

SENATE HIGHLIGHTS

UTSA Faculty Senate Newsletter



Consent Agenda - APPROVED

- Approval of Minutes – February 16, 2023, Faculty Senate Meeting

CHAIR'S REPORT: René Zenteno

- Dr. Zenteno participated in the Texas Council of Faculty Senate meeting in Austin, Feb. 24-25, 2023. It brings representatives from Senates across the State of Texas together.
 - Representatives from AAUP and the Texas Association of College Teachers discussed concerns such as DEI, CRT, and tenure.
 - The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Commissioner, Harrison Keller, spoke about higher education and the importance of defending tenure and academic freedom.
- Dr. Zenteno provided an update from the UTSA University Leadership Council clarifying the UT System's position on the suspension of new DEI policies at academic and health institutions.
 - UTSA has not been requested to take any action. UTSA is not currently collecting any DEI policies. There has been no change to the way UTSA is operated.
 - The deadline for filing bills with the legislature is March 10, 2023.
- The Strategic Plan Refresh survey closed on Feb. 24. A summary of the results was presented at ULC. The colleges will continue Listening Sessions to discuss survey results. Participation is encouraged.
- Regarding Senate meetings with the Deans:
 - Deans will provide budget information to faculty in their respective colleges as part of the IRM process.
 - More information about compression exercises will be shared during the summer. Each dean will conduct this process differently.
 - There is inconsistent use of COVID statements in annual evaluations, if they are used at all.

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2022-2023 OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Rene Zenteno: Chair

Chad Mahood: Past Faculty Senate
Chair

Chris Packham: Secretary of the
General Faculty

Victor Villarreal: Graduate
Council

Valerie Sponsel: ADTS
Representative

Curtis Brewer: Parliamentarian

Mary McNaughton-Cassil:
Secretary

Kerry Sinanan: Academic
Freedom, Evaluation & Merit
(AFEM)

Kirsten Gardner: Budget
Committee

Sonya Aleman: HOP Committee

Alexis Godet: Research Committee

Andrew Lloyd: Curriculum
Committee

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The purpose of the newsletter is to communicate updates from the Faculty Senate and to encourage faculty participation in the spirit of shared governance and the success of UTSA students, faculty, and staff.



Chair's Report (continued)

- The Senate will need to elect a Vice Chair-Elect. The position will become the Chair of the Senate in 2024. Anyone interested should contact Dr. Zenteno. While Dr. Zenteno can be re-elected for another term, it's important the Senate elects a Vice Chair.
- The Faculty Senate will also need to elect a Secretary and Parliamentarian and possibly the Secretary of General Faculty in May.

Q

A The Texas A&M System recently asked its Deans & Heads of Departments:

Do you have any formally prepared reports related to diversity goals or improvement? If so, please share an electronic copy of or a link to the report. Do you have any college or department specific published policies, rules or procedures related to DEI? If so, please share an electronic copy or link.

Has UTSA been given similar directives?

- *As of last week, UTSA has not received a request for this information.*

Leadership Update: Academic Innovation Update

Melissa Vito, Vice Provost for Academic Innovation, Claudia Arcolin, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Experiences, Marcela Ramirez, Associate Vice Provost Academic Innovation - Teaching, Learning and Digital Transformation and Jonathan Gutierrez, Associate Director, Digital Learning

- ChatGPT is an AI-powered conversational agent that can respond to user questions. This tool is continuously advancing, Academic Innovation and Academic Affairs are collaborating with faculty to offer updated information and resources including:
 - Conducting seminars with internal and external experts. Recordings are available on their [website](#). Next workshop on Miscalculation of AI, presented by Cindy Roberts and Matthew Schurmann from the Dept. of Mathematics on April 16, 2023.
 - Working with faculty members who use ChatGPT in their coursework to inform and create best practices.
 - Faculty were surveyed to collect their perspectives on ChatGPT/Generative AI. Based on the survey results, Academic Innovation created a dedicated [webpage](#) with resources on Generative AI.
- There is a Generative AI Peer Learning Network which continually reviews ChatGPT/Generative AI topics. They have identified five major areas to explore the impact of artificial intelligence:
 - Creativity
 - Digital/Data literacy
 - Trust/Accuracy
 - Equity/Bias
 - Classroom to Career
- Anyone interested in joining the Generative AI Peer Learning Network should contact Dr. Zenteno.
 - The group meets monthly, and feedback is appreciated.
- This area is changing rapidly, and Academic Innovation is doing its best to keep resources up to date for faculty and students.
 - If any Faculty Senators know of other renowned experts in the Generative AI field, please share their information with Academic Innovation staff.

