

Faculty Senate Minutes
29 March 2023
Trinity Hall 104

Senate Leadership in Attendance

Jackie Fay, Chair

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 and Engineering
Georgios Alexandrakis	Bioengineering
Jonathan Asadi	Physics
Amy Austin	College of Liberal Arts
Karabi Bezboruah	Public Affairs
Alan Cannon	Information Systems and Operations Management
Jivas Chakravarthy	Accounting
Sergio Espinosa	Music
Julienne Greer	Theatre Arts and Dance
Doug Grisaffe	Marketing
Andy Hansz	Finance and Real Estate
Michael Holmes	Nursing
Darlene Hunter	School of Social Work
Aimée Israel-Pelletier	Modern Languages
Song Jiang	Computer Science
Theresa Jorgensen	Math
Un-Jung Kim	Earth and Environmental Sciences
Andrzej Korzeniowski	Math
David Levine	College of Engineering
Steve Mattingly	Civil Engineering
Jeff McGee	Management
Joyce Myers	College of Education
Anne Nordberg	Social Work
Taner Ozdil	Landscape Architecture
Sally Parker-Ryan	College of Liberal Arts
Mark Pellegrino	Biology
Cristina Salinas	History
Brent Sasley	Political Science
Aaron Smallwood	Economics
Amy Speier	Sociology and Anthropology
Christy Spivey	College of Business
Chunke Su	Communication
Regina Urban	Nursing

Nilakshi Veerabathina	College of Science
Jeffrey Witzel	Linguistics
Ling Xu	Social Work
Yi Zhang	Education Leadership and Policy Studies

Ex officio Members in Attendance

Jennifer Cowley, UTA President

Tamara Brown, UTA Provost

Guests

Minerva Cordero, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

Desirée Henderson, subbing for Amy Tigner, Department of English

Jennifer Jenkins, Senate History Intern and History graduate student

**

Call to order by Jackie Fay 2:32 pm

Remarks from President Jennifer Cowley

- Legislative update
 - Hearing on tenure on 3/30/23 – as introduced, the bill says nobody else in the state can get tenure who doesn't already have it.
 - There will be a replacement bill, effectively, a codification of Texas A&M's tenure requirements, which say that the President has the right to "summarily dismiss" (fire) a tenured faculty member without the normal due process if, for example, they've been convicted of a felony. (Rare exceptions.)
 - That change would be within the norms for our institution; it would be a codification of our existing practices.
 - Watching that bill carefully, but the expectation is that the replacement bill will be satisfactory.
 - Critical race theory bill – Short bill, with one relevant sentence saying that we will not force our students to adopt a belief held by a faculty member that holds that a specific race or gender is "inherently superior" to any other. We don't do that, and this bill isn't really about CRT.
 - DEI – A lot of clarification needed on this bill; we anticipate it will pass, but in what form?
 - One possibility emerged through the budget process (you can't create law in the budget process, but effectively it's a poll of how bills might go over): state funds cannot be used for DEI efforts. Not that big of a deal, because so little of our budget comes from the state (15%), and we can use other funds for DEI efforts.
 - Another aspect in the current bill: prohibiting litmus tests, and diversity statements used in a hiring process are considered litmus tests. A question is how diversity statements are evaluated, and would someone be excluded from hire based on a view they might express in their diversity statement. Universities haven't done a very good job clarifying how diversity statements

