

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING

Of February 20th, 2025

(revised 3/7/2025)

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2024-2025 academic year was held February 20th, 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, Anthony Rios, Ashwin Malshe, August (Gus) Allo, Catalina Zarte, Chantal Fahmy, Chris Reddick, Cristian Botez, Curtis Brewer, David Beheshti, David Weber, Devon Romero, Edwin Barea-Rodriguez, Emilie Amrein, George Perry, Hongjie Xie, Humberto Saenz, Hung-Da Wan, Jelena Todici, Jie Huang, Jimi Francis, John Alexander, Jusung Lee, Kimberly Garza, Kimberly Kline, Kirk Schanze, Lauren Hoffmann, Marcus Hamilton, Marguerite Newcomb, Marie Tillyer, Marissa Wechsler, Mary Dixon, Michael Karcher, Mihai Popa, Miltos Alamaniotis, Minghe Sun, Mitra Bokaei Hosseini, Neil Debbage, Rahul Raghavan Rene Zenteno, Rica Ramirez, Sidury Christiansen, Sonya Aleman, Susan Thomas, Valeria Meiller, Valerie Spensel, Xu Chen, Zachary Tonzetich- (Graduate Council), Zaid Haddad

Absent: Andrew Lloyd, Ginny Garcia-Alexander, John Quarles (excused), Michael Baumann (excused), Zijun Wang, Zhigang Feng (excused)

Total members/substitutes present: 50 Total members absent: 6

Guests: Heather Shipley, Carlos Martinez, Jason King, Katie Meersman, Abi Caceres, Sarah Soulek, Ximena Barbagelatta Grau, Michael Smith, Nate Liu

II. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes – January 23rd, 2025

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. Heather Shipley, Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Jason King, Associate Vice President of Strategic Risk Management and Chief Legal Officer to the Faculty Senate, and Carlos Martinez, Senior Vice President for Institutional Strategic Planning, Compliance Risk Management, and Office Operations Chief of Staff

III. Reports

A. Report of Dr. Heather Shipley, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Shipley began her report by thanking the Senate for her visit and by acknowledging that these are challenging times, with all the ambiguity surrounding federal grants. Currently, she is waiting on decisions regarding the current legislative session, and will continue to meet and work with the Senate, the Department Chairs, the Deans, and UT System for the whole duration of the Legislative Session. University leadership is also working alongside UT System through their government relationships to gain better understanding both on the House and Senate side on how things will work going forward. On the federal level, UTSA also works with UT System to gain information and share the importance of research and the work that we do in developing workforce, students, and our community. She knows this does not take away the uncertainty for now, but she is committed to getting answers that will be shared as soon as received.

Question: Have you or President Eighmy sent out any communication addressing the ongoing concerns happening?

Answer: Emails have come out through from our Research Office regarding the actions taken at the federal level, and we have also communicated through the Deans and other leadership at UTSA, but she will take that feedback to increase communications.

Question: Is UTSA planning on having contingency plans if federal grants are impacted?

Answer: There is discussion happening regarding these concerns, but we also follow guidance from UT System, so nothing concrete will happen, until all the decisions are made at all the necessary levels. UTSA is remaining flexible to be able to adapt or pivot to any changes that are communicated.

Question: Is there any type of reassurance you can offer the faculty on behalf of UTSA's administration regarding the letter sent to the Department of Education on Friday?

Answer: Dr. Shipley allowed Jason King to provide further information on this question. The letter that came out was a statement from the Department of Education and the view on existing law. We met with UT System this week to answer this question for us. They are currently looking for further clarification as well and are working with all institutions across the board. There is not a currently deadline specified in the letter, so they are waiting for the end of the legislative session to provide additional information.

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

Carlos Martinez began his report by providing an update on the 89th legislative session. In the first slide of his presentation, he provided a snapshot of the institutional and employee rights and responsibilities regarding legislative activities. The slide talked about the state law and Regents' rules that pertain to faculty involvement in legislative activities. He clarified that UTSA faculty may interact with the legislative process as long as it is done as a private citizen. This means that state employees cannot participate using any state resources, email, state funds and so on. Next, he went over key dates and the process of the current session along with pointing out some key dates coming up. Because of the nature of the legislative process, there is only so much we can prepare at this moment given that a lot of the proposed bills have yet to be looked at. Dr.

