees move forward
 - 2. Motion passes
- ii. Arthur: I don't want to commit to something I don't want to achieve. Could use more information about the time commitment of each committee.

X. Meeting adjourned

- a. Motion to adjourn: Hebbard; Seconded: Gabler**
- b. Meeting adjourned at 5:02pm**