

February / March 2018

# Faculty Voice

The Newsletter of the UTSA Faculty Senate

## ¥ Senate Highlights:

Senate listens to the Student Government Association and agrees to further address inconsistencies raised in the plus/minus grading system for undergraduates. See below under New Business for details.

Senate approves a proposal for a Concentration in Pre-Medical Sciences. See below under Curriculum Committee for details.



## Chair's Report



### Dr. Emily Bonner

The February meeting of the Faculty Senate was held on February 22, 2018, at 3:30 p.m.

## Secretary of the General Faculty



### Dr. Joshua Thurow

At the February meeting, Dr. Thurow gave an update on what the legislature funded in the last

in the Assembly Room (JPL 4.04.22) with Dr. Emily Bonner, Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding. At this meeting, Dr. Bonner said that the committee working on the UTSA workload policy met to look at the current policy and proposed revisions. Once the new version is completed it will go out for stakeholder review. Dr. Bonner said that a few main topics were discussed at the most recent SYSFAC meeting: The search for a new Chancellor is underway. The search committee is comprised of two former and two current Regents who have asked for feedback from FAC to promote shared governance. Other topics discussed were physician burnout and how that principle can apply to academic institutions, a paid family leave policy being worked on by a FAC subcommittee, and NTT faculty initiatives. More information on these topics is forthcoming. Dr. Bonner also said that the university's budget steering committee is looking at choosing a budget model soon and will be asking for feedback at upcoming town halls. She also said that a gender equity study is underway, which was initiated by UT System.

The March meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2017-2018 academic year was held March 22, 2018, at 3:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room (JPL 4.04.22) with Dr. Emily Bonner, Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding. At this meeting, Dr. Bonner said that there are currently three HOP policies undergoing revision/creation. The first HOP policy deals with Emeritus status. Changes to the policy were presented last fall.

biennium. \$20.5 billion was used to fund higher education, which was a \$235 million increase over the FY 16-17 biennium and was primarily used to pay for increases for TRB debt service and the higher education assistance fund. Other funds went to state mental health hospitals and the Governor's University Research Initiative. There were no changes to the higher education budget structure, except that special items received significant reductions in funding and were renamed "non-formula support funding" items. Within the UT System, academic institutions received a \$1.5 billion total appropriation (a \$47.1 million decrease over FY 16-17). Health-related institutions received a \$1.8 billion total appropriation (a \$6.7 million decrease over FY 16-17). In addition, HRI formula funding was provided for the new medical schools at UT Austin and UTRGV. The higher education issues addressed by the legislature were reporting of campus sexual misconduct, community colleges now able to issue baccalaureate degrees, greater information on open source textbooks, transparency on student loan debt, and the expansion of telemedicine and telehealth. Other items that the legislature did not accomplish were: reforming Hazlewood, re-regulating tuition, repealing in-state tuition for undocumented students, increasing THECB authority, eliminating tuition set-asides, changing campus carry, and altering the top 10% law. The next legislative session will convene on January 8, 2019. For FY 20-21, the state is projecting an estimated \$6-8 billion deficit to start. UT System priorities are expected to be institution priorities, protecting PUF/AUF, obtaining adequate and rational funding, protecting free speech on campus, protection the tuition benefit for

Revisions have since been made to change the requirement that faculty members must have been rated as "exceeds expectations" in their last five evaluations. The new requirements have been changed to "exceeds expectations" at least twice and no rating below "meets expectations." Any feedback can be sent to Diane Walz (HOP committee chair). The second HOP policy deals with NTT faculty. Revisions are being made that would allow NTT faculty to initiate a promotion review, and to create a more university-wide system overall for promoting NTT faculty. The third HOP policy deals with workload. This new policy is currently being developed. Dr. Bonner also reminded the Senate that elections for Faculty Senate Chair and Secretary of the General Faculty will be conducted in April. Faculty Senate committee elections will take place in May.

DREAMers, maintaining the Regents' tuition-setting authority, and revisiting campus sexual misconduct legislation. They will also look to re-establish the value of higher education especially among Republicans, whose views regarding the impact of higher education have diminished (according to a recent study).

