

# Faculty Senate *Updates*

Faculty governance is the way that we carry out our primary responsibility for curriculum, methods of instruction, research and faculty status, as well as for the aspects of our students' experiences that relate to their education.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

by Cynthia M. Paccacerqua - Faculty Senate Past-President

It is difficult to give account of the Faculty Senate's work during a year marked by unforeseen events that demanded a cacophony of immediate responses and profound personal, professional, institutional and cultural changes. These demands tested the strength and quality of our existing social relations, organizational capabilities, and knowledge. I believe that what we do moving forward will be the genuine measure of the accomplishments of the last eighteen months.

In this section I draw a summary list of the work during the last eighteen months, supplemented below with a more detailed accounting of some of the more significant developments during the Fall and Spring semesters and into the near future. As I go through these items chronologically, there is a recognizably positive arc toward increased engagement and joint productivity with our university's executive leadership and administration. The importance of this arc should not be underestimated and constitutes a significant first step in recognizing that the governance of successful institutions of higher education is a shared task.

In our *early* response to the pandemic, we:

1. Met with EVPAA Dr. McHatton weekly to stay on top of rapid UT System, UTRGV, and public health developments, and to address the concerns faculty were expressing as we shifted to remote instruction and working conditions;
2. Wrote our UTRGV's tenure clock extension policy;
3. Reached a common understanding with Academic Affairs leadership that faculty would be involved in designing development opportunities for remote teaching in Summer and Fall
4. Assisted Academic Affairs with student and faculty communication efforts
5. Wrote a COVID-19 Pass-No Credit Policy for Faculty Senate approval and May 2020 implementation
6. Requested and was granted an extension to the pathways faculty annual review and promotion submission deadline in Division of Health Affairs;

7. Requested and was granted that student evaluations of faculty teaching for Spring and Summer 2020 not be counted toward faculty annual review and/or promotion, unless stated otherwise by the candidate.

In our response to unexpected leadership changes in the Division of Academic Affairs and as we turned our attention to the pandemic's effects on summer and fall instruction and research, we:

1. Called upon President Bailey to address the consequences of Dr. Patricia McHatton's departure as EVP for Academic Affairs. Despite attempts to extend faculty governance into all three Divisions, up until then the FS's engagement with upper-level administration had been limited to Division of Academic Affairs (AA). Confronted with the sudden loss of leadership in AA, we were extremely worried about losing this lifeline in the midst of a worsening public health crisis that promised to deeply affect higher education locally and across the country.
2. Immediately raised serious concerns over a call sent directly to individual faculty members to register for Blueprinting workshops. The call for registering in these workshops disregarded the shared understanding that faculty would be involved in the design of online teaching professional development opportunities. The call also ignored established faculty governance authority over curriculum and methods of instruction and committed unknowing faculty to sharing intellectual property rights over their workshoped courses.
  1. FS leadership was able to bring a degree of awareness and clarity of the short and long term implications for participating in the Blueprinting summer workshops, some of which we saw play out already. This resulted in time dedicated to learning about Intellectual Property (IP) rights and norms under UT System and other universities, and meeting with Dr. Parwinder Grewal, whose EVP appointment includes responsibility over new program development and COLTT. Our request for an account focused on the process by which this COVID-19 initiative developed and decided upon, how it fit in prior ongoing efforts to transfer a growing number of general education courses online, the origin of little known policies and guidelines directing these efforts, and the contractual terms of faculty agreeing to Blueprint a course in exchange for money.
3. Called a Special Faculty Senate meeting to discuss the increased strain on faculty and shared governance we were witnessing with the sudden UTRGV leadership changes and the pandemic's disruption. An outcome of this meeting:
  1. We identified structural (e.g., three divisions), normative, and/or cultural causes for problems that were holding our institution back, with an emphasis on the way these problems stood in the way of faculty's ability to fulfill our responsibilities well.
  2. Sent the list of problems to President Bailey, requesting serious consideration, timely action, and joint governance in the process. We communicated as clearly as possible that while the events we were living exacer-

bated their failure, they were longstanding and our earlier calls for change had been ignored.

