

SENATE HIGHLIGHTS

UTSA Faculty Senate Newsletter

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



Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2023, Faculty Senate Meeting
- Approval of the following proposals which were approved at the February 7, 2023, Graduate Council meeting:
 - Graduate Certificate in Music Theory Pedagogy
 - M.A. Curriculum & Instruction – adding a new concentration in Dual Credit

ALL ITEMS APPROVED

CHAIR'S REPORTS: Rene Zenteno

- Dr. Zenteno updated the Faculty Senate on the ongoing Strategic Plan Refresh and said Deans are communicating participation details to their respective colleges.
 - For those who missed the President's State of the University 2023 address, it can be viewed [online](#).
- Regarding legislative discussions:
 - On February 8, 2023, President Eighmy testified before the Texas Senate Finance Committee.
 - On February 21, 2023, President Eighmy testified before the Texas House Appropriations Committee about UTSA's budget request.
 - The Texas Senate and House Higher Education Committees may request institutional testimony at any point during the session.
- Meetings between the Provost and Faculty Senators and Deans to discuss the following issues have been or are being scheduled:
 - IRM-Budget transparency, compression exercises, use of COVID statements in annual evaluations, and FTTs.
 - Meetings for COLFA and ACOB were conducted the week of February 13th, 2023.

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SENATE
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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.



Leadership Update: Legislative Update **Carlos Martinez, Sr. Vice President for Institutional Strategic Planning, Compliance Risk Management and Office Operations, Chief of Staff**

- Mr. Martinez discussed Lt. Governor Dan Patrick's priorities as outlined in a recent press release. He noted that both the Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the Texas House identify their priorities as lower-numbered bills (i.e. the first 30 bills). The House Speaker has yet to identify his priorities.
- With the exception of the budget bill, the bills have not yet been filed, though UTSA is monitoring this.
 - Of the priorities mentioned in the Lt. Governor's press release, the following are expected to impact higher education:
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)
 - Gender Issues
 - Critical Race Theory (CRT)
- Jason Hassay, Associate VP for Governmental Relations, is based in Austin and is responsible for monitoring the legislative process and delivering UTSA's message to members of the legislature.
- Mr. Martinez said that bills go through multiple revisions and receive input from various stakeholders such as business leaders and other university system constituents.
- The final version of a bill is often different from its original draft. Bills also go through committee hearings and may be edited until the end of the general session in late May.
- Dr. Zenteno and Dr. Chris Packham recently attended a meeting with UT System authorities, including Chancellor Milliken and Vice-Chancellor for Governmental Relations Stacey Napier, to discuss legislative matters. SYFAC members were informed that data shows that public confidence in universities has been decreasing over the years due to the perception that universities do not have a good return on investment and that the public has very little input in what is being taught.
- Dr. Zenteno said that the Chancellor indicated that more needs to be done to educate the public on the value of universities to society.
- During the SYFAC meeting, Dr. Zenteno learned that legislation may be filed regarding the following issues related to higher education:
 - Tenure
 - Critical Race Theory (CRT)
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
- Dr. Zenteno commented that tenure is a priority for the Lt. Governor of Texas. Although the bill is unlikely to pass, it may lead to discussions such as moving comprehensive post-tenure reviews from six years to five.
- In addition, there are two proposals related to DEI, though it doesn't seem that CRT has the same steam as DEI at this time.
- Mr. Martinez emphasized that the bill process is ongoing, and bills are not finalized until the end of the session in May.
 - He suggested that the strategy for managing bills is to be deliberate in responding.
 - The leadership team and constituents have learned from this process in Texas and other states that there will be an attempt to energize the other side. Therefore, it is important to be thoughtful and deliberate on how and when to respond.



