

SENATE HIGHLIGHTS

UTSA Faculty Senate Newsletter



2023-2024 OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Rene Zenteno: Chair

Alexis Godet: Vice Chair-Chair Elect

Chris Packham: Secretary of the General Faculty

Victor Villarreal: Graduate Council

Valerie Sponsel: ADTS Representative

Mike Baumann: Parliamentarian

Kirsten Gardner: Secretary

Ginny Garcia-Alexander: Academic Freedom, Evaluation & Merit (AFEM)

Mary Dixon: Budget Committee

Sonya Aleman: HOP Committee

George Perry: Research Committee

Andrew Lloyd: Curriculum Committee



Consent Agenda - APPROVED

- Approval of Minutes – January 18, 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting
- Graduate Council item – approved at the February 6, 2024 meeting
 - Accelerated Master of Arts in Economics
 - Accelerated Master of Science in Data Analytics
 - Accelerated Master of Science in Statistics and Data Science
 - PhD in Physics – adding a concentration in Materials Science

Leadership Update: Academic Affairs Update Heather Shipley, Ph.D., Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

- A new college planning process was announced focusing on artificial intelligence, computing, cybersecurity, and data science. An Advisory Task Force, led by Dr. Jonathon Halbesleben and Dr. Jianwei Niu, has been established. A [website](#) provides details and updates on the initiative, with the first phase due in June 2024.
- The creation of a new college at UTSA will:
 - Support academic excellence and innovation.
 - Focus is on redefining the landscape of AI, computing, cybersecurity, and data science, contemplating their future directions, and integrating them into a cohesive unit.
 - Solidify UTSA and San Antonio's status as the largest information security hub outside of Washington, D.C., with significant contributions from government, non-profit, and private entities
 - Prepare students for technically advanced professions in emerging fields, recognizing that the current landscape will significantly change in the next five to ten years.

FOR FULL FACULTY SENATE MINUTES & REPORT, [CLICK HERE](#)

FOR MORE DETAIL, CONTACT YOUR SENATOR

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.

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Leadership Update: Academic Affairs Update Heather Shipley, Ph.D., *Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (continued)*

- An Advisory Task Force, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, and Faculty Senate members, was assembled to undertake a significant project for the university. Ad hoc members will provide resource assistance, and Dr. Shannon Hueberger has been hired as a consultant to facilitate the process.
- The task force is charged with considering UTSA student interests, regional workforce needs, and multidisciplinary research opportunities in AI, data science, computing, and cybersecurity. They are also tasked with recommending an organizational structure that aligns these fields to enhance student success, career readiness, research, and funding competitiveness.
 - The initiative will commence in spring 2024 with the Planning Advisory Task Force conducting benchmarking and gathering stakeholder input, including through town halls. A website will be set up to collect comments.
- Senators are encouraged to use the process to provide feedback and ask questions. The task force will create models and recommendations by the end of the spring semester. These will be reviewed and discussed with various faculty and leadership groups throughout the summer and fall of 2024, with further input gathered. A model will then be selected for implementation, including naming the new college, with the earliest launch date being fall 2025.
- There was an update on Senate Bill 18 (tenure bill). The committee meeting bi-weekly and planning to recommend policy updates in early March.
- UTSA's National Impact Travel Award has been updated to accommodate rising travel costs. The award is open to tenured/tenure-track and FTT faculty, and college or academic support division staff, aiming to enhance pedagogical skills and promote the university's accomplishments nationally.
 - Full-time FTT faculty – eligible for reimbursements up to \$2,000 with no matching funds required by the sponsoring college or support unit;
 - T/TT faculty – eligible for reimbursements up to \$2,000, but a 4:1 fund matching is required by the unit (the unit provides \$500 for the full \$2,000 AA support);
 - Staff – eligible for reimbursements up to \$1,500, with a 3:1 fund matching by the unit (the unit provides \$500 for the full \$1,500 AA support).
- UTSA Research's Faculty Travel Support program is open and available to active tenured and tenure-track faculty.
 - Maximum funding: Reimbursement up to \$1,000 for travel, provided eligibility criteria are met.
 - Applications must be submitted at least 15 days before travel.
 - Travel must be completed before July 19, 2024.
 - Deadline: June 30, 2024, by 5:00 p.m. CST.
 - To request the application link, email seedgrants@utsa.edu.
- Every spring, the Deans/Faculty Senator meetings are hosted, with scheduling currently underway. Invitations will be sent later this month and in March, and meetings are organized by college.
- Celebrate Teaching Week, hosted by the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars, is scheduled for the week of February 19-23, 2024. The week will be filled with various events and a Showcase, and Senators are encouraged to participate.

