

## Faculty Senate Minutes

1 February 2023

Teams

### Senate Leadership in Attendance

Jackie Fay, Chair

Andy Milson, Chair Elect

Venkat Devarajan, Parliamentarian

Kathryn Warren, Secretary

### Senators in Attendance, followed by the unit they represent

(Department for TT, College or School for NTT)

Ishfaq Ahmad	Computer Science
Georgios Alexandrakis	Bioengineering
Amy Austin	College of Liberal Arts
Karabi Bezboruah	Public Affairs
Alan Bowling	Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Lauren Brewer	College of Business
Keith Burgess-Jackson	Philosophy/Humanities
Alan Cannon	Information Systems and Operations Management
Jivas Chakravarthy	Accounting
Wei Chen	Physics
Imre Demhardt	History
Sarah El Sayed	Criminology and Criminal Justice
Sergio Espinosa	Music
Julienne Greer	Theatre Arts and Dance
Doug Grisaffe	Marketing
Andy Hansz	Finance and Real Estate
Michael Holmes	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Darlene Hunter	School of Social Work
Aimée Israel-Pelletier	Modern Languages
Song Jiang	Computer Science
Theresa Jorgensen	Math
Vinayak Kaushal	College of Engineering
Un-Jung Kim	Earth and Environmental Sciences
Douglas Klahr	Architecture
Andrzej Korzeniowski	Math
David Levine	College of Engineering
Qing Lin	Psychology
Fred MacDonnell	Chemistry and Biochemistry
Steve Mattingly	Civil Engineering
Jeff McGee	Management
Joyce Myers	College of Education
Michael Nelson	Kinesiology

Anne Nordberg	Social Work
Taner Ozdil	Landscape Architecture
Sally Parker-Ryan	College of Liberal Arts
Mark Pellegrino	Biology
Cynthia Plonien	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Nicholas Pollock	College of Science
Stefan Romanoschi	Civil Engineering
Cristina Salinas	History
Brent Sasley	Political Science
Ioannis Schizas	Electrical Engineering
Aaron Smallwood	Economics
Amy Speier	Sociology and Anthropology
Christy Spivey	College of Business
Chunke Su	Communication
Amy Tigner	English
Jodi Tommerdahl	Curriculum and Instruction
Margarita Treviño	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Regina Urban	Nursing
Nilakshi Veerabathina	College of Science
Shouyi Wang	Industrial, Manufacturing and Systems Engineering
Jeffrey Witzel	Linguistics
Yi Zhang	Education Leadership and Policy Studies

### **Ex officio Members in Attendance**

Jennifer Cowley, UTA President  
 Tamara Brown, UTA Provost  
 Teresa Nguyen, Student Body President

### **Guests**

Minerva Cordero, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs  
 Kate Miller, Vice President for Research and Innovation

### **Press**

Rabbia Molai, *Shorthorn*  
 Wolf Islay, *Shorthorn*

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### **Call to order by Jackie Fay 2:31 pm**

### **Remarks from President Jennifer Cowley**

- Legislative season underway
- President Cowley is in Austin next week testifying as part of the Senate higher ed budget committee meetings

- Request to legislature on part of all Texas system schools: 6.8% increase in the state rate, funding for Hazelwood, and additional insurance support in exchange for not raising tuition for two years. That hasn't made it into the base budget bill, but it's a point of discussion.
- \$2.5 billion in the legislative budget bill that is not clearly designated – waiting for legislation to come out that will show where it will go. Administration is hearing that that it will go to support research universities. Watching to see how that will impact UTA.
- \$350 million in base budget bill for space; proposed to help state of Texas build a space industry. We anticipate that a portion of those funds will be used to support aerospace-related research and industry partnerships. We are preparing to talk about the work UTA is doing in the space sector.
- Anticipating a range of legislative bills related to higher ed; reminder that where bills start out is not always where they end up. Administration is monitoring the bills. Jeff Jeter, in Government Affairs Office, can answer questions as bills come up.
- UTA-unique asks: Maverick Energy Institute, support in biotechnology, request for funding to be used for a Fine and Performing Arts complex, deferred maintenance

### Questions/Discussion

**Senator:** 1) Many faculty are concerned with political developments in Florida. In an election season, there's a race to be the most conservative. Could that happen with our governor? 2) Are we better off with state support and not raising tuition?

