



Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen

2024-2025 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 15, 2024, 3:00–5:08 pm CST Via Zoom

Senators Present:

Folake Adelakun, Mataz Alcoutlabi, Michelle Alvarado, Elvia Ardalani, Bruno Arthur, George Atisa, Norma Beardwood-Roper, Erica Buchberger, Genaro Ramirez Correa, Ruth Crutchfield, Laurie Deleon, Marcus Farris, Fuat Firat, Christopher Gabler, Liliana Galindo, Joel Garza, Alexandre Couture Gagnon, Suad Ghaddar, James Gleason, Cynthia Lopez Guerrero, Jose Gutierrez, Marcela Hebbard, Servando Hinojosa, Wanrong Hou, Joseph Hovey, Ulku Karabulut, Megan Keniry, Marisa Knox, Denise Longoria, Gladys Maestre, Salma Mahmood, Pedro Martinez, Ferenc Moldovanyi, Randall Monty, Robert Moreira, Mohamadhosssein Noruzoliaee, Noushin Nouri, Jung-IL Oh, Tamer Oraby, Edna Orozco, George Padilla, Maysam Pournik, Mahmoud Quweider, Monika Rabarison, Belinda Rivas, Ignacio Rodriguez, Margaret Rubi, Jack Ruelas, Igor Ryabov, Andrew Smith, Silvia Solis, Erwin Suazo, Hooman Tabatabai-Mir, Mohammed Uddin, Vejoya Viren, Sarah Williams-Blangero, Cory Wimberly, Haiyan Zhou, Christian Zuniga

Guests Present:

Francisco J Aldape, Stephanie Alvarez, Carla Angulo-Pasel, Marzieh Ayati, Guy Bailey, Tamer Balci, Khalid Benamar, Stephanie Campbell, Eloí Camprubi-Casas, Jose Luis Cano, Alyssa Cerroni, Katherine Christoffersen, Melissa Adams Corral, Robert Dearth, Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto, Luigi Ferraro, Nazaret Fresno, Criselda Garcia, Juan L Gonzalez, Sylvia Gorman, Giorgio Gotti, Sergey Grigorian, Dongkyu Kim, Sanjeev Kumar, Michael Lehker, Mike Lindstrom, Zhuanzhuan Ma, Carina Marques, Rosemay Michel, Nancy Nadeau, Ramsés Ortín, Emmy Perez, Ala Qubbaj, Volker Quetschke, Alejandra I. Ramirez, Padmanabhan Rengasamy, Cinthya Saavedra, Manuel Saldivar, Magalie Saucedo, Katarzyna Sepielak, Paul Sharpe, Alex Stehn, Maria Luisa Trinidad, Cristina Villalobos, Kristine Wirts, Murali Yallapu, George Yanev, Luis H Zayas

Senators Absent:

Punit Ahluwalia, Mounir Ben Ghalia, Brent Campney, Veronica Castro, Sonia Chapa, Elizabeth Deven Hernandez, Krista Jobson, Kye-Hwan Lee, Donald J. Lyles, Lisa Longoria, Cynthia Paccacerqua, Laura Seligman, Ahmed Touhami

Minutes:

- I.** Meeting initiated at 3:00 PM by Senator Solis.
- II. Report of FS Parliamentarian – Senator Dr. Silvia Solis**
 - a. Reminder of Community Agreement.
 - b. Meeting Courtesy Reminders provided.
 - c. Confidentiality
 - d. Robert’s Rules
- III. Report of FS Secretary – Senator Dr. Ruth Crutchfield**
 - a. Minutes adjustment, two senators that were present and one misspelling.
 - b. Andrew Smith moved to accept the minutes with these corrections.
 - c. Fuat Firat seconded the move.
 - d. Minutes accepted with those corrections with all in favor and non-opposed.
- IV. Report of FS President – Dr. Chris Gabler**
 - a. Dr. Paccacerqua graciously yielded her minutes to Dr. Gabler.
 - b. President Gabler welcomed the department of political science back to the Faculty Senate.
 - i. Senator Andrew Smith
 - ii. Senator Alexandre Couture
 - c. President Gabler provided information regarding budget.
 - i. Budgets have been growing since 2016
 - ii. Cohort of peer institutions UT Tyler and UT Permian Bason, UT El Paso, UT San Antonio and UT Dallas.
 - iii. There is a clear pattern of growth. Inflation.
 - iv. Self-reported data for each university.
 - v. We see robust growth that matches or exceeds our peers. Growth outpaces inflation.
 - vi. Faculty Salaries – Total Academic faculty salaries. Only UTRGV and UT Austin have the med school included.
 1. With UTRGV, we see little or no growth (ending lower than where we started if looking at academic salaries), trend was mediocre relative to peers, inflation outpaces growth.
 2. Salaries as a percentage of the total university budget. Range of 8% to 18%. When compared to our peer institutions there is a downward trend for us and our peer institutions.
 3. There is a system wide decrease in salaries across UT systems.
 4. UTRGV has the highest percentage value among peers, but we also decreased more steeply than our peers.

