

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Of March 9, 2023**

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2022-2023 academic year was held March 9, 2023 at 3:30 p.m. in the Faculty Center Assembly Room, JPL 4.04.22 and via Zoom (online meeting) with Dr. René Zenteno, Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding.

I. Call to order and taking of attendance.

Present: René Zenteno, Chris Packham, Sonya Aleman, Kirsten Gardner, Alex Godet, Andrew Lloyd, Kerry Sinanan, Valerie Sponsel, Chad Mahood, Victor Villarreal, John Alexander, David Beheshti, Kiran Bhaganagar, Lorenzo Brancaleon, Whitney Chappell, Xun Chen, Candace Christensen, Sidury Christiansen, Neil Debbage, Mary Dixson, Ginny Garcia, Dmitry Gokhman, Zaid Haddad, Marcus Hamilton, Ying Huang, Drew Johnson, Michael Karcher, Charles Liu, Dennis Lopez, Justin Marmolejo, George Perry, Jeff Prevost, John Quarles, Rica Ramirez, Lauren Riojas Fitzpatrick, Devon Romero, Gabriela Romero Uribe, Humberto Saenz, Arturo Schultz, Maho Sonmez, Marie Tillyer, Zijun Wang, David Weber, and Tianou Zhang

Absent: Hector Aguilar, August (Gus) Allo, Curtis Brewer (excused), James Chambers, Victor DeOliveira, Kim Kline, Brian Laub, Huy Le, Ashwin Malshe (excused) Mary McNaughton-Cassill, Sue Ann Pemberton, Branco Ponomariov, Kirk Schanze and Zenong Yin (excused)

Guests: Jeffrey Howard (for Zenong Yin), Jihye Jung (for Ashwin Malshe), Heather Shipley, Melissa Vito, Claudia Arcolin, Marcela Ramirez, Jonathan Gutierrez, Shanda Hayden, Gregg Michel, JoAnne Browning, Mamie Frank, Ximena Barbagelatta Grau, Angela Griffith, and Debbie Howard Rappaport

Total members present: 44 Total members absent: 14 Total substitutes: 2

II. Consent Agenda

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

III. Reports

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

Dr. Zenteno thanked Dr. Vito and Dr. Arcolin for attending the Faculty Senate meeting to discuss Chat GPT and Generative AI. He also thanked Ms. Ramirez and Mr. Gutierrez for attending to address questions regarding the Canvas project. (***PowerPoint presentation uploaded to Faculty Senate SharePoint site and [website](#)***)

- Dr. Vito and Dr. Arcolin discussed ChatGPT, which is an AI powered conversational agent and is able to answer prompts and questions based upon user input. Since this topic/tool is changing frequently, Dr. Vito mentioned Academic Innovation and Academic Affairs is working with faculty to provide information and resources such as:
 - Pulling together experts internally and externally to conduct seminars on the subject. The seminars are usually recorded, so if you are unable to attend you can access the recordings from their [webpage](#). (next workshop scheduled for April 16, 2023 on Miscalculation of AI and presented by Cindy Roberts and Matthew Schurmann from the Department of Mathematics);
 - Working with faculty who are using ChatGPT in their coursework in order to gain their expertise and experiences to inform and create best practices; and
 - Surveyed faculty back in January to collect perspectives about ChatGPT/generative AI. From that survey Academic Innovation created a dedicated [webpage](#) with resources on generative AI;
- Dr. Arcolin mentioned there is a Generative AI Peer Learning Network to continually review ChatGPT/Generative AI topics and have identified five major areas to explore the impact of artificial intelligence:
 - Creativity
 - Digital/Data literacy
 - Trust/Accuracy
 - Equity/Bias
 - Classroom to Career
- Dr. Arcolin asked if anyone was interested in joining the Generative AI Peer Learning Network to please contact Dr. Zenteno. The group meets monthly. The group appreciates any feedback.
- Dr. Vito added this area is evolving quickly and their office is updating resources as fast as they are able so faculty and students stay up-to-date on the topic. Dr. Vito also asked if any of the Faculty Senators know of other renowned experts in the field of Generative AI to pass their information onto their staff.