Also at the February meeting, Dr. Thurow pointed out a guideline on the financial affairs website regarding relocation expense reimbursement; specifically, the amount of time that a new employee must work to be eligible to receive a relocation reimbursement. Section C: Requirements 1.a. "Time Test: The employee must be hired for a full-time position (100% appointment - 40 hours per week) for a minimum of 39 weeks (9.75 months) during the first 12 months of employment." Dr. Thurow said that Dr. Zapata's office is looking into this matter as it relates to faculty on a 9-month contract.

At the March meeting, Dr. Thurow said that the workload policy draft from the committee is almost complete. The Senate will have an opportunity to provide feedback before the policy moves through the formal HOP review process. The policy aims to be broad, fitting within UT System guidelines and allowing deans and department chairs the latitude for designing

a policy that will work for their unique disciplines. A supplemental guidance document is expected to be created as well. Dr. Thurow also gave an update on the recent diversity survey results. In comparison with the national average, common purpose rated higher at UTSA and equity of reward/trust rated lower at UTSA. The full survey results can be found [here](#).

## Curriculum Committee



### Dr. Sakiko Oyama


At the December meeting the Curriculum Committee reviewed a proposal for the following 8 core curriculum courses: ARC 2413 History of Architecture: Pre-history to the Middle Ages, ENG 2xx Literature and Film, ENG 2xx3 Science, Technology, and Society, PHI 2013 Basic Philosophical Problems, MUS 2653 History of Recorded Music, MUS 2653 Music in Culture, MAT 1053 Mathematics for Business, MAT 1133 Calculus for Business. A full report detailing each proposal can be accessed online. The committee recommended that all proposals be approved. The senate voted to unanimously approve all 8 proposals.

## New Business



### New Business

At the February Meeting, Dr. Shipley, Vice Provost and Dean, University College, asked the Senate if they were willing to look at the possibility of changing the academic calendar in order to calculate the semester in accordance with Carnegie units (by contact hours). This could change the calendar from 17 weeks (fall and spring) to 16 weeks (fall and spring), similar to many other Texas schools. Benefits would include (1) student success & give colleges/offices time to review final grades and effect on student placement into next semester, (2) faculty & more preparation time between semesters, (3) financial savings & student workers would be paid 16 weeks (versus 17)



and those saved resources could be put to other academic success initiatives, (4) faculty/staff/student Benefits & the new schedule would better align with the public school systems start date in the fall. Dr. Shipley also said that no concrete decisions have been made yet regarding the ways in which to implement this new schedule, but that details would be worked out soon. The Senate agreed overall in support of this new schedule.

At the March meeting, representatives from the Student Government Association (SGA) presented GA112: "The Plus/Minus Alternative Proposals and Reform Act of 2018." These representatives were Marcus Thomas, Jerry Sharp, Ariana Pulido, and Alex Sexton. The previously presented GA111 expressed students' disapproval of the current implementation of the plus/minus system. GA112 includes various proposals on how the current system could be reformed to be more consistent in its implementation. This discussion was only focused on the plus/minus system at the undergraduate level. SGA said that students have expressed their concern regarding inequities of the current system, even among different sections of the same course. SGA has repealed all other previous reforms regarding this topic and plan to amend GA111 to emphasize that the plus/minus system should be re-evaluated and not necessarily eliminated, as previously stated. After presenting their findings and explaining possible options for reform, a motion was made by the Senate to

further address inconsistencies raised in the plus/minus system. The Senate unanimously voted to approve the motion.

The Senate is responsible for gathering stakeholder feedback related to HOP Policies. Be on the lookout for emails from your department Senator seeking feedback on these policies. This is one way that faculty provide important feedback for policy, so please send comments as indicated. Without your comments, your Senator cannot represent your voice.

Much of the content of this newsletter was taken directly from the minutes of Faculty Senate meetings. Many thanks to Sarah Soulek for preparing the minutes.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER?

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