



2020-2021

Faculty Senate Meeting

via zoom

Friday, May 7, 2021

2:00pm - 4:30pm

Minutes

Minutes prepared by Nancy Nadeau, UTRGV Faculty Senate, Secretary

Senators Present (current):

Abdullah Rahman, Amy Cummins, Andrea Schwarzbach, Andrew Anabila, Arnulfo Mar, Ayleen Godreau, Aziza Zemrani, Bruno Arthur, Clarissa Salinas, Cynthia Cripps, Cynthia Paccacerqua, Dae Kim, Dana Shackelford, Dean Kyne, Diana Paz, Micky Caruntu, Eleftherios Gkioulekas, Emmy Pérez, Francisco Zecca, Fuat FIRAT, George Diaz, Hale Kaynak, Jair J. Aguilar, Jameela Banu, Jimmy Gonzales, John VandeBerg, Jonathan Guist, Jorge Vidal, Karin Lewis, Karl Berg, Khalid Aada, Kip Austin Hinton, Kye-Hwan Lee, Linda Belau, Louis Falk, Lucas Espinoza, Lucia Carreon, Marcela Hebbard, Michael Machiorlatti, Michiyo Hirai, Mircea Chipara, Nancy Nadeau, Owen Temby, Paul Valadez, Punit Ahluwalia, Rachel Mann, Randall Monty, Raquel Estrada, Rene Gonzalez, Robert Gilkerson, Ryan (Sam) Sale, Salma Mahmood, Sandra Atkins, Sergey Grigorian, Sharon Helsley-Mcginley, Sonja Arredondo, Soojin Yoo, Stephanie Alvarez, Stephanie Atkins Sharpe, Tekla Hawkins, Ulku Karabulut, Volker Quetschke, Wendy Innis, Yingchen Yang.

Senators Absent: Charles Olney, Christine Gerin, Denise Silcox, Donald Lyles, Grant Benham, Hansheng Lei, Irving Levinson, John Luna, Junfei Li, Miguel Salazar, Narayan Bhat, Robert Magee, Theresa Mata-Pistokache, Vejoya Viren, William Sokoloff, William Yaworsky

New Senators: Aaron Wilson, Alex Stehn, Ben Brown, Federico Guerra, Francisco Zecca, Joe Mendoza, Joel H. Chirinos, Leyla Feize, M Jasim Uddin, Manuel Saldivar, Nilanjana Paul, Qinyu Liao, Riccardo Pizzinato, Saara Grizzell, Sanjeev Kumar, Tony Aguirre, Yu Liu.

Visitors(s): Melinda Rodriguez, Shawn Saladin, Susanna Thomas

President: Cynthia Paccacerqua

Past President: Volker Quetschke

President-Elect: Karin Lewis

Faculty Senate Liaison: Vanessa Ceballos

I. Convene Meeting

Started at 2:00 pm

II. Report of the FS Secretary:

- Minutes Update - April Minutes only for the current senators (not the new senators) – approved at 4:21 pm by the majority.
- President Paccacerqua reminded the new Senators will be introduced by the new President Lewis then they will be allowed to vote on motions.

III. Report of the current President Cynthia Paccacerqua

A. General Updates, including:

1. UTRGV Baseball tickets: Each senator has 2 tickets for recognizing their work at the Senate by the UTRGV Athletics department.

2. Classroom Zoom Technology from Bob Allen (attachment available FS Blackboard)

3. FSD Council Meeting was introduced to the Senators.

- Each council member is a representative from each college including the school of Medicine. Many of the council members are reaching out to the senators to hear about the concerns of the colleges, ideas, and senators are encouraged to communicate with council members. The FSEC was not part of the selection process of the members of the new Council.

4. Info from the Registrar's Office (see attachment FS Blackboard)

- Students will receive financial aid only if it applies for the courses that belong to the program of study (all majors, minors, and/or concentrations by the start of registration) selected. If not, then the student will not qualify to receive federal financial aid. Faculty advising students must be mindful about the student's degree work.
- *Course Program of Study is a federal regulation that mandates universities to award financial aid to students ONLY for classes that are officially part of student's documented degree plans. Any classes students take that deviate from what is prescribed on the degree plan are generally ineligible for financial aid. Failure to comply with this regulation jeopardizes UTRGV's eligibility for the Title IV funding and subjects us to audit findings that may in turn jeopardize our regional accreditation.*

5. FS Resource Request: Dr. Arney has agreed to release funds, like course releases and staffing resource. Vanessa is the person from Dr. Arney's office who will assist helping the Senate or will delegate to other staff in the Provost's office. The FS President and Secretary will have a stipend of \$5,000 this summer to primarily continue working on the changes. Expenses to bring speakers or chairs of committees that resemble ours from other universities to come talk to us about how they work, the type of work they do, and we can learn of it reported President Paccacerqua. Lastly, the President will have a course release each semester allowing to perform her duties effectively. The new Secretary also will have one course release for the entire year.

