

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 – February 15, 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting
- Graduate Council item – approved at the March 5, 2024 meeting
 - Graduate Council By-laws

CHAIR'S REPORT: René Zenteno

- Updates were provided regarding meetings between the Faculty Senators, their respective Deans, and Interim Provost, Dr. Heather Shipley. The meetings encompassed topics like the aspiration to attain R1 status, securing essential resources for faculty, ensuring faculty support and protection, and promoting shared governance.
- The conversation was productive and the Deans suggested two additional topics: evaluation guidelines at the college and department level, and shared governance, indicating a preference for greater faculty participation in decision-making on college-level committees. Thus far, there have been two meetings: COLFA and COS.
- UTSA has approved the suspension of classes from noon to 2:00 p.m. on April 8th due to the eclipse, as communicated in an [email](#) sent on March 5th.
- An update was provided on [SB 17](#) and [SB 18](#). SB 17 took effect on January 1, 2024. For clarification on the implementation of SB 17, consult with your department/school director. Further clarification can also be sought from your dean and university legal counsel.

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.

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Chair's Report

René Zenteno, Faculty Senate Chair (continued)

- [SB 18](#), effective September 1, 2023, has given institutions additional time to shape policies regarding good cause and summary dismissal of faculty at public academic institutions in Texas. These policies must receive approval from the Faculty Senate by the end of the academic year.
- There seems to be a delay as UTSA and other institutions are seeking to understand and clarify the language in the new law. The goal is to modify policies to ensure faculty support and provide due process in case of potential dismissal.
- The Faculty Senate representatives in the working group shared their concerns, along with those from other Faculty Senate members, about proceeding with the policy process.
- Dr. Zenteno will meet with UT System academic representatives to address policy challenges and seek consensus. The focus will be on developing fair procedures for potential faculty dismissals, managing the process of placing faculty on leave, and establishing a fair hearing process with faculty representation.
- SB 18 has implications for several HOP policies, and this is being carefully considered during the working group's deliberations.
- Dr. Zenteno will consult with Dr. Heather Shipley and Dr. Kelly Nash to clarify questions and comments on SB 17 and SB 18, with an update to be provided at the April meeting.



What is the university's strategy for addressing diversity in faculty and administrative hires now that SB 17 has been implemented?

- *The process of securing representation in hiring, while not targeting specific groups, is being examined. Further clarification on this issue is being sought, and the findings will be reported to the Faculty Senate.*

Comment - SB 17 has affected the planning of programming and activities for Women's History Month.

- *Further clarification will be sought with the Provost and Legal Counsel, after which feedback will be provided.*

Leadership Update: Academic Innovation Update

Melissa Vito, Vice Provost for Academic Innovation, Claudia Arcolin, Executive Director, Teaching & Learning Experiences, and Kelvin Bentley, Program Manager, UT System Office of Academic Affairs

- Full presentation available on the Faculty Senate [website](#).
- The UT System microcredentials project allows alumni, faculty, staff, and students access to courses that reflect the evolving work environment.
- Dr. Bentley highlighted the collaboration with Strada Education Foundation, Google, and Coursera, providing UT System campuses access to Coursera platforms. Faculty can review and embed microcredential pathways into their content, allowing students to earn industry-recognized credentials upon completion.
- The program, while still developing, is generating excitement and growth, with campuses showcasing students who have benefited from microcredential pathways. An unexpected result is faculty members creating their own microcredentials, aiding institutions in identifying skills and competencies mastered by students, thereby enabling students to articulate their knowledge and abilities.
- Dr. Vito acknowledged the efforts of the UT System in negotiating with external providers for funding to provide access to a wide range of industry-recognized microcredentials. Academic Innovation is working to integrate this platform into existing courses and curricula. Her team is exploring co-curricular opportunities, including a potential pilot program for student workers to earn a microcredential.
- UTSA's project team, including representatives of Academic Innovation and Student Success, meets monthly to discuss microcredentials. They facilitate communication across Student Success Centers and conduct training with [Skyepack](#) to help faculty understand and implement microcredentials in their curriculum.
- Academic Innovations has developed a [microcredentials website](#), featuring over 400 courses for the [UTSA Coursera Career Academy](#), which can be selected based on student needs or teaching discipline.
- Faculty are piloting approaches such as using microcredentials as extra credit activities, final projects, or major assignments. One example is the integration of the Google Project Management Certificate into Humanities courses, allowing students to apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to project management. Students will earn the Google Project Management Certificate at the end of the course.
- Faculty are incorporating the IBM Artificial Intelligence Certificate into a Linguistics course, enabling students to learn linguistics while developing data engineering skills. A link has also been created in Canvas, which connects to the Coursera Career Academy board.
- Academic Innovations is collaborating with contacts and faculty champions in each college to identify courses that could enhance competitive skills for students relevant to their programs.
- Dr. Bentley has provided a [form](#) for those interested in joining a community of practice focused on integrating microcredentials with undergraduate learning experiences.





What are UTSA's goals in developing students' skills through certificates?

- Faculty are embedding certificates into courses, enhancing traditional curriculums with specific skills like project management. The university is working with employers to identify key skills for targeting student training. Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) offers microcredentials to working adults and industries for upskilling. The goal is to prepare students for the workforce, understand faculty needs in using microcredentials, and align with business and industry needs.

How is UTSA integrating microcredentialing into its pedagogy? Are instructors being encouraged to incorporate this approach? Does it establish a new form of achievement for students, where they not only complete credit hour requirements but also fulfill microcredential credit requirements?

What is the potential impact on their overall education?

- UTSA and other UT System schools are early adopters of microcredentials, aligning with business and industry needs. The initiative is in its second year, and while it's too early to measure its success, faculty are encouraged to consider microcredentials. Academic Innovation is assisting faculty interested in incorporating microcredentials into their courses and exploring areas without specific course/certificate integration, such as project management in the humanities that would benefit students in the workplace.

What is the cost of the microcredentials?

- The UT System office will cover the cost of Coursera benefits for at least two years, allowing students to use their UTSA ID to access courses. The co-curricular pathway is being utilized by faculty, and the UT System has initiated the Credit for Prior Learning initiative, part of the Texas Credentials for the Future project. This project considers whether credit will be given for courses offered outside university settings. Google has also involved the American Council on Education to provide credit recommendations for their certificates, an initiative the UT System wants to support for system campuses.





Secretary of the General Faculty Chris Packham, Chair

- Dr. Packham and Dr. Godet attended the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, discussing SB 18 regarding faculty leave policies during investigations. Several institutions have reinstated paid leave. Indications suggest that bills concerning higher education, including SB 17 and SB 18, will be reintroduced in the legislative session beginning January 2025.
- At some universities in Texas, administrative roles such as Chair, Dean, Provost, and President are evaluated annually by the Faculty Senate. These evaluations are advisory.
- There was a brief discussion of exploring the evaluation of administrators. Dr. Packham reiterated that the presentation from the Texas Council of Faculty Senators indicated the evaluations were advisory in nature.
- A meeting was held at UT System regarding the Texas Space Institute, a \$350M project funded by the Texas Legislature. Over the summer, overseas events involving medicine and engineering are expected.



2023-2024 FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS

Alvarez College of Business

- **Dennis Lopez**, Dept. of Accounting
- **David Beheshti**, Dept. of Economics
- **Zijun Wang**, Dept. of Finance
- **Catalina Zarate**, 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 Studies

- **Armando Trujillo**, 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
- **Susan Thomas**, 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
- **James Chambers**, 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 Sponsel**, ADTS Representative
- **Lauren Hoffman**, Staff Senate Representative