

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Of November 9, 2023**

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2023-2024 academic year was held November 9, 2023 at 3:30 p.m. via Zoom (online meeting) with Dr. René Zenteno, Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding.

I. Call to order and taking of attendance.

Present: René Zenteno, Alex Godet, Chris Packham, Kirsten Gardner, Mike Baumann, Sonya Aleman, Mary Dixson, Ginny Garcia-Alexander, Andrew Lloyd, George Perry, Valerie Sponsel, Victor Villarreal, John Alexander, August (Gus) Allo, Edwin Barea-Rodriguez, Mark Bayer, Cristian Botez, Curtis Brewer, Xun Chen, Sidury Christiansen, Neil Debbage, Victor DeOliveira, Glenn Dietrich, Jimi Francis, Kimberly Garza, Dmitry Gokhman, Zaid Haddad, Marcus Hamilton, Kim Kline, Dennis Lopez, Justin Marmolejo, Alex Mejia, Valeria Meiller, Harry Millwater, John Quarles, Rica Ramirez, Lauren Riojas-Fitzpatrick, Devon Romero, Humberto Saenz, Stephen Saville, Maho Sonmez, and Marie Tillyer

Absent: Hector Aguilar, David Beheshti, Jie Huang, Michael Karcher, Huy Le, Jusung Lee, Ashwin Malshe, Branco Ponomariov, Jeff Prevost, Kirk Schanze, Jelena Todić (excused), Zijun Wang and David Weber

Guests: Heather Shipley, Jason King, Carlos Martinez, Mamie Frank, Ximena Barbagelatta Grau, Angela Griffith, and Debra Del Toro

Total members present: 41 Total members absent: 14

II. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes – October 12, 2023 Faculty Senate Meeting

The Minutes of the Faculty Senate were approved.

Dr. Zenteno welcomed Dr. Heather Shipley, and thanked her for coming and providing updates to SB 17/18, which are crucial for the institution.

He mentioned that Debbie was out and Angie/Mamie would be assisting today. Debbie is missed!

III. Reports

A. Academic Affairs Update – Heather Shipley, Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (*PowerPoint presentation uploaded to Faculty Senate SharePoint site and [website](#)*)

Dr. Shipley recapped SB17 information, effective date, exempt activities and restricted. Reminder that HSI status does not change. She shared continuing guidance from UT System that included restrictions to training and DEI efforts from any office. UTSA cannot contract another entity to provide DEI trainings, nor can it require participation. For DEI training to be approved, all three requirements noted in the presentation must be satisfied. She did clarify that students, faculty, and staff can attend external training on their own. She also shared that SB17 does not include any blanket exclusion on the use of terms like diversity, equity and inclusion. Use of these terms will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Federally and state recognized history days/months are allowable and can continue. Dr. Shipley reviewed the approval structure, including ELRC, Advisory, PAIR, Campus wide stakeholder, and review process. She showed the inventory summary totals in each category and the review determinations (eliminated, permitted, requires modification, etc.)

[SB 17 website](#)

Regular updates are being given to ULC, DCC, FS, SGA. Results will be shared with units, with unit heads attesting to required actions. A review process (tbd) will continue after January 1, 2024 and an internal audit 2024 is planned.

Dr. Shipley provided an update on SB18. The expanded committee has been meeting biweekly to look at the difference in the Regents' Rules in order to determine how to better define process and criteria. They are in the early stages but have had good conversations. We are still awaiting guidance from UT System and it is uncertain when that will occur. In the meantime, the committee does have updates from Texas Tech to work with.

Dr. Shipley shared that the Campus Experience Task Force is in the phase of collecting data and there is no specific recommendations or updates at this time.

Dr. Shipley reminded the group of the email that went out regarding comprehensive strategic compensation plan and institution wide merit. The Office of People Excellence will be following up in coming weeks with individualized information, similar to last year.

Dr. Shipley's last update was the public service loan forgiveness program. She wanted to inform everyone that as public employees, we are eligible for loan forgiveness. The website was shared.

Heather wished everyone a great thanksgiving. She thanked the Faculty Senate for their work and expressed how everyone is valued.

Q&A Session with Dr. Shipley

Question – Do we know when the inclusivity statement on course syllabi will be updated for spring semester?

Answer – Dr. Shipley stated that there is an ongoing conversation around the inclusivity statement. The SB17 advisory group is being consulted and the simple syllabus will be updated to include new language.

Question – A faculty member asked for clarification on SB17 determinations, specifically regarding grants.

Answer – Dr. Shipley responded that we are awaiting guidance for system before making any decisions.

Question – A faculty member asked about the process and timeline for notifications, how will the internal audit look different from this process, and is there a particular office who will be conducting the audit?

Answer – Dr. Shipley responded that notification will occur within the next few weeks. She also stated that the university has not been provided information from the State on what will be included in the audit or what rubric used. Once the university has that information, then their office will try to mimic the audit process for our review. The Compliance office will look at items following what the external audit will look like. Email PAIR with any concerns on misinterpretations.

Question – A faculty member asked why the normal process for sharing leftover food with students wasn't followed for the Season of Thanks.

Answer – Heather said she would look into it.

B. Introduction and Q&A with Chief Legal Officer – Mr. Jason King

Dr. Zenteno welcomed Mr. Jason King to UTSA and he asked Mr. Carlos Martinez, Chief of Staff to introduce him.

Mr. Martinez introduced Mr. King who shared his background. He missed seeing the practical results and, after a decade at UT System, jumped at the UTSA opportunity. He has received a warm welcome at UTSA and is excited to help achieve the mission of the university. Email and reach out!