- are used in hiring practices. There are other mechanisms to get at the same information we're looking for (teaching and research statements, teaching presentations). Perfect time to reflect on training for the hiring process.
- The most concerning piece is saying that we can't have mandatory DEI training or DEI offices. Unclear: can we not use *state funds* for DEI efforts, or can we *not have* DEI efforts at all? There are carve outs for curriculum, research, and student organizations – but what about staff supporting those efforts?
 - Working actively with legislatures to figure out how these bills will impact us and what changes to the bill could make it work for the legislature and for us.
- Budget – very early in the process
 - House and Senate have both gone through preliminary budget process, but most of the budget decisions happen in the last two weeks of the session, in about a month.
 - All of the University systems have asked the legislature for an “affordability plan,” a \$1 billion plan that would include a 6.8% increase in our formula funding, a greater coverage of insurance, and coverage of Hazelwood – in exchange for not raising tuition and fees. Would we be better off going for the affordability plan or the increase in tuition and fees? Because we'd raise tuition and fees by only 3.5%, the answer is the affordability plan, which is a fair and reasonable plan. The House has included it in its budget, and the Senate hasn't, but through the reconciliation process they'll arrive at the final plan. It's a good sign that at least on the House side, that possibility is included. Unfortunately, by the time this gets decided, it's too late to make changes in tuition and fees for the next year.
 - Strong support for increasing Texas grants (equivalent of Pell at state level). The state hasn't kept up with the growth of students in the state, so only about 70% of the students who qualify get them because the money runs out.
 - We're owed \$20+ million from the state from a prior loan program called B-On-Time, and we've never gotten payment from that because the state needed to hold onto it to balance the budget from a cashflow perspective, so we're asking for it back. The Senate has said we can put it into the mix; the House hasn't.
 - There's a statewide nursing rider; we're asking for an increase to the nursing shortage reduction program and for a scholarship program for nursing. Making positive progress forward, but the question is at what level. It looks like \$25 million will get added to the nursing shortage reduction program as well as a change in the allocation, which is key because we didn't get any money from the nursing shortage reduction program last year because we didn't grow, and it was only supporting growth. There's a new formula with a more fair balance; only about 40% of the nursing schools in the state were benefiting from the prior program in any given year.
 - UTA-specific asks:
 - A rider to increase the funding for the Center for Mexican American Studies
 - A rider requesting additional funding for the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center, Maverick Energy Center, Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Center, and for land acquisition.
 - Senate leaning toward individual allocations to institutions; House leaning toward affordability plan. Individual riders haven't made it into the budget yet.

- Remaining question: how the legislature will allocate research funding and how much money will go into research; we expect an increase in research funding.
- K-12 has a budget request to fund student teachers, which would help our students.
- Do not expect that the majority of these will be a “yes,” but it’s fantastic that there’s still so much active in the session.

Senator: Is there any update on the Fine Arts and Performance building?

President: It’s on the list. We’re waiting to see whether the state’s going to do tuition revenue bonds (TRB). Every few sessions, they decide whether they’re going to issue debt for facilities across the universities, and then they pick projects based on the priorities of the institutions. The state has lots of one-time money but not a lot of ongoing money. That’s an ongoing money source, so I have less confidence that they’ll go that route. Thinking creatively, Jeff Jeter noticed that in a prior legislative session, the University of Houston did a request not through the TRB process, but through a legislative rider process to get money for land. So we’ve written a rider that could bring resources (land, infrastructure, facilities) to the University to address critical needs.

Remarks from Provost Tamara Brown

- Budget review exercise underway – thanks Senate for feedback
 - Refinement to how process works is necessary. Some college processes more participatory than others.
- Promotion and tenure, annual reviews, CPE season – observations/reactions after going through it for the first time.
 - Time to do a refresh on T and P guidelines. Some areas haven’t revised them in over 10 years, but the institution has changed a lot in that time. The guidelines should be in line with our identity as an R1 and Texas Tier One. If they’re already in line, great, but if they’re not, there’s an opportunity for adjustment.
 - It was challenging in some instances to determine whether people had met expectations, for example, for promotion to full professor because the guidelines aren’t clear. It’s hard to know what is meant by a phrase like “substantial contributions” (a phrase used in one area).
 - In reconsidering guidelines, consider alternative pathways to attaining promotion. What would those be? There were some cases where decisions were made on the basis of an alternative pathway that wasn’t spelled out as an option in the guidelines. Particularly unclear when the person going up for full was a Department Chair. What does that look like? Some people gave candidates a pass on research productivity when you’re a Chair. If that’s the case, it should be in the guidelines.
 - Some departments were challenged to know whether a person’s research was quality. Faculty evaluating dossiers lack the expertise, sometimes, to be able to evaluate their colleagues’ work in certain areas.
 - Necessary conversation about guidelines, given the University we are now; we don’t want faculty to be guessing whether what they’re doing will earn them promotion.
 - There are standard ways of operating within departments that aren’t spelled out in the guidelines. There needs to be clarity outside of the departments, even for things that are routinized within them.