Q

A **Given the current lack of regulation in the AI industry, will ChatGPT be available free to UTSA students?**

- *Currently, a free version is available to all users. There have been no discussions about acquiring a subscription for the university.*

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Leadership Update (continued)

How can we ensure proper regulation as we explore integrating ChatGPT as a teaching tool and evaluate its use by students? Is it feasible to regulate its use?

- *The main focus has been to facilitate opportunities for faculty to integrate ChatGPT into academic courses. Educational technology and online learning listservs host discussions about whether universities have established policies regarding ChatGPT, and most institutions are grappling with this challenge. While developing relevant policies, these institutions are also seeking to optimize the learning experience for students.*

Have the different needs of the various disciplines been considered?

- *The Academic Council earlier was briefed early in the year, but it may warrant revisiting. One suggestion is for colleges to convene groups and collaborate on ideas to meet the different needs of the various disciplines within their respective colleges.*

Given the many options available in the marketplace, have other AI tools been considered for course integration, such as Grammarly?

- *We have not yet had the chance to explore all of the available AI tools as there are so many, each with its own specific focus. However, our team remains committed to exploring other options to adopt the appropriate tools that will enable a rich teaching and learning experience.*



Blackboard to Canvas Transition Update

- Faculty members will have access to Canvas starting on Tuesday, March 21st.
 - Academic Innovation is offering walk-in consultations at the Academic Innovations Center in the MS Building on main campus.
 - They will also provide a link to book 1:1 consultation with Academic Innovation team members.
 - Jonathan's team is working with Faculty Champions to schedule departmental meetings.
 - Within Canvas there are resources such as a self-paced course and other online resources.
- Once access begins, the priority will be to migrate courses from Blackboard from past semesters into Canvas, including Fall 2022 and Fall 2021.
 - Courses are expected to be moved into Canvas by the end of March or early April.
- On March 20, there will be an update with all of the hours, links, and request forms. It will also provide an FAQ for faculty about Canvas access, how to get started, the timeline, and how to contact a member of the Canvas team.



Will Canvas handle the transfer of courses from Blackboard, or will faculty be responsible for transferring their own courses?

- *Academic Innovation will transition all courses offered between Spring 2021 and Summer 2023 to Canvas. The main focus will be on the Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 semesters to enable faculty to update their Fall 2023 courses early. The remaining courses will be added gradually through the summer.*

Is there a specific sequence or schedule for moving the courses from Blackboard to Canvas?

- *Yes, the schedule will be posted in the FAQ. The order is Fall 2022, followed by Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Spring 2021, and Spring 2023. This is done to ensure that faculty have access to the most up-to-date information. Summer semesters will be added at a later date.*

Leadership Update (continued)

Will classes prior to Fall 2021 be uploaded to Canvas? Will access to Blackboard be removed or transitioned to a read-only mode?

- There will be a form available for requesting transfer of courses before Spring 2021. The Academic Innovation team will be responsible for transferring content from Blackboard to Canvas. Blackboard will be accessible until August 31, 2023, as the contract expires on September 1, 2023.

Will Panopto continue to be used for recording video lectures?

