



Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen

## **2023-2024 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 3:00–5:00pm CST Via Zoom**

### **Senators Present:**

Mohamed Abdel-Raheem, Jair J. Aguilar, Antonio Aguirre, Michelle Alvarado, Mataz Alcoutlabi, Bruno Arthur, George Atisa, Roseann Bacha-Garza, Norma Beardwood-Roper, Ben Brown, Erica Buchberger, Sonia Chapa, Joel Chirinos, Ruth Crutchfield, Laurie De Leon Escobedo, Louis Falk, Marcus Farris, Fuat Firat, Christopher Gabler, Suad Ghaddar, Jimmy Gleason, Jonathan Guist, Marcela Hebbard, Kip Austin Hinton, Wanrong Hou, Joseph D. Hovey, Krista Jobson, Pauline Jojo, Ulku Karabulut, Jeong Han Kim, Megan Keniry, Sanjeev Kumar, Kye-Hwan Lee, Qinyu Liao, Denise Longoria, Lisa Longoria, Cynthia Lopez Guerrero, Gladys Maestre, Ferenc Moldovanyi, Randall Monty, Noushin Nouri, Tamer Oraby, Cynthia Paccacerqua, George Padilla, Marisa Palacios Knox, Monika Rabarison, Genaro Ramirez-Correa, Padmanabhan Rengasamy, Jack Ruelas, Jeannean Ryman, Laura Seligman, Silvia Patricia Solís, Owen Temby, Ahmed Touhami, Viren Vejoya, Robert Velez, Sarah Williams-Blangero, Aaron Wilson, Haiyan Zhou

### **Guests Present:**

Ruby Cardenas-Solis, Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto, Joy Esquierdo, Brian Evans, Criselda Garcia, Giorgio Gotti, Michael Guerrero, Michael Lehker, Eunice Lerma, Eron Manusov, Jung-II Oh, Alejandra Peña, Emmy Pérez, Alma Rodriguez, Dora Saavedra, Paul Sharpe, Christian K. Sobngwi, Justin White

### **Senators Absent:**

Mircea Chipara, Elizabeth Deven-Hernandez, José Esteban Hernandez, Dean Kyne, Salma Mahmood, Pedro Martinez, Nancy Nadeau, Nilanjana Paul, Ricardo Pizzinato, Mahmoud K. Quweider, José Antonio Rodriguez, Clarissa Salinas, Hooman Tabatabai-Mir, Mohammed Uddin, Christian Zuniga

## Minutes:

- I. **Meeting Called to Order at 3:02pm**
- II. **Report of FS Parliamentarian – Senator Falk**
  - a. Happy Valentine’s Day!
  - b. Roberts Rules
- III. **Report of FS Secretary – Senator Monty**
  - a. Election bylaws now on FS website
  - b. Approval of January minutes
  - c. Motion to approve: **Gabler**; Seconded: Rabarison
  - d. **Approved: 61 Against: 2 Abstain: 0**
- IV. **Report of FS President — Senator Paccacerqua**
  - a. Update from UTSEC meeting
    - i. Academic Affairs & Quality Committee: differentiate between disagreement and unprofessionalism; recommendations for training for chairs, looking for feedback on what UTS’s development of that training might look, **send recommendations to Paccacerqua**; discussing the role of micro-credentialing and student skilling, system-wide
    - ii. Research
      1. Travel costs
      2. Opening access to research resources in our libraries across UT system
      3. Public outreach; How the public looks and sees faculty at different institutions
    - iii. General council
      1. Requested UT FAC rep to sit on UT system working groups
      2. There's a group working on what it means to be an HSI within UT system. That has, you know, multiple universities with that designation working together.
      3. Faculty burnout, faculty wellness, an offspring of an earlier initiative that focused on faculty burnout in health institutions especially with and after Covid.
      4. Civic education (not much information on that, except that exists)
      5. Affirm UTS philosophy of shared governance (waiting on response)
      6. Kelvin Bently program manager for Texas Credentials for the Future;
  - b. UTRGV Level Conversations
    - i. Meet every two weeks with Zayas and Saavedra
    - ii. Share ideas for improving work experience with FSEC
    - iii. Had difficulty filling last-minute vacancies on University T&P committee
    - iv. FS Education Policy committee had its first meeting on AI and text-generating software, we’ll be hearing from them soon

- v. Working with HDO students to develop set of recommendations for how FS and faculty and reach out to different communities regarding the significance of faculty work in those communities

**V. Report of FS President-elect – Senator Gabler**

- a. FAC Research Committee
  - i. Pan-System symposium, get everybody in the System looking for collaborative and cooperative opportunities
  - ii. Advocating for graduate/post-doc support
  - iii. Update on UTS discounted publication costs
  - iv. Develop public-facing campaign regarding the importance of tenure in the research field, especially where confidence in public education has dwindled
  - v. Staff & infrastructure issues
  - vi. Maintain humanities and arts grant research across Texas
  - vii. Space & Texas!
- b. FAC Governance Committee
  - i. Attempting to get UTS to affirm FAC’s statement on faculty governance
    - 1. See also: 2018 White Paper
  - ii. UTRGV is behind the curve re how shared governance is operationalized in the HOP

**VI. Report of FS Past-president – Senator Hinton**

- a. New Senators: [Get a FS shirt!](#)
- b. If you ordered a shirt and didn’t get it, Hinton will track it down.