- There were instances in promotions to full professor where teaching performance wasn't satisfactory, and admittedly so, but promotion was recommended because they're a great researcher. There were individuals with teaching scores of 1s and 2s and sustained student complaints across years, but the research trumped the teaching. Those were outlier instances.
- Vast majority of dossiers were a joy and a delight to read.
- DFW rates in core courses
 - These affect the whole university. Some DFW rates embarrassingly high, even before the pandemic. Comparing 2019 numbers to now (to separate out pandemic effects). In some areas, in 2019, pre-pandemic, the DFW rate was 50%. After the pandemic, it's even lower, with only 40% passing the class. Has to be addressed.
 - Provost's personal opinion: we ought to be north of 80% (passing rate) in the core because nobody's going to be successful proceeding to a degree without the core.
 - Math used to have high DFW rates, but they've done amazing things with co-requisites. Answer is not to "dumb down" curriculum, but to find ways of supporting students.
- Minimum Canvas presence
 - One thing that supports student success is their ability to know what their grades are. Canvas allows students to log in and see how they're doing academically, but a lot of faculty don't use Canvas that way. We should use the tools that we have so that the syllabus, required course materials, and grades are available on Canvas.

Senator: For DFW rates, is there an easy way to find out what the DFW rates are for faculty courses?

Provost: Yes. We also have tools that are predictive, indicating who might be at risk of failing.

Senator: I really like your comments. I have been at UTA a long time. I used to be on the tenure review committee, and questions about promotion guidelines have been unclear for a long time. For example, the guidelines say "one or two publications a year post-tenure" – so, is it one or two?

Provost: Clarity about timelines might be important too. I want faculty to feel some sense of guidance and clarity about when the time is right to submit a dossier for full.

Senator: I'm interested in DFW rates because I do teach one class with freshman and sophomore students. I see some students who aren't successful because they just don't turn things in. I find that very challenging. If they turn things in, they pass. Over the past six or seven years, more and more students just don't turn things in.

Provost: You're right. Students are changing. And as students change, we need to innovate around that, and CRTLE can help us. I'm not saying there's a one-size-fits-all solution.

Senator: About the evaluation of research for promotion: our college (College of Business) uses a list that separates journals into categories that include elite, near elite, high quality, and quality. Would the administration be open to the idea of eliminating departmental/college lists and

moving to an external ranking service like Scimago that can create a normalized score for every journal in every discipline?

Provost: It will depend on the discipline. I'm not prescribing one approach. I'm more wanting to us to make clearer what it means to be promoted at every level.

Senator: Thanks for your observations about different pathways to get to full. In our unit, there are people who earn tenure and then go into administrative roles and give up hope of ever going up for full. Can we write new guidelines into our unit now?

Provost: That's the *conversation* I want to start. There are fields where numbers of publications matters a lot. But what about the people whose research is, for example, *on UTA*? People who are helping us to understand what is happening here, but who aren't publishing in journals that are on a certain list? What about community impact and engagement in ways that transform? It's not service; it's knowledge production.

Senator: I think there's an extra layer of challenge to that, and that's the external review. A lot of times people outside the university have less clear understanding of what matters to us, and that needs to be considered.

Provost: I agree. We do give instructions to those reviewers on our standards, requesting that they evaluate those standards. But maybe there's some refinement that we will need in how we convey that, especially if we contemplate alternative pathways to promotion.

Faculty Senate minutes from the March 1, 2023, meeting approved by acclamation.

Updates from Minerva Cordero, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

- Looking into areas where Faculty Affairs and HOP can be clearer about policies – tenure and promotion is one such area. Departments, Colleges, Schools – not all of them have clear guidelines. Process has also been all over the place. Questions about things like how to treat faculty who are Directors of centers or programs; there's a lot of uncertainty. Need to look at all these areas to learn about the practice and recommendation.
- Also has been taking a look at Professional Development initiatives and opportunities run by the DFA (Leadership Academy, ACUE, program for new faculty, etc.). What's the satisfaction of people participating in those programs? Was their time well invested? Reviewing/surveying whether faculty needs are being met.
- Wants to visit faculty in our departments to find out what we already know about DFA and what they do and to learn whether DFA is meeting our needs.