5. Faculty salaries as percentage of total budget, our decline is relatively slow since 2019 compared to our peer institutions. UTRGV fell farther than most.
- vii. Key Limitations
- viii. Does not consider or compare individual salaries
 1. Big picture vs. lived experience (Can I pay my bills?)
 2. Core issue
- ix. Lack of transparency regarding salary data.
- x. SOM faculty do not have easy access to AAMC salary data.
- xi. Faculty are unable to access CUPA Data on Demand
 1. College and University Professional Association for Human resources.
 2. Industry standard for salary comparisons: data include discipline, rank, time in rank, gender, institutional classification (R1, R2)
 3. Faculty at many peer institutions have access.
- Screen shot Bridge: Case Study
- xii. Merit adjustments alone are inadequate
 1. Inflation has outpaced salaries, even with maximum merit
 2. Purchasing power is lower now than at hire for many faculty.
 3. Compounding rising insurance costs, especially for families
 4. R2 Salaries+R2 staff support +R2 facilities+R1 expectations does not equal R1 research.
 5. Shared goals for our students' impact on our budget- low cost/high value, national identity, traditional college experience.
 6. Accumulating faculty debts is increasingly harmful
 7. Are move towards R1 is being moved because of faculty motivation.

Bridge: Case study

- Associate Professor in SEEMS, joined UTRGV in FY 2016

Scenario	9-mo Salary	12-mo Salary	Med. Insur.	Dent. Insur.	12-mo take home	Change in take home
Starting (2016)	60,000	80,000	5,769	2,001	72,231	N/A
2016 Inflation adj.*	79,851	106,468	7,678	2,663	96,129	0%
Current (2024)	84,713	112,948	7,939	2,200	102,810	+6.9%

- Inside this 6.9% increase
 - 1 market adjustment
 - 3 merit adjustments, all *exceptional* (in COS, meets < exceeds < exceptional)
 - 1 promotion to Associate (\$6,000)
 - ~\$5,000 from Faculty Grant Incentive Program (3 large, 4 small grants)

+0.86%
per year

* https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm (spoiler: it's **33.1%** from 1/2016 to 9/2024)



Alternative scenarios

Scenario	9-mo Salary	12-mo Salary	Med. Insur.	Dent. Insur.	12-mo take home	Change in take home
Starting (2016)	60,000	80,000	5,769	2,001	72,231	N/A
2016 Inflation adj.*	79,851	106,468	7,678	2,663	96,129	0%
Current (2024)	84,713	112,948	7,939	2,200	102,810	+6.9%
Less FGIP	79,713	106,281	7,939	2,200	96,143	+0.01%
Less Promotion	78,713	104,948	7,939	2,200	94,810	-1.4%
Less FGIP or Prom.	73,713	98,282	7,939	2,200	88,143	-8.3%

**Strictly merit
(exceptional x3)**

- V. **Report of FS President Elect – Senator Dr. Williams-Blanjero** - Working Group on Faculty Salaries and Resources. Committee Members - Michelle Alvarado, Norma Beardwood-Roper, Pauline Jojo, Tamar Oraby, Sarah Williams-Blangero and Kristine Wirts
- Purpose to develop recommendations regarding faculty salaries and resources to be provided to the faculty senate executive committee. Processes reviewed:
 - Determination of salary at time of hire
 - Review of salaries for internal and external equity
 - Determination of merit increases
 - Approach to salary compression and inversion
 - To achieve R1 which requires the expansion of research and graduate education programs, UTRGV must be able to attract and retain outstanding faculty.
 - Competitive salaries need to be provided.
 - 2021 was the last review of equity.
 - There is no ready access to CUPA or AAMC
 - Lack of transparency raises some issues.
 - Recommend – make UTRGV faculty salary data available through the website or at a physical location like the library.
 - Conduct equity reviews every three years for all faculty
 - NTT faculty – provide multi-year contract to improve retention. Conduct review of faculty salaries once over three years.
 - Merit increases – research is highlighted in determining merit pay. The value of service and teaching must be considered.
 - Provide guidelines for use of evaluations in determining merit increases that are applied across all colleges.
 - Standardize the use of the Annual Evaluation for determination of merit increases.

