

# 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 – April 4, 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting
- Election of Secretary of the Faculty Senate – Dr. Marie Tillyer
- Election of Parliamentarian – Dr. Michael Baumann
- Graduate Council item – approved by electronic vote on April 15, 2024
  - Graduate Certificate in Teaching

## CHAIR'S REPORT: René Zenteno

- Incoming Faculty Senate chair, Dr. Alexis Godet, will organize the August summer retreat to set and align priorities for the upcoming year. More details about the retreat will be provided later.
- The Faculty Senate addressed the following topics with the administration in 2023-2024:
  - Address salary/pay issues at all stages of the faculty lifecycle for all faculty types (FTT, T/TT, adjunct)
    - Merit increase
    - Recommendations from the Ad-Hoc Compensation Committee leading to updated compensation for successful tenure track faculty promotions and CPE reviews
    - UTSA Staff and Fixed-Term Track Faculty Compensation Study
  - Maintaining R1 Status/Research Infrastructure
    - UTSA Office of Research reorganization; and,
    - Post-award administration updates

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**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: Dr. René Zenteno (continued)

- Shared Governance
  - Participation in the University Leadership Council (ULC) to keep the Faculty Senate informed of university activities
  - Check-in between Faculty Senators, Deans, and Provost
  - Implementation process of [SB17](#) and [SB18](#)
  - Approval of various graduate and undergraduate degree programs
  - Review process of the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP)
- Protections for all faculty
  - SB17 and SB18 Implementation Process
- The Faculty Senate passed new bylaws this year.

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

- An update on the new college planning process was provided. The task force shared the first draft of its conceptual models through campus forums. Feedback will be provided to the group following their presentation next week. Information on the new college planning process can be found on the initiative's [website](#).
- The next phase of the initiative includes:
  - Sharing the Phase 2 Report in June
  - Conducting conversations with faculty and departments proposed in the notional model
  - Developing iterations of the proposed models with additional opportunities for feedback. These models will form the final model for the college.
- The launch of Simple Syllabus for all faculty is expected in Fall 2024, following successful pilot programs. The platform is being implemented under the leadership of Academic Innovation. Key features of the platform include:
  - Integration with Canvas
  - Simplification of syllabi management
  - The ability for faculty to track student engagement through syllabi
  - Adherence to HB 2504 for a publicly accessible syllabus repository
- The Office of Academic Innovation provides faculty resources and training, including workshops, department trainings, and consultations. UTSA Digital Learning has also created a [website](#) with resources such as templates, FAQs, and instructional videos.

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- The collaboration between Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate was highlighted through involvement in various activities such as task forces, working groups, committees, Chair's Council, and through memos and discussions during the academic year 2023-2024:
  - Compensation - The faculty compensation practices for P&T, CPE and FTT promotion have been updated, including new rates for successful promotions.
    - Accomplished with input from a committee that included deans, department chairs, and the Faculty Senate
    - An internal review of the FTT minimum pay scale is currently underway, alongside a staff compensation study. This involves research, data collection, and assessments from peer and aspiring institutions.
  - Legislative Changes – SB 17 and SB 18
    - The Faculty Senate participated in the SB 17 Program, Activity, and Initiative Review (PAIR) process with Dr. Zenteno as the representative.
    - The SB 18 committee was established to recommend changes to the HOP, including three department chairs and three Faculty Senators.
  - Transparency and Representation
    - Faculty Senate collaborated on key institutional initiatives including:
      - Klesse College Dean Search
      - College of Sciences Dean Search
      - New College Task Force
      - Annual meetings with the Provost, college dean and Faculty Senators
- The May 2024 Commencement schedule is as follows:
  - May 15 – Doctoral Conferral Ceremony – Arts Building Recital Hall
  - May 16 – Roadrunner Walk – Student Union Paseo
  - May 17 – Commencement Ceremonies – Alamodome



### When are salary adjustments expected to occur following a successful CPE?

- *The salary adjustments following a successful CPE will be implemented in Fall 2025, aligning with the budget cycle. Those who succeed in the Spring 2025 CPE can expect to see these increases in Fall 2025.*

### Do the salary adjustments apply to all faculty members who receive early promotion and tenure?

- *All new increases will take effect from Fall 2025. Notifications for successful promotion and tenure, including those who achieve early promotion and tenure, will occur in January 2025. Those who are successful will receive their increases in Fall 2025.*

### Comment - The Simple Syllabus tool was highly regarded by a Faculty Senator for its features such as the ability to upload assignments and modify the syllabus template, which are found to be very helpful by students.

