SENATE HIGHLIGHTS

UTSA Faculty Senate Newsletter

UTSA Faculty Senate

2024-2025 OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Alexis Godet: Chair
Marie Tillyer: Secretary
Zachary Tonzetich: Graduate Council
Valerie Sponsel: ADTS Representative
René Zenteno: Past Chair
Mike Baumann: Parlimentarian
Ginny Garcia-Alexander: Academic Freedom, Evaluation & Merit (AFEM) Committee
Mary Dixson: Budget Committee
Sonya Aleman: HOP Committee
George Perry: Research Committee
Zaid Haddad: Curriculum Committee

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.

Consent Agenda - APPROVED
- Approval of Minutes – January 23, 2025

CHAIR'S REPORT: *Alexis Godet*

- An update was provided regarding the Faculty Advisory Council meeting in Austin on January 30 and 31, which included updates from system leadership. The UT System continues to maintain stable faculty recruitment numbers, potentially attributed to current funding and enrollment figures across the state.
  - System-wide analysis of the institutional funding stability was conducted with decision-making authority delegated to individual universities.
- Additionally, Provost Shipley has completed meetings with all college senators and deans.
- The well-being listening sessions were held last month at Main Campus and Downtown Campus. A Brand Socialization listening session also took place last month.
- The March senate meeting will be conducted in person.

Leadership Update
Heather Shipley, Ph.D., *Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

- The provost acknowledged the current ambiguity surrounding federal grants. As we await decisions from the current legislative session, she is continuing discussions with stakeholders including the Senate, Department Chairs, Deans and UT System.
- The university administration is working along with UT System through government relationships to better understand legislative developments on both the House and Senate sides. At the federal level, work continues with UT System to communicate the significance of research initiatives and their impact on workforce development, student success and community engagement.
  - While uncertainty remains at present, leadership is committed to providing updates as new information becomes available.

Has there been any communication sent from university leadership to address current concerns?
- *Communications have been sent from the Research Office regarding federal-level actions, and information has been shared through Deans and other university leadership channels.*

Is UTSA developing contingency plans for potential impacts to federal grants?
- *Data is being collected, and model scenarios will be developed, so next steps can be considered.*

What reassurance can be offered regarding the Department of Education letter from February 14?
- *Jason King responded that the letter contained a statement from the Department of Education regarding their view on existing law. Following discussions with the UT System this week, we understand they are seeking further clarification and working with all institutions. As no specific deadline was mentioned in the letter, they are awaiting the conclusion of the legislative session to provide additional guidance.*

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

- An update on the 89th legislative session was provided. Senators were given an overview of institutional and employee rights and responsibilities regarding legislative activities, including state law and Regents' rules pertaining to faculty involvement in legislative matters.
- UTSA faculty may interact with the legislative process as private citizens. However, state employees cannot use state resources, email, funds, etc., for such activities.
- A review of key dates and processes for the current legislative session was provided. Due to the nature of the legislative process and pending bill reviews, there is limited preparation that can be done at this time.
- An overview of the legislative landscape and priorities for this session was presented. Updates on legislation can be tracked online where individuals can select bills of interest to receive real-time updates and alerts through the official Texas capitol website.
- The Office of the President ensures the tracking of bills relevant to UTSA and maintains in-person representation in Austin to monitor proceedings.
  - All slides and presentations are available on the Senate's SharePoint site.

Are there opportunities for faculty to contribute to discussions of the value of higher education and ongoing changes?
- *Yes, we actively seek subject-matter experts to speak to the media and collaborate with our network.*

Can faculty members write op-eds based on their professional expertise to inform the public?
- *Yes, faculty members and groups of faculty can write op-eds about matters of public concern. However, they must clearly state the capacity under which they are writing and that they are not writing on behalf of UTSA—not doing so can be a violation. It is permissible, when you have clearly clarified your capacity as a private citizen. Additionally, faculty should not use institutional email, letterhead or other university resources when writing such pieces.*

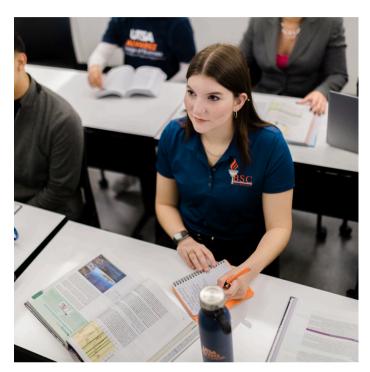## Secretary of the General Faculty Report
Marie Tillyer, *Chair*

- An update was provided regarding upcoming elections. Senators serve for a three-year term and may be re-elected. Units that need to hold elections for the next academic year will receive email notifications.
- Additionally, a Vice Chair is needed. The position requires a nominating committee and notifications will be sent about this process. The Senate also needs to select a parliamentarian for the upcoming year. Those interested in these roles should contact the current leadership.

Curriculum Committee
Zaid Haddad, *Chair*

- The Committee Chair opened the discussion regarding the Undergraduate Certificate in Semiconductor Engineering.
  - The Senate voted and approved the certificate.

Graduate Council
Zachary Tonzetich, *Chair*

- The committee presented updated guidelines for mentoring and best practices for doctoral students. The document containing resources and mentoring recommendations will be distributed to all departments.
- No program approvals occurred this month but several are anticipated. The committee also reviewed current bylaws to ensure continued compliance during the merger with UT Health San Antonio.

Research Committee
George Perry, *Chair*

- A written report has been posted on the SharePoint site regarding publishing discounts and faculty resources. Contact the committee with any questions.

New Business

- A statement was presented for discussion. Due to time constraints, the statement was held for review at a later session.

2024-2025
FACULTY SENATE MEMBERS

Alvarez College of Business
- **Juan Mao,** *Dept. of Accounting*
- **David Beheshti,** *Dept. of Economics*
- **Zijun Wang,** *Dept. of Finance*
- **Catalina Zarate,** *Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative*
- **Anthony Rios,** *Dept. of Information Systems & Cyber Security*
- **Pepe Chang,** *Dept. of Management*
- **Minghe Sun,** *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 Alemán,** *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*
- **Miltos Alamaniotis,** *Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering*
- **August (Gus) Allo,** *Fixed-Term Track Representative*
- **Marissa Wechsler,** *Department of Biomedical and Chemical Engineering*
- **Zhigang Feng,** *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 Dixson,** *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*
- **Emilie Amrein,** *Interdisciplinary School for Engagement in Humanities and Social Sciences*

College of Sciences
- **Kirk Schanze,** *Dept. of Chemistry*
- **John Quarles,** *Dept. of Computer Science*
- **Hongjie Xie,** *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*
- **Alperen Ergur,** *Dept. of Mathematics*
- **Rahul Raghavan,** *Dept. of Molecular, Microbiology and Immunology*
- **Cristian Botez,** *Dept. of Physics and Astronomy*

College for Health, Community and Policy
- **Chantal Fahmy,** *Dept. of Criminology & Criminal Justice*
- **David Weber,** *Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative*
- **Chris Reddick,** *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
- **Marguerite Newcomb,** *Fixed-term Tenure Track Representative*

Ex-Officio Members
- **Alexis Godet,** *Chair, Faculty Senate*
- **René Zenteno,** *Past Chair, Faculty Senate*
- **Marie Tillyer,** *Secretary of the General Faculty*
- **Zachary Tonzetich,** *Chair, Graduate Council*
- **Mark Bayer,** *Department Chair Council Representative*
- **Valerie Sponsel,** *ADTS Representative*
- **Lauren Hoffman,** *Staff Senate Representative*