- iii. Each college should review the criteria for exceptional or special merit and develop criteria that can be applied across the college.
- iv. Develop an incentive program that would be applied across all colleges and disciplines to recognize exceptional scholarly productivity with a permanent increase in salary on top of merit increase.
- e. Develop guidelines for nine-month contract employees, develop a model for compensating for service work during the summer at the normal rate, when time commitments exceed the equivalent of 10% effort (4 hours per week).
- f. Additional factors – lack of financial resources – allocate resources to departments and colleges to support travel to national conferences for faculty who do not have grant funding. Allocate resources to departments to support publication costs, recognizing that costs will vary by discipline.
- g. Cost of living in south Texas has increased. 2% of merit increases is not enough of a compensation.

VI. Comments by UTRGV President Dr. Guy Bailey. Dr. Bailey requests presentations to be sent to him at the end of this meeting. Senator Gabler thanked Dr. Bailey for being present with us.

VII. Question Responses by UTRGV President Dr. Guy Bailey.

- a. Dr. Bailey states that UTRGV may not be at R2 salary. People who were here prior to UTRGV may not have R2 salaries.
- b. In 2019, enrollment declined due to the pandemic. 2024 has had good enrollment growth.
- c. Systematic changes will occur in a period of years. Issues in salaries that extend beyond the formation of the institute that will be harder to address.
- d. *Question 1:* Target percentage of institution's budget to be dedicated towards faculty salaries. Dr. Bailey states that there really isn't a target. For comparison, UT Dallas has a smaller number of tenure and tenure track faculty and larger # of part time faculty. They have good salaries for full-time tenured faculty because there are fewer of them. Compensate the full-time faculty and hire a larger group of part-time faculties. We are not very competitive when we need to hire a clinical faculty. PA, Nursing, etc. These are special cases.
 - i. Enrollment growth of 18% over a nine-year period. SCH's need to grow better than your total number of students, which helps with formula funding – 23%. # of faculty should grow a little bit less than that. There is a deficit there that needs to be addressed.
 - ii. Because salaries were so low in 2015 when UTRV began, the percentage of academic affairs budget devoted to faculty has grown rapidly -60% growth. There is an equity problem that is occurring. Equity in loads between both campuses was directed. We have moved forward from this.
 - iii. Enrollment growth – we should be able to address some of these concerns in a systematic way in the next number of years.
 - iv. He is not sure how you would usefully measure change in percent of budget dedicated to salaries because of the aspect of the addition of new buildings/facilities.
 - v. He is open to discussing this further.
 - vi. It is time for a market equity study. Will investigate completing one in the next 6-7 month in time for the next legislative session.
 - vii. Lecturers can be included in this market equity study.

- e. *Question from Dr. Bailey* – Can you not access CUPA data? No. He will investigate why that is not occurring.
- f. *Question 2: Reward programs and obtaining grants. Research expenditures.* Dr. Saygin has a plan for this. As the research dollars are expended over a period of years, the reward system will follow the same pace. Dr. Zayas can expand on how scholarly, artistic and research productivity is expected and can be rewarded.
 - i. If enrollment continues to increase, they will certainly hire more faculty and increase the space. They will be adding space for physical therapy and optometry. These will be placed off campus in a purchased space. This is a more reasonable way to house our programs. Construction costs are very high.
 - ii. Stand-alone programs that do not have undergraduate programs can be shifted to stand alone buildings off campus. PUF monies, etc.
- g. *Question 3: The dollar amount of the rank base salary has not changed for over a decade; can these be changed to reflect current inflation.* Dr. Bailey says yes. One of the ways to improve salaries is to adjust the size of standard increases that occur at time of promotion.
- h. *Question 4: School of medicine offers higher salaries because of the difficulty in recruiting faculty. UTRGV faculty salaries are lower because of the reported lower cost of salary. What response do you have for these comments?* Dr. Bailey states that he is not so sure that there is a significant difference from our peer institutions. He stated that salaries are paid in reflection of what is occurring in the market.
- i. *Question 5: While faculty salaries have not kept pace with inflation, it appears that market adjustments have been made for administrative salaries, can you comment on how this decision was made.* Dr. Bailey states he can comment on those that he has been involved with. Mostly retention driven. Attempting to retain good people who are the best in the business.
- j. *Question 6: My question is why are FT lecturers and TT faculty being paid less than K-12 teachers in the RGV at rates that have not changed in years? It seems those two things should be addressed immediately.* Dr. Bailey states he cannot answer that question.
- k. *Question 7: Statistic- percentage of university budget – administrative budget are going down and academic budgets are going down. Money is being saved from academic purposes and going towards administrative institutions. Academics must come first and foremost. Please direct this. Administrative cost is a percentage of the total budget. It was 11% and now is 6.5%. This has declined quite a bit. He cannot tell us what the faculty salary budget is right now. Please let him know which data points we would like to see. He can provide that. He can provide the percentage of the budget for specific areas, academic affairs budget example – has decreased 60%.*
- l. Dr. Bailey exited the meeting at 4:16.