**President Cowley:** If we got a 6.8% increase to the state rate, we'd be in a good position. And better if they fully fund Hazelwood. So we're better off with an increase in state support.

The governor's role is different from the lieutenant governor's role. We pay particular attention to what's coming out of the lieutenant governor's office.

**Senator:** Question for clarification about the way the budget works—what the state pays for. We're asking for a 6.8% increase to the 15% level of support from the state?

**President Cowley:** The 6.8% applies to the student credit hour rate. State support is greater than 15% because we get a big chunk of pass through aid (taking federal dollars and giving it to our students). If we were given what we asked for, we could expect an increase of in the range of \$14 million more per year in our budget; over a two-year period that would be in the \$27ish million range.

**Senator:** Question about the Fine and Performing Arts Complex. Is there a monetary amount attached to the ask?

**President Cowley:** \$85 million. The critical issue is whether or not the state will issue tuition revenue bonds or not. They did in the last legislative cycle, so we're not overly optimistic that they will this cycle as well.

**Senator:** The last UTA President asked the Deans to solicit proposals from faculty for funding requests (using NRUF money). What is the status of those decisions?

**President Cowley:** That money was spent. We provided a summary to the Senate President's Advisory Committee showing how the dollars were allocated. The little bit that was left was given as an emergency fund to employees making under a certain threshold. I've heard that the highest priorities are to address compensation and graduate student support, so that's what we're working on.

#### **Remarks from President Cowley, continued**

- Tuition: Administration has had a request to expand tuition benefit program. Faculty and staff who are full time can take up to 6 hours a semester (any courses). Won't have to pay for it up front. Change going into effect for summer. This will cost an additional \$800K a year.
- Strategic planning retreat earlier this week. Focus on broader context of higher ed. Strategic planning committee now formulated. Laying out goals and objectives.
- From researchers, a desire to have funding available that would de-risk inventions. Kate Miller has created a fund to help to support inventions.

**Senator:** What about just wanting to take classes, not be admitted as a degree-seeking student?

**President Cowley:** Yes, you can apply as a non-degree-seeking student.

#### **Remarks from Provost Tamara Brown**

- TikTok: A ban has gone into place, and we can't use it on state-purchased equipment.
  - Faculty have raised questions about using it in service of teaching, and what about research?
  - There is a process for reviewing exceptions (quoting memo):
    - For research, "an exception can be given when the researchers use TikTok as part of their field of study, but only if the uses are performed via a university-issued device solely used for TikTok access and would not be used for any other university purpose or to access any other university service."
    - For teaching, "an exception can be given when faculty use TikTok as part of their curriculum but only if such use would be conducted from a university-issued device solely used for TikTok and not used for any other university purpose or to access any other university service." Faculty members with an exception would be responsible for teaching students how to safely and responsibly access TikTok for the course, including using cellular service or home network connections, since use of TikTok will be blocked on university networks.
  - Basically, you can have an exception approved for teaching or research on a university-purchased device devoted only to the purpose of using TikTok. (Nothing else can be done on those machines at all.) Exceptions seem so narrow as to be almost unfeasible.
- Status of Dean searches. Desire to have positions filled in time for fall. In COLA, wrapping up this week. Last candidate arrives tomorrow. CAPP is scaling up. Then we'll have Education and Libraries. Search committees have been finalized and search firms contracted.
- VP for Student Affairs, also moving ahead. About 100 applications, trying to get it down to about 20 for the search committee to review and vet to get down to a shorter list.