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Leadership Update: Legislative Update

Carlos Martinez, Sr. Vice President for Institutional Strategic Planning, Compliance Risk Management and Office Operations, Chief of Staff

- Mr. Martinez reminded the Faculty Senate that as state employees, they do not surrender their right to free speech and to petition the government. However, there are restrictions:
 - There is a law in place that prohibits the use of state resources to oppose or support any legislative measure. You may not use state resources, such as state time, state office, UTSA email or stationery, to communicate personal views or positions.
 - You may represent personal position as a **private citizen**.
 - Refer to [HOP 4.19 Involvement of the University and University Personnel in Community or Political Affairs](#).
 - Only the President of the University and the UT System Board of Regents may represent the university.



Can more guidance be provided about the legislation that prohibits faculty from advocating for or against legislation?

- *As a state employee, you must comply with current laws regardless of your role. You cannot use your UTSA email or letterhead to advocate for or against legislative measures, even if you are a faculty member or part of a faculty association. However, you can work through other associations to support your position.*

How does this apply to the Senate resolution passed last year by Faculty Senates at other institutions? The resolution expressed support for the principles of academic freedom, the teaching of CRT, and support for gender issues.

- *Though Mr. Martinez had not read the resolution, he said that if it was issued last year, there was no legislation since they were not in session. The law does not prohibit sharing factual information. If a legislator asks about the impact of a measure on teaching or research, it is permissible to provide an answer to that question.*

What is the university's plan if the bills are passed in their current form, and how can we support faculty members who are conducting research in the affected areas?

- *Mr. Martinez stated that it would not be wise to speculate about the bills that have not been filed yet, as his office has not seen any language for them. He mentioned that UTSA recognizes the spectrum of possibilities between nothing and everything, and their goal is to establish an environment that supports the work of faculty members.*

American Association of University Professors Update: **Brian L. Evans, Ph.D., Vice President, Texas AAUP Conference, Engineering Foundation Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin**

- For complete report visit the [Faculty Senate website](#).
- Dr. Evans stressed that when advocating for an issue it is important to state up front that you are speaking for yourself as an individual.
- He stated that academic freedom has roots dating back to the 1500's and 19th century Germany. Principles regarding academic freedom were developed in conjunction with the administration and faculty in 1915 and 1925. The principles evolved over time, ultimately leading to the creation of the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure by the American Association of Colleges.
 - Academic freedom for teachers in teaching, research, and expression
 - Jointly issued by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Association of Colleges & University (AAC&U)
 - UTSA is one of over 900 AAC&U members
 - The statement was adopted in UT System policies (Regents' Rule 31004)
 - Safeguards include tenure, due process, and shared governance
- Dr. Evans discussed the four connected aspects of academic freedom that are relevant to anyone working in a teaching role in higher education, as well as to anyone in a research or post-doctoral scholar role.
- Dr. Evans stated that tenure is a crucial aspect of academic freedom for faculty, but it has been on the decline over the years. Nationally, the rate of tenure has decreased by 26%, while the rate of tenure-track has decreased by 10%.
 - Tenure provides a commitment to continued scholarship and trajectory to larger projects and curriculum development, which may take 6-10 years to fully realize.
 - In addition, tenure also offers protection of rights, freedom and economic security.
- The 1966 Statement on the Government of Colleges and Universities was jointly formulated by AAUP, ACE and AGB.
 - UTSA is a member of the American Council on Education (ACE).
 - The UT System is a member of the Association of Governing Boards of University and Colleges (AGB).
 - The statement outlines the roles of the Faculty, President, and Governing Board in university governance.
- The AAUP, ACE and AGB. collaborated to establish guiding principles for governance. For example, faculty members have primary authority over the curriculum. Currently, approximately 1400 universities have embraced these principles of mutual understanding.
- Dr. Evans stated that the President bears the legal responsibility to represent the university, but there is shared governance with faculty, students and staff.
- Dr. Evans stated that he participated in the Orange and Maroon Legislative Day on February 15, 2023. They had a set of talking points. This is a group of former students at UT Austin and Texas A&M as well as faculty and staff at both institutions to advocate at the Texas Legislature. Their topics included affordability for students; research support; semiconductor R&D and manufacturing; improve campus mental health resources and staff; and Fully fund Texas Hazlewood Act mandates for Veteran dependents. Both Chancellors and Presidents were present.