6. FS Elections: In order to address some of the problems from past years, FSEC as per the FS constitution has to facilitate the elections for the Faculty Senate. This year, it was allowed for the department to select the process to either their own senators or to request FSEC for assistance. The election process has been completed.

7. Institutional Base Salary Initiative: FCES was invited to the Steering Committee to be part of the process as the university is now undergoing a study focusing for 12 months faculty contracts and the other was for nine months faculty contracts.

Dr. Arney is reporting that there are 2 components: one is to listen to faculty and understand opportunities for research incentives. She reported working on a policy to be more inclusive and more encompassing of the federal and state guidelines to be in compliance. She is expecting implementation during the summer allowing time to remediate if needed. The salary also will be reviewed this summer.

8. Merit/Compression/Inversion: The message of President Bailey is after the legislative session is over, merit and budget will be reviewed. We need to understand how the political events such as COVID, winter freeze and border crossing might affect the state budget, however we recommended to the UTRGV President to put together a group to create a plan on how to address salary compression and inversion equity and merit raises. The idea is to bring people together to review the issues as the previous year, FSEC was given little to time to make the recommendations between merit or compression. This time, we need to make those decision in an informed matter reported President Paccacerqua.

9. UT Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) had a meeting 2 weeks ago addressing different issues such as tenured faculty. Another issue is the creation of an ad hoc committee on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and the other committee is the research policy – Senator Volker is the Chair. Regarding the committee on DEI, a survey has been sent to different universities to assess what type of initiatives are in existence at different universities.

10. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Initiative: President Paccacerqua invited us to consider forming some type of committee addressing concerns from the event of the death of George Floyd and continuous cases of police violence working together across other parts of the university in tandem with the work that is happening across the State of Texas.

11. Texas Council of Faculty Senates (TCFS)

IV. Report from Committees

- A. Research Policy Committee Volker gave a brief report. A report was represented to the Vice Chancellor Dale Klein at UT system that a very select group of universities have defined plans, however the coordination is not there but trying to keep the conversation going at the local level.
- B. Faculty Advisory Council (FAC): Senator Volker was nominated and elected as Secretary.
- C. Texas Council of faculty Senate (TCFS): Senator Paccacerqua has been elected as a representative for a region of universities in Texas.

Senators Questions/concerns:

- Senator Chipara commented on summer salaries vs research funding during the summer.
- Senator Monty commented on the committee of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for work in the summer to response on bills being proposed in the Texas legislature that are attacking to prevent any sort of critical thinking education in the State of Texas pertaining to race or systemic power or oppression aiming elementary and secondary education. We should have relevant

conversation on the subject at our post-secondary level as we are going to be forced to address sooner as other states are making some moves toward these issues.

- Senator Alvarez commented the importance of the legislature to help diversify the faculty and ensure pay equity across the board for faculty from marginalized communities and hoping the new Council will look at these issues. She reported that over 15 campuses in Texas currently have Black Live Matter committees. The Center for Mexican American studies does have BLM committee with over 40 faculty members and students involved. Everyone is welcome to be a part of joining this committee. Currently the committee is working on diversifying the curriculum and looking at how to increase diversity with faculty.

B. End of AY Reports from Standing Committees (reports can be found under Blackboard UTRGV Faculty Senate 2020-2021)

- **Research Policy Committee:** Senator Grigorian (Chair) reported on the committee's initial activity: response to the 2020 Huron report on UTRGV Research opportunity and infrastructure assessment. The key points of the response were to emphasize the most important concerns of the faculty regarding impediments to UTRGV's efforts to enhance research, and to provide some ideas for remedies and a rational chronology for implementing those remedies. To rectify existing problems and to develop a sound infrastructure, both physically and administratively, that is conducive to efficiency of research and expansion of current research capabilities, prior to a major expansion of the UTRGV research enterprise. The committee hopes to finish by the end of May and to send to the FSEC for feedback before submitting to the Senate floor.
 - Areas of concern: research leadership, research support services and administrative processes, management of finances, problems in recruitment of research faculty, insufficient financial support of existing research faculty, faculty turnover, support of student research and concerns about implementation of changes.
- **Undergraduate Curriculum Committee:** Lucas Espinoza (Chair) is introduced the members representative of each of the respective colleges and schools and presented a summary of activities including all the links. There will be a meeting in June and July.
- **Graduate Curriculum Committee:** Senator Zemrani (Chair) introduced the new Chair (Nancy Razo) and the members. She presented a summary of activities – some colleges do not have a curriculum committee in their department(s) and do not have shared governance, yet. The committee will be meeting in June with the Undergraduate Curriculum committee to review policies and procedures.
- **General Education committee:** Alex Stehn (Chair) introduced the members and presented his report to the Senate. Completed SLOs' work this year. In 2021 the average class size is up as a general trend and reminded faculty to help the students not to feel lost in a section of 150. One issue was raised about creating equity, as there is not institutional mechanism for creating equity. The ultimate decisions are made by departments, meaning by the dean, as some majors might keep raising the size of core courses in order to pay for smaller classes for their majors.
 - Senator Brown agreed with the presentation and worries of having large classes due to lack of faculty is a concern in his department and to bring support to faculty to address this issue.
 - Senator Stehn is also concerned about not having direct channel up to Dr. Arney to have a wide conversation at different levels at the university, so it does not stop at the dean's

level regarding class size. Online has seen an increased of 150% so it is challenging to support the students.