Q&A Session with Dr. Vito and Dr. Arcolin on ChatGPT

Question – AI industry has little or no regulation. Will ChatGPT be available for free to UTSA students?

Answer – Right now there is a free version that is available to everyone. We have not had any conversations on purchasing a subscription for the university.

Question – As we think about integrating ChatGPT as a teaching tool and also how students utilize it in their work. How will we regulate it? Can we regulate it?

Answer – You raise a good point. Our focus has been on creating opportunities for faculty to look at how to incorporate it into their courses. There are a number of listservs which

focus on educational technology and online learning. Among the conversations are questions as to whether policies have been created at universities on ChatGPT- most schools are trying to determine how to develop policies, but also how to effectively enhance the learning experience.

Question – Are you considering the various disciplines within each college as each college is different and will have different needs?

Answer – You are correct. We briefed Academic Council earlier in the year and may need to brief them again. Good idea to have colleges convene groups and come up with suggestions that would meet the needs of the various disciplines in their colleges.

Question – With all of the various AI tools in the marketplace, are you exploring other AI tools that can be integrated into the courses, such as Grammarly?

Answer – Because there are so many AI tools, and many have a specific focus, such as video-focus, we have not had an opportunity to explore all of them. However, our team will be exploring other options as it will be important to adopt the correct tools to provide a rich teaching and learning experience.

- Jonathan Gutierrez, Associate Director for Digital Learning and project leader for the transition from Blackboard to Canvas provided the following update:
 - Faculty will have access to Canvas on Tuesday, March 21st;
 - Academic Innovation will offer walk-in at the Academic Innovations Center in the MS Building on the 1604 campus. Also providing a booking link for 1:1 consultation with their team members;
 - Already working with Faculty Champions to schedule departmental meetings; and
 - Offer resources within Canvas such as a self-paced course and other online resources.
- Once access begins, their priority will be to begin bringing courses over from Blackboard from past semesters into Canvas:
 - Fall 2022
 - Fall 2021
 - Timeline is end of March or early April to move courses into Canvas
 - One update on March 20th which will have all of the hours, links, and request forms. It will also provide an FAQ for faculty about Canvas access, how to get started, timeline and how to contact a member of their team.

Q&A Session on Canvas

Question – Will Canvas be moving courses from Blackboard or will faculty be moving courses?

Answer – Academic Innovation will be moving all courses from Spring 2021 through Summer 2023 to Canvas. We are starting with Fall 2022 and Fall 2021 first as faculty will want to start updating their Fall 2023 courses. From there, through the summer, we will add the additional courses.

Question – Presumably, there is a sequence/schedule to the movement of the courses from Blackboard to Canvas?

Answer – Yes, the schedule will be posted in the FAQ. We have prioritized which semesters will be moved the quickest—it’s Fall 2022 and then Fall 2021. Then Spring 2022, Spring 2021, Spring 2023 to make sure you have the most up-to-date content. Summer semesters will be added later.

Question – Will any classes prior to Fall 2021 be added to Canvas? Will they be lost or will we have read-only access to Blackboard?

Answer – We will have a form that you can request a course prior to Spring 2021. The Academic Innovation team will move the requested content from Blackboard to Canvas. We will have access to Blackboard until August 31, 2023. The contract expires on September 1, 2023. We have sufficient time to move content over from Blackboard to Canvas.

Question – Will Panopto remain the program for recording video lectures?

Answer – Yes, Panopto will remain the repository for video lectures. Any videos or content will remain and fully integrate with Canvas as it does now with Blackboard.