- Salary study. Getting really close. In final stretch. Met with faculty committee in December to share options and receive input.
  - Priorities
    - Salary minimums
    - Promotional increases, retroactive to 9/1/22
    - Reexamine gap between where faculty are in relation to 75% of market – maximum benefit within \$1 million there is to spend
  - Looking at research faculty to see whether grants can cover their salary increases *right now*.
  - Looking at assistant professors hired in last 2-3 years to see where gaps are there.
  - Results of work will be sent to colleges, inquiring about performance issues. (Sometimes gaps exist because of poor performance.)
  - Process is iterative. Want to spend all the money allotted for this. This stage is the first step. We'll continue to make adjustments.
  - Working toward finalizing by 3/1/23 so change can be implemented this semester.

**Senator:** With these salary bumps, will some of that be going to teaching faculty?

**Provost Brown:** We conducted the salary studies separately for TT and NTT faculty, and those adjustments are going to be applied across *all* full-time faculty. Looking at it comprehensively. Not just an adjustment for TT faculty. The gap is bigger for NTT faculty, so more is being spent there than on TT faculty. A number of our faculty are already at market or above it. We're trying to bring up those that are not there. This is not enhancing folks who are at market or just a hair below it. Getting everyone up to 75% of market is our target.

This is a first step. We'll continue to examine this and to make adjustments.

We've also been asked to look at equity gaps. But we can't do that kind of in-depth analysis at this phase.

**Senator:** Re. research faculty, do you know what your office can support (what percentage)?

**Provost Brown:** This money is recurring dollars that is coming from central administration. In hiring new faculty, I'll have to answer that in specific cases.

- Last update: cluster hires. Four per area. Two areas: 1) Data-driven discovery, 2) culture and societal transformations. That second area doesn't have anything listed under it. So I had the idea to get that area going; the idea has to do with social media analysis (a broad topic that needs to be fleshed out). There seem to be themes cutting across the colleges that all had to do with that.

**Senator:** I was on the committee working on that last theme; we had endless discussions about the title. Most people refer to it as “cultural and societal transformations,” and the point was to have culture separate and then “societal transformations” and not necessarily make a causal connection between the two of them. I don't know if we ever want to revisit the precise title . . . I see it misspelled quite often with other people. We thought about “societal transformations and

culture,” but that was implying that societal transformations change culture. I’m just throwing that out as someone who was on that committee.

**Provost Brown:** Thank you for that. From looking at how that’s written, I didn’t appreciate that nuance, but it proves the point that we need to be focusing there and developing and further refining what we intend there. We can have greater precision about what we mean in the folks we hire.

**Senator:** Can you give us an update on the VP of Faculty Affairs position? There were a lot of people on the Senate who didn’t know Toni was stepping down and that Minerva was going to be the Interim.

**Provost Brown:** I was surprised; I thought the communication had gone out. That’s an oversight of my office if it didn’t go out. Toni resigned as VP Provost of Faculty Affairs effective the end of December. Minerva Cordero has agreed to serve as Interim beginning January 2 in that role. She has hit the ground running. She’s noted some things that need change, some vision and refinement. One change: the position, when advertised, will be changed from “Faculty Affairs” to “Faculty Success” in order to foreground the success and support of faculty rather than foregrounding paperwork, procedures, and bureaucracy that undergirds how we support faculty.

**Senator:** Has cluster hiring itself been a successful method of hiring in academia? The research I’ve read suggests that it can be effective but there needs to be improvement to how it’s done.

**Provost Brown:** It’s all in how you set it up and how you create the goals about what those faculty are doing together. In instances it hasn’t gone well, there’s been misalignment. We say it’s a cluster, but the home department is still expecting the bulk of the work. It can be very successful and launch a lot of new projects.

**Senator** (following up): I’ve noticed that there are “hot” trends, and then they die. So if you do a big cluster hire, then it could be like buying too much of one stock.

**Kate Miller:** In my experience, I’ve found cluster hires to be a fantastic faculty recruiting tool.

Faculty Senate minutes from the December 7, 2022, meeting approved by acclamation.