- *Yes. Panopto will continue to serve as the repository for video lectures. All videos and content will remain in place and fully integrate with Canvas, as they currently do with Blackboard.*

Leadership Update: Blackboard Observer Update

Ms. Shanda Hayden, Senior Associate Athletics Director/Academic Services and Dr. Gregg Michel, Associate Professor, Department of History

- Last fall, Ms. Hayden worked with Dr. Michel, the faculty representative to Athletics, to discuss the "Blackboard Observer" feature. They presented it to the Intercollegiate Athletic Council and the Academic Integrity Committee. With their support, they submitted a proposal to the Provost's Office, which was approved.
- Blackboard Observer is a type of user account that provides view-only access to content.
 - Academic Innovation will provide a PowerPoint slide to accompany a letter from Provost Espy and Vice Provost Wyatt, educating faculty on Blackboard Observer.
 - It provides access to view grades, but not to course content.
 - All student-athletes sign a FERPA release which allows their office to communicate with faculty, view grades, and provide academic progress to coaches and staff within the athletic department.
 - Athletics previously used a platform called Grades First which was discontinued in Summer 2021. According to Ms. Hayden, their office still has access to Banner and grades. To obtain information more efficiently, their office now uses Blackboard Observer.
 - If a student-athlete requires assistance, the office can direct them to the appropriate resources.
 - According to Ms. Hayden, student-athletes can receive focused support from their academic counselor. The Office of Student Success is already a partner in this effort, and the counselor may draw on various resources, including advisors, tutoring, student success coaches, and faculty.
 - This user is only able to view students with the Athletics coding and cannot access any other student data.
 - Only grades can be viewed on Blackboard. It is not a platform for communication or for submitting assignments.
 - Just requesting access to grades, syllabi, and course calendar.
 - Canvas offers a similar feature, and the team at Academic Innovation is committed to expanding its availability.
 - Dr. Michel mentioned that this is real-time monitoring of student-athletes, which facilitates academic intervention more efficiently and timely.
 - The aim is to offer assistance to student-athletes who require it.
 - This is an extra layer of support, as academic under-performance has eligibility implications for student-athletes.
 - Faculty members have the option to opt out of Blackboard Observer.
 - A few faculty members chose to utilize the "opt-out" as they recognized the benefits of Blackboard Observer
 - On the faculty side of Blackboard, the role of "observer" is represented by the name of the individual.
 - Only five full-time staff members from Athletics are currently authorized to access this role.





In the past, faculty could designate a TA to monitor grades. Is it possible to do the same thing in Canvas?

- *It is anticipated that Canvas will include a comparable feature. Additionally, the Athletics staff doesn't have access to courses. They are limited to view-only privileges.*

It was mentioned that faculty could opt out. In that case, how would they report grades?

- *The Athletics staff extracts grades from Banner, and also receives reports of changes in grades and records of instructor drops. We rely on faculty to use the platform, whether it be Blackboard or Canvas (soon).*

Is there any data to share regarding the effectiveness of the intervention for student-athletes?

- *Data tracking for student-athletes is not yet separate from that of the general campus. Despite this, UTSA student-athletes have a high graduation success rate, surpassing both the campus average and the national average. This indicates that the support we provide is effective in enabling them to graduate and remain eligible to participate in their respective sports.*

Do the student-athletes find Blackboard Observer helpful, considering the other forms of support available?

- *Yes. Several student-athletes have requested the assistance of the staff to access their grades on Blackboard - staff doesn't access these grades without students being present. The Athletics staff has been very forthcoming with the student-athletes, and they appreciate the benefits of the support provided.*

Is Blackboard Observer already in use? If not, is there a planned start date in mind?

- *The feature is already integrated into the system and is used by many high schools. However, UTSA has not yet accessed it, and it won't until faculty has been educated and notified.*

Secretary of the General Faculty Report: Chris Packham, Chair

- Dr. Packham and Dr. Zenteno will be attending the final meeting of the UT System Faculty Advisory Council of the year in Austin on April 27 - 28, 2023.
- Dr. Packham participated in UTSA Day at the Capitol and reported that it was a successful and positive event.
 - An elected official mentioned being impressed by the enthusiasm of the attending faculty.

Graduate Council: Victor Villarreal, Chair

- The Graduate Council has given its approval for the 2023-2025 Graduate Catalog.
 - It will be presented for review and approval by the Faculty Senate during the April meeting.
- Dr. Zaid Haddad attended the Graduate Council meeting where he addressed matters concerning FTT faculty.
 - He discussed the definitions related to FTT and their roles in the current Graduate Council Bylaws regarding whether FTT can serve as sole chairs of master thesis.
 - The Graduate Council will explore this matter further during the upcoming Executive Committee meeting and review the language used.
- Dr. Villarreal will provide updates to the Faculty Senate on these discussions.



Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee: Kerry Sinanan, Chair

- The AFEM Committee has requested additional clarity and transparency regarding the promotion and guidelines related to FTT.
- The AFEM Committee recommends that the Research Committee evaluates the impact of increasing the issuance of FTTs on the teaching faculty and its potential effect on R1 status.
- The committee is currently discussing academic freedom and the suspension of DEIJ.
- The AFEM Committee requests that all Faculty Senators gather a neutral list of current or future pedagogical, research and administrative activities related to DEIJ from their respective faculties.
 - Please forward this list to the AFEM Committee representative.
- The AFEM committee is interested in evaluating research activities that include a DEIJ component and examining potential impacts.
 - For instance, UTSA is currently applying for renewal of its Carnegie Mellon Classification Community Engagement for 2026, and the committee would like to explore how this move may impact the renewal process.

Budget Committee Report: Kirsten Gardner, Chair

- Dr. Gardner has discussed compensation and the IRM model internally with the Budget Committee and externally with Academic Affairs.
- The Budget Committee plans to summarize the discussions and results in two brief memos to Academic Affairs. The plan has been endorsed by both the Budget Committee and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, although the latter did not take an official vote.
- The first memo from the Budget Committee reads:
 - After researching pay raises associated with promotion throughout Texas Higher Education institutions, the Faculty Senate Budget Committee recommends that Academic Affairs:
 - Increase the promotion base pay raise for Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to \$7,500.
 - Increase the promotion base pay raise for Associate Professor to Full Professor to \$10,000.
 - Increase the base pay raise associated with promotion in FTT rank at a commensurate rate.
 - The Faculty Senate voted and approved.
- Dr. Gardner mentioned that a several Senators have been invited to join an Academic Affairs committee that will explore this topic.
 - The first meeting is upcoming, and they would like to present this memo as a show of support for this initiative.
- Dr. Gardner confirmed that the Provost requested, during the September meeting, that the Faculty Senate gather data and make recommendations on promotion and tenure pay raises.
 - The Budget Committee spent approximately 6-8 weeks researching the data, primarily within the UT System.



- The Second Memo from the Budget Committee reads:
 - After learning more about the IRM process, the Faculty Senate Budget Committee requests routine updates (once per semester) from College Deans. This update should include an outline of how the incentivized resource model has funded College Programs, Faculty, Student Success and additional College goals.
 - The Budget Committee intentionally kept the delivery method ambiguous, as some Deans prefer to communicate through newsletters, while others prefer a town hall setting.
- A motion was made for the Budget Committee to compose a memo, supported by Faculty Senate, to the Provost. The memo would request regular updates from the College Dean on the progress of the IRM process.
- During the meeting, Dr. Gardner clarified that the objective was to ensure that all faculty members in each college receive an update from their respective Deans. This can be achieved through means such as a newsletter or town hall setting. It was recommended that the proposal could be modified to include "routine updates to all faculty once per semester."
- The current language reads "the Faculty Senate Budget Committee requests routine updates...". It was clarified that the aim is not to make the request too complex, but rather to reproduce a productive discussion that was shared with the Budget Committee and should be accessible to all faculty members in every college.
- Dr. Zenteno and Dr. Gardner decided to table the motion to first meet with the Provost to discuss the topic, modify the language if necessary, and bring up the matter again at the next meeting.



What is the current weight of base pay raises for Assistant to Associate and Associate to full? Also, is it associated with current salaries?

- *The salary increase from Assistant to Associate is \$5,000, and the increase from Associate to Full is \$7,000. It is not associated with current salaries.*

Would it be possible to link it to a percentage instead?

- *UT System schools utilize a flat rate system, not a percentage. The Budget Committee did not carry out an extensive search. They created an Excel spreadsheet and reached out to colleagues at other UT System schools to determine that most use a flat rate. UTSA's promotion raises are situated towards the lower end of the scale. Percentages could result in pay compression and disparity issues.*

Is UTSA only comparing itself to other R1 institutions?

