

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Nathan Neale
Regular Scheduled Senate Meeting Feb 2, 2021 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Online through Zoom

Senate: Ronald Beebe, Edmund Cueva, Michael Duncan, Godwin Agboka, Franklin Allaire, Amy Baird, Nina Barbieri, Maria Bhattacharjee, Alexander Bielakowski, Kasi Bundoc, Dexter Cahoy, Prakash Deo, Isaac Elking, Lucas Fedell, Krista Gehring, Aaron Gillette, Rachael Hudspeth, Tahereh Jafari, Michael Lemke, Cynthia Lloyd, Lucas Logan, Nathan Neale, Chu Nguyen, Anand Pore, Angelica Roncacio, Rupak Rauniar, M. Nell Sullivan, Candace TenBrink, Pat Williams, Julie Wilson

Senators Absent: Shohreh Hashemi, Timothy Klein, Jeffrey Martz, Jean Nganou, Arpita Shroff

Guests: Eric Link, Provost/VPAA; Michelle Moosally, AVP Programming and Curriculum, Jerry Johnson, AVP Sponsored Programs, Akif Uzman, Dean, CST, Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds, Kevin Buckler, Professor and Chair of FAC, Meritza Tamez, Dean of Students, Lisa Morano, Professor, Irene Chen, Professor, Patricia Ensor, Executive Director, W.I.D., Linda Dune, Director of Nursing, Daniel Villanueva, V.P. of Enrollment Management, Anita Chadha, Associate Professor, Katharine Jager, Associate Professor, Stacie DeFreitas, Associate Professor, Dietrich von Biedenfeld, Assistant Professor, Natacha Poggi, Assistant Professor, Meghan Minard, Lecturer, Sheryl Sellers, Dateline, Shannon Cunningham, Registrar, Pat Ensor, Executive Director, W.I.D., Hossein Shahrokhi, Associate Vice President, Information Technology, Said Fattouh, Director of User Support Services, David Bradley, Vice President Administration and Finance, Houston Brown, Lecturer, Darlene Hodge, FS Admin, T. Alan Modrow, SGA President, Creshema Murray, Associate Professor, Juan Martinez, Sustainability Coordinator, Monica Villarreal, Adjunct Faculty.

Call to order: The Senate was called to order at 2:30 PM by Senate President Ronald Beebe

Minutes

A motion to approve the January 19, 2021 minutes was made and seconded.
The minutes were approved.

Reports

Dr. Beebe asked for task force reports.

The Graduate Council Task Force explained that they were seeking input and involvement from the UHD Graduate Council. They explained that they prefer to have a Graduate School before Doctoral Programs. There is not much movement this early in the semester but they will be moving forward.

A senator reported on the SGA resolution for Election Day being a non-instructional day. A draft was sent to FSEC and the task force to review.

Dr. Beebe provided an update on the Ombuds Policy. A draft will be sent out to all senators. The primary focus is to update the dates to coincide with other shared governance dates. The current draft will allow yearly nominations every March with an appointment being made in April. The term would begin August 15th. The review process for the year will still occur over the summer. This will be on the next senate agenda.

Mr. Said Fattouh provided a report about UHD turning off Legacy Email. Microsoft announced that they will be turning off all legacy protocols that connect to 365 for security and other reasons. This is for all Microsoft Customers. UH System has instructed us to turn off these as soon as possible. They are planning on turning off POP and IMAP on the 16th. Many have questions about how this will impact them. There are dozens of apps. Some use legacy and some do not. If using a web browser to connect to 365 and email, nothing needs to be done. If using Outlook on a UHD computer, one should not have issues. If using an Android or Apple App, please use MS Outlook App for Mobile Devices. If using native client from a phone, it is difficult to know if it is legacy or modern.

Dr. Beebe asked what would happen when these are turned off.

Mr. Fattouh stated that mobile devices may believe that messages are sent but they are not. They may remain in one's outbox.

Q – A senator asked if using O365 on a phone would still work.

A – Mr. Fattouh stated yes

Q – A senator asked if any browser would work.

A – Yes, just as it does now.

They are also looking at different options for MediaSite and may move it to the cloud. This is in the early stages.

Dr. Beebe asked if they would survey faculty.

Mr. Fattouh stated that they would. This is in the early stages so much work will need to be completed. Yes, they will involve faculty.

Provost Link shared good news. As of Feb 1, SCHs were up 4.9% and headcount had an increase of 3.3%. UHD has the highest growth in the UH System for this semester. He thanked faculty advisors and other stakeholders for all of their efforts.

He shared an update about grant activity. Grant writing decreased during the first half of the pandemic. However, UHD faculty have made up for this over the past couple months with some high dollar grants being processed through ORSP. YTD submissions are up 156% and submissions increased 19% and awards 10% (all based on dollar amounts) and 6% in the number of those awarded.

He shared an update on the market study. The comprehensive compensation analysis was contracted to CBIZ. The interactions are going well thus far. The project launched the week of the 18th and they have held follow-up meetings since. The work is divided into two categories 1) faculty and 2) staff. Faculty will be conducted and completed first. The staff study will take significantly longer as it is more complicated. It has more deliverables. We wanted to make sure that faculty could participate in town halls and have other communication before the end of the school year. The staff study will begin as soon as the faculty study is completed. CBIZ is supposed to have the faculty study completed around the first week of March. During the second week of March, the results should be provided to Interim President Tillis and Provost Link. Then, around the third week of March, the results will be shared with the President's Cabinet and then FSEC. Then, they plan to hold one or two faculty forums for faculty with CBIZ. Provost Link stressed that the timeline is not fixed and allows a little room if it takes longer than anticipated.

