



Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen

2022-2023 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes **Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 3pm – 5pm CST Via Zoom**

Senators Present:

| | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Khalid Aada | Christopher Gabler | Kye-Hwan Lee | Diana Paz | Ahmed Touhami |
| Jair Aguilar | James Gleason | Karin Lewis | Emmy Perez | Mohammed Uddin |
| Antonio Aguirre | Sergey Grigorian | Qinyu Liao | Riccardo Pizzinato | Paul Valadez |
| Stephanie Alvarez | Jonathan Guist | Michael Machiorlatti | Monika Rabarison | Jorge Vidal |
| Andrew Anabila | Tekla Hawkins | Gladys Maestre | Genaro Ramirez-Correa | Vejoya Viren |
| Roseann Bacha-Garza | Marcela Hebbard | Lucia Carreon Martinez | Padmanabhan, Ramasamy | Sarah Williams-Blangero |
| Linda Belau | Kip Austin Hinton | Pedro Martinez | Jeannean Ryman | Aaron Wilson |
| Grant Benham | Krista Jobson | Theresa Mata-Pistokache | Manuel Saldivar | Yingchen Yang |
| Mircea Chipara | Pauline Jojo | Randall Monty | Clarissa Salinas | Christian Zuniga |
| Joel Chirinos | Ulku Karabulut | Gerardo Munoz-Monaco | Andrea Schwarzbach | |
| George Diaz | Hale Kanak | Nancy Nadeau | Dana Shackelford | |
| Louis Falk | Megan Keniry | Rafael Otero | Eloisa Tamez | |
| Fuat Firat | Dean Kyne | Cynthia Paccacerqua | Owen Temby | |

Senators Absent:

| | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sonja Arredondo | Narayan Bhat | Jeong Kim | Salma Mahmood | Hooman Tabatabai-Mir |
| George Atisa | Christine Gerin | Sanjeev Kumar | Nilanjana Paul | |
| Jameela Banu | Ayleen Godreau | Hansheng Lei | Jack Ruelas | |
| Ben Brown | Federico Guerra | Robert Magee | Miguel Salazar | |

Guests:

Frank Ambriz
Bruno Arthur
Jonikka Charlton

Peter-James Ehimika
Margaret Graham
Yadira Mejia

Ala Qubbaj

I. Meeting convened at 3:01pm by Senate President Kip Austin Hinton

II. Report of FS Parliamentarian – Louis Falk

- a. Reminder that we are using Roberts Rules of Order which are distributed, along with Zoom rules, with the pre-reading materials

III. Report of the FS Secretary – Jonathan Guist

- a. October Minutes
 - i. Motion to approve:
 - 1. Approve: 37; Disapprove: 0; Abstain: 3
 - a. Minutes are approved

IV. Old Business

- a. Academic Freedom Resolution
 - i. Motion to adopt the resolution made by Senator Firat; second by Senator Alvarez
 - ii. Discussion:
 - 1. Friendly amendment offered by Senator Lewis: Pg. 2, last paragraph– redact “or the Board of Trustees”. We use Regents, not trustees. In addition, the Board of Regents has been very supportive of us, and we should not antagonize unnecessarily.
 - 2. Senator Firat believes we should leave the language as is but will go along with the consensus of the senate.
 - 3. Senator Gabler proposes alternative language: make the language broader so that it could include the Regents without naming them specifically
 - 4. Senator Munoz-Monaco agrees with Senator Lewis and suggests a change similar to that proposed by Senator Gabler.
 - 5. Senator Lewis suggests that we could achieve what we want by just ending the paragraph after: “...faculty authority.” – Offers this as a second friendly amendment
 - 6. Senator Firat accepts this second friendly amendment and Senator Lewis calls the question
 - iii. Vote to approve the resolution with the second friendly amendment
 - 1. Approve: 44; Disapprove: 3; Abstain: 3
 - 2. The resolution is approved
- b. Summer 2022 Tenure Track HOP Policies
 - [UTRGV HOP ADM 06-503: Tenure Track Faculty Evaluation](#)
 - [UTRGV HOP ADM 06-504 - Tenured Faculty Evaluation](#)
 - [HOP ADM 06-503 and 06-504 Appendix A – UTRGV](#)
 - [HOP ADM 06-503 and 06-504 Appendix B – UTRGV](#)
 - i. These were first presented back to the Senate at the May 2022 meeting. Any discussion?
 - 1. Senator Paccacerqua would like these documents to acknowledge that the purpose of these reviews and the tenure process is to protect academic freedom. Academic freedom comes from the protection of tenure so any policy regarding post-tenure review should affirm these principles.

