

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 – October 12, 2023 Faculty Senate Meeting

The Minutes of the Faculty Senate were approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT: René Zenteno

- Dr. Zenteno participated in the University Leadership Council (ULC) and SB17 Advisory meeting on the related process and topics as referenced in Dr. Heather Shipley's presentation.
- During the final Faculty Senate meeting of the calendar year (November 30), the plan is to present the new Faculty Senate Bylaws for an official vote in January.
- The research committee has been in conversations with Dr. JoAnn Browning, Interim Vice President of Research.
 - She will attend the Faculty Senate meeting on November 30th to give an update on one of the Faculty Senate's main focuses: improving operations to better support research infrastructure.

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.



Leadership Update: Academic Affairs Update

Heather Shipley, Ph.D., *Interim Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

- Dr. Shipley provided a recap of [SB17](#) information, including effective date, exempt activities and restrictions. As a reminder, SB17 does not change UTSA's HSI designation.
- Continuing guidance from UT System restricts training and DEI efforts from any office.
- While UTSA cannot contract external entities for DEI trainings nor require participation, students, faculty, and staff are allowed to attend external training independently.
- [SB17](#) does not have a blanket exclusion on the use of terms like diversity, equity and inclusion. The use of these terms will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Federally and state recognized history days/months are permissible and can continue.
- The approval structure was reviewed, including ELRC, Advisory, PAIR, Campus-wide stakeholder, and review process. The inventory summary totals and review determinations for each category were shared.
- Regular updates are being given to ULC, DCC, FS and SGA. Results will be shared with units, with unit heads with required actions. A review process will continue after January 1, 2024, and an internal audit in 2024 is planned.
- An update on [SB18](#) was also provided. The expanded committee has met biweekly to analyze the Regents' Rules and improve the definition of process and criteria.
- The Campus Experience Task Force is currently in the process of gathering data, and there are no specific recommendations or updates available at this time.
- The recent email about the comprehensive strategic compensation plan and institution-wide merit was discussed. The Office of People Excellence will provide individualized information in the upcoming weeks, similar to last year.
- The [Public Service Loan Forgiveness \(PSLF\) Program](#) allows eligible recipients the opportunity to be granted immunity for the remaining balance of their student loan after having made 120 qualifying payments, while working for a qualifying public service employer.

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When will the inclusivity statement on course syllabi will be updated for the spring semester?

- *There is an ongoing discussion regarding the inclusivity statement. The SB17 advisory group is being consulted, and the simple syllabus will be revised to incorporate new language.*

Is there any clarification on SB17 determinations, particularly regarding grants?

- *No decisions will be made until guidance from the UT system is received.*

What is the process and timeline for notifications? Also, how will the internal audit differ from this process and is there is a specific office responsible for conducting the audit?

- *The notification will occur in the coming weeks. The university is awaiting information from the State regarding the audit's scope and rubric. Once received, the audit process will be mimicked for our audit. The Compliance Office will review all items, following the external audit.*
- *Any concerns should be emailed to [PAIR](#).*



Introduction of Jason King, Associate Vice President of Strategic Risk Management and Chief Legal Officer Carlos Martinez, Senior Vice President for Institutional Strategic Planning, Compliance Risk Management, and Office Operations Chief of Staff

- Mr. Martinez introduced Jason King. Learn more about King in the recent [UTSA Today story](#).
- Mr. King highlighted the importance of collaboration and engagement with all facets of campus, particularly the faculty.
- He is excited about working with everyone at UTSA and invites open communication and questions.



Secretary of the General Faculty Chris Packham, Chair

- Dr. Packham provided an update on the Texas A&M Space Institute, highlighting a \$350 million investment during the last legislative session. Plans are to erect a new building at Texas A&M and \$150 million is expected to be allocated for space research across Texas each new biennium.

Research Committee George Perry, Chair

- The Research Committee will meet with Dr. Zenteno, Dr. Packham, and Dr. JoAnn Browning monthly to discuss post-awards and grant processing. Dr. Browning mentioned plans for reorganization to enhance efficiency.
- The committee will focus on the following five topics:
 - Improve post-award grant processing including the processes and handoffs between faculty, departments, colleges, and VPBA/VPREDKE to support faculty and streamline the process for greater efficiency.
 - Foster a research-oriented philosophy across campus inclusive of all scholarly activities. Graduate education and support through fellowships and grants, should be a central to the research mission.
 - Develop a plan to cover the cost of open-access publications.
 - Increase faculty involvement in space utilization and the development of new buildings.
 - Establish compensation levels and appointment flexibility for postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and other staff members.



What is the possibility of meeting with Veronica Salazar and others to discuss policy and process regarding new building decisions, with the aim of assessing needs and ensuring transparency.

- *A meeting with Dr. Browning is needed first to identify needs, locations/type, etc.*

With existing issues in communication, timeliness and support how will more Ph.D.s be recruited?

- *The need to consider the impact on postdocs and graduate students and explore other ways to cover tuition was discussed. Recruitment challenges for doctoral students in Texas were acknowledged. The pressure on departments to secure large grants and the university's role in funding and supporting students were highlighted. Exploring compensation changes in different areas was suggested.*



New Business

- Proposed changes to Faculty Senate bylaws will be presented at the next meeting.

Other Topics

- There was a discussion regarding shared governance in the College of Sciences.
- As a next step, Dr. Zenteno will discuss the concerns regarding shared governance in the College of Sciences with Interim Provost Shipley, with the consent of the Faculty Senate.
- The faculty merit award process was questioned and Dr. Zenteno said it was discussed at the Department Chairs Council on November 8, 2023, with further communication to clarify the process expected soon.



2023-2024 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
- 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

- 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
- 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
- Hector Aguilar**, 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
- Stephen Saville**, 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 Sponse**, ADTS Representative
- Justin Marmolejo**, Staff Senate Representative