

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 – March 7, 2024
- Graduate Council Items – approved at the April 2, 2024 meeting
 - Graduate Certificate in Public History
 - Graduate Council Executive Committee (September 2024-May 2025)
 - Chair – Dr. Zachary Tonzetich (Chemistry)
 - Secretary – Dr. Gabriela Romero Uribe (Chemical Engineering/ Biomedical Engineering)

CHAIR'S

REPORT: René Zenteno

- Productive meetings were held between the Faculty Senators, their respective Deans, and the Interim Provost. One significant outcome was the Deans' agreement to schedule additional meetings with the Faculty Senators in the fall, in addition to the regular spring meeting. ([presentation](#) uploaded to Faculty Senate SharePoint site and website)

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.



Leadership Update: Academic Affairs Update Heather Shipley, Ph.D., Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

- Recent data from UT System and [Steppingblocks](#) shows that over the past three years, the average salary of all UTSA graduates is \$65,082, with master's degree holders earning an average of \$75,018 and doctoral degree holders earning \$94,536. Additionally, 90% of UTSA students who graduated in the last three years remain and work in Texas.
- UTSA will be conducting a Staff and Faculty Compensation Study. This study will review the compensation levels for staff and fixed-term-track faculty, considering national peer and aspiring market trends. For the tenure-track faculty members, the university uses the CUPA dashboards for market trend analysis.
- A staff study, starting in April and concluding in late November 2024, will be conducted alongside a faculty review. The university, which has around 1,500 unique staff job titles, has enlisted the services of the consulting firm WTW. This firm will assist in the review, analyze market trends and data, and prioritize information to facilitate compensation adjustments.
- As referenced in the April 2nd email, changes to faculty promotion practices include:
 - 10% salary increase or \$5,000/\$7,000 for TT/T Faculty approved for P&T
 - \$3,000 for tenured faculty meeting expectations or higher for CPE
 - Established FTT promotion minimums
- The changes were based on analysis and the recommendations of the ad hoc committee from the past academic year. This committee included Deans, Chairs, faculty, and Faculty Senate members. The committee established consistent FTT promotion minimums across colleges after reviewing information from various institutions. Faculty receiving promotion, tenure, or CPE in Fall 2025 will see the new rates, aligning with the university's budget cycle and evaluation periods.
- The [Campus Experience Task Force](#), launched in Fall 2023 as part of the university's strategic plan refresh process, includes faculty, staff, and students. It aims to identify best practices that enhance the campus experience, develop guidelines for flexible work arrangements, and optimize academic course and program modality. The task force has formed working groups, such as:
 - Wellbeing & Community
 - Flexible Work Playbook
 - Academic Experience
 - Value Proposition
- The recommendation highlights offering core and high-demand courses in multiple modalities where suitable. Planned actions include continuing to offer courses in various formats, such as asynchronous, online, synchronous, hybrid, face-to-face, etc., and removing the "online hybrid" modality starting in Spring 2025.

Rank	Increase*
Lecturer to Senior Lecturer	\$2,000 or 5%
Senior to Assistant	\$3,000 or 5%
Assistant to Associate	\$4,000 or 5%
Associate to Full	\$5,000 or 5%

*whichever is greater.

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- The working group found that less than 1% of courses use the online hybrid modality, which was mainly implemented for lab courses during the pandemic. Currently, 78% of courses are taught face-to-face or in a hybrid format.
- The Academic Experience working group recommends holding regular meetings between academic advising and departments for timely updates on course offerings, catalog changes, and input on course sequencing.
- The planned action includes leveraging the Associate Deans Council on Undergraduate Studies to facilitate communication among Advising, Departments, and College Curriculum Committees.
- For better communication and collaboration, the Academic Experience working group recommends improving student onboarding with online orientations, raising resource awareness via info sessions from different academic units, and nurturing relationships between faculty and students through hosting various events.
- The recommended action plan involves leveraging the Ruby Tuesday group of vice provosts to identify improvements in communication related to existing resources, such as the First-Year Journey Working Group, to enhance student success.



Will these changes to faculty promotion be supplemental to the merit-based ones?

- *Yes, the amounts for promotion and tenure, CPE, and FTT promotion are separate from any merit process. It's also important to note that the merit process and the market retention analysis are distinct mechanisms.*

Now that salary surveys have been separated by levels, can we expect to see this information reflected in recruitment materials? Graduate salary information on the website would be beneficial to assist with recruitment.

- *Dr. Shipley agreed that this information is a valuable resource the university can use effectively for recruiting students to graduate programs.*

What was the previous salary increase for CPE, or is this its first implementation?