Dr. Zenteno thanked Ms. Shanda Hayden and Dr. Gregg Michel for attending the Faculty Senate meeting to update the Faculty Senate on Blackboard Observer. Ms. Hayden and Dr. Michel briefly introduced themselves to the Senate. (***Handout uploaded to Faculty Senate SharePoint site and [website](#)***)

- Ms. Hayden collaborated with Dr. Michel, the faculty representative to Athletics, last fall to discuss the feature “Blackboard Observer.” They presented it to the Intercollegiate Athletic Council and then to the subcommittee-Academic Integrity Committee. With their support submitted a proposal to the Provost’s Office which was approved.
- Blackboard Observer is a special type of user account that has view-only access to content.
 - Partnering with Academic Innovation to provide a PowerPoint slide which will accompany a letter from Provost Espy and Vice Provost Wyatt to educate faculty on Blackboard Observer;
 - Read-only access to grades; not course content;
 - All student athletes sign a FERPA release; enables their office to communicate with faculty to view grades and provide academic progress to coaches and staff within their department;
 - Athletics used a platform called Grades First which was discontinued in Summer 2021. Ms. Hayden stated their office does have access to Banner and grades. Blackboard Observer allows their office to obtain information quicker and then if the student athlete needs assistance they can direct them to that assistance, as necessary;
 - Ms. Hayden mentioned that when the student-athlete meets with their academic counselor they can focus on how to support that student. They already partner with Office of Student Success, utilize advisors, tutoring, student success coaches and faculty;
 - Does not view any other student information; only students with the Athletics coding;
 - Grades view only; no other communication in Blackboard, assignments or submitted work by students;

- Only asking for access to Grades, Syllabi and Course Calendar;
- Canvas has a similar feature and Academic Innovation is ensuring they build out that availability;
- Dr. Michel added this is real-time monitoring of our student-athletes which allows for more efficient and timely academic intervention, as needed;
- Also, faculty will have the option to opt-out of Blackboard Observer. The goal is to provide support to student-athletes who need it. There is a lot of support provided to our students, this is an additional layer of support as there are eligibility implications if a student-athlete is under-performing academically. Once faculty learned about Blackboard Observer, only a handful utilized the “opt-out” feature as they saw the benefits; and
- In Blackboard, on the faculty side, you would not see “observer” you would see the name of the person and there are only 5, soon to be 6, full time staff members from Athletics that are authorized to have this access.

Q&A Session with Ms. Hayden and Dr. Michel on Blackboard Observer

Question – In the past faculty could assign someone as a TA to monitor grades. Does Canvas have that same feature/role?

Answer – It should and we’re expecting Canvas to have a similar feature. Also, Athletics staff are not enrolled in the courses similar as a TA. This is view-only.

Question – You mentioned there was an option for faculty to opt out. How would they report grades?

Answer – The Athletics staff would pull grades from Banner. We receive the change of grade reports, instructor drop records, etc. We also rely on faculty utilizing the platform, be it Blackboard or soon Canvas. We appreciate the support of faculty utilizing the platform and those partnerships. Our goal is for our students to graduate.

Question – Do you have any data to share on how effective the intervention is for student athletes?

Answer – Currently, there is not a lot of data tracking separately for student athletes right now. They are part of the data for the general campus. Our graduation success rate is very high among our student athletes—it’s higher than campus and higher than the national average. You can see the support is working through graduation rates and remaining eligible to play in their respective sport.

Question – Are the student athletes supportive of using Blackboard Observer, given the other types of support already in place?

Answer – Yes, they are. Many of the student athletes ask the staff to log into Blackboard to check their grades for them--the staff does not access their grades without the student present. They have been very open with the Athletics staff. The student athletes recognize the benefits of the support.

Question – Have we already started using Blackboard Observer? If not, when are we planning to begin?

Answer – It’s already built into the system. Many high schools use the feature. However, UTSA has not accessed yet and will not until faculty have been educated and notified.

A. Chair's Report – René Zenteno

Dr. Zenteno attended the Texas Council of Faculty Senate in Austin on February 24-25, 2023, which is separate from the UT System Faculty Advisory Council. This meeting brings representatives from Senates from across the State of Texas.

- AAUP & Texas Association of College Teachers attended the meeting and discussed similar concerns we have discussed, such as DEI, CRT and tenure.
- The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Commissioner, Harrison Keller, was the keynote speaker and provided a good perspective on higher education; he understands the importance of defending tenure and academic freedom. Dr. Zenteno stated that in Dr. Keller's address he stated he believes there is a good chance higher education will receive an increase in funding this legislative year.

