

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 – May 4, 2023
 - Elect Secretary – Kirsten Gardner
 - Elect Parliamentarian – Mike Baumann

The Minutes and the election of the Secretary and Parliamentarian of the Faculty Senate were approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT: René Zenteno

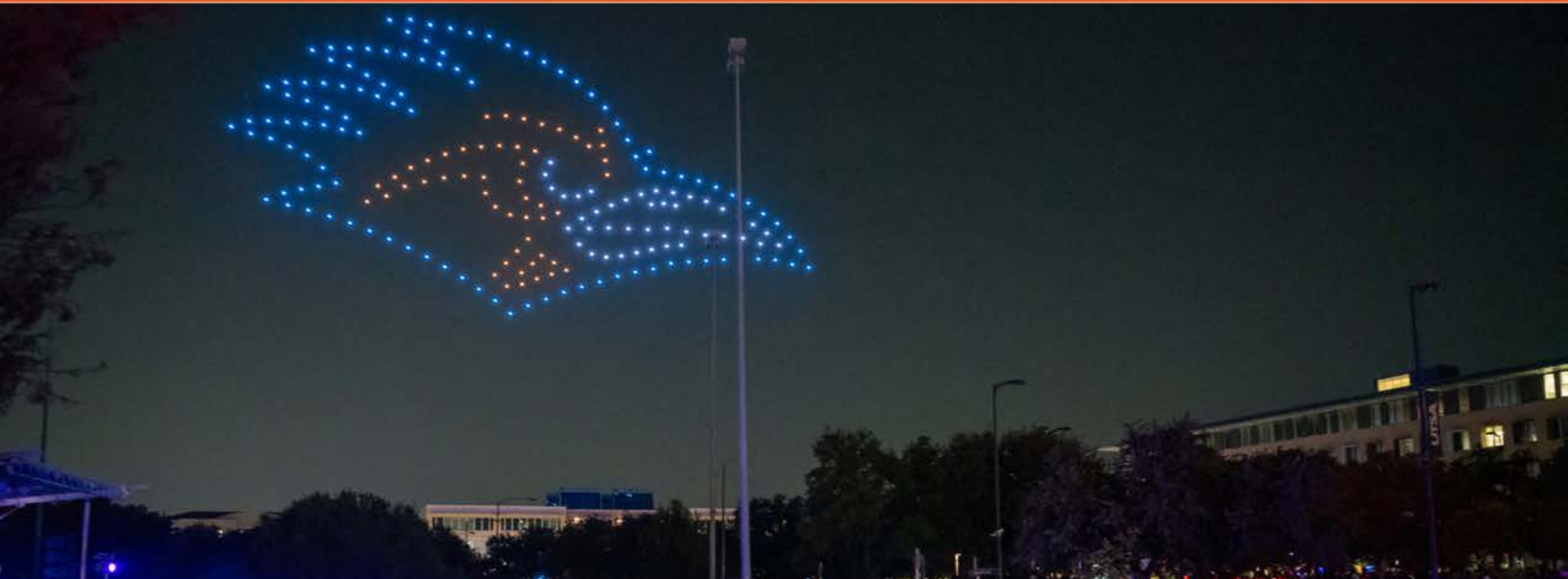
A University Leadership Council update was shared, which covered the following areas:

- For [SB 17](#) and [SB 18](#), Dr. Shipley's *presentation* on the topic and the process were referenced.
 - It was noted that further clarification is required on these bills, their implications, and how [SB 18](#) will impact the HOP.
- On the topic of Strategic Plan Refresh, Dr. Shipley's *presentation* was referenced.
- Appreciation was extended to Interim Provost Shipley for organizing the joint reception for the Faculty Senate, Chair's Council, and University Leadership Council at San Pedro I building on September 6th.

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, *Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