<https://www.utsa.edu/today/2023/10/story/jason-king-new-avp-strategic-risk-management.html>

Q&A Session with Jason King - none

C. Report of the Chair – Dr. René Zenteno (*PowerPoint presentation uploaded to Faculty Senate SharePoint Site and [website](#)*)

Dr. Zenteno – Three primary items: SB17, SB18, Bylaws
He attended ULC and SB17 Advisory meeting on topics and process and referenced the content of Dr. Heather Shipley's presentation.

At the last Faculty Senate meeting of the calendar year (Nov 30), he will introduce the new Bylaws to allow for an official vote in January.

Dr. Zenteno shared that the research committee has engaged in conversations with Dr. JoAnn Browning, Interim Vice President of Research. She will be attending the Faculty Senate meeting on November 30th to provide an update on one of the Faculty Senate's top priorities – how to keep improving operations to support research infrastructure. He noted that there are still challenges in post-awards.

D. Secretary of the General Faculty – Dr. Chris Packham

Dr. Packham updated the Faculty Senate on the Texas A&M Space Institute. During the last legislature \$350 million was invested. There will be a new building at Texas A&M and \$150 million is expected each new biennium for space research across Texas.

PDF in SharePoint, distribute as needed

E. Committee Reports

Budget Committee – Mary Dixson, no report

University Curriculum Committee – Andy Lloyd, no report

Graduate Council Chair – Victor Villarreal, no report

HOP Committee – Sonya Aleman, no report

Research Committee – George Perry

The Research Committee met with Dr. Zenteno, Dr. Packham, and Dr. JoAnn Browning and will meet monthly with Dr. Browning to address post-awards and grant processing. Dr. Browning said they are looking to reorganize for improved efficiency. The committee will focus on following five topics.

1. Improve Post award grant processing. Focus on improving processes and handoffs between the faculty-departments-colleges-VPBA/VPREDKE with the goal of supporting faculty and streamlining the process for greater agility.
2. Create a philosophy of research throughout the campus that involves all scholarly activities. Graduate education and its support through fellowship and grants needs to be central to the research mission.
3. Support a plan to cover the cost of open access publications
4. Increase faculty input into space utilization and development of new buildings.
5. Setting compensation levels and appointment flexibility for Postdoctoral Fellows, graduate students, and other staff.

Question – Dr. Alexis Godet asked about the willingness to meet with Veronica Salazar and others to discuss policy and process about new building decisions. He asked if it would be helpful to meet with stakeholders to gauge needs and ensure transparency.

Answer – Dr. Perry stated they will meet with Dr. Browning first to try and identify needs, locations/type, how does that fit with fac recruitment, student recruitment, people need to know answers

Question – Dr. Alex Mejia mentioned continuing issues with post-awards. One particular issue is not getting any response from the staff. He provided a specific example where a grant was about to end and they were told everything was approved but then needed to charge to another account due to issues with due diligence. He summarized the two big issues as communication and timeliness. Dr. Mejia mentioned that Ph.D.s are not wanting to come to Texas due to SB17 and how this is important to bring up to Dr. Browning because of implications on goal of increasing doctoral numbers. He also said that REDKE makes decisions without talking to faculty, for example, the decision to increase the funding amount given to Ph.D. students, specifically without any additional support from university. Lastly, Dr. Mejia asked how they are supposed to recruit more Ph.D.s when there is pushback from university on creating new programs. He stated the university seems unsupportive.

Dr. George Perry responded that we need to understand the implications on postdocs and graduate students. There may be other ways to cover tuition.

Dr. Chris Packham acknowledged issues in Texas on recruiting doctoral students at state level as well.

Dr. Sidury Christiansen stated that there was pressure on departments to get large grants, which are difficult in small areas, and that through IRM all funding is expected to be generated by the department. The University needs to have larger role in funding and supporting students.

Dr. George Perry said it may be easier in sciences and engineering, and the way we support GTAs is similar to undergraduates. He noted that there may be ways to change compensation in different areas.

Dr. Alex Mejia commented that if the goal is to graduate more Ph.D.s, then we need to recognize the students we serve and provide more support to help them graduate on time and be successful. This is not recognized by university and some faculty.

Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee – Ginny Garcia-Alexander - no report

IV. Unfinished Business – None

V. New Business – None

Next meeting new FS/change to bylaws

Other topics:

A faculty senator from the College of Sciences raised concerns about the lack of shared governance in decisions being made by the dean, reassignment of faculty to other departments, qualifications and hiring of the dean, and the process of naming interim chairs. The same faculty senator commented on an incident that arose during a recent college town hall meeting. After the incident, the People Excellence office initiated an investigation.

During the discussion several comments, questions, and suggestions arose:

- Policy and practice to reassign faculty at will
- Policy and protocol for reprimanding a faculty member and subsequent grievance process
- If the summary dismissal outlined in SB18 were in place, potential effect on this situation
- Identify HOP policies where issues occurred
- Role of Faculty Senate in college specific situations. Can the Faculty Senate initiate an investigation and/or a vote of no confidence?

As a next step, and with the consent of the Faculty Senate, Dr. Zenteno will talk to Interim Provost Shipley about the concerns raised regarding shared governance in the College of Sciences.

Dr. Sidury Christiansen inquired about how faculty are going to be awarded merit this year. Dr. Zenteno informed the group that this was raised at Department Chairs Council on November 8, 2023 and communication will be coming soon to clarify faculty merit.

VI. Adjournment:

There being no further business, a motion was made by Dr. Sidury Christiansen and seconded by Dr. Xun Chen; the meeting concluded at 5:05 PM.