- Senator Hinton (Kip) commented about how we have variants in different departments and disciplines on how the State compensates per student from the upper and lower divisions.
- **University Library committee:** Saara Grizzell (Chair) presented her committee members and a summary of activities. The recommendation is the need to pursue additional funding for the university library, as UTRGV wants to become a research institution, to support faculty and students.
- **IT infrastructure and architecture committee:** Francisco Zecca (Chair) presented his report, one change is the faculty membership to serve as 2-year term requesting FS review and either re-appoint existing or appoint new Faculty representative to start on September 1, 2021.
 - The research and educational technical committee is chaired by a faculty member also to be a 2-year commitment.
 - Senator Gkioulekas raise a concern about research journal online and having access from home. The Chair answered about the authentication system in place when off campus to help the faculty.
- **Research and Educational committee:** Senator Punit summarized the committee's work. It will be important to continue to accentuate balance with faculty/students' needs, IT governance and budgetary constraints.
- **IT and Data Strategy Steering Committee:** available under FS Blackboard
- **External Award committee:** Senator Hale Kaynak presented her committee's members (6) and summarized their activities for the external and internal awards for a total of 63 applicants.
 - Senator Alvarez commented on in the past from UTB – colleges awarded faculty then move on to the institutional level. It was nice if not recognized at the institutional award they were at least recognized at the departmental level with smaller amount. Then we got a new Provost and it was eliminated.
 - Senator Banu commented it is a very dainty work to review candidate in 1 week to 10 days.
- **Tenure Promotion committee** has 2 subcommittees. See FS Blackboard.

Updates: (Senate Committees)

- **Education Policy committee** by Senator Kip reported having a meeting with the Dean of Students and Student Government to get feedback about the Pass or No Pass policy. Some students did not know how to use or not, according to their program of study without affecting them in the future.
- **Technology Enhanced Education Committee** by Senator Monty reported on working on a partnership to develop a relationship with COLTT and IT. Reviewing faculty ownership of course designs and the decision-making processes for blueprint and courses.
- **Academic Freedom Council** chaired by Cynthia Crips, reported by Senator Firat, reported faculty concerns on what teaching modalities that should be used this coming fall reflecting the most conducive to quality learning on the side of the students.
 - **The committee is proposing a statement:** "It is the professor's responsibility to provide a safe and productive learning environment in the classroom and given the

principles of academic freedom professors should have the authority to choose the modality and delivery style of their classes in order to be able to faithfully fulfill their responsibility, especially under the current pandemic. If the SLOs and content goals are being met it should be the professor's choice to return to traditional face to face or remain as a hybrid or online course." Our concern is that unless that each professor teaching a class is given the authority to make this decision then there will be many circumstances teaching environments might be difficult. Administration should give the professor the authority over the class such face2face with mask wearing or no, or student is not comfortable to be in class or via zoom. Communication should continue.

- **Transition to Fall 2021** by Senator Paccacerqua raised concerns about health concerns, physical constraints, new policies in place for safe Fall 2021 returns. She proposed joint-collaboration to address issues from faculty and students and help each other to solve and find creative solutions.

V. Old Business

A. Resolution on the Vaccination Program: Sent to Dr. Krouse last month.

B. Teaching Evaluation Document

- **Teaching Evaluation Document** by Senator Caruntu suggested to be voted by email within a few weeks.

VI. New Business

A. Welcoming of 2021/2022 President Karin Lewis

- a. Senator Paccacerqua completed her term and transferred the presidency to President-Elect Senator Lewis.
 - b. President Lewis presented her introduction, extended our gratitude to the Senators who completed their terms, the FCES and welcomed the new Senators. (See FS Blackboard)
1. Confirmation of new senators.
 - a. Officially recognized and welcome to participate actively to FS committees.
 2. Elections of new officers' procedures:
 - a. Link via email will be sent to all Senators for a call for nominations (self-nomination), then to vote for the President-Elect (by majority of votes), then will proceed for the Secretary (by majority of votes), and then we will proceed with the election of our Parliamentarian.
 - b. When the officers (President-Elect, Secretary and Parliamentarian) have been elected, an email announcement will be sent out confirming the officers for the new Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) representing your college. (more details see FS Blackboard – 2021-2022 FS First Convening May 7, 2021)

Adjournment 4:22 pm – Happy Summer everyone – Next meeting in September.

Motion by Senator Falk, second by Senator Gonzales. All approved.