

# **THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO**

## **DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY**

### **SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING Of January 23rd, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2024-2025 academic year was held January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. via Zoom (online meeting) with Dr. Alex Godet, Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding.

#### **I. Call to order and taking of attendance.**

Present: Alex Godet, Andrew Lloyd, Anthony Rios, Ashwin Malshe, August (Gus) Allo, Catalina Zarte, Chantal Fahmy, Chris Reddick, Cristian Botez, Curtis Brewer, David Beheshti, Devon Romero, Edwin Barea-Rodriguez, Emilie Amrein, George Perry, Ginny Garcia-Alexander, Humberto Saenz, Jelena Todoc, Jie Huang, Jimi Francis, John Alexander, John Quarles, Jusung Lee, Kimberly Garza, Kimberly Kline, Lauren Hoffmann, Marcus Hamilton, Marguerite Newcomb, Marie Tillyer, Marissa Wechsler, Mary Dixon, Michael Baumann, Michael Karcher, Miltos Alamaniotis, Minghe Sun, Minghe Sun, Neil Debbage, Rene Zenteno, Rica Ramírez, Sidury Christiansen, Sonya Aleman, Susan Thomas, Valeria Meiller, Valerie Sponsel, Zachary Tonzetich- (Graduate Council), Zaid Haddad, Zijun Wang

Absent: David Weber, Hongjie Xie (excused), Kirsten Gardner, Kirk Schanze, Mark Bayer, Pepe Chang, Rahul Raghavan, Xunwu Chen, Zhigang Feng- (Sub)

Total members/substitutes present: 47      Total members absent: 9

Guests: Dr. JoAnn Browning, Lori Schultz, Jason King, Abi Caceres, Debra Del Toro, Katie Meersman, Sarah Soulek, Ximena Barbagelatta Grau

#### **II. Consent Agenda**

- Approval of Minutes – December 5, 2024

The Chair of the Faculty Senate, Alex Godet, called for the approval of the consent agenda and it was unanimously approved by the senate with no objections.

Dr. Alex Godet welcomed Dr. JoAnn Browning, Interim Vice President, Office of Research, Lori Schultz, Senior Associate Vice President for Research Administration, and Jason King, Associate Vice President of Strategic Risk Management and Chief Legal Officer to the Faculty Senate.

### **III. Reports**

- A. Report of JoAnn Browning, Interim Vice President, Office of Research; Lori Schultz, Senior Associate Vice President for Research Administration; Jason King, Associate Vice President of Strategic Risk Management and Chief Legal Officer**

Dr. Browning began by thanking the Senate for her visit and presenting the senate with a with a list of resources that the Office of Research and UTSA offers. She then continued by presenting information about the data they collect on a regular basis, starting with a preview of the 2024 research expenditures. UTSA's cumulative research expenditures grew in AY 2023-2024 and the graph presented showed that UTSA grew 10% (\$173 million compared to \$158 million in 2023). The Office of Research also tracks the number of proposal submissions each month to track research administration team load. They also track the progress of each proposal alongside the "15-5" rule. If someone is able to meet the five-day prior rule, it is considered a "full review" and are able to give it an intensive look and make sure everything is adequately prepared for submission. If a proposal comes in between the last five days and one day prior to submission, it is considered a "limited review," but they are still able to review and prepare as much as possible. If a proposal is submitted in the last 24 hours, they are still able to submit, but the proposal is considered "at risk" because they are not able to review everything given the time constraint. The Office of Research tracks and records data for all types of proposals mentioned, including by time of year and college. They also track award set-up times (current average approximately two weeks). Modification times are also tracked (current average approximately three weeks), as well as the number of processing days for sub-recipients' invoice payments.

Dr. Browning continued her presentation by talking about the Faculty Senate Research committee. They meet monthly and they are reviewing publication costs, F&A, the services from the Office of Research, as well as international travel. They are always looking for ways to help faculty (e.g., lower publication costs, provide more resources and opportunities). They work with Chris Packham, who has been advocating at UT System to find better deals on publication costs with major providers. They are also working with the librarians at UTSA to find better deals and resources to reduce costs.

Dr. Browning highlighted their collaboration with the Dean's Research Council and the Research Council through the Faculty Senate to develop a consistent distribution model that now follows the researcher. If the researcher is not affiliated with a specific college, the distribution will follow the VP unit to which they belong. Lori Schultz distributed all relevant information prior to the break last year.