- UTSA has achieved the State's criteria for participation in the National Research University Fund (NRUF), a key objective in the university's journey toward becoming a top public research institution.
 - The funding structure will change with the creation of the Texas University Fund (TUF) as a result of the 88th Legislative Session. The TUF will provide funding for several universities, including Texas Tech University, Texas State University, University of North Texas and the University of Houston.
 - The Core Research Support Fund (CRSF) has been renamed the National Research Support Fund (NRSF) and is expected to bring new resources to UTSA and the other three emerging research universities in the UT System - The University of Texas at Arlington, The University of Texas at Dallas, and The University of Texas at El Paso. However, the funding is contingent upon UT System matching NRSF funding.
 - More information about this process and funding will be shared as it becomes available.
- There are 97 new TT/T/FTT faculty hires for 2023-2024. This brings the total faculty at UTSA to nearly 1,500, spread across 7 academic colleges.
 - Among the new hires, there are 4 department chairs from the Alvarez College of Business, College for Health and Community Policy, and the College of Sciences.
 - Additionally, there are new leaders appointed and hired within Academic Affairs. They are "home-grown" leaders from UTSA, some serving interim positions and some selected from internal or national searches:
 - Jill Fleuriet, *Vice Provost for Honors Education*
 - Eric Brey, *Interim Dean, Margie & Bill Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design*
 - Jianwei Niu, *Interim Dean of University College*
 - Angelica M. Barrera, *Associate Vice Provost for Student-Athlete Retention and Excellence*
 - Kelly Nash, *Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Success*
 - Libby Rowe, *Inaugural Director of the School of Art (COLFA)*
- Other updates:
 - The College of Liberal and Fine Arts has established a new Interdisciplinary School for Engagement in the Humanities and Social Sciences, or E-School, effective September 1, 2023, with Director Sean Kelly.
 - Blanco Hall, a new Living/Learning Community, will begin construction this fall. This new residential community will provide additional housing options for first-year students and sophomores.
 - Living on campus is important as it leads to higher retention rates, a greater sense of belonging and other positive student success outcomes.
 - Construction for the new Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Careers (IEC) building, San Pedro II, will begin this fall. The building will be located across San Pedro Creek from San Pedro I.
 - The Faculty News has been updated with a new email address – faculty@utsa.edu. It will feature important information, so please keep an eye out for it in your inbox.

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Leadership Update *(continued)*

- The Classroom to Career initiative ensures that students receive a well-rounded education during their time at UTSA and are prepared for their future careers upon graduation. It is important to continue developing strategies to align programs with workforce needs. This strategy is part of UTSA's Bold Advantage Formula:
 - High-quality instruction from R1-level faculty
 - Cutting-edge curricula and programs that are aligned with industry needs
 - Immersive classroom-to-career experiences that allow experiential learning
 - Marketable skills that prepare students to be career-ready Roadrunners, in demand by employers.
- An action plan has been developed and will be rolled out to address the Presidential Charge of Advancing a Culture of Respect and Accountability in doctoral, graduate, and post-doctoral education. This includes existing programs that will be implemented by Graduate Studies and Faculty Success.
- An update was provided on the Strategic Plan Refresh process with a reminder of the initial vision outlined in the Ten-Year Strategic Plan Destinations for 2018-2028.
 - A model for student success;
 - A great public research university; and
 - An exemplar for strategic growth and innovative excellence
- The Refresh process allows the university to:
 - Acknowledge its achievements since 2018.
 - Map its progress and chart future directions.
 - Adapt to changes in the higher education landscape.
 - Capitalize on lessons learned during the pandemic.
 - Align its goals and long-range financial plan with UT Regents' requirements.
- The process, which began in Fall 2022 led to the following recommendations:
 - Recommendation #1 – Affirm UTSA's Mission, Vision, and Values
 - Recommendation #2 – Affirm and refine our Destinations:
 - Destination One – UTSA will be a model for student success
 - Affirmed with no changes
 - Destination Two – UTSA will be a great public research university
 - Affirmed; modest changes to rationale; becoming R1 and small changes to acronyms with NRUF
 - Destination Three – UTSA will be an innovative place to work, learn and discover
 - Affirmed; further refine destination; name and rationale
- During the feedback process, it was noted that some people found it challenging to recall Destinations Three and suggested refining the name to better reflect our institution's goals. As a result, we revised the name to something more relatable and understandable — we work, learn, and discover at UTSA.
- The plan will be presented by President Eighmy at the upcoming November UT System Board of Regents meeting for review and approval. In the meantime, units will need to align their priorities and activities with this plan.
- Information was provided about two bills that were passed during the 88th Texas Legislative Session.
 - Senate Bill 17 (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) was signed into law by the Governor in June 2023 and will take effect on January 1, 2024. UTSA is following real-time guidance from UT System in accordance with the bill.
 - The details of the activities that are considered exempt, as well as the process for reviewing campus programs, activities, language, and initiatives that must be reviewed can be found in her [presentation](#).
 - Governing boards are required to provide a report certifying compliance, and if a violation is found, institutions have a period of time to make corrective actions. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will also conduct a biennial impact study to review enrollment, retention, etc.