3. Upon his invitation, the FS Executive Committee (FSEC) met with President Bailey to discuss the above.

We view President Bailey's decision and swift appointment of Dr. Janna Arney as Interim Provost as responsive to our actions. Following this organizational change, FS leadership and/or the FSEC:

1. Began meeting biweekly with Interim Provost Dr. Arney to jointly:
  1. start building the conditions we need in place to strengthen faculty governance and participate in joint governance;
  2. seek resolutions to ongoing faculty concerns;
  3. communicate and come to understand the expectations of faculty and her office as we moved forward. A sample of items under each of these:
    1. Support in our efforts to restructure FS (see below) to achieve a proactive position for faculty participation in institutional governance;
    2. Consideration of processes to incorporate faculty participation in policy development and approval;
    3. Agreement to minimize pursuing the development and approval of new institutional policies until the pandemic subsides;
    4. Identification of small and large changes to free up faculty's time to perform the work that only faculty can carry out;
    5. Better integration of the Divisions under the Provost's model
2. Met with President to receive budgetary updates. We requested that budget cuts and increased productivity be shared across the university and not only a few divisions. In these meetings we continuously communicated faculty needs, concerns, and/or expectations regarding:
  1. The effects of the university's strategic demand to increase student enrollment with limited increase in the number of full time and tenure line faculty;
  2. The executive decision that the university would increase the number of online course delivery;
  3. The need for more research and office space and the possibility of constructing new buildings;
  4. The need to gather updated data and develop a plan to systematically address faculty salary compression/inversion;
  5. The need for increased resources for technology and other new expenses originating from remote work;
  6. The need for more access to information and faculty participation in budgetary matters and priorities;

7. His participation in FS meetings.
3. Participated simultaneously in multiple COVID-19 task forces through which we:
    - i. Studied and made recommendations for three different instructional needs that would increase on-campus safety: labs, performance/art, lectures;
    2. Studied and made recommendations for continuing research through the pandemic;
    3. Created new course modalities that were successfully administered through our registration systems;
    4. Secured academic freedom of faculty and programs to choose instructional modality for the academic year;<sup>1</sup>
    5. Advocated for a guide to assist students in identifying the technology they would need for their courses and disciplines (the university is developing an improved version for this year and into the future)
    6. Advocated for student funding and assistance with identifying possible funding sources to cover new technology costs;
    7. Assisted with efforts to identify and communicate COVID-19 changes and resources for students and faculty;
    8. Developed descriptions distinguishing the new course modalities for students to understand;
    9. Assisted with drafting the unique COVID-19 syllabus templates;
    10. Advocated for specific and clearly communicated Library services;
    11. Assisted in informing faculty of the unique benefits available to for us to best accommodate the competing demands that COVID-19 placed upon us, especially as caretakers.

As we worked on these and other matters through the summer, the FS continued holding monthly meetings to ensure communication of developing concerns; surveyed department faculty on their experiences and knowledge to guide the FSEC efforts. We also issued our first Faculty Senate *Updates* for all Senators to share with their department. During this time I made a concerted effort to meet or stay in communication with Student Government Association and Women's Faculty Network leadership throughout.

In response to growing concerns surrounding the immediate and long term impact that the pandemic may have on faculty reviews, promotion, and income, Volker Quetschke (then FS Past-President) and I developed an "adaptive review policy" designed to help account for the ways each individual faculty's productivity was af-

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that no problems would arise later in particular programs.

ected within their given disciplines. This and other such measures are of particular significance as they may ameliorate the compounding of the pandemic's impact with regard to how gender, ability, ethnicity and other social factors affect a faculty's career. With the support of our Interim Provost, each member of the FS Executive Committee introduced the policy to our respective colleges during college level meetings intended to address annual reviews and promotion. As we move into our next review cycle, it is just as significant today as it was when introduced.

The adaptive model for faculty reviews was adopted at other four-year colleges and universities in Texas through our work with UT Faculty Advisory Council and the Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS). Volker Quetschke served as a member of the UT Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) new *ad-hoc* Research Committee and is the newly elected Secretary for FAC. In addition to serving on the FAC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, I was elected TCFS VP for the South Central Region<sup>2</sup>.