- *UTSA is possibly the first UT System institution, and possibly the first State institution in Texas, to offer a salary increase following a CPE review. This was implemented as another mechanism for salary changes, in addition to the existing three promotion opportunities – assistant, associate and full professor ranks.*

What distinguishes hybrid courses from online hybrid courses?

- *Hybrid courses are structured to meet face-to-face on one day and online on another day. Asynchronous online hybrid courses, on the other hand, have one asynchronous day and one synchronous day.*





UTSA Office of Legal Affairs Update

Jason King, Associate Vice President of Strategic Risk Management and Chief Legal Officer

- An update was provided on speech and political activity in response to an increase in inquiries about various topics such as [SB 17](#) and [SB 18](#), the current political scenario, and the forthcoming election and legislative session. The complexity of these rules and the potential repercussions for individuals expressing their opinions were also emphasized.
- In 2022, the UT System adopted the Chicago Statement on Free Speech:
 - *"The Board of Regents' adoption of the Chicago Statement on Free Speech underscores The University of Texas System's long-standing commitment to freedom of speech and expression on our campuses in a manner that promotes open inquiry, provides transparency and upholds the rule of law. We will always value and embrace the debate of competing ideas and principles."* - Chairman Kevin Eltife
- A condensed version of the Chicago Statement could state that more speech is better, and faculty members are both allowed and required to voice their opinions and participate in debates.
- He provided the statement from the UT System Chancellor, J.B. Milliken, who stated:
 - *"The freedom to openly exchange ideas is essential to learning, and the adoption of the principles of the Chicago Statement on Free Speech will support free and healthy discussion and debate across UT institutions. This freedom is at the core of the college experience and a democratic society and must be protected."*
- The UT System has a webpage dedicated to their [commitment to free speech](#), which states in part:
 - *"In a word, the fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most individual members of the UT System community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the UT System community, not for the UT System or the UT institutions, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not be seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose...."*
- The statements provide a platform for discussing and debating ideas at UTSA, particularly related to these topics
- The Texas Government Code 556.004 imposes restrictions on political activity, specifically prohibiting state officers or employees from using their official authority or resources, including those of a university, to interfere with election results or for any political purpose.
- Guidance on campaigns and political activity can be referenced from the policies outlined in HOP 2.46 Faculty Rights and Responsibilities and [HOP 4.19 Involvement of the University and University Personnel in Community or Political Affairs](#):
 - University employees are prohibited from using public funds, official authority, work time, or other state resources in support of a campaign or candidate, and cannot coerce or restrict lawful contributions to a campaign or candidate.
 - University employees are not allowed to lobby elected officials, their offices/staff, and/or political candidates unless expressly authorized by UTSA.
 - University employees have the right to support or oppose political campaigns or candidates in their personal time and can contribute personal funds in their private capacity.
 - Under [Texas Education Code Section 51.9315\(f\)](#), free speech is specifically protected in the university's common outdoor areas.

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- A simplified rubric for political speech was provided:
 - When teaching a course in the classroom, reference the Chicago Statement for guidance on academic freedom and the exchange of ideas.
 - The document highlights the potential misuse of UTSA's authority or resources for political purposes by employees or faculty members when they are not in their teaching mode.
 - Consider the capacity in which the individual is speaking, as a government employee or a private citizen.



How can a faculty member differentiate between being an expert in their field and being a private citizen when engaging in political activities or speech? Outsiders might perceive faculty as representatives of the university, assuming they speak on its behalf.

- *To avoid being mistaken for speaking on behalf of their institution, a faculty member can clarify at the outset that they are speaking as a private citizen or expressing a personal opinion. Not doing so doesn't necessarily imply wrongdoing, but it may require further clarification later.*



University Curriculum Committee Andy Lloyd, Chair

- A report by the University Curriculum Committee was presented, which included the review and unanimous approval of three new concentrations.
 - B.S. in Kinesiology, with an added concentration in Strength & Conditioning
 - B.A. in Equity & Education, 4-8 Language/Reading/Social Studies, with an added concentration in Bilingual Supplemental Certification
 - B.A. in Equity & Education, 4-8 Math/Science, with an added concentration in Bilingual Supplemental Certification



- The University Curriculum Committee presented their review of the 2024-2026 Undergraduate Catalog. Each college was reviewed and received approval.
- The University Curriculum Report was approved, leading to consent of the 2024-2026 Undergraduate Catalog.