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Leadership Update (continued)

- Reference was made to the email that was sent to the UTSA community on August 28, 2023, and reposted on [UTSA Today](#). The email emphasized UTSA's commitment to core values and academic freedom, creating a strategy that aligns with UT System guidelines, and will ensure our efforts are guided by our commitment to the inclusiveness, collaboration, and well-being of all Roadrunners.
- A review process will commence this Fall regarding [SB 17](#), including a Campus-wide Stakeholder Working Group, PAIR Team, [SB 17](#) Advisory Group (shared governance group which includes President's Cabinet, Faculty Senate and SGA Chairs), Executive Leadership Review Committee (Veronica Salazar, Carlos Martinez and Heather Shipley).
 - Their work and responsibilities are outlined in the presentation. The President will make final determinations of permissibility based on provided recommendations. This process will not include the Office of Inclusive Excellence as that is a separate process that will be handled by the President's office.
- Senate Bill 18 which was signed into law by the Governor in June 2023 and made changes to the promotion and tenure process was also discussed. UTSA is following real-time guidance from UT-System in accordance with the bill.
- At the August UT Board of Regents' meeting, UT System updated Regents' Rules and Regulations: 31002, 31007, 31008, and 31102. These changes went into effect September 1, 2023. The recommended changes were shared with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.
- A committee will be formed to review the changes and review relevant HOP policies. Nominations are requested from Faculty Senate and Department Chair's Council to participate on this committee.
- Dr. Shipley was given a copy of the Faculty Senate priorities that were developed during the August retreat and is looking forward to collaborating on the goals and initiatives throughout the academic year.
- Senators were reminded of the resources available through UTSA's Faculty Success, Academic Innovation, and Research, Economic Development and Knowledge Enterprise divisions. Additionally, People Excellence offers professional development and personal journey enrichment through My Training, LinkedIn Learning, the Employee Assistance Program, and wellness.
- Please consider following Academic Affairs social media channels:
 - X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram: Academic Affairs - [@utsa_academics](#)
 - LinkedIn: Heather Shipley - [@HeatherShipleyPhD](#)

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Have any faculty members left UTSA because of the passage of SB 17 and SB 18?

- *There is no specific data indicating that faculty members have resigned due to the passage of these bills. However, anecdotally, it has been heard that a few faculty members may have resigned in light of the bills, although the number of resignations has not been significant.*

One of our objectives has been to enhance diversity at UTSA. Will the working group be able to address this within the guidelines/policy of SB 17?

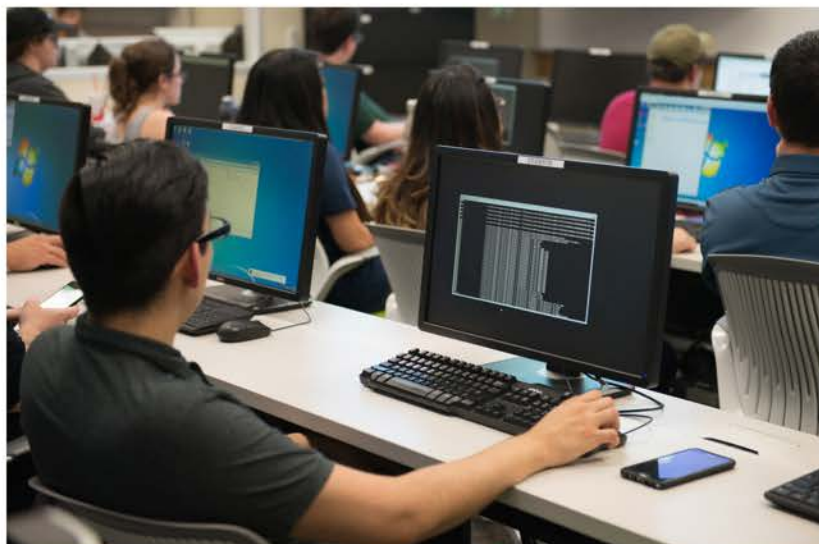
- *UTSA is dedicated to promoting faculty diversity. Significant progress has been made in this area. Dr. Shipley is open to establishing another group to review this and think through the process. UTSA first needs guidance from UT System regarding SB 17 and SB 18, and to complete the initial iterative process and data collection to fully comprehend the changes and determine what actions are feasible. Dr. Shipley met with the Department Chairs Council to discuss the faculty recruitment process in light of the new legislation. She emphasized that UTSA, as an HSI and actively involved with Excelencia in Education, remains committed to serving our students, faculty, and staff. This is an ongoing process, and we are being deliberate and thoughtful in decision-making, as we seek guidance from UT System.*

Has the administration discussed the potential misapplication or misunderstanding of the implications of these bills? How does the university support faculty members knowing that students and the general public may not fully grasp the intricacies of the bill?