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Q.
A.

Is the Planning Advisory Task Force initiative, currently in the planning phase, intended to expand the School of Data Science into a college with tenure/tenure-track lines, and academic programs, including PhD programs? Alternatively, is the School of Data Science expected to be incorporated into this initiative?

- *The vision is to establish a new college, but it is still being determined how the School of Data Science will fit into the new structure. That will be part of the notional model/recommendations. The new college will look like other colleges at UTSA, it will have departments, tenure homes, possibly research centers and institutes, graduate programs, etc.*

Will other departments be incorporated into the new college?

- *The creation of the new college will involve the joining of current departments, similar to the process with the College for Health, Community, and Policy (HCAP) and the Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design (KCEID). The task force is challenged to think creatively and innovatively about the establishment of new departments with possible new structures. The goal is to create a college with a lasting foundation in a field that is constantly evolving.*

Update from the SB 18 Committee: Sonya Aleman, Maria Tillyer and Marcus Hamilton

- The [SB 18](#) Committee plans to present a recommendation to the Faculty Senate at the March meeting, with two subcommittees focusing on the process and the policy language. The aim is to reflect UTSA's values and commitment, providing clarity and transparency for faculty.
- A model policy template was provided by UT System for System campuses to model their policies. The committee is focusing on aligning current UTSA policies with greater clarity. The committee is creating a clarified flow chart for the summary dismissal process.
- It was stated that allegations stemming from the policy would initiate an investigation and need to be supported by evidence. Also, each recorded allegation would require a certain degree of severity, frequency, and intentionality.
 - The committee intends to include specific language into the UTSA policy, which was not present in the provided template, as they believe it ensures protection and fairness for the faculty at UTSA.

Q.
A.

It was suggested that there was an opportunity to revise the policy to align it with UTSA's current policy, needs, and philosophy. How successful has this revision been?

- *The committee is currently drafting a recommendation concerning faculty dismissal and review processes, which will be reviewed by leadership and Legal. The proposal includes potential modifications to address conflicts of interest in faculty review panels. However, it is uncertain whether these recommendations will be adopted in the final approval process.*





Secretary of the General Faculty Chris Packham, *Chair*

- The UT System Faculty Advisory Council held a meeting in Austin, TX on January 25-26, 2024. During this meeting, the Council reviewed and discussed [SB 18](#).
- The research subcommittee is actively discussing the complex issue of reducing or waiving publication costs, a matter that involves several offices at UT System and numerous publishing houses.
- The FAC research committee will receive an update from the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research in April. There's also a plan to link various campuses for a symposium, which requires seed funding.
- The Texas Space Institute continues to be a subject of interest. This initiative, driven by the UT System and the Texas legislature, focuses on areas such as space flight, rocket propulsion, and human exploration of space.

University Curriculum Committee Andy Lloyd, *Chair*

- A report from the University Curriculum Committee was presented, which unanimously approved the proposed degree program:
 - B.A. Linguistics in the Local and Global Community.
- With no further discussion or objection, the new degree program was approved.



Research Committee George Perry, Chair

- The Research Committee talked about the possibility of using F&A funds to cover publication fees with Interim Vice President for Research, Dr. JoAnn Browning, who said she would look into it. The committee also met with Vice Provost and University Librarian, Dean Hendrix, who noted existing arrangements with publishers for fee waivers and discounts, but acknowledged these are insufficient to cover everyone. There are ongoing conversations at the System level about this issue.
- The Research Committee discussed the reorganization of the research office, focusing on the pre- and post-award areas and the implementation of the 5-day rule. This rule was instituted because over 50% of proposals were submitted on the last day, causing review problems.
 - When a faculty member submits and then revises a proposal, the entire proposal, not just the revisions, is reviewed to ensure compliance. Each revision triggers a complete check of the proposal.
- Concierge services are expected to be fully staffed by the end of the spring semester, with hiring and training processes currently underway.



