

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Of February 15, 2024**

The regular monthly meeting of the Faculty Senate for the 2023-2024 academic year was held February 15, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. via Zoom (online meeting) with Dr. Alexis Godet, Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate, presiding.

I. Call to order and taking of attendance.

Present: Alexis Godet, Chris Packham, Kirsten Gardner, Mike Baumann, Sonya Aleman, Mary Dixson, Ginny Garcia-Alexander, Andrew Lloyd, George Perry, Valerie Sponsel, John Alexander, Edwin Barea-Rodriguez, David Beheshti, Cristian Botez, Curtis Brewer, James Chambers, Xun Chen, Neil Debbage, Victor DeOliveira, Glenn Dietrich, Jimi Francis, Kimberly Garza, Zaid Haddad, Marcus Hamilton, Lauren Hoffman, Jie Huang, Michael Karcher, Kim Kline, Dennis Lopez, Ashwin Malshe, Alex Mejia, Valeria Meiller, Harry Millwater, Jeff Prevost, John Quarles, Rica Ramirez, Lauren Riojas-Fitzpatrick, Devon Romero, Humberto Saenz, Kirk Schanze, Susan Thomas, Marie Tillyer, Jelena Todić, Armando Trujillo, Zijun Wang, David Weber and Catalina Zarate

Absent: August (Gus) Allo, Mark Bayer, Dmitry Gokhman, Huy Le, Jusung Lee, Branco Ponomariov, Victor Villarreal, and René Zenteno

Guests: Heather Shipley, Michael Rushforth, Francisco Marquez, Daniel Sass, Debra Del Toro, Mamie Frank, Ximena Grau, Katie Meersman, and Debbie Howard Rappaport

Total members present: 47 Total members absent: 8

II. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Minutes – January 18, 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting
- Graduate Council item – approved at the February 6, 2024 meeting
 - Accelerated Master of Arts in Economics
 - Accelerated Master of Science in Data Analytics
 - Accelerated Master of Science in Statistics and Data Science
 - PhD in Physics – adding a concentration in Materials Science

The Minutes of the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council items were approved.

Dr. Godet welcomed Dr. Heather Shipley, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs to the Faculty Senate.

III. Reports

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

Dr. Shipley provided an update on the recently announced launch to the new college planning process that will focus on artificial intelligence (AI), computing, cybersecurity, data science and related disciplines. An Advisory Task Force has been created, led by co-chairs, Dr. Jonathon Halbesleben, Dean of the Alvarez College of Business, and Dr. Jianwei Niu, Dean of the University College. A [website](#) has been created which outlines the overview of the initiative, provides details and updates. Dr. Shipley indicated the first phase of the process will be due in June 2024.

Dr. Shipley stated the opportunities and benefits for creating the new college include:

- Supporting innovation academic excellence. The creation of the School of Data Science has enhanced the cross-collaboration occurring at this time;
- Redefining AI, computing, cybersecurity and data science landscape and to think about where these fields are going and to bring them together in a cohesive unit;
- Solidifying UTSA and San Antonio's status as the largest information security hub outside of Washington, D.C. There is already a lot of large amount of work from government, non-profit and private entities in these fields. A new college will allow UTSA to showcase this work in a new light; and
- Be able to respond to the demand for technically advanced professions in emerging fields. UTSA will be able to prepare our students for these fields as what is occurring now will not be what we see in five to ten years from now.

Dr. Shipley provided the names of the Advisory Task Force members which consists of administrators, faculty, staff and students which include two members of the Faculty Senate. In addition, there are ad hoc members to provide resource assistance to the task force. Dr. Shannon Heuberger, has been hired as a consultant to facilitate the process as it is a large undertaking for the university.

Dr. Shipley described the charge to the task force which is to:

1. Consider the landscape of UTSA student interests, regional workforce needs and partnering opportunities, and multidisciplinary research opportunities related to AI, data science, computing and cybersecurity.
2. Recommend a college organizational structure that aligns AI, data science and computing related programs to enhance student success, career readiness and partnering opportunities, transdisciplinary research and funding competitiveness.