- *Dr. Shipley is collaborating with the Dean of Students, LT Robinson, to meet with the President of the Student Government Association (SGA) and others on how best to communicate with students and educate them about what is allowed and what is not allowed. Students received the same email as the faculty and staff on August 28, explaining how this process is being carried out and the different strategies that the university is implementing. Please share any ideas with René Zenteno and he will pass them along to Dr. Shipley.*

Do we need to assess the existing college/departmental committees that are dedicated to DEI initiatives?

- *This process aims to evaluate initiatives, programs, and other relevant aspects. The UT System will provide a FAQ document that will offer additional guidance to the university. If you have any questions, please reach out to your department chair or dean during this period.*



Secretary of the General Faculty

Chris Packham, Chair

- Dr. Packham and Dr. Zenteno represent the Faculty Senate on the UT System Faculty Advisory Council. They attend meetings three times a year in Austin, with the first meeting scheduled for October 5-6, 2023.
- Dr. Packham currently serves as the Research Chair on the FAC Executive Council. He emphasized the importance of the FAC speaking with a unified voice across all UT System campuses this year, particularly when it comes to activities such as [SB 17](#) and [SB 18](#).
 - According to Dr. Packham, it will be crucial to have a clear goal and vision of what the faculty can and cannot do, distinguishing between the spirit of influence and the spirit of control.
 - There is a need to identify the target audience, the message for that audience, and the best method of delivery, with a clear and concise timeline for implementation.
 - Any feedback or input are welcomed and should be sent to either Dr. Packham or Dr. Zenteno before the October meeting.



University Curriculum Committee

Andy Lloyd, Chair

- The following proposals were reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee:
 - Closing the Minor in Adaptive Decision Models for Business program
 - Adding a concentration in Grades 6-12 Physical Science Teacher Certification to the Geosciences program
 - Secondary Education Minor
 - B.S. in Health Administration
 - B.A. Film and Media
 - Minor in Media and Medicine
- The committee found a few minor corrections and consulted with the program proposals for clarification, all of which have been resolved. Therefore, the proposals were unanimously approved by the committee.
- A brief discussion was held for reviewing programs and the importance of consulting with other departments, particularly when collaborating on a program or offering courses from another department.
 - The proposals go through multiple curriculum committees and Academic Council before reaching the Faculty Senate, giving ample opportunity for consultation and review.
 - All materials are uploaded to the Faculty Senate SharePoint for Senators to review prior to the meeting.
- During the discussion, Dr. Maho Sonmez, FTT Representative from the Alvarez College of Business, briefly shared the collaborative process used to review the Minor the Adaptive Decision Models for Business in his department. As a result of their review, they submitted a request to close the program. Dr. Lloyd is available for any specific questions.
- The motion was approved.



New Business

- Dr. Zenteno introduced the priorities that were developed at the Faculty Senate Retreat. The priorities were compiled and organized into a matrix, which was then distributed among the Faculty Senate committees. The document is now available on the SharePoint site.
 - The Faculty Senators were encouraged to share this document with the faculty in their respective departments with each committee beginning work on the goals/actions outlined in each area.
- [SB 17](#) and [SB 18](#) will require a significant amount of time from the Faculty Senate this year as they hold great importance for both faculty and the institution.
 - Senators are encouraged to take the time to understand these bills, as they will impact the daily lives of faculty members and have long-term implications.
- Interim Provost Dr. Shipley is open to the topics discussed during the retreat. Last year's success of the Faculty Senate was due to the roadmap that had been developed, which clearly defined expectations.
 - It was suggested that each committee develop a system to measure outcomes of goals/actions of the priorities.
- A question was asked whether UTSA was a member of AAUP. Dr. Perry and Dr. Zenteno are members of AAUP as individual faculty members.
 - Contact Dr. Marisol Cortez, a Professor of Practice in the Department of English, at cortez.marisol@gmail.com for more information on AAUP membership.
 - AAUP had played a crucial role in shaping higher education legislation this year.
- Currently, the VP-REDKE search process is paused, and there has been no recent information shared about it. VP-REDKE and the Provost are positions crucial to the university and have an impact on the faculty. There was a discussion about the importance of having Faculty Senate representation on both search committees.



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 Sponset**, ADTS Representative
- **Justin Marmolejo**, Staff Senate Representative