**VII. Old Business**

- a. FS Committee Reports
  - i. Academic Freedom & Responsibility: Gabler
    - 1. Can’t redefine terms; the terms used are the ones that were legislated; System will not support amendments that will attempt to define terms that were not defined; We CAN define policies and procedures
    - 2. HOP ADM 06-507: Current policy for terminating someone with tenure (with good cause) <-- this is what we may want to change
    - 3. Model policy; quite similar to 507
    - 4. “summary dismissal” is one of the big differences between current policy and new SB, based on faculty being a threat to the university or national security
  - ii. Paccacerqua: What do you need from Senators?
    - 1. Gabler: Document ready for FSEC, and then can be shared with FS. We need specific comments and suggestions for where we might want to make changes for the policy (model or current).
    - 2. Paccacerqua: FS might have to meet in June and then HOP committee will be able to vote

3. Gabler: Gotta move quickly if we want to get through the HOP process before summer!
- iii. Seligman: What would prevent admin from putting someone on paid leave and forcing a decision w/o any process? What is the purpose of the tribunal?
  1. Gabler: President can overrule tribunal (and it will go to the Chancellor's after that, and they just have to justify why they overruled)
  2. Falk: Policy says findings are recommendations, not final

### **VIII. Guest Presentations:**

- a. Brian Evans (UT Austin Engineering; AAUP)
  - i. [Slides](#); Phone: 5125165991
  - ii. Speaking as an individual, not as a member of any group/organization
  - iii. Shared governance is anybody part of the campus community
  - iv. Difficult but rewarding work
  - v. Shared governance comes from shared effort by presidents, boards, and faculty
  - vi. Think of academic freedom as the freedom of censorship from the institution or government
  - vii. If we don't have the room to discuss things, then students don't have the room to discuss things
  - viii. Questions/Discussion
    1. Firat: When I was department chair, TT to NTT faculty was ~10/1, now it's 3/1. People are being exploited by being given lower salaries and benefits. Is this due to administrative bloat (look at the budgets)?
    2. Gabler: Policy for financial exigency is impressive! Maybe a policy on when an academic unit might be dissolved or reorganized. What is your advice for a big, that has real implications for how administrators can operate and make decisions?
      - a. Evans: Policy took one year to write and five years for the president to sign it! Ombuds have a very clear value for everybody, same thing for financial emergency. At least we're making decisions, so we're going to prioritize things admin moving too quickly won't do.
    3. Paccacerqua: What does it look like for the executive committee to work?
      - a. Evans: Weekly engagement; relationship between officers and the rest of the Executive Committee. The Faculty Council Executive Committee meets with the President, Provost, VP, Legal affairs, and several other administrators once a month. We also have another body called the

Graduate Assembly. It's for all graduate matters. They advise the graduate dean.

4. Temby: Academic units are going to be dissolved, split, combined. Is there an opportunity in shared governance for redefining academic units and deciding where faculty will go?
  - a. Evans: Couldn't get that in our policy. Want a good financial exigency policy to handle that case. AAUP's case is that if you get tenure, you're tenured at that university, so it should go to the Board of Regents; you have a property right as a tenured faculty member. AAUP has policies you can adapt.
  - b. Temby: You kind of conflated combination/dissolution of units. Might there be other reasons programs are created or dissolved?
  - c. Evans: I would always like to see some oversight in those things. But you're going to have to get into your policies. They have a Faculty Senate, maybe your executive committee, figure out some way to do this that you have input in the decision making
5. Saavedra: What about when there is no financial exigency but an entire department is redistributed (without shared governance) to other departments. What happens to SACS accreditation?
  - a. Evans: SACS will do reviews at 10 and 5 years and any time they get a complaint. You can file an anonymous report with SACS COC! At the very least, they will contact the university president to see what's going on. Contact AAUP, too!
6. Hebbard: A little over half of the faculty at UTRGV are non-tenure track. What are the limitations of faculty governance?
  - a. Evans: This is where faculty governance can make a big difference. We, like a lot of other universities, went to the Assistant Associate, full Professor of Practice Assistant Associate, full professor of instruction, also with clinical titles and others. So it was a. It was parallel to the tenure track and tenure titles, which means every six years, there's the expectation that you would be eligible for promotion to the next rank in parallel like you would have as a tenure track assistant professor.
  - b. Hebbard: Is R1 research activity important at all ranks? Some of the policies are against lecturers wanting to do things to benefit the university and institution in general.

- c. Evans: We changed university-wide titles and updated T&P policies. NTT faculty could select 2/3 teaching/service/research. Institutionalize that policy!
- 7. Firat: in your third slide. It says, faculty have primary decision-making authority in subject matter and methods of instruction. Can't this be really a matter of how the departments are organized and curriculum?
  - a. Evans: Faculty Senate would have to approve curriculum changes. As an individual, you have freedom about the texts and materials you choose; if your department votes on a text, you can choose additional materials.
    - i. NOTE: Is this true at UTRGV?

IX. **Meeting adjourned**

- a. Falk: End meeting, Evans will stick around to answer questions.
- b. Motion to adjourn: XXXX; Seconded: Abdel-Raheem**
- c. Meeting adjourned at 5:01pm; closed at 5:02pm**
- d. Next meeting:
  - i. March 5, 2024