**Remarks from Dr. Minerva Cordero, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs**  
*(She introduces herself.)*

- At UTA for 20 years, has been a Senator several times
- Professor of Mathematics
- From Puerto Rico, came to US for MA in Mathematics at Berkeley; PhD at Iowa
- To Texas Tech, where she started her career and earned tenure; then came to UTA
- Earned promotion to Full Professor
- College of Science Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Academic Affairs (5 years)
- Worked at National Science Foundation (NSF) as a program director on two programs: Advance, dealing gender equity in STEM academia; and the Hispanic Serving Institutions (UT Arlington had recently been named one)

- Senior Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Science
- Back to NSF, serving as an expert for the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) program
- Now Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, as of January 2, 2023

***Five Things Faculty Should Know about the Office of the VP of Research and Innovation***

with Kate Miller, Vice President for Research and Innovation

- Started career in oil industry in New Orleans.
- Went to UTEP for geology faculty position.
- Moved to Texas A&M and was a Dean of Geosciences there.
- Provost and VP for Academic Affairs at Wyoming
- Looking for opportunities in research and landed at UTA.

**Five questions were posed to Dr. Miller**

1. What are the key responsibilities and/or mission of the Office of the VP for Research and Innovation?

I want to talk about vision. The role of our office is to ensure that UTA expands the volume and the impact of its faculty research, scholarly, creative, and entrepreneurial endeavors in support of the responsibilities we have as an R1, minority-serving University. We want to see UTA grow into a world class, AAU-quality university.

The most important thing we do is help faculty achieve their scholarly goals through a variety of mechanisms – e.g., seed grants, administration of grants and contracts. Trying to grow research centers. Office of Undergraduate Research reports to us. We want to increase experiential learning. We want to strengthen the culture of innovation. We want to help grow the number of patents and put them on the road to commercialization. We have an active chapter of the National Academy of Inventors.

We partner with the Provost's office to work to enhance how our faculty can be recognized nationally and internationally for the high quality of their work.

2. What reforms and initiatives are underway?

- There will be an announcement shortly about the creation of a proposal development center, one of the strategic requests.
- We have a contract for a lobbyist in Washington, DC, that will help us get on the inside of agencies in DC.
- We've launched a commercialization gap fund.
- We also have ad hoc groups and task forces set up to see where UTA might be going in areas like energy.
- Data sciences and research – common for research universities to have a center like that.
- Reviewing strategic funding requests and looking for themes, thinking about how we might prioritize the themes.

- In April, there will be an innovation week (overlapping with the time of undergraduate research presentations)
  - Cluster hires
  - NRUF investments – funds set aside, trying to use to advance ourselves as a high-quality research university
3. What do you see as underutilized strengths of UTA and its faculty related to research productivity, funding, innovation/commercialization, and/or industry partnerships?

There are many. One important area is to recognize where we have strength among faculty members who have not routinely sought funding opportunities and publication and growing the number of leaders on campus. We need to help our outstanding faculty to be nominated for and receive awards from their professional societies and beyond. When you dig into faculty analytics, we have faculty in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile when it comes to grants and papers and being published in conference proceedings, but we're in the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile for awards. We need to work to get people the recognition they deserve.

We're also looking at what interdisciplinary research is and has been and what we can do to advance that.

We need to look at a stronger reward system for invention patents.

We're in a great place for industry partnerships, but we receive relatively few research dollars in that area.

4. What are some of the best practices that you have observed at other institutions that would benefit UTA if implemented here?

Federal affairs strategies. We've invested in a lobbying firm to help us with that.

We have a weak faculty development leave program, and we need to work on that.

We need to have a culture and a high tolerance for planning. It's good to have many irons in the fire so that when opportunity knocks, we can be there.

5. What ideas do you have for fostering greater collaboration and improved communication between your office and the UTA faculty?

People from my office need to be out and about talking to people on campus.

**Senator:** I just became a fellow of NAI (National Academy of Inventors) last year. I have about 20 patents. I'm happy to see commercialization get funding from UTA. Is this one-time support, or continuous? Also: are you increasing the budget to support patent applications?