I would like to highlight that for the first time in my knowledge of the UTRGV FS, but approximating standard practices at other UT System and nationwide universities:

1. FS leadership has maintained productive, bi-weekly meetings with our university Provost;
2. Our monthly meeting attendance participation rate for the last year has been 85%, a happy increase from the 58-62% we saw between 2016 and 2020;
3. The FS is able to directly communicate with all members of the General Faculty and has done so through these Faculty Senate *Updates*, now incorporated into the one of the regular tasks of our Executive Committee.

As I step down, I trust FS is committed to doing our part in the advance of faculty and joint governance for the betterment of our university and in the service of our community.

**WHAT WE DID** - Some concrete FS accomplishments and projects during Fall & Spring semesters.

## Faculty Governance Changes

Transparency, focus, and broader faculty participation demanded a devolution of tasks and power away from the FS leadership and the FS Executive Committee. To accomplish this, we created new standing committees.

With distinct charges, these committees effectively replace the Blue Ribbon Committee (BRC), which was created in 2016 to compensate for the absence of existing faculty governance structure and provide a space for FS faculty input on existing

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<sup>2</sup> South Central Region includes: University of Texas at Austin; University of Texas Rio Grande Valley; University of Texas at San Antonio; Texas A&M International Univ.; Texas A&M Central Texas; Texas A&M Corpus Christi; Texas A&M Kingsville; Texas A&M San Antonio; Texas State University.

and/or new university policies. However, the BRC had no institutionalized existence or concrete publicly known charge, and functioned with little procedural clarity as to faculty's role in the decision making process. In addition, the institutional needs exceeded the time available for a single committee to give the focus a subject matter was due to answer faculty concerns and incorporate our knowledge. Therefore, increasing the number of faculty participation via our new FS committees ensures a more diverse set of perspectives and gives committee members the ability to reach out to those they represent for feedback and more methodically work with the FS.

While we expect to grow the number of new committees to respond the needs of a growing university, the FS prioritized the creation of committees for which we have more urgent need. You will notice that many of their charges speak directly to the root causes of problems that we identified and sent to President Bailey last summer.

The purpose of these committees: To develop well grounded recommendations and position statements for review and vote by the FS on subjects that fall under their charge. For all intents and purposes, this type of work is new to the practice of faculty governance. We are both excited about this new development and cognizant that it will entail learning and a degree of socialization for all us.

### **New Standing Committees**

Once we identified "founding" members from among sitting senators, in mid-Spring semester new committees were scheduled for a first meeting and, armed with some orientation materials concerning their charge and preliminary place in the governance structure, and thus began their work. Their charge and a brief update on their work thus far will be posted on our website as soon as it goes live. All committees were tasked with:

1. Selecting a Chair;
  2. Making recommendations for their composition, structure, size and possible modifications to their charge;
  3. Identifying and begin working on priority issues, focusing primarily on those that (re)surfaced during the last AY.
- ◆ Committee of Council on Academic Freedom and Responsibility: Cynthia Cripps, Chair.
  - ◆ Educational Policy Committee: Kip Austin Hinton, Chair
  - ◆ Faculty Advisory Committee on Budgets: TBA
  - ◆ Faculty Welfare: Dumitri Caruntu and Linda Bebeau, Co-Chairs
  - ◆ Research Policy Committee: Sergey Grigorian, Chair
  - ◆ Rules and Governance Committee: Cynthia Paccacerqua, Interim Chair
  - ◆ Technology Enhanced Education Policy and Oversight Committee: Rachel Mann and Randall Monty, co-Chairs

## Other Committees

- ◆ The FS *ad hoc* committee on the Evaluation of Faculty Teaching submitted its final recommendations to the FSEC in April for consideration during our last AY meeting on May 7th. Since there was not enough time, the item is tabled until scheduled by our new FSEC.
- ◆ Committee on Committees: FS President, Chair

This committee, composed of the members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, is charged with making yearly recommendations for faculty membership on our university level academic committees and councils.

This year the FSEC invited committees to our last FS meeting and asked that they report on their AY's work. Such reporting and other forms of committee coordination are established practice in most universities. We just took the first step in incorporating this norm into our practices. This concerns not only university level committees and councils composed by faculty appointees recommended by the Committee on Committees, but also those faculty appointees recommended to represent the voice of faculty.