2. President Hinton asks that senators share these documents with faculty in our respective departments and let us know if there are any issues that need to be addressed

V. Committee Reports

- a. Faculty Athletics Representative, Margaret Graham (Chair of Anthropology Department) [Student Athlete Welfare and Safety Procedures](#)
 - i. Every NCAA institution has a faculty athletics representative (FAR) in place. Their role is to advocate for student athletes. The FAR is appointed by the university president and does not work for the athletics department. Graham reports that the system in place at UTRGV to protect student athletes is really well done in terms of procedures that are in place. The athletics department takes this very seriously.
 - ii. Also reports that the approval of the fee increase to support football and related spirit programs is on the Board of Regent's agenda for their November 16 & 17 meeting.
- b. Provost Council – FS President Kip Austin Hinton
 - i. UTRGV thinks DHR is mischaracterizing the relationship between them and UTRGV and the problems that led to the ending of our collaboration. Notably, DHR states that we do not have accreditations that we do in fact already have.
- c. [Johnson Controls Sustainability Study](#) - FS President Kip Austin Hinton
 - i. Update on the Finance & Planning/Johnson Controls Working Group: Recent meetings have been canceled so updates not available at this time. See link above for timeline. If people are interested in meeting with or sharing concerns with the Johnson Controls team when they arrive, let President Hinton know. Ad-hoc committee on sustainability is meeting next week.
- d. National Council of Faculty Senates – Senator Karin Lewis
 - i. The primary focus of the most recent meeting centered around strategies for engaging faculty in shared governance. Details on these discussions are summarized [here](#).
- e. Welfare Committee – Senator Ulku Karabulut
 - i. The goal of this committee is to prioritize faculty health and well-being. Senator Karabulut reports that the committee has not met this year. The chair has dropped off the committee and no organizational action has occurred since.
 - ii. Senator Paccacerqua shares that faculty are expressing concerns about health. Faculty seem to be getting sick regularly and there are questions as to whether facilities are being properly cleaned in the way they were during the height of the pandemic.
 - iii. This committee needs additional members and to elect a new chair. The charge and description of committee is available on the Faculty Senate web page.
- f. [Technology Enhanced Oversight Committee](#) – Senator Randal Monty
 - i. Two main issues the committee has been working on: 1) IT is meeting with vendors regarding replacing old computer hardware. Vendors are fairly similar in what the vendors are offering. University is asking for quick turn around on orders and U.S. based customer service. IT is working on a computer replacement budget

so we can work with IT for purchase rather than working through department budgets. Also working to update classrooms with HDMI connections to make it easier to connect laptops. Having faculty in on these meetings was helpful in that it did bring attention to IT and vendors the specific uses faculty need for new devices. 2) Contract with Blackboard is ending. University is considering options for switching to new LMS. Blackboard, Ultra, and Canvas, are industry leaders so COLTT is starting there and COLTT is leading a broader team of faculty and staff and other potential users (including student accessibility services) who will be evaluating and user testing the different systems. This will happen during spring 2023 with a recommendation made by March/April. 3) The committee has lost some members and could use some new members.

g. Questions/Comments on Committee Reports

- All questions/comments were directed at the Technology Enhanced Oversight Committee
 - i. Senator Paccacerqua: 1) classroom technology always has issues with some element not working properly 2) Need to get a sense of faculty feeling about switching Learning Management Systems so close after COVID when many faculty have just gotten comfortable using existing systems and are also just starting to get back into normal routines of teaching as we emerge from the pandemic. Additional trainings, etc. will be required
 - 1. Senator Monty acknowledges that training will be required but also adds that the new options being explored are much more intuitive and the ecosystem is much more cohesive. Senator Monty likes the idea of a faculty survey to gauge the climate on this.
 - ii. Senator Falk: Are we definitely going to switch?
 - 1. Senator Monty: Does not know for sure. Suggests this would be a good question to ask Assoc. Provost Charlton later in the meeting.
 - iii. Senator Lee comments that classroom technology systems are not set up to meet faculty needs. There is no flexibility which leads faculty to try to change connections, etc. resulting in systems not being returned to their original state so that everything is ready for the next faculty to use the classroom who may not know how to reconnect things properly.

VI. New Business

- a. Senator Alvarez: A small group of senators are working on a B3 resolution. If any senators wish to join this group, let Senator Alvarez know. The hope is to have a resolution ready for the December meeting.
- b. Senator Hebbard: The Spanish Department has been newly reformed and needs a senator.

VII. Report of the President-Elect: Senator Cynthia Paccacerqua

- a. Reporting on issues being brought forward by various faculty:
 - i. Health concerns already discussed and brought up in Welfare Committee discussion.

- ii. Complaints regarding salary not keeping up with inflation costs. Starting to feel like we were catching up with recent adjustments, but economy has lessened this. In addition, healthcare premiums have gone up which the president addressed but what was not addressed is the increase in our co-pays which have impacted everybody. Net impact of this is a pay cut for many people.
- iii. Some issues are being raised about the workload process including issues of the timing of negotiation with department chairs; is there in fact room for negotiation? Last minute surprises that change workloads.
- iv. There is a need for clarity as to how the university is financing the new athletic center for students.