- *The two-year pilot of the new program was beneficial, allowing faculty and students to familiarize themselves with it.*





## **Secretary of the General Faculty Report:** ***Chris Packham, Chair***

- A report from the UT System Faculty Advisory Council discussed higher education items for the 2025 legislative session, including:
  - Role of the Faculty Senate
  - Implementation of SB17 and SB18
- A discussion was held on the topic of publication costs, led by the FAC Research Committee. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and the Chief Librarian showed readiness to establish a common publication link or negotiate reduced fees with publishing houses. Despite existing fee reductions from some publishers, a more cohesive solution is required for the faculty.
- Dr. Packham, who first served as a senator in 2014, has had a significant tenure with the Faculty Senate, including roles as the chair of the Research Committee and Secretary of the General Faculty. He represented the Faculty Senate at the UT System FAC and was recently elected to the FAC Executive Committee as Parliamentarian. He will continue to serve as the Chair of the FAC Research Committee from Fall 2024.

## **University Curriculum Committee** ***Andy Lloyd, Chair***

- A report was presented by the University Curriculum Committee reviewing the proposal for:
  - Undergraduate Certificate - Application of Behavior Analysis to Human Behavior.
    - The proposal was reviewed and unanimously approved.
- The University Curriculum Report was unanimously approved.

## **Research Committee** ***George Perry, Chair***

- Dr. JoAnn Browning, Interim Vice President for UTSA Research, announced recently filled leadership positions within VPR during a meeting with the committee on April 18, 2024, as reported by Dr. Alex Godet.
  - She highlighted improvements in inter-office communications. Any matters concerning the research enterprise should be forwarded to Dr. George Perry for relay to Dr. Browning for her attention.
- Dr. Browning has been promoting federal science grants and fostering relationships with funding agencies through travels to various external agencies like the NSF in Washington, D.C.

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- The Office of Research has received 29 proposals for the cluster hiring initiative. The proposals will be reviewed with the Deans and Academic Affairs to decide which ones can be implemented.
- There was a brief discussion on strategies for UTSA to better position itself to secure large grants, such as those between \$10-\$20 million.



**It's been noticed that setting up post awards and grant accounts can sometimes take longer than expected, often around six months. Additionally, it seems that email responses may be delayed. Would it be helpful to share these observations with Dr. Perry to be relayed to the Office of Research?**

- *This is the best course of action at this time. Please ensure to provide as many details as possible.*

**Are there any updates or announcements regarding the search for the Vice President for Research (VPR)?**

- *There have been no updates received regarding the search process.*

**Comment - A faculty senator shared that a candidate for their department asked about the post-award process at UTSA, indicating that potential faculty, particularly those with significant grants, are interested in this aspect of the university.**

- *The importance of communication between the faculty and both the pre- and post-award offices was emphasized, highlighting its role in ensuring a smooth process.*

## Unfinished Business: Adoption of SB 18 Policy Recommendation by the Faculty Senate HOP Committee

- Dr. Zenteno discussed the work of the SB 18 working group in modifying UTSA's policies based on a model policy provided by UT System, as previously presented by Dr. Sonya Alemán.
- The working group reviewed the model policy for faculty summary dismissal to ensure fairness. Recommendations were emailed to the Faculty Senate and shared with respective departments. Feedback was requested and subsequently reviewed by the working group.
- The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has decided to assign the Faculty Senate HOP Committee to review a complex document and provide a recommendation for the Faculty Senate's consideration.
- The Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UT System is considering implementing a uniform policy for all UT System institutions, a shift from previous plans for each campus to adopt its own HOP processes.
- The UT System needs to review and approve UTSA's recommendation before it can be integrated into the *UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures*. The UT System is currently waiting for recommendations from all its campuses, which might cause some delay in their response.
- The Faculty Senate's HOP Committee's recommendation was presented as the motion:
  - *The HOP committee recommends that the Faculty Senate accepts the drafted policy on summary dismissal that was drafted by the SB 18 committee and that the policy is integrated into UTSA's Handbook of Operating Procedures.*
- The Faculty Senate unanimously approved the recommended Faculty Senate HOP.





## New Business

- The Faculty Senators discussed the importance of issuing a statement supporting students' freedom of speech, suggesting it might be the right time to reinforce the university's commitment to these issues and its mission to train global leaders.
- The Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee (AFEM) could write a statement of support. If the statement is agreed upon, it can be voted on electronically.
- The process for drafting a statement was discussed. It was proposed that the AFEM committee should draft the statement, which would then be reviewed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. If approved, it would be sent to the Faculty Senate for further review and feedback before an electronic vote.
- Dr. Baumann highlighted the need for the Faculty Senate to be aware of the electronic voting rules outlined in the [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), specifically Article V. "If a minimum of five senators vote against the voting procedure, the vote will be tabled until the next regular or special meeting of the Senate."
- A new policy banning camping on university property was added to the UTSA HOP on April 24, 2024, through an expedited review process, bypassing the usual HOP Committee procedures. This was necessary to comply with [UT System Board of Regents' Rules \(80101\)](#). Other HOP policies have also been recently updated following the passage of SB 17.
- A faculty member raised concerns about the university-level decision to permanently suspend the GRE requirement for their program's admission.



### 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 Sponzel**, ADTS Representative
- **Lauren Hoffman**, Staff Senate Representative