The following academic committees answered our invitation to give an end of year report:

- External Awards Committee
- General Education Committee
- Graduate Committee
- Library Committee
- Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
- University Tenure and Promotion Committee

## New Election and Committee Appointment Procedures

Every year the FSEC is responsible for facilitating: 1. the appointment of faculty to university committees, and 2. the election of faculty senators. In their absence, FS leadership developed procedures and timelines for each of these responsibilities:

1. to ensure that our administrative support staff can anticipate and prepare for the demands in each step in the cycles;
2. to serve as roadmaps for the new, yearly elected FSEC members;
3. to normalize key processes so that standing university level committees that are not solely composed by faculty but seek faculty representation may align their requests with our timeline;
4. to make this information available to all faculty.

Implementation begins Fall 2021 and will be posted online when our newly designed website goes public.

## **Elections**

For the first time and as directed by the FS Constitution, the FSEC facilitated senator elections. While faculty in each department had the power to conduct their own elections, the FSEC facilitated elections for units that requested it and for those in units that missed their deadline. We are happy to say that all vacant senate seats were filled in advance of the FS's election of its officers - thanks to all whose participation made this possible!

## **Orientations for Newly Elected Faculty Senators**

In Fall 2019, FS leadership identified the lack of resources to assist first-time Senators better grasp their new roles in shared governance. The FSEC agreed to the idea of a yearly "Orientation." The impact of the pandemic on our community last summer delayed its organization until this new cycle. We informed newly elected Senators to expect an orientation before our first 2021-2022 FS meeting. All Senators are invited to join as well.

## **Orientation for New Incoming Faculty**

FSEC's late December 2019 request that "faculty governance" be scheduled into UTRGV's "New Faculty Orientation" was approved by the Office of Faculty Success and Diversity. We plan on welcoming and introducing new faculty to faculty and shared governance at UTRGV starting this 2021 cycle.

## **General Outreach**

We received positive feedback from faculty regarding the distribution of our Faculty Senate *Updates*. As a result the FSEC has incorporated the regular writing and distribution as new task under the leadership of the President-Elect.

## **Resolutions**

During the Spring semester, the FS worked on two Resolutions.

The first Resolution was in appreciation of the leadership and efforts of administrators, faculty, students, and staff in making it possible for UTRGV to host and the School of Medicine to administer a COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Their task was extraordinary, unlike any other in the history of our institution; and it was because of them that many of us had the privilege of access to a life-saving resource that is bringing us closer to the public health conditions we need to normalize our working lives. The FS passed this Resolution on February 8th 2021 and was recently shared with you.

After the first Resolution was approved by a majority of votes, we learned that - for no legitimate reason - people residing in the Rio Grande Valley had been denied access to the COVID-19 vaccine at UT Health Rio Grande Valley Vaccination Program sites. The cases that came to light on social media and reported on by national media outlets or were communicated in confidence. These cases resulted from unnecessary requests for the type of private information and/or proof of identification



that also serves to confirm whether a person is a federally documented resident of the United States. The majority of the FS agreed that this new knowledge did not invalidate the vote of appreciation expressed in our first Resolution, a majority also agreed that events brought to light were grave, of concern to all of us, and cause to commit to writing a second Resolution that speaks to them directly. This second Resolution is being finalized and will be voted on soon.

It was not until FS leadership - in dialogue with members of the upper level administration - received concrete reports of steps being taken to end practices wrongly legitimizing denying a vaccine access at the UT Health Rio Grande Valley COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

### **Faculty Wellbeing and Fall 2021 Return to Campus Task Force**

In response to communicating our concerns with reports of faculty burnout and isolation, and in anticipation of the professional and personal stressors to which the transition to a “post-COVID landscape” may give rise, the Office of the Provost invited Veronica Cano, [Faculty Ombuds](#), and Dr. Cynthia Jones, [OVAVP Director](#), to design spaces where faculty can speak in confidence about these and other unanticipated concerns so that they may be considered as the university moves towards full on campus operations. These “Chats” took place late spring, with new summer sessions ongoing.