VIII. Comments from UTRGV Provost Zayas– On 9.17.24, he issued to Deans an increase in the amount of travel support that can be distributed which is above from the past.

IX. Open Forum

- a. *Question 7: Credit hours have grown, and students are encouraged to take more classes, the intersection between credit hours in student success and faculty salaries. Current students, many of them are failing and repeating classes. Attempts are being made to increase retention. Since merit raises are linked with student success, and many students are failing and having to repeat classes, how are those factors intersecting and how can we work with administration to start directing these issues.*

- b. Question 8: Faculty who have received merit increases due to scholarly productivity are typically not provided with a salary adjustment since their salaries are higher than others. And hence in a way these productive faculties are penalized, and no salary adjustment is provided. How can they be provided with a salary adjustment so that they are not penalized. This penalization has happened to me for the last 3-4 salary market adjustments. This needs to be addressed.
- c. Question 9: Is there any way to address faculty space issue? Putting multiple faculties into the same room does not work for students and faculty. We see lots of wasted space while valuable faculty do not have adequate space for research and privacy.
- d. Question 10: Will the new Tenure Track criteria that all departments are currently working on under a very tight deadline for Faculty Affairs replace each department's tenure guidelines?
- e. Question 11 on chat: Could faculty have a program where our children could be part of a scholarship for their tuition at UTRGV? TEC of Monterrey does it. Children of full-time faculty get 90% tuition paid. Question posed to Chancellor Milliken last Friday. He said No. In order to do this, it would have to be approved by the legislature.
- f. Question 12 on chat: Is there any data on faculty retention rate vs. administrative position retention rate, to justify corresponding raises?
- g. Question 13 on Q&A: There is a lot of confusion about the required "TT faculty T&P Guidelines." It seems everyone has different information. Additionally, it seems the new document was not created through faculty shared governance which may be contributing to faculty frustration, confusion and even anger. 1. Can this document be vetted by the faculty senate before asking departments to create guidelines? Why? Why not? 2. If the doc can't be vetted, can the FS host a town hall meeting and/or a live document of Q&A. The new guidelines are to be accepted after they are approved at the provost levels. It is how the guidelines are presented. We want to read the materials and they need to be similar. Dr. Saavedra, the guidelines that have been received by the Deans and Chairs will replace your tenure track guidelines once they are adopted. This is a way in which quality significance and impact are seen at UTRGV. In tenure track, there is documentation that you are striving for recognition. Not just impact factors. Demonstrate that your scholarship is sustainable. Your criteria help ensure and determine what a significant profile looks like in your discipline. Highlight your role in your collaborative work.
- h. Question 14 on Q&A: Can Senate create or ask committees to create their by-laws? It is unclear who is in charge of what and what are the internal rules of committees.

X. President Gabler - Committee Updates. Dr. Gabler shared the UTRGV Faculty senate webpage.

- a. Seats reserved at university academic committees. We are offered a set at the table at these university committees. There are vacancies.
- b. Faculty senate standing committees also have vacancies. Please volunteer to fill them.
- c. Dr. Gabler thanked Vanessa for updating our website.
- d. Dr. Gabler proposes a streamlining of the set of FS standing committees.
 - i. Reduce the total overall number of seats in these 10 committees.
 - ii. The charges of each committee are on the website.
 - iii. Senator Smith – mentioned the strengths of reassigning committee work secondary to collegiality and critical mass. We want to encourage collateral collegial work.

- iv. Senator Knox – reorganization labor – top-down approach would be more beneficial where the committees that are too large be reduced and the smaller committees have increased. FSEC board to complete this task. President Gabler's response, this needs to be a collaborative transparent process.

XI. Motion by President Gabler. Proposal for the senate to host a Town Hall related to the tenure and promotion guidelines with Dr. Savedra and Dr. Dearth from the office of faculty affairs to target these questions posed – date to be determined. Dr. Saavedra is open to this with the premise that all who are present have already read the guidelines prior to the meeting.

- a. Seconded by Senator Erica Buchberger.
- b. Hands raise was used as indicator for voting.
- c. 36 agreed via hand raise
- d. 1 opposed via hand raise
- e. Motion carries.

XII. Dr. Gabler motions to adjourn and Senator Rabarison seconds. All in favor except for one senator.

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 PM.