Dr. Zenteno provided an update from the UTSA University Leadership Council:

- Clarified UT System's position regarding the suspension of new DEI policies at academic and health institutions. President Eighmy stated nothing has been requested of UTSA. At this point, UTSA is not collecting any policies about DEI. Nothing has changed in the manner in which we operate at UTSA.
- March 10, 2023 is the deadline for filing bills with the legislature.
- Strategic Plan Refresh Process- the survey closed on February 24th and they presented a summary of the results at ULC. More conversations will be occurring within the colleges regarding the results of the survey. Please participate in the listening sessions.
- Senate meetings with respective Deans
 - IRM – budget transparency – the Deans will provide information to the faculty in their respective colleges;
 - Compression exercises – we will be more informed about the process that will occur during the summer. Each dean conducts this process differently;
 - COVID statements in annual evaluations – seems there is a varied use of the statements, if they are used at all;
 - FTTs – will be addressed in a later report

Question – Texas A&M System sent the following questions to their Deans and 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 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.*

Asking for confirmation that UTSA has not been given similar directives.

Answer – Dr. Zenteno stated that, to his knowledge, as of last week, UTSA has not been asked to provide this information.

Dr. Zenteno stated that a Vice Chair-Elect needs to be elected. This position would then become the Chair of the Senate the following year (2024). If anyone is interested in the position to please let him know. Also, in May the Faculty Senate will need to elect a Secretary and Parliamentarian and possibly the Secretary of General Faculty. Dr. Zenteno stated that he can be re-elected for another term, but he feels that it's important the Senate elects a Vice Chair.

B. Secretary of the General Faculty – Chris Packham

Dr. Packham mentioned he and Dr. Zenteno will be attending the final UT System Faculty Advisory Council meeting for the year which will be held in Austin on April 27-28, 2023. In addition, he attended the UTSA Day at the Capitol, which he said went very well and was a positive event. One elected official stated they were impressed by the enthusiasm by the faculty who attended the event.

C. University Curriculum Committee – no report

D. Graduate Council Chair – Victor Villarreal

Dr. Villarreal stated the Graduate Council has approved the 2023-2025 Graduate Catalog. It will be available for the Faculty Senate to review and approve at the April meeting. In addition, Dr. Zaid Haddad attended the Graduate Council to present issues related to FTT faculty. Specifically, definitions related to FTT and their roles which are currently in the Graduate Council Bylaws regarding whether FTT can serve as sole chairs of master thesis. The Graduate Council will discuss the matter further at the next Graduate Council Executive Committee meeting and consider revising the language and then continue the discussion with the Graduate Council members. Based on those conversations, Dr. Villarreal will have more to share with the Faculty Senate. Dr. Zenteno thanked Dr. Haddad for his presentation at the Graduate Council.

E. Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee– Kerry Sinanan

Dr. Sinanan stated the AFEM Committee has asked for more clarity and transparency regarding FTT promotion and guidelines. The Committee is also recommending the Research Committee considers the consequence of increasing the issue of FTTs to teaching faculty and if it has any effect on R1 status? One other topic the committee has at this time surrounds academic freedom and DEIJ being suspended. Dr. Sinanan stated it seems a review is being conducted at other universities who have been given more directives than UTSA at this time. The AFEM committee is asking:

- UTSA administration for clarity regarding the recent UT Board of Regents' halt on review of DEIJ.
- What is the scope of this directive?
- How does it impact current practice especially considering follow-up actions at Texas A&M to end diversity of hiring as they made a clear statement they would end this practice?
- And also, University of Houston's pledge to end DEIJ. In short, does the university continue to support those of us undertaking DEIJ including ongoing hiring practices.

The AFEM Committee is asking all Faculty Senators to gather from all faculty a neutral list of current or future pedagogical, research, administrative activities related to DEIJ. Please forward to AFEM Committee representative. The AFEM committee would like to assess research activities that have a DEIJ component and how it might be affected. For example, UTSA is seeking renewal of its Carnegie Mellon Classification Community Engagement for 2026. How is this current move affecting that renewal?