Martinez provided a graph to show further details of this process. He then proceeded to show a snapshot of the landscape of the legislature including the priorities for this session. You can also follow the legislation updates online and select which bills you are interested in to get updates and alert as they happen live in the official Texas capitol website. Carlos Martinez's office makes sure to follow the bills that pertain to UTSA, and they also have someone physically in Austin right now whose job is to keep up with everything in person. All slides and presentation are available in the Senate's SharePoint site.

Questions: Is there a way that we could meet to discuss the value of higher education, what is happening, and the changes being made?

Answer: Yes, we also actively look for people that can speak to the subject matter to the media, and we are also expending the invitation to provide experts through a network that we can collaborate with.

Question: Can a faculty write op-ed from the expertise of social work to ensure that the public is aware of everything happening?

Answer: Can an individual faculty member, or group of faculty members, write an op-ed of public concern? Yes, but make sure you clarify your capacity and providing a statement such as, "I/we, are not speaking on behalf of UTSA." If you do not clarify the "hat" you are wearing in writing the op-ed, it can be a violation. If you clarify your capacity as a private citizen, it is permissible. Also, do not use USTA email, letter head, SharePoint, or other UTSA resources.

C. Report of the Chair – Alex Godet

Dr. Godet began his presentation by providing an update regarding the Faculty Advisory Council meeting in Austin on January 30th to 31st, and updates from Chancellor Milliken, Exec. Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs Holmes, and Vice-Chancellor for Governmental Relations Rathgeber. UT System is still attracting good numbers of faculty. This might be based on funding and good enrollment numbers for the state. Chancellor Holmes mentioned that he analyzed the funding stability of each institution and that it is up to each university how they want to handle things locally. Next, Dr. Godet talked about the meetings of the provost with each college's senators and their dean. At this point the provost has met with all the colleges and Dr. Godet was asked to remind the senate of the upcoming listening wellness session happening on 02/25/2025 at the Downtown Campus and 02/26/2025 at Main Campus. He also talked about the incoming listening session on 02/27/2025 for Brand Socialization and finished his report by notifying everyone that the May meeting of the senate that will be in person.

D. Report of the Secretary – Marie Tillyer

Dr. Tillyer provided an update on the elections. As a reminder, senators serve for a three-year term with the option to be re-elected. Emails will be coming out soon to units that need to hold elections for the next academic year, so make sure to look out for those. In addition, a Vice Chair position is needed and will require a nominating committee, so an email will be coming out about that as well. Lastly, the senate needs to select a parliamentarian for the upcoming year, so if you are interested in any of those roles you can contact Dr. Tillyer.

E. Reports of the Committees

- Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee – Ginny Garcia-Alexander

- None

- Budget Committee – Mary Dixon
 - None

- Curriculum Committee – Zaid Haddad

Committee Chair Zaid Haddad called for discussion about the UG Certificate in Semiconductor Engineering. The University Curriculum Committee approved the proposal with a vote of 7 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain.

The University Curriculum Committee supports the certificate and motioned to approve. The motion was seconded. There were no objections from the senate and the senate unanimously approved the certificate.

- Graduate Council Chair – Zachary Tonzetich

The chair of the committee presented an updated document for mentoring and best practice recommendations for doctoral students. This document will be share with all the departments soon as it mainly provides resources and effective ideas to help in mentoring. There were no program approvals this month, but some will be coming soon. Lastly, the committee revised the current bylaws to ensure continued compliance as we merge with UT Health.

- HOP Committee – Sonya Alemán
 - None

- Research Committee – George Perry

No verbal report, but a written report has been provided in SharePoint site. The report provides information on publishing discounts and additional resources for faculty. If you have any questions, please reach out to the committee.

IV. Unfinished Business – None

V. New Business –

A proposed position statement was presented to the Senate by some senators regarding the uncertainties surrounding DEI programs and how the administration's lack of action presents problems, as well as reaffirming UTSA's identity as a minority-serving institution and calling for leadership action on the topic. A motion was raised and seconded, and the senate proceeded to discuss the statement. As there was limited time left in the meeting for review, there was discussion about a special session for review and sharing the memo in the SharePoint site.

VI. Adjournment of Meeting

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously passed at 5:07 PM.