Dr. Shipley described the overall timeline for the initiative which begins this spring 2024 with the Planning Advisory Task Force conducting benchmarking, stakeholder input, to include town halls. The website will include a place to provide comments. Dr. Shipley encouraged the Senators to use this process to provide feedback or speak to the Senators on the task force if they have questions. She indicated this will be a constant and open

process. Following this process, the task force will develop several notional models and recommendations at the end of the spring semester. During the summer 2024 and into fall 2024, the leadership will review the recommendations, conduct sessions with college leadership, departmental leadership, and faculty about the proposed notional models and gather more input. A model will be selected and then move into the implementation phase of the initiative, which will include naming the new college. This process will take time and Dr. Shipley stated the earliest for launching the new college would be fall 2025. Dr. Shipley encouraged the Senators to speak to the those who are on the task force if you have any questions, especially those Senators who are on the task force and to use the comment box on the website to share feedback and to look at the updates.

Question – Knowing this initiative is in the planning phase, is the idea that this initiative is an expansion of the School of Data Science to turn it into a college with tenure/tenure-track lines, academic programs, including PhD programs? Or, will the School of Data Science be wrapped into this initiative?

Answer – Dr. Shipley stated that the vision is to create a new college, but it is still being determined how the School of Data Science will fit into the new structure. That will be part of the notional model/recommendations. In addition, the college will look like other colleges at UTSA, it will have departments, tenure homes, possibly research centers and institutes, graduate programs, etc.

Question – Will other departments join the new college?

Answer – Dr. Shipley stated similar to the creation of the College for Health, Community and Policy (HCaP) and the Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design (KCEID), current departments will join the new college. However, the task force has been challenged to think creatively and innovatively to consider new departments that may have new structures. Dr. Shipley stated the goal is to develop a college that has a foundation that will last over time as these fields are constantly changing.

Dr. Shipley provided a brief update on Senate Bill 18 (tenure bill). The committee is meeting every other week and plans to provide recommended policy updates in early March.

Dr. Shipley updated the UTSA's National Impact Travel Award due to rising costs in travel which is open to tenured/tenure-track and FTT faculty, and college or academic support division staff. The purpose of the travel award is to enhance pedagogical skills and showcase the university's accomplishments on a national scale.

- Full-time FTT faculty – reimbursements up to \$2,000 with no matching funds required by the sponsoring college or support unit;
- T/TT faculty – reimbursement **now up to \$2,000 with a 4:1** fund matching required by the unit (\$500 provided by the unit for the full \$2,000 AA support);
- Staff – reimbursement **up to \$1,500** for staff with 3:1 fund matching by the unit (\$500 provided by the unit for the full \$1,500 AA support).

Dr. Shipley announced that REDKE Faculty Travel Support program is now available. It is open to active tenured and tenure-track faculty. The criteria for their program is as follows:

- Maximum total funding – reimbursement up to \$1K for travel provided eligibility criteria has been met;

- Applications must be submitted at least 15 days in advance of travel;
- Travel must be completed before July 19, 2024;
- Deadline: June 30, 2024, by 5:00 p.m. CST
- Request application link – email seedgrants@utsa.edu

Dr. Shipley reminded the Senators that every spring she hosts the Deans/Faculty Senator meetings. Those meetings are being set-up now, so you will see calendar invitations later this month, but mainly in March, depending on scheduling. As a reminder, the meetings are by college.

Dr. Shipley stated that [Celebrate Teaching Week](#) will occur the week of February 19-23, 2024 and is hosted by the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars. The week includes many events and Showcase to attend. She encouraged the Senators to attend events throughout the week.

B. Update from the SB 18 Committee – Sonya Aleman, Maria Tillyer, Marcus Hamilton

Dr. Aleman indicated that the SB 18 Committee plans to present a recommendation to the Faculty Senate at the March 2024 meeting. The committee has been divided into two subcommittees. One focusing on the process and the other subcommittee focusing on the terms and language of the policy to reflect the values and commitment of UTSA and provide clarity and transparency for faculty during this process. A model policy template was provided by UT System for UT System campuses to substantially model their policies. There are certain structures and processes to adhere to, but UTSA is able to align to policies we already have in existence and provide greater clarity. The committee is focusing on that part right now. The committee is creating a flow chart so that if the summary dismissal part is triggered, since that part is new, it will be easy to follow.