**Dr. Miller:** The gap fund is a little bit of an experiment. I hope we'll see some successes that will convince us that we want to keep doing that. I hope to continue it. With respect to patents,



that's a little more complicated. I'm learning that decisions around whether we continue to pay for patents are fairly complex; there's a committee called the IPC that reviews these expenditures. I know that Jim Grover cut back in this area because of the budget situation when he was Interim. I will be looking at our policies. My goal is to grow what we're doing, so we'll be sure to have a strategy about which patents to support, and we'll make it as clear as possible to potential patent holders how it works.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Sergio Espinosa, Ad Hoc Committee on DEI**

- A new committee was created at the University level, the Employee Resource Group DEI Working Committee – the committee of committees of DEI. They had their first meeting in the past week. The idea is to set guidelines and coordinate and align efforts, but so far there hasn't been much progress in that direction.
- Senate committee on DEI is going to start flying solo, finding things to work on.

### **Vinny Kaushal, Ad Hoc Committee on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Issues**

- Committee meetings scheduled; we'll have a substantial update by the next Senate meeting.

### **Mike Nelson, Ad Hoc Committee on Research**

- Relatively new initiative. Met with Dr. Miller about a month ago. She was open to the idea of having some open communication. If you have questions for her, I can communicate them.

**Senator:** There used to be funds in Kate Miller's office for travel. Can we follow up on that? And can you follow up on the FDL?

### **Stefan Romanoschi, Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee**

- No new activities to report.

### **Theresa Jorgensen, Equity and Ethics Committee**

- Met in December to share ideas about best practices for awards, professional development, and other competitive awards related to faculty.
- Writing up ideas – expect to have report for Senate in the next month.

### **Douglas Klahr, Operating Procedures Committee**

- Will have updated bylaws ready for the Senate for the next session.
- Will have recommendations for additional offices and membership.

### **Brent Sasley, Academic and Student Liaison Committee**

- We spoke with the Office of Community Standards and the SAR Center and got a lot of information about them.
- The biggest concern is that there's a lot of uncertainty about how academic dishonesty works and how accommodations work. We're trying to get more information for the faculty about the processes.

### **Imre Demhardt, Budget Liaison Committee**

- Meeting with the financial officer had to be postponed

### **Dave Levine, Information Technology and Information Security Committee**

- Met with security people from OIT; hope to meet with Information Technology people next week
- Encourages people to join committee

**Senator:** Our advising office asked me to bring this up. Somehow students are showing up on Canvas as registered but not in MyMav as registered. It seems they're addressing individual cases but not addressing the problems as a whole.

**Senator:** Bizarre phishing emails that we've received.

**Chair:** Report it as phishing and it will get removed from your inbox.

### **Taner Ozdil, Special Projects**

- Emeritus nominations will start coming through in February and March, and this committee will meet to process those.

### **Chair's Report (Jackie Fay and Andy Milson)**

- Mark your calendars for Senate's 50-year anniversary celebration (and senate appreciation reception): May 1, 5:30-7:00 pm
- Latest infographic from COACHE having to do with faculty retention; it was emailed to faculty and is on the COACHE website
- Chat with the Chairs (office hours) back up and running, every Monday of the semester 1-2 pm in Trinity 102. Any faculty member can stop by to talk.
- Faculty Advisory Council Meeting in Austin, January 26-27
  - Faculty leadership from UT System institutions gathered
  - Meetings with leaders from UT System
  - Zoom call with Student Advisory Council President was a highlight
  - Dr. Rebecca Karoff, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, talked about ACUE and its role on campuses. UTA is a campus that does a lot with ACUE.
- Texas Council of Faculty Senates Meeting upcoming, 24-25 February, Austin

Motion to enter executive session made and seconded, 4:22 pm

Came out of executive session 5:05 pm

**Senator:** Concerns about Chairs not being able to access Senate travel funds. Is it because they're administrators?

**Chair:** The Senate Travel fund is for faculty, who it is intended to serve. We decided to align the travel fund with eligibility to serve on the Senate itself, and Department Chairs cannot serve on the Senate. The concern is really mostly about a specific college's group of Chairs. We do recognize there's a need for funding for Chairs.

**Adjourned at 5:08 pm**

**Next Meeting: March 1, 2023**