Late last spring senators communicated concerns regarding faculty choice over Fall 2021 teaching modalities and campus health safety. At the request of the FSEC and informed by the common themes that emerged from the “Chats,” Interim Provost Dr. Arney reconstituted last summer’s Return to Campus Task-Force to work through this summer. FS President Karin Lewis and former Secretary Nancy Nadeau are members.

### **Research/Academic Space**

A FSEC expressed priority this past year was the ongoing need to resolve the problem of lack of research space, which is affecting faculty across disciplines, from the Humanities to STEM, irrespective of campus. In the past few years, faculty have lost or been forced to move their research spaces, causing major disruptions in their projects. And too many have never enjoyed access to any such space. The shortage of research space is not something that individual faculty can solve on their own, yet it is essential for our research achievements. Space is also not a resource cost that can be absorbed by individual departments, yet it remains a significant impediment to many departments' ability to develop and grow academic programs and is a known obstacle to faculty recruitment and retention.

The FSEC highlighted this problem repeatedly in meetings with President Bailey and Interim Provost Dr. Arney, and again as we participated in Huron’s focused

study on how to enhance UTRGV's research infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> The university hired Huron to lead a "Space Assessment Project" this summer.

During this summer's assessment, faculty and staff from across UTRGV will be contacted and interviewed to gather information on the use of space. In addition, there are two working groups tackling the issue of space from distinct but complementary perspectives: 1. academic and 2. research. Dr. Lewis and Dr. Paccacerqua respectively are working members in each. Any faculty member is welcome to provide input or share concerns with either of us to then bring to the working groups.

## Faculty Salaries

### Salary/Compensation Work

Since the summer of 2020, the FSEC has been in regular meetings with Interim Provost, Janna Arney (bi-weekly meetings with Dr. Arney and FS President and President-Elect) and frequently with President Bailey. We consistently brought up faculty concerns regarding the extensive work faculty undertook during the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, and the personal expenses incurred to work remotely, carry the workload of faculty we were unable to hire due to the hiring freeze, manage significant enrollment increases without additional faculty, etc. We raised the issue of reimbursements, merit raises, and previous commitments to address salary compression and inversion.

President Bailey sustained his commitment to addressing salary issues and hiring more faculty, yet the obstacles were the economic turmoil, absorbing the return of 10% of university allocations to the state, and in the midst of the legislative session negotiations to position the university for the best possible formula budget allocation for the biennium, the focus was on retaining all current faculty and staff and avoiding the situation faced by many institutions that had to lay off faculty and staff, cut programs, etc. It would not have been prudent to distract the laser focused efforts to position UTRGV for the best possible financial trajectory by requesting faculty raises, salary adjustments, or merit pay at that time. However, as soon as the legislature approved the budget that now positions UTRGV on a solid financial trajectory to do more to propel us forward, President Bailey and Provost Arney immediately turned their attention to our faculty concerns regarding salaries. Remarkably, a 2% merit *and* 2% equity adjustment will be implemented September 1, 2021.

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<sup>3</sup> The FSEC first asked for FS participation in the research infrastructure assessment to be conducted by a private consulting group in late Fall 2019 when President Bailey first informed us of the intention. In summer 2020 when our the Past President and President at the time were invited to a "focus group" we again very clearly communicated that the FS needed to be involved in such a way that we could ensure faculty from all colleges' communicate their research infrastructure concerns to be assessed. At the time it was clear that faculty selected to participate in focus groups were not representative of our disciplinary diversity. This second request resulted in a special focus group composed of all FSEC member college representatives, where we were able to communicate the feedback from the "research" survey we sent out to all senators - a survey we designed and processed specifically for this purpose within the less than two weeks notice of the opportunity.

In the spirit of faculty shared governance, Dr. Arney set up a faculty Compensation Task Force to work this summer on a compensation philosophy and methodology for addressing internal and external market salary issues. FS recommended a list of Senators, and Provost Arney invited selected nominees, and work has commenced. Our senators have been sharing their work on the task force with the FSEC, and we anticipate recommendations of compensation philosophy for equity (external market and internal compression/inversion in tenured/tenure-track) goals, and transparency so all faculty understand what guides decisions and how we are progressing toward goals. While these recommendations may not undergo full FS review before Fall implementation, barring unexpected obstacles the FS is committed to taking up them up for review before the AY2022-2023.