Comment - Dr. Packham mentioned the UT System FAC recently met and the UT System Executive Vice Chancellor, Dr. Archie Holmes, mentioned at that meeting that faculty could make recommendations regarding the implementation of the policy, but not necessarily the structure of the law.

Answer - Dr. Tillyer mentioned there are continuing aspects of the bill that the committee has asked Legal Affairs to review to provide insight. For example, if a faculty member is placed on leave without pay would they retain health benefits? If a faculty member is not ultimately summarily dismissed would they be entitled to back pay? Dr. Tillyer stated there are issues that are important to faculty that are not articulated in the model policy that the committee is hoping UTSA can provide clarity before writing their recommendations.

Dr. Hamilton stated one of the big issues the committee has been discussing is surrounding the definitions, which has been difficult, because decisions are made around crucial words and then defining those words can be unclear, especially when the words are not designed to be concrete.

Dr. Aleman further stated that she didn't sense the committee was receiving the message that Dr. Packham mentioned, but that it seems the committee can provide clarity as best

as they can and any allegations derived from the policy would trigger an investigation and need to be substantiated with evidence. In addition, any documented allegation would need a level of severity, frequency, and intentionality. The committee would like to incorporate this language into the UTSA policy as it was not included in the template that was provided to the committee but they feel it provides protection and fairness to faculty at UTSA.

Comment - Dr. Packham mentioned at the UT System FAC meeting there was discussion that HOP policies and procedures at the various UT System institutions related to SB 18 should be in substantial alignment; not exact, but substantial.

Answer -Dr. Aleman and Senate committee members stated that message has not reached the SB 18 committee at UTSA, but would be an interesting topic of conversation.

Question – You stated there was an opportunity to change the policy so that it would be in line with UTSA current policy, needs and philosophy. How successful have you been able to make those changes?

Answer – Dr. Tillyer stated at this time she does not know as the committee is currently drafting their recommendation. The recommendation needs to be reviewed by leadership and Legal. The committee is not able to recommend anything that is counter to the law, but not entirely clear what is being proposed will be adopted. Dr. Hamilton mentioned that after they were provided guidance through the template, the committee reviewed the policies that were already in place at UTSA. The committee then began to review areas that needed modification to address the spirit of the law. Dr. Tillyer provided the following example: if a faculty member is dismissed, that individual can appeal the decision which would allow the President to convene a faculty panel to review the appeal. In that process, the former faculty member could challenge a person's placement on the committee if they felt there was a conflict of interest. Ultimately, that may or may not hold up. The committee is discussing whether or not to suggest some individuals are excluded from serving on these panels, or could the policy further define who could serve on the faculty review panels. So, the committee is not sure at this point if their recommendations will make it through the final approval process. Dr. Aleman added that at this stage of the process, the committee has not been dissuaded from making these types of recommendations to the policy.

C. Report of the Chair – Dr. René Zenteno – Dr. Zenteno was unable to attend today's meeting. He will provide an update at the March meeting.

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

The UT System Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) meeting was held in Austin, TX on January 25-26, 2024. The Council reviewed and discussed SB 18 (comments mentioned above). Dr. Packham stated the FAC research subcommittee is very active and discussed publication costs being reduced or waived. He stated that it seems it is a complicated matter as it spans various offices at UT System and multiple publishing houses. The FAC will receive an update from the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at the April meeting. Another item under discussion is to link various campuses for a symposium, but needs some seed funding for that to occur. Dr. Packham mentioned the Texas Space Institute remains a topic of interest which is driven by UT System and the Texas

legislature and would include space flight, rocket propulsion and human exploration of space.

E. Committee Reports

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

Budget Committee – Mary Dixson, no report

Graduate Council Chair – Victor Villarreal, no report

HOP Committee – Sonya Aleman, no report

University Curriculum Committee – Andy Lloyd

Dr. Lloyd presented the report by the University Curriculum Committee who reviewed the following degree program proposal which was unanimously approved by the committee:

- B.A. Linguistics in the Local and Global Community

The UCC recommendation serves as the motion to approve the proposal and was seconded by Dr. Mary Dixson. There being no further discussion, and no objections, the new degree program was approved.