Dr. Browning then introduced Lori Schultz to provide an overview of the recent federal policy changes regarding rate adjustments. The new Facilities and Administrative (F&A) rate agreement was signed in November 2024. While these changes will take effect for the upcoming school year, they will not affect current awards or proposals submitted prior to the agreement. New proposals submitted after the agreement will reflect the updated rates. Additionally, Dr. Browning discussed ongoing efforts to integrate ServiceNow into the research administration processes. This implementation aims to improve tracking capabilities and enhance data collection.

Following this, Dr. Browning introduced Jason King, who provided an update on international travel. He began by discussing the executive order issued by Governor Abbott last year, which

outlines a list of countries where official university travel is prohibited. He clarified that while personal travel to these countries is not restricted, it must be reported to UTSA both prior to and following the trip. A working group is currently reviewing the order and expects to provide additional clarification in the near future. On the federal level, he is actively working to understand and navigate the executive orders related to travel and will continue to seek further clarification throughout the spring semester and summer.

Lastly, Dr. Browning addressed several questions submitted by the Senate. For more information, please refer to the full presentation uploaded to the Senate SharePoint site.

**Question:** You showed a graph outlining the duration of the setting up time for awards. Is the time related to the complexity where we might see an average of 25-30 days?

**Answer:** Yes, it is because of the complexity that we have that average time. Sometimes sponsors are not responsive, so that can add time. In those cases, we might use the help of the faculty member who might have a better line of communication with the sponsor or information that might help in the process.

**Question:** Do you know when COEHD will get their own concierge?

**Answer:** The Office of Research has been looking at the number of awards coming in, and based on the set-up they had last year, things have been moving at the right pace. They plan to keeping the process the same with a joint plan between COLFA and COEHD. In case of questions about any of the process or services please reach out to Jesse Hernandez for more information.

**Question:** Is the new F&A the rate the final increase we will have, or will it go up with the integration?

**Answer:** The UT Health rate is higher than ours, but UTSA just signed for the new one. As a combined institution nothing will need to be submitted for quite a long time. The rate you see now is expected to stay the same for the next five years.

**Question:** What specific training programs are being implemented to facilitate inter-college collaboration and joint grant applications among offices across the university. How is UTSA preparing to support evolving research collaborations?

**Answer:** We are committed to help train, support, and help develop faculty to be able to work in those teams. Right now, we have research interest groups that can be found in our research page. We also have help to facilitate grants depending on their size, and each college has a research facilitator that is funded by both the Office of Research and the college that can help with grants that are under \$5 million in funding. If a grant is bigger than that, we have a research team at the university level that can help as well.

## **B. Report of the Chair – Alex Godet**

Dr. Alex Godet, Chair of the Senate, began his report by providing an update on the upcoming survey from Academic Innovation, which will be distributed during the second week of February. The survey aims to assess the online tools and resources currently in use by faculty, as well as identify areas for improvement. Dr. Godet encouraged all members to participate and provide feedback, noting that the survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete. Regarding the merit stipend, the meeting notes from Sherri Hardison, who addressed questions on this and other topics, are available on the SharePoint site for reference.

Dr. Godet also provided an update on the Texas legislative session, noting that they will continue to monitor developments closely. Carlos Martinez and Jason King, are expected to present to the Senate in the near future with updates. Additionally, Dr. Godet shared that the UT System Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) will meet in Austin on January 30th and 31st, where he and Marie Tillyer will be representing UTSA. He encouraged anyone with questions to email him directly.

The Provost will meet with senators by college soon. Everyone should have received an email invitation so keep an eye out for that.

Lastly, the leadership council meeting met and they discussed the possibility of a fall break being incorporated into the academic calendar. There will be more communication coming out when available.

**C. Reports of the Secretary – Marie Tillyer**

- None

**D. Reports of the Committees**

- Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee – Ginny Garcia-Alexander
  - None
- Budget Committee – Mary Dixon

Dr. Mary Dixon asked the senate to look at the SharePoint materials from the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting with Sheri Hardison. The meeting went great and they were able to ask some really good questions. A lot of the questions are still pending more information about the merger, so she will keep the Senate updated about those pending questions.

- Curriculum Committee – Zaid Haddad
  - None
- Graduate Council Chair – Zachary Tonzetich
  - None
- HOP Committee – Sonya Alemán
  - None
- Research Committee – George Perry

No report, but please look at the written report in SharePoint site.

**IV. Unfinished Business – None**

**V. New Business – None**

There was no new business to discuss.

**VI. Adjournment of Meeting**

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously passed at 4:40 PM.