For non-tenure track faculty, each college has been charged with forming their own task force/ad hoc committee to look at the NTT faculty categories they have and what is used in those decisions. That work has commenced, and deans have been charged to include a senator for their college on their committee. This fall the work will continue in order to address a merit philosophy and methodology (anticipate request for FS reps for that work that will go on through the AY). For this fall's merit allocations, merit determinations will generally follow whatever was the methodology in the past (by college/dept.).

The charge of the Compensation Equity Task Force is to:

1. Review Market Equity methodology.
2. Utilize CUPA-HR data plus some supplementary disciplinary databases when available/appropriate to identify salary ranges by academic rank and discipline and identify target percentile, example: 25th percentile, and recommend goal for future cycles.
3. Identify missing variables and recommend methodology and prioritize their use contingent on budget availability.
4. Develop a communication plan to document the work of the Task Force and to inform faculty of the methodology and recommendations for future cycles.

**Market Equity** – Review of faculty academic rates based on external market parity by academic discipline, rank, and tenure status with peer and/or aspirant institutions.

**Internal Equity** – Review of faculty academic rates based on internal salary parity by discipline and rank to identify possible issues with compression, inversion, and/or gender equity.

**Merit** – For fall 2021, merit allocations will follow similar methodologies used in 2019; future merit cycles will follow a revised methodology giving each discipline the opportunity to rethink annual evaluation to optimally assess meritorious work according to departmental and/or college guidelines.

Faculty Senate leadership are committed to continuing to work with Dr. Arney and President Bailey to address salary issues, bringing the policy before the FS

## Compensation Task Force Members

College	Nominee	Rank	Gender	Source
CEP	Vejoya Viren	Prof	F	Senator
CLA	Michiyo Hirai	Prof	F	WFN
CECS	Thuy Vu	Assoc Prof	F	WFN
CFA	Jonathan Guist	Assoc Prof	M	Senator
COS	Karl Berg	Assoc Prof	M	Senator
VCOBE	Jorge Gonzalez	Assoc Prof	M	Faculty Lead (HR)
SON	Carol Pool	Asst Prof	F	WFN
COHP	John Luna	Asst Prof	M	Senator
SOSW	Helen Jiang	Asst Prof	F	WFN

## Trends in Faculty Hiring Since UTRGV Inception

Late Fall the FS requested and received data that would help us identify trends in faculty appointments and hires, with a particular interest in seeing how tenure line faculty lines fared in contrast with other appointment types. Our interest in this data is ongoing and we intend to update it to get a better grasp of where we stand after a year of the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption in hiring new tenure line faculty and what was experienced as an increase in non-tenure full time, part time, and adjunct faculty.

Our placement among Texas universities is encouraging.

1. 47.1% of UTRGV's 1358 faculty is Tenured/Tenure Track
2. Among UT System universities, this percentage puts us second after UT Austin (58.3) and ahead of UTEP (46.5), UT Tyler (45.4), UTSA (45.1), UT Dallas (40.3), UT Arlington (39.2), UT Permian Basin (35.9)
3. If we compare UTRGV to institutions in the Texas A&M System, we would rank fourth out of eight universities, with A&M with the highest percentage (66.2) and Galveston with the lowest (35.3)

At the same time, when we mapped the data over time starting with UTRGV's inception, we did identify a potentially worrying trend that we will need to confirm with updated data that includes Spring 2021 and follow carefully in the years to come:

1. The percentage of Tenure Track faculty within a college is not keeping up over time, hinting to the possibility that we are not making a sufficient investment into their replacement and thus maintaining our current ranking in the state.
2. In some cases, this trend is parallel to an increase in the percentage of non-tenure line faculty within the college.

Please note that these trends do not include colleges in the Health Affairs Division, where the types of faculty appointments are much more diverse following other academic norms.

We will share more detailed college specific trends with your Senators once the new data comes in.