Dr. Zenteno emphasized, to his knowledge, nothing has changed at UTSA. If he hears something different, he will pass that along.

Budget Committee – Kirsten Gardner

Dr. Gardner has been working on two items, discussing internally with the Budget Committee and, externally with Academic Affairs is 1) compensation and 2) IRM model. The Budget Committee would like to synthesize the conversations and outcomes in two brief memos to Academic Affairs, which has been approved by the Budget Committee and also the Faculty Senate Executive Committee- although no official vote was taken by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

First memo – Budget Committee Proposal #1 would read:

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 base pay raise associated with promotion in FTT rank at a commensurate rate

Dr. Gardner mentioned that several Senators have been invited to join an Academic Affairs committee that will be exploring this topic and the first meeting is upcoming and we would like to present this memo as support for this initiative.

Dr. Zenteno has the Faculty Senate if anyone had any questions.

Question – What is the current weight of base pay raises for Assistant to Associate and Associate to full? Is it linked to our current salaries?

Answer – Assistant to Associate if \$5,000 and Associate to Full is \$7,000. No, it's not.

Question – Why not link it to a percentage?

Answer – UT System schools use a flat rate, not a percentage. However, to be clear, the Budget Committee did not conduct an extensive search. The Budget Committee created an Excel spreadsheet, contacted colleagues we knew at other UT System schools and determined most used a flat rate—UTSA is at the low end of the scale for promotion raises. Also, percentages could create compression and pay disparity issues. This request felt fair and reasonable.

Dr. Gardner confirmed the Provost requested at the September meeting for the Faculty Senate to gather data on make a recommendation on promotion and tenure pay raises. The Budget Committee spent about 6-8 weeks researching the data primarily within the UT System.

Question – Are we comparing ourselves only with other R1 institutions?

Answer – No, we compared ourselves to other institutions that are not R1 and UTSA is still on the low end for promotion raises.

There being no further questions, a motion was made by Alex Godet for the Budget Committee to write a memo which is supported by the entire Faculty Senate to the Provost summarizing the terms listed above. The motion was seconded by Rica Ramirez. The vote was conducted using Chat in Zoom and by a show of hands by those attending in person.

The Faculty Senate vote was as follows:

Approve: 30; Disapprove: 0; Abstain: 0

Second memo from the Budget Committee would read:

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 incentivized resource model has funded College Programs, Faculty, Student Success and additional College goals.

The Budget Committee purposefully left the method of delivery vague as some Deans communicate via a newsletter, others via a town hall setting.

A motion was made by Alex Godet for the Budget Committee to write a memo, which is supported by the entire Faculty Senate, to the Provost requesting routine updates from the College Dean regarding the IRM process. The motion was seconded by Rica Ramirez.

Question – Are the updates provided to the college only or to the Faculty Senate?

Answer – The updates can be share with the Faculty Senate as well as each college.

Dr. Gardner clarified the goal was for all faculty in each college would receive an update from their Dean whether it be through a newsletter or townhall setting. She stated that she could modify the proposal to state “routine updates to all faculty once per semester.” The current language states “the Faculty Senate Budget Committee requests routine updates....” She further stated the goal was not to over complicate the request, but to replicate a fruitful dialogue that was provided to the Budget Committee and felt should be available to all faculty in each of the colleges.

Dr. Zenteno and Dr. Gardner decided to table the motion at this time in order to meet with the Provost and Dr. Shipley to discuss the topic, modify the language, and will bring forth the matter at the next meeting.

F. HOP Committee – no report

G. Research Committee – Alexis Godet

Dr. Godet met with Mickey Stevenson to discuss upcoming changes to training regarding responsible and ethical conduct of research. Brainstorm on efficient way to train students on UTSA.

IV. **Unfinished Business – None**

V. **New Business:**

Due to the lateness of the day and the importance of the FTT Taskforce topic, Dr. Zenteno asked Valerie Sponsel if we could move her report to the April meeting so that the Faculty Senate could provide her with sufficient time for the report and discussion. She agreed to the request.

VI. **Adjournment:**

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alex Godet, seconded by Andy Lloyd and the meeting concluded at 5:01 PM