Chair: Do you have the numbers of faculty promoted?

Minerva Cordero: I don't have the complete count.

- FDL proposals have been reviewed and ranked. We have 18 proposals submitted. The HOP says up to 6% of our faculty can be on an FDL a year, so that would bring us to about 30, and we didn't get that many, so we're trying to look at how many can be funded this year. We're

also trying to figure out whether the committee, in addition to reviewing and ranking, indicated how many of the proposals were worthy of being funded.

Senator: I think approaching departments about what DFA does is a very good idea, because a lot of faculty don't know who does what and who can offer what. I would like to know whether teaching faculty would be eligible to receive FDLs.

Minerva Cordero: I know Faculty Senate did a study and had some recommendations, so that will be a starting point for these initiatives for helping faculty. Provost Brown is the first Provost I've seen who is so committed to NTT faculty. She wants us to look at what programs and initiatives NTT faculty can take advantage of. We're not a first class and a second class; we're all faculty. We are looking into what professional development opportunities can be offered to NTT faculty that are comparable to FDLs for tenure-track faculty.

Chair: Our report on the FDL program is available on the Senate website. We also reviewed all the T and P guidelines under the leadership of Chris Morris from the Department of History in 2020. I have all that information and will pass it along to the Provost and the DFA.

Committee Reports

Sergio Espinosa, Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- No report.

Nila Veerabathina, NTT Faculty Concerns

- Last meeting, the committee brought forward a motion that we consider a different term other than "non tenure-track faculty." The motion was tabled so that we could seek input from faculty. The committee designed a survey.
- Survey is ready, simple survey. Should be deployed soon. Results will be brought to next meeting.

Research Committee, no report

Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee, no report

Theresa Jorgensen, Equity and Ethics Committee

- They have drafted a document for best practices guidelines for administering awards programs on campus
- They have drafted a document for guidelines for Extraordinary Service to Faculty Senate award
- Both will be shared at the next meeting.

Cristina Salinas, Operating Procedures

- Bylaws revision, to be discussed later in the meeting.

Brent Sasley, Academic and Student Liaison Committee, no report

Dave Levine, Information Technology and Information Security Committee

- Meeting with Timekeeper Plus people. If you're having trouble with Timekeeper, let him know.

Cindy Plonien, Budget Liaison Committee

- Great meeting with PAC and BLC with the Provost, discussing what had been done so far in the budget oversight exercise.

Taner Ozdil, Special Projects Committee

- Emeritus nominations due in two days (March 31 is deadline); make sure packages are ready to go. Special Projects committee will meet, evaluate dossiers, and relay recommendations to the Faculty Senate.

Jackie Fay, Chairs' Report

- Successful outcome of request to count faculty time at UTA as years, not nine-month chunks. Jewel Washington fixed the problem.
- There will be a culture survey coming out of TCI that will be given to the entire campus. It will come out in the fall.
- Senate's 50th Year anniversary reception May 1, 5:30-7, 6th floor library parlor.
- Representative Chris Turner wants to pass a resolution in honor of the UTA Faculty Senate, enumerating the history and achievements of the Senate, passed through the legislative council.
- Strategic Planning Committee meeting this Friday on the first meeting, on People and Culture.
- COACHE update: the farewell tour will begin soon, visiting various groups they visited at the beginning of the project to make clear what has happened with the results.

Old Business

- Revisions to emeritus policy – the section about emeritus titles for administrative roles needs further clarification.
- Revisions to Senate bylaws. All Senators were sent the original bylaws, a draft of the revisions, and an explanation of differences.

Motion: that we accept the revisions to the bylaws. Seconded.