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American Association of University Professors Update: Brian L. Evans, Ph.D., Vice President, Texas AAUP Conference, Engineering Foundation Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin

- Texas AAUP Advocacy organizes faculty:
 - Academic Freedom;
 - Tenure; and
 - Shared Governance
- They also affiliated in August with the American Federation of Teachers, which has incredible resources.



Is there an AAUP Chapter at UTSA?

At this time, no, UTSA does not have a chapter.

What is the AAUP's position, in your view, regarding the pending bills?

The Texas AAUP Conference is able to express its position on bills; however, the organization has not crafted any language to date on any particular bill. We follow the Principles on academic freedom and tenure and shared governance; we would like to see the current strength in Texas law to support us to continue. There are a lot of bills that have not been filed yet (SB 15-19 inclusive). AAUP has a higher education bill tracker and will follow those bills using that system and will provide an analysis and impact statement of the bill.

Mr. Martinez stated that UTSA's Capitol Day is Wed., February 22, 2023. President Eighmy, alumni, students and other leadership will be walking the halls and meeting with legislators and highlighting the work we do. It will be similar to the Orange and Maroon Day.



UTSA Day at the Capitol



UTSA representatives Dr. Rene Zenteno and Dr. Chris Packham attended the January FAC meeting in Austin.

Secretary of the General Faculty Report: Chris Packham, Chair

- Dr. Packham stated that Dr. Zenteno had covered the Faculty Advisory Committee meeting regarding the legislative update but added that the State of Texas has a positive budget outlook that may have a positive impact on higher education budgets.

University Curriculum Committee: Andy Lloyd, Chair

- **Early Childhood Education Certificate**
 - The University Curriculum Committee had reviewed the Early Childhood Education Certificate proposal. The committee unanimously approved the proposal.
 - The program focuses on teaching pre-kindergarten through 6th grade.
 - Dr. Zenteno stated that under Roberts' Rules of Order, the Faculty Senate may adopt the program without voting. If there are any objections to the proposal, then the Senate would need to vote; however, if there are no objections to the proposal, the Senate can adopt the proposal. With no further discussion or objections to the proposal, the Faculty Senate approved the Early Childhood Education Certificate by general consent.

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

- **Merit Pay**
 - The AFEM Committee discussed merit pay and will request more transparency regarding its allocation.
 - Dr. Sinanan also mentioned that Dr. Zenteno is working on their request with the Deans, as merit pay is distributed on a college-by-college basis.
 - The committee also asked about plans for merit pay in the future, to see if they are comparable to other R1 institutions' salaries across the country and in Texas.
 - The AFEM committee is seeking clarification on the rules regarding FTT titles and the process for FTT promotion guidelines.
- **Texas House Bill 1006**
 - Dr. Sinanan reminded the Faculty Senate about the resolution passed last year by a two-thirds majority of the Senate pertaining to academic freedom, DEI, and issues currently in HB 1006.
 - The AFEM Committee is asking that the Senate explore ways to fulfill the resolution to support academic freedom and protect specific areas that may be affected by future legislation.



Budget Committee Report: **Kirsten Gardner, Chair**

- The Budget Committee submitted a question to Academic Affairs about the effectiveness of the IRM model in supporting faculty. The provost responded by organizing a meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Academic Deans to discuss this question. At the meeting, each Dean shared how they are using the IRM model to support faculty.
- The responses of the FS Executive Committee and Budget Committee were transparent and clear. Both committees are utilizing the model and have significant flexibility. Dr. Gardner highlighted some trends with incentivized management funds:
 - Used for FTT salary increases
 - Used for faculty retention or to address compression
 - Used to launch new initiatives within their respective colleges
- The Budget Committee is currently addressing a request from the Deans to provide a written summary every semester regarding the allocation of funds. This is in line with a recent meeting held between the FS Executive and Budget Committees.
- The Budget Committee is currently addressing two issues that will be presented to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee:
 - A request for transparency on IRM
 - An increase in salary adjustments.
- Regarding the use of IRM formulas in determining the revenue generated by each department, Dr. Gardner explained that the final decision rests with the Dean.
- The committee expressed concern about faculty members who might feel a lack of communication with their department chair, especially if there has been a recent turnover in the position.
 - The Budget Committee requested that the Deans maintain the same level of transparency with their faculty as they did with the Budget Committee, ensuring clear communication at regular intervals throughout the semester.