## WHAT IS NEXT?

### Faculty Senate Executive Members - AY 2021-2022

Elections for FSEC officers and college representatives in now complete. Please welcome our 2021-2022 FSEC members:

President (CEP): Karin Lewis

Past President (CLA): Cynthia Paccacerqua

President-Elect (CEP): Kip Austin Hinton, *ex-officio* (2021-2022, as per FS approved election provisos)

Secretary (CFA): Cynthia Cripps

Parliamentarian (COS): Volker Quetschke

Member (SON): Nancy Nadeau

Member (SSW): Sonja Arredondo

Member (UC): Manuel Saldívar

Member (UL): Joel Chirinos

Member (CECS): Dumitru Caruntu

Member (COHP): Ulku Karabulut

Member (SOM): Sarah Williams-Blangero

Member (VCOBE): R. Sam Sale

Please note your FSEC college representative. All UTRGV faculty are encouraged to engage in shared governance and voice their concerns and perspectives to their representatives (senators and FSEC members are elected to represent you).

As you may know, senators are elected by faculty in their departments and then FSEC members are elected from among all serving senators (70 + senators), in such a way that ensures all colleges are represented. The election of FSEC members is confidential in so far as no knowledge of participants' votes is generated by the software.

All FSEC members are elected to serve one year, except for the president in so far as the person serves as president-elect for one year, as president the next, and then as past-president.

The only reasons the other FSEC members would serve for more than one year are because: 1. They are reelected as secretary or parliamentarian from among and by our 70+ FS members; 2. They are reelected as college representatives by their respective college senators (the bigger the college, the larger the pool and the higher the number of voters); 3. Their college or equivalent unit only has one senator (School of Social Work, University College, Library – and soon the School of Podiatry may become a new member). This past year the FSEC was composed of 12 faculty senators.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not members of the FSEC change is the choice of the 70 + senators who are elected by the eligible faculty in their department or equivalent academic unit. Whether or not senators choose to volunteer to serve on the FSEC is not only based on our interest, but depends on our workload percentages and professional commitments for the coming year. Since the FS is as good as its members, and its members are as good as our desire and commitment to work in governance and ability to commit time to the tasks required of us, it is imperative our department peers and chairs support their elected senators to accommodate the unique demands placed on us by the elected office.

Interim Provost Dr. Arney has made a commitment to communicate this need to all Deans and Chairs. We hope to see this reflected in our local departmental communities.

### **Calls for Nominations for Academic Standing Committees**

Please keep an eye out for a summer call for nominations to fill faculty vacancies on different university committees.

### **Faculty and Shared Governance Sessions**

FS leadership is currently reaching out to faculty from other universities who have held leadership positions in their Faculty Senates, Chaired University Committees, and/or AAUP Chapters to address (e.g., via talks or workshops) current members of our FS and standing committees. Selection and scheduling will be completed shortly.

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<sup>4</sup> The path to serving on the FSEC need not take long. For instance, now Immediate Past-President Cynthia Paccacerqua was only one and a half year into her first term as senator when the FS elected her to the be President-Elect. The office had been vacated when the Dr. Dingle lost her faculty appointment with the SoM in May 2019, resulting in "special election" for President-Elect was held in the Fall 2019 and Dr. Volker Quetschke continuing to serve as President for a second year (AY 2019-2020).

## WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

On May 18th, Congressman Cuellar [Announced](#) \$436 Million for Local Colleges, Universities, and Students. The American Rescue Plan funding will be used for local institutions; at least half of the funding will be distributed to students as emergency financial aid.

The Press Release, lists **UTRGV with a \$101,411,829** allocation. It also includes a note addressing funds for Hispanic Serving Institutions like ours: "The American Rescue Plan also includes nearly \$3 billion in additional funding to be distributed at a later date for HSIs, HBSCUs, TCUs, and other under-resourced institutions."

On June 2nd, the AAUP issued a report on data from its first national survey about shared governance in two decades. Analyzing responses completed by faculty governance leaders at four-year institutions, focusing on the portion concerning the impact of the pandemic, the [Survey Data on the Impact of the Pandemic on Shared Governance](#) "provides additional evidence of severe pressure on governance" while "offering a hopeful counterpoint by documenting an increase in faculty influence at some institutions." Some findings:

- Almost a quarter of respondents reported a reduction in faculty influence at their institutions, while almost fifteen percent reported an increase in influence.
- Respondents at fewer than a third of institutions reported an opportunity for meaningful faculty participation in budgetary decisions. More than two-thirds reported that the administration had made such decisions essentially unilaterally.
- Over a quarter of respondents from all institutions reported that faculty on contingent appointments had been laid off.
- Almost a tenth of respondents at institutions with a tenure system reported terminations or non-renewals of tenured or tenure-track faculty. The number climbed to over forty percent at institutions where programs had been eliminated.
- At institutions where administrations or governing boards declared institutional regulations no longer in force, over forty percent of respondents reported the elimination of programs.
- Almost a quarter of respondents indicated that faculty members could not voice dissenting views without fear of administrative reprisal, but the number exceeded forty percent at institutions where regulations were declared no longer in force.