Is the hiring in progress for new staff or replacing previous positions?

- *The Research Office is adding at least six new staff members, as per Dr. Perry, who will seek further clarification.*

Does the research office want to review the budget in advance as one of the primary aspects of grant applications?

- *The requirement for the research office to review only the budget of grants is not confirmed. It is believed that the research office intends to review the entire grant.*

Could there be exceptions to the 5-day rule for grants with deadlines announced only 30 days in advance?

- *An exception to the 5-day rule may need to be made for grants and contracts that have short-term notices. This situation will require further discussion with the VPR office.*

Can you clarify the details of the six positions being filled in relation to the three new senior leadership positions Dr. Browning mentioned at the last Faculty Senate meeting?

- *Six new positions have been introduced in the pre- and post-award areas. These include concierge staff to assist faculty with their grant proposals and senior positions which have a more global focus.*

Is there already someone in the team capable of writing large grants?

- *A committee for a senior level position includes finalists with experience in coordinating faculty for large grants and collaborations with other universities.*

UTSA
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Department of Physics and Astronomy
College of Sciences



New Business:

- Dr. Packham presented on the upcoming solar eclipse to occur on Monday, April 8th. He stressed the necessity of using proper eclipse glasses or viewing equipment. The eclipse can be observed from the UTSA Main Campus around noon, with the most significant visibility near Fredericksburg and Kerrville.
- All UTSA students, faculty, and staff are invited to the university's official [viewing party](#) for the April 8th eclipse, narrated by Dr. Angela Speck, Chair of the Physics and Astronomy Department.
- The 16th Annual COEHD Research Colloquium, themed "The Nexus of the Sciences and Humanities," will be held on March 7, 2024, from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. in the H-E-B Ballroom on the Main Campus.
 - The event is open to all colleges, faculty, and students.
 - Proposals are due by February 27, 2024.



2023-2024 FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS

Alvarez College of Business

- **Dennis Lopez**, Dept. of Accounting
- **David Beheshti**, Dept. of Economics
- **Zijun Wang**, Dept. of Finance
- **Catalina Zarate**, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- **Glenn Dietrich**, 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

- **Armando Trujillo**, 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
- **Jeffrey Prevost**, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- **August (Gus) Allo**, Fixed-Term Track Representative
- **Alex Mejia**, Department of Biomedical and Chemical Engineering
- **Harry Millwater**, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering
- **Jie Huang**, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Construction Management

College of Liberal and Fine Arts

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

College of Sciences

- **Kirk Schanze**, Dept. of Chemistry
- **John Quarles**, Dept. of Computer Science
- **Alexis Godet**, Dept. of Earth and Planetary Sciences
- **Susan Thomas**, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- **Edwin Barea-Rodriguez**, Dept. of Integrative Biology
- **George Perry**, Dept. of Neuroscience, Developmental and Regenerative Biology
- **Dmitry Gokhman**, Dept. of Mathematics
- **James Chambers**, Dept. of Molecular, Microbiology and Immunology
- **Cristian Botez**, Dept. of Physics and Astronomy

College for Health, Community and Policy

- **Marie Tillyer**, Dept. of Criminology & Criminal Justice
- **David Weber**, Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative
- **Branco Ponomariov**, Dept. of Public Administration
- **Ginny Garcia-Alexander**, Dept. of Sociology & Demography
- **Jimi Francis**, Dept. of Kinesiology
- **Jelena Todić**, Dept. of Social Work
- **Mike Baumann**, Dept. of Psychology
- **Jusung Lee**, Dept. of Public Health

University College

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

Ex-Officio Members

- **Rene Zenteno**, Chair, Faculty Senate
- **Alexis Godet**, Vice Chair
- **Chris Packham**, Secretary of the General Faculty
- **Victor Villarreal**, Chair, Graduate Council
- **Mark Bayer**, Department Chair Council Representative
- **Valerie Sponsel**, ADTS Representative
- **Lauren Hoffman**, Staff Senate Representative