Discussion

- Purpose of this charge was to reconcile the bylaws, the HOP, and the current practice of doing things in the Senate (e.g., the Chair of the Staff Advisory Council and VP of Faculty Affairs were added as ex officio members, since they have been attending meetings), including the new apportionment plan that was approved in November 2022. There was also some outmoded language.
- Chair goes over the document itemizing the changes, explaining each (see appended document).

Senator: If we adopt these, do they come into force right away, or are they adopted in the next session.

Chair: It will be thirty days before they go into effect. They would determine the elections for this year that we're about to hold.

Senator: So we would need to elect a treasurer at the next meeting.

Chair: Yes, we would.

Senator: What about the ad hoc committees (DEI, NTT concerns) – what are we doing with those?

Chair: We didn't change any of the ad hoc committees into standing committees. We did add a Travel Committee because currently the travel fund is administered by the Chair and Chair Elect or Vice Chair, which is not ideal, because they have a lot of other things that they're doing. It seems to make sense that there should be a committee reviewing travel applications on behalf of the Senate. The other ad hoc committees – we should think carefully, and I would ask those committees what they think about adding them permanently, or not. If the current ad hoc committees want to propose that they be added as standing committees next academic year, they can.

Senator: One or two suggestions. Faculty Development is an essential part of what we do, and I wonder if the Travel Committee could be made part of, housed, within the Faculty Development committee. And about the newly-titled Emeritus Committee; yes, the Special Projects Committee handles the Emeritus nominations, but from time to time, the Special Projects does take on the issues that don't fit under other committees.

Senator: I propose an amendment: that the committee now titled Emeritus Review Committee in the proposed bylaw revisions be titled Emeritus Review and Special Projects Committee instead, in order to handle other projects that come up and don't fall under the purview of other committees.

Seconded.

Chair: We will add a bullet point saying "other projects as needed."

Senator: It's strange to have a committee called Emeritus Committee and Special Projects.

Senator: Doesn't the Chair have the purview to assign charges to any committees? The Chair could always assign special projects to committees that have lighter loads in a particular year.

Senator: The functions of the Special Projects committee has been charged with a lot of other things over the past six years.

Chair: We can leave it as Special Projects.

Senator: Aren't ad hoc committees for things that come up that might need committee work?

Chair: Yes, but usually what happens is that ad hoc committees need to be constituted with a specific group of people to get a particular thing done, as was the case with the revisions to the Emeritus policy.

Vote on amendment – amendment passes.

Senator: Regarding the Travel Committee. Faculty Development is an essential part of what we do. Could we consolidate Faculty Development as part of Travel, so that we have a committee that talks about Faculty Development and Travel? *Motion:* I move that we rename the Travel Committee, Faculty Development Committee instead, with travel as part of its purview and an additional bullet point about faculty development added.

Motion is seconded.

Senator: Can we use hands instead of voting by voice?

Parliamentarian: Yes.

Senator: Faculty Development does require travel, but that's not the kind of travel that we normally think of with the travel fund, so it doesn't make sense for me to add them together. Also, you're adding more and more to this committee. I'd rather leave it as is.

Senator: I guess the issue for me is that for the past several years, we've been discussing faculty development, and there are ad hoc committees formed to address those things. I think this is one of the major functions of Faculty Senate, to be able to address faculty development. Travel is an important issue, but faculty development is too. I'm trying to find a place on a standing committee for discussions of faculty development.

Vote on motion – motion carries.

Senator: Currently, the head of student government *is* an ex officio member of the ASL committee, but the revised bylaws say that they *may* serve. Shouldn't it be "is"?

Chair: Yes, probably.

Senator: I move that we change the move "may" to "shall." (Changing it back.)

Motion seconded, voted on, motion carries.

Senator: I move that we adopt the changes under discussion and approve the bylaws.

Vote on motion – motion carries, bylaws revised.

Senator: Do we have any comment from the President or Provost about the increase in 50% in our insurance copays? Many of my constituents are asking.

Chair: I'm still following up on that.

Senator: In nonprofit world, rates have gone up 11%.

Chair: I will follow up on that. The insurance is negotiated by UT System.

Meeting Adjourned 4:15 pm

Next Meeting: May 3, 2023