For your reference, this new AAUP Report follows and complements their recently released [Special Report: COVID-19 and Academic Governance](#), which looks into instances in which boards and administrators may have exploited the pandemic as excuse to sidestep established academic governance processes and unilaterally close programs and lay off faculty members

## **M**ESSAGE FROM NEW FS PRESIDENT

Greetings colleagues. It is an honor to serve as your elected Faculty Senate President for AY 2021-2022. The Faculty Senate is our central mechanism for ensuring faculty shared governance at UTRGV. Our Senators are faculty representatives elected by their department peers to serve in the best interests of the faculty in matters of shared governance. For faculty senators to represent their constituencies with integrity, all UTRGV faculty are encouraged to actively engage with their elected senators and Faculty Senate as their representative body.

Shared governance is an essential leadership value that requires an investment of time and conscientious work, meaningful faculty participation and shared responsibility in institutional governance, open communication, mutual trust, and respect. The faculty has the central role of participating in shared governance, whether an elected senator or not.

In higher education, shared governance refers to institutional structures and processes through which faculty, administrators, governing boards, students, and staff participate in the development and revision of policies, procedures, and engage in decision-making that affects the institution as a whole.

The following is from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP):

### Shared Governance

Since its founding, the AAUP has been ensuring meaningful faculty participation in institutional governance.

The AAUP's Committee on College and University Governance composed its first statement on the subject in 1920, emphasizing the importance of faculty involvement in personnel decisions, selection of administrators, preparation of the budget, and determination of educational policies. Refinements were introduced in subsequent years, culminating in the development of the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities>). This statement, which was jointly formulated with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, calls for shared responsibility among the different components of institutional government and specifies areas of primary responsibility for governing boards, administrations, and faculties. It remains the Association's central policy document relating to academic governance. It has been supplemented over the years by a series of derivative policy statements, including those on faculty governance and academic freedom; budgetary and salary matters; financial exigency; the selection, evaluation, and retention of administrators; college athletics; governance and collective bargaining; and the faculty status of college and university librarians (<https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/shared-governance>).



As we collectively embark on another academic year, I invite all UTRGV faculty to actively participate in shared governance. I encourage you to cultivate open communication with your elected senator(s), FSEC college representative, ensure Faculty Senate information is shared by your senator(s) at every department faculty meeting, and provide your input and valuable insights. Senators are charged with representing their constituents and they need to hear your voice, know your perspectives, and gain insight from your experiences in order to represent you with integrity.

With your active engagement, I look forward to a productive year.

Respectfully,



Karin Ann Lewis, PhD  
Faculty Senate President, 2021-2022  
Associate Professor, Teaching & Learning  
College of Education & P-16 Integration

## EXTERNAL RESOURCES ON FACULTY AND SHARED GOVERNANCE

Federal Higher Education Funds: <https://www.nacubo.org/News/2021/1/ED-Announces-Availability-of-New-Relief-Funds>

American Association of University Faculty (AAUP) & Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities): [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#)

AAUP - [On the Relationship of Faculty Governance and Academic Freedom](#)

AAUP - [Role of Faculty Budgetary and Salary Matters](#)

AAUP - [Statement on COVID-19 and the Faculty Role in Decision Making](#)

AAUP - [Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#)

AAUP - [The Privatization Problem](#)

AAUP *Academe* - [Academic Freedom in Online Education](#)

AAUP *Academe* - [Do Adjuncts have Academic Freedom? Or Why Tenure Matters](#)

National Center for Education Statistics - [IPEDS: Integrated Post-Secondary Data System](#)

NACUBO - [National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers](#)