VIII. Report of the President: Senator Kip Austin Hinton

- a. Dr. Julietta Garcia will address the senate sometime during Spring '23
- b. There have been concerns raised about perceived threatening language in emails sent to faculty who work with cost centers. In response administration will no longer be sending these emails. They were meant to be targeted toward staff resulting from a UT System mandate about problems with some of the ways funds are being handled. However, faculty do still have a responsibility to follow proper procedures.
- c. Yes – the Spanish department is back, and they are electing a new senator today who should be seated by the next senate meeting.

IX. Guest Presentations

- a. Yadira Mejia – Staff Senate President
 - i. Ms. Mejia shared with senators the structure of the staff senate which includes senators from each administrative district. Standing & Ad-hoc committees report to the staff senate executive board. They also have a representative on the UT System Employee Advisory Board.
 - ii. Topics of recent discussion in staff senate include environmental sustainability and expansion of Spanish language accessibility and visibility across UTRGV departments.
 - iii. Expresses a guiding principle which is:
 - 1. Faculty Success + Staff Success = Student Success
 - 2. Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government Association all have overlapping interests
- b. Jonikka Charlton – Associate Provost of Student Success
 - i. Responding to some questions that President Hinton had shared in advance:
 - 1. Please explain what is happening regarding Blackboard: Our contract with Blackboard is up at the end of 2023. We are in the process of looking at options for new Learning Management Systems. The version of Blackboard we are currently using is very old. Blackboard no longer even offers technical support for this version. Administration will work closely with FS, SGA, and other stakeholders in this process.
 - 2. How can we get more GA's & GTA's? How can we involve more undergraduates in research? This is part of a larger

conversation that Dr. Saygin is working on so we should expect to hear more about these issues in the future.

ii. Enrollment

- 1.** There is a dashboard that all faculty have access to through MyUTRGV to look up enrollment data. At this point we have significantly lower graduate enrollment for the spring. This is a counting year and lower enrollment will have financial repercussions if we can't boost this.

c. Questions/Comments for Guest Presenters (all questions directed to Assoc. Provost Charlton)

- i.** Senator Tamez (SON): For clarification, Masters enrollment is going down?

- 1.** A: Yes

- ii.** Senator Temby (COS): Why do you think we are down so much in graduate enrollment?

- 1.** A: Graduate enrollment hit a historic high during the pandemic, which was a bit of an anomaly, so we need to be careful with these comparisons. Now that people are back to work after the pandemic, they may not have the time to pursue graduate studies. In addition, good jobs are more readily available without needing graduate degrees. We are also seeing changes to who our graduate students are.

- iii.** Senator Vidal (CECS): Regarding the Blackboard transition, it would be helpful if this could happen during the summer months.

- 1.** A: Yes, we will be exploring options during the spring but not implementing during the spring.

- iv.** Senator Otero (VCOBE – Economics): The Blackboard contract expires at the end of the calendar year of academic year?

- 1.** A: End of August 2023

- v.** Senator Falk (CLA): Is it possible graduate students are just registering late?

- 1.** A: Maybe – we started seeing less urgency in student registration behavior among undergraduates starting Fall 2020. As those students become graduate students this behavior seems to be carrying over. We are working to understand these patterns.

- vi.** Senator Karabulut (COHP): A problem with graduate enrollment is that students are seeing that our assistance packages are not competitive

- 1.** A: The deans of all colleges are aware of this and are doing a good job of raising this issue.

- vii.** Senator Hawkins (CLA): Is there movement on improving infrastructure as well as software? For example, stable internet throughout campus?

- 1.** A: Will take this question back to Jeff Graham for more information on this

- viii.** Senator Hawkins follow-up: Students are having many financial and personal issues at levels we have not seen before

- 1.** A: Have heard this from a lot of different circles. Saw a statistic that 70% of stop-outs are due to mental health

issues. We need to do more to help faculty figure out how to respond when students come to us with these issues.

- ix. Senator Belau (CLA): When will we begin using the new LMS?
 - 1. A: Not entirely sure what the timing will be. Needs to get more information on this.
- x. Senator Paccacerqua (CLA – President-elect): invites Assoc. Provost Charlton back to share concerns that are being gathered from constituents by FSEC.
 - 1. A: Yes, the more specifics we can give her ahead of time, the better able she will be to look into the issue and report back to the senate.
- xi. Senator Lewis (CEP – Past-president): Entering into to the official record a comment in the chat from Senator Karabulut: “We need to prioritize student and faculty health and wellness.”
- xii. Senator Alvarez (CLA): The “Off-track” emails students receive when they register for classes not on their degree plan are causing a lot of stress to students and do not always apply, such as in cases where a student is registered for 12 hours that are on degree plan and is taking a class beyond the 12 hours.
 - 1. A: Understands the issue and needs to take a look at the messaging.
- xiii. Senator Nadeau (SON): Compassion and flexibility (when appropriate) go a long way, but faculty still need to be firm with requirements and students need to communicate issues

X. No other business. The next meeting will be held on December 6, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 4:56pm