- *No, other institutions that are not R1 have been compared and UTSA still has lower promotion raises in comparison.*

Are updates shared with the college only or with the Faculty Senate as well?

- *The updates may be shared with the Faculty Senate as well as each college.*





Research Committee: Alexis Godet, Chair

- Dr. Godet met with Mickey Stevenson to discuss upcoming revisions to training focused on responsible and ethical research practices.
 - They brainstormed efficient ways to train UTSA students.

New Business

- Dr. Valerie Sponzel agreed to move the FTT Taskforce report to the April meeting to ensure enough time for discussion, given the report's importance.
- Next Faculty Senate Meeting will be held on April 6th, 2023.
 - Via Zoom.
 - JPL 4.04.22 in person.



Alvarez College of Business

- *Dennis Lopez*, Dept. of Accounting
- *David Beheshti*, Dept. of Economics
- *Zijun Wang*, Dept. of Finance
- *Maho Sonmez*, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- *Charles Liu*, Dept. of Information Systems & Cyber Security
- *Huy Le*, Dept. of Management
- *Victor DeOliveria*, Dept. of Management Science and Statistics
- *Ashwin Malshe*, Dept. of Marketing

College of Education and Human Development

- *Sidury Christiansen*, Dept. of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies
- *Devon Romero*, Dept. of Counseling
- *Curtis Brewer*, Dept. of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
- *Michael Karcher*, Dept. of Educational Psychology
- *Rica Ramirez*, Dept. of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching
- *Sonya Aleman*, Dept. of Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- *Zaid Haddad*, Fixed Term Track Representative

Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design

- *John Alexander*, School of Architecture and Planning
- *Sue Ann Pemberton*, School of Architecture and Planning
- *Gabriela Romero Uribe*, Dept. of Biomedical Engineering and Chemical Engineering
- *Drew Johnson*, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Construction Management
- *Jeffrey Prevost*, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- *August (Gus) Allo*, Fixed-Term Track Representative
- *Kiran Bhaganagar*, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering

College of Liberal and Fine Arts

- *Marcus Hamilton*, Dept. of Anthropology
- *Humberto Saenz*, School of Art
- *Kim Kline*, Dept. of Communication
- *Kerry Sinanon*, Dept. of English
- *Mary Dixon*, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- *Kristen Gardner*, Dept. of History
- *Whitney Chappell*, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures
- *S. Andrew Lloyd*, School of Music
- *Xunwu Chen*, Dept. of Philosophy and Classics
- *Neil Debbage*, Dept. of Political Science and Geography

College of Sciences

- *James Chambers*, Dept. of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology
- *Kirk Schanze*, Dept. of Chemistry
- *John Quarles*, Dept. of Computer Science
- *Brian Laub*, Dept. of Integrative Biology
- *Alexis Godet*, Dept. of Earth and Planetary Sciences
- *Hector Aguilar*, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- *Lorenzo Brancaleon*, Dept. of Physics and Astronomy
- *George Perry*, Dept. of Neuroscience, Developmental and Regenerative Biology
- *Dmitry Gokhan*, Dept. of Mathematics

College for Health, Community and Policy

- *Marie Tillyer*, Dept. of Criminology & Criminal Justice
- *Ying Huang*, Dept. of Demography
- *David Weber*, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- *Tianou Zhang*, Dept. of Kinesiology
- *Mary McNaughton-Cassill*, Dept. of Psychology
- *Branco Ponomarev*, Dept. of Public Administration
- *Zenong Yin*, Dept. of Public Health
- *Candace Christensen*, Dept. of Social Work
- *Ginny Garcia*, Dept. of Sociology

University College

- *Lauren Riojas-Fitzpatrick*, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative

Ex-Officio Members

- *Rene Zenteno*, Chair, Faculty Senate
- *Chris Packham*, Secretary of the General Faculty
- *Victor Villarreal*, Chair, Graduate Council
- *Arturo Schultz*, Department Chair Council Representative
- *Valerie Sponzel*, ADTS Representative
- *Chad Mahood*, Past Faculty Senate Chair
- *Justin Marmolejo*, Staff Senate Representative