Research Committee – George Perry

Dr. Perry stated that the Research Committee met with the Interim Vice President for Research, Dr. JoAnn Browning, and asked about the publication fees and possibly using F&A funds to cover these costs. Dr. Perry stated Dr. Browning was open to the idea, and would look into it. The committee previously met with Vice Provost and University Librarian, Dean Hendrix, and he mentioned there are arrangements with several publishers, such as Sage who waives their fees, and others who provide small discounts. However, it is clear it is not enough to encompass everyone. Dr. Perry stated he was encouraged to hear there are conversations at the System level on this subject.

The Research Committee also discussed the reorganization of the research office with Dr. Browning, specifically the pre- and post-award areas and the 5-day rule which has been implemented. Dr. Browning stated the reason this has been instituted is that over 50% of the proposals were submitted on the last day, some in the last hours and this created problems with reviews. She further informed the committee that if a faculty member submits a proposal and then revises it, the entire proposal is reviewed, not just the revisions, to ensure the proposal is compliant. Every time a proposal is revised, it is checked from start to finish.

Dr. Perry stated the other topic that was discussed is the concierge services and when those would be fully staffed. He stated Dr. Browning's goal was to have those areas staffed by end of spring semester as they are still hiring and training staff.

Question – Are they adding new staff or is it a replacement of the ones that were let go in the fall?

Answer – Dr. Perry stated that the Research Office is adding new staff – at least six that he is aware of at this time. But, Dr. Perry will ask for clarification.

Question – Am I correct that one of the major items the research office wants to see in advance regarding grants is the budget?

Answer - Dr. Perry indicated he is not aware of that requirement. He believes the research office wants to review the grant as a whole.

Question – There seems to be an assumption that faculty are aware of the turn-in deadlines in advance. For example, going after an NSF or NIH grant the deadlines are similar every year and that the concierge staff will be on top of those deadlines to assist faculty. However, there are other grants with different deadlines and announced sporadically and faculty are made aware of these grants 30 days in advance of their deadlines, such as military and NASA. Can there be exceptions to policy, otherwise the 5-day rule may make us less competitive.

Answer – Dr. Godet stated that is a good point and an exception to the 5-day rule may need to be considered for grants and contracts with short-term notices – this will need to be further discussed with the VPR office.

There was discussion surrounding the VPR search since the President recently announced he would be conducting the search for the next Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. There was a brief discussion over the concerns of having too many interim positions at the leadership levels and needing continuity. Dr. Perry stated he would ask Dr. Browning about the VPR search at the next Research Committee meeting.

Question – The last time Dr. Browning met with the Faculty Senate she spoke about three new senior leadership positions. Can you clarify the six positions?

Answer – Dr. Perry stated the six positions are in the pre- and post- award areas, concierge staff to assist faculty with their grant proposals. The senior positions are more global.

Question – I thought we already had someone that could write large grants.

Answer – Dr. Perry stated that he is in on one committee for a senior level position and the finalists have experience in bringing faculty together on the large grants and with other universities.

IV. **Unfinished Business – None**

V. **New Business – Chris Packham – The April 8th Total Solar Eclipse (*presentation uploaded to Faculty Senate Sharepoint site*)**

Dr. Packham provided an in-depth and exciting presentation on the upcoming total solar eclipse which will take place on Monday, April 8th. He impressed upon everyone the importance of wearing eclipse glasses or using special viewing equipment. People will be able to see the eclipse on the UTSA Main Campus, but not at the Downtown Campus beginning around noon. Maximum totality will move over Fredericksburg and close to Kerrville.

All UTSA students, faculty and staff are invited to attend the university's official viewing party for the April 8th eclipse [event](#) on the Main Campus narrated by the Chair of Physics and Astronomy Department, Dr. Angela Speck.

Dr. Rica Ramirez, announced the 16th Annual COEHD Research Colloquium which will be held on March 7, 2024 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. in the H-E-B Ballroom on the 1604 Campus. The theme will be “The Nexus of the Sciences and Humanities.” It is open to all colleges, faculty and students. If you are interested in submitting a [proposal](#), please contact Dr. Ramirez or Dr. Rosalind Horowitz as they are due on February 27, 2024.

VI. Adjournment:

There being no further business, a motion was made by Dr. Mike Baumann and seconded by Dr. Mary Dixon; the meeting concluded at 4:40 p.m.