Research Committee: **Alexis Godet, Chair**

- The Research Committee met with Interim VPREDKE, Jaclyn Shaw, Jennifer Silver, Veronica Stoller, and Mickey Stevenson. They shared that there has been some progress in handling the post-award backlog in the Grants & Contracts Financial Services (GCFS) office.
- There has been an improvement in the time it takes to set up grants. If anyone is still experiencing delays, inform Dr. Godet or your Senator; they will forward the information to Jennifer Silver.
- There is a pilot program in HCaP that aims to define the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff, with the goal of enhancing communication between the groups and their respective offices.
- The Research Committee recalled that Jaclyn Shaw and her team tried a pilot program in the College of Sciences. The program involved having post-award staff embedded within the COS building to help faculty. While the program was implemented, it seems that it was not utilized widely by faculty.
- To ensure that faculty are aware of the services offered, it was suggested that the VPREDKE newsletter or other forms of communication be utilized.

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Research Committee: Alexis Godet, Chair

- Dr. Godet reported that the first phase of clean-up efforts in Huron should be finished by March, according to Jaclyn Shaw.
 - The second phase of process automation is tentatively slated to begin in March as well.
- The committee sought an update on the current status of NRUF and was informed that UTSA is in good standing with the research expenditure criteria for this submission.
 - The committee is positive about receiving the results in late spring or summer.
- The Research Committee and VPREDKE, Jaclyn Shaw, will hold monthly meetings with the next scheduled date of March 20, 2023.
- Mickey Stevenson requested the involvement of three Faculty Senators from the Research Committee in research ethics training, which is required following recent changes in Federal regulations.
- Dr. Godet mentioned that on-campus interviews for the VPREDKE position are currently taking place. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has been invited to attend these meetings, and faculty members have had the opportunity to attend the open forums.

New Business

- There was a discussion about the use of the parking garages for Fiesta. One Senator mentioned that her department hosts a program each semester where participants purchase parking passes to benefit the university and the community.
 - The program coincides with Fiesta in April, when the parking lots and garages are unavailable.
 - Mary Dixson suggested contacting Clay Haverland, Assistant Vice President for Campus Services, as Parking reports to him.
 - Dr. Zenteno offered to share the concern with the Provost as well.
- There was also discussion regarding F&A, as this is the time the funds are returned to the departments. The rate of F&A that is being returned to Centers and Institutes is being significantly decreased and will continue to decrease in the coming years.
 - Inquiry was encouraged as to whether other colleagues or colleges have noticed a similar decrease or understand the rationale behind it.
 - Additional inquiry was directed to REDKE and the college Dean where question was raised.



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New Business

- The Faculty Senate brought up the topic of the university's request for faculty and instructors to switch to remote learning for short-term cancellations due to weather-related or emergency situations.
 - There are concerns about the method of communication for the changes, particularly the use of social media as a primary source instead of email, which has resulted in faculty members being unaware of the changes.
 - The Senator referred to [HOP 9.15](#), which allows for the suspension of normal operations and classes during severe weather conditions or emergencies.
 - Dr. Zenteno discussed this issue during his meeting with the Department Chair's Council.
 - He will work with the FS Executive Committee on this matter.
 - The next Faculty Senate meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 9, 2023, in a hybrid format (via Zoom and in person at the Assembly Room, JPL 4.04.22)



2022-2023 FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS

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 Sinanan**, 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