HOP Committee

Sonya Alemán, Chair

- Dr. Zenteno provided a review of SB 18 and noted that the Faculty Senate will vote on the policy review committee's recommendations at the May 2, 2024 meeting.
- Among UT System institutions, UTSA's Faculty Senate is uniquely collaborating with its leadership to review and develop procedures, unlike most institutions which are using their legal offices to draft procedures before submitting them to their Faculty Senates for review.
- An updated policy document on summary dismissal at UTSA was presented, which had been modified from the Model Policy provided by UT System. This policy is a recommendation for the dismissal process and does not endorse SB 18. The policy will be shared with Faculty Senators for voting at the next meeting on May 2, 2024. If UTSA does not approve a process, the UT System will resort to the Model Policy.
- The changes implemented by the committee from the start of the process were described:
 - Once a disciplinary action of good cause or summary dismissal is determined based on a decision or identified behavior, the President will prepare a memo, as per UTSA procedures.
 - The memo should explain the rationale for choosing summary dismissal over the good cause process.
 - The memo should detail how the frequency, severity, and intentionality of behavior contribute to one of three points, which are integral to the original legislative language and cannot be changed:
 - Creates a serious safety threat to students, faculty, staff, or members of the public
 - Creates a significant threat to national security
 - Creates a significant adverse impact on the operation of the institution
- The previous points were noted to initiate the summary dismissal process, but a request was made by the committee for documentation to be provided for the benefit of the faculty member.
 - The working group is proposing a change in the Model Policy's language from "hearing opportunity" to "meeting opportunity" to more accurately describe the initial interaction between the faculty member and the Provost.
 - The working group proposes to use the existing hearing panel and pool structure from [HOP 2.36](#) for the appeal process after a faculty member's termination, instead of creating a new one. This ensures adequate faculty representation and oversight mechanisms in the panel.
- The recommendations provided by the HOP Committee after reviewing the document are as follows:
 - Clarify the language on the issue of back pay for reinstated faculty and the extent of the President's discretion following a decision. It is currently unclear whether a reinstated faculty member is eligible for back pay.
 - The policy should be integrated and adopted into the HOP to ensure oversight and consistency in implementation across the institution.
 - The HOP Committee emphasized the Faculty Senate's role in the selection of the Standing Pool as stated in HOP 2.36, expressing a desire for transparency in the selection process and availability of the list to the Faculty Senate.
 - The Faculty Senate plays a crucial role in participating in upper administration searches, including for positions like the Chief Academic Officer and President, as they are key decision-makers at the university.
 - A report is recommended to evaluate the frequency of good cause or summary dismissal processes at UTSA.
- In the working group sessions, it was realized that the language that transitions a case from good cause to summary dismissal couldn't be altered. The focus shifted towards clarifying the process and adding protections for the faculty. This was accomplished by introducing a memo at the start of the process and clarifying the hearing panel process at the end.



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When is the feedback required to be provided for the Faculty Senate to be prepared for the document vote at the meeting on May 2, 2024?

- *Dr. Zenteno and Dr. Alemán have set a deadline of April 19, 2024, for receiving feedback. All comments should be submitted to Dr. Alemán for the HOP committee's review.*

Will this policy be integrated into the existing guidelines, or will it be established as a new standalone policy?

- *The plan is to discuss and approve the policy document, which will subsequently be incorporated into the HOP.*

Where is the Model Policy shared by the UT System located? In addition, where can the document containing the modifications be found?

- *The documents will be shared with the Faculty Senate via email by April 5, 2024.*

Does this policy apply only to tenured or tenure-track faculty, or does it also apply to those on fixed-term, 9-month, multi-year contracts?

- *The policy of termination for good cause is applicable to all faculty members, though most changes primarily affect those with tenure.*

Is the general approach to have the faculty review the model policy along with its adjustments while recognizing that the legislative language cannot be altered? Should the evaluation focus be on the "process" and feedback regarding any obscure elements?

- *Faculty should focus their review on the process, bearing in mind that any recommendations made will be subject to approval by the UT System.*

What will occur if the UT System does not approve the changes submitted by UTSA?

- *The UT System will review the proposed changes and provide feedback. If all changes are accepted, the process will then proceed to the standard UTSA HOP review and approval process, as noted by Dr. Zenteno.*

The committee's role was to modify aspects of the UT System-provided Model Policy, focusing on decision recording at critical stages to protect faculty and assist with appeals. The summary dismissal track, used in exceptional circumstances, was not equivalent to the good cause track and required documentation.





Research Committee George Perry, Chair

- Dr. Alex Godet and the committee met with Dr. JoAnn Browning to discuss research operations at UTSA. While improvements have been noted, further advancements are needed, particularly in faculty research support. The committee plans to meet again with Dr. Browning and will provide an update at the next meeting.



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

- **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 Sponset**, ADTS Representative
- **Lauren Hoffmann**, Staff Senate Representative