As the results are not completed, they do not know what changes to salaries will be required. They included a pool of about 1% of total salaries or \$650,000 from last year's budget that the president may use if the funds do not need to be deployed for another purpose. This will also be influenced by incoming President Blanchard's vision. They hope to have a dynamic plan that anticipates \$2,000,000 increase. As the funds are not currently there, it may require a phased in or multi-year approach. He stressed that these are only speculations until the recommendations are presented.

The cost of the market study about \$236,000 which is under the \$250,000 budgeted. While this is a lot of money, it has been a long time since UHD engaged in a market study.

Q – Will transparency about the methodology, such as comparable schools and programs be included? Specifically, for Criminal Justice, will other departments be included that are not Criminal Justice?

A – Provost Link stated that he would follow up with CBIZ. There will be focus groups and feedback mechanisms so that Deans, Chairs, other stakeholders, his staff and others will be able to provide feedback and ask questions. FSEC will be meeting with them soon. Please send your questions to Dr. Beebe so that FSEC can ask them. You may also email Provost Link, Ms. Montalbano or Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Bradley stated that Ms. Montalbano should be the point person. Also, the consultants are usually extremely transparent.

Provost Link asked for additional questions. There were none.

Provost Link then provided an update on scheduling.

For the current semester, we are currently fully online through the end of February. Later in February there will be more communication about March 1 and beyond. He thanked faculty for being willing to pivot and for continuing to provide quality education to our students.

For summer, while there are plenty of news reports that many more people will be vaccinated, we do not know what the situation will look like by the beginning of the next school year. For summer, scheduling decisions are left up to the Deans and he anticipated that most courses would be delivered online. If holding face-to-face courses, social distancing will apply. There is no push to hold face-to-face courses from the Provost's office for summer. He encouraged faculty to work with their chairs.

The fall is more difficult to plan. There are many questions. The biggest is: Will UHD have social distance requirements in the classroom? They do not currently know. Therefore, they are working with chairs to build a schedule that incorporates social distancing but would allow modification in the summer before the semester begins. He hoped that faculty would use the Flex classrooms. These have the technology required to drop the Covid Caps. We currently have about 20 rooms and may add a few more. We should also be creative with the hybrid schedule. They plan to open all classrooms for scheduling.

Q – If teaching F2F in the summer, what will be the cap for the classes? Will faculty have a choice on modality for summer and fall?

A – Most classrooms already have a Covid Cap calculated. Classes vary in caps. There will probably not be a rush to teach F2F in the summer. If we go to green in the fall, faculty will need to reengage in their classrooms. For the summer, please work with your chair.

Dr. Beebe stated that the fall is being approached as yellow going into green. When watching news reports and noticing what is happening in our country, this plan is a little aggressive. If you are moving to green, will you require students to show that they are vaccinated?

Provost Link said that they need guidance from UHS legal. Also, a large part of the population are apprehensive about the vaccinations.

Dr. Moosally stated that she spoke with Ms. Bloom about this earlier. The current vaccinations are only approved through the FDA for emergency status. Therefore, they cannot be required.

Provost Link emphasized that the fall schedule needs to be created. A plan is required. The plan needs to be thoughtful enough to allow us to pivot. He does not know the color that we will open under. While the plan may be seen as ambitious, during a discussion in cabinet, Ms. Vargas was optimistic.

Provost Link asked for questions. There were none.

Mr. Bradley then provided a budget update. We are in 2021. When the budget was created, COVID had just hit. Then, they needed to factor in a 5% decrease. This created an unsustainable impact on the fund balance. Then, we had a record summer enrollment and in the fall, we were up in enrollment. We are also up in the current semester. They added in some of the priorities in the previous budget and funded initiatives. This included the 1% the Provost Link mentioned and some faculty positions. The largest component of our budget is enrollment. Hopefully we will have future growth. We will have a 2.5% tuition increase next year. One of the priorities is faculty and staff compensation. The leadership team hopes to have a 3-4% increase.

We are in a legislative session. Texas leaders believe that the state budget will be better than originally anticipated. There is an increase of 1-1.5BB in sales tax revenue from online transactions. Oil and gas may be in a better position too. With all things considered, things are better than expected at the state level. They originally thought there was going to be a 4.5BB deficit and now expect a 1BB deficit. As they reduced most divisions' budgets, including UHS 5%, this is almost wiped out. With inflation and population growth, they need 119BB in revenue and they expect 112-114BB. They also expect that they have up to 10BB in the rainy day fund.

There are also some important policies at the federal level. Biden's new 1.9TT plan would provide us funds too. We need to continue to watch this. We received 10MM in the spring from the CARES act. About 5.7MM went to support students. Another 2MM reimbursed UHD for expenses, another 1MM to help with fees and parking with the remainder supporting leave. Those funds are essentially spent. The December 27 bill provides UHD about 18MM. We have to spend about 5MM for student aid. The other 13 is institutional and is less restrictive than the last spring. It can be used for payroll expenses in some instances, reimbursement student expenses.

UHD does not have auxiliary expenses that many other institutions have. Many of them are using these funds to assist there. We may be able to spend this on part time faculty, classroom motivations and other improvements.

Mr. Bradley asked for questions and there were none.

Dr. Beebe thanked him for his report.

Dr. Beebe opened discussion about the S/U option. He said that the faculty feedback has been mixed. He asked for a motion to either extend the S/U or to not extend it.

A senator moved to institutions the S/U option for spring and summer 2021. It was seconded.

The senate then discussed this.

A senator stated that many of their colleagues were opposed. A faculty member told them that this was not equitable as faculty do not have the option to opt out of faculty evaluations. Also, adjuncts may have more work as we have to provide a five day window for the option and this creates an undue burden for adjuncts. Overall from the department, there is not much support. If it is approved, we should tie it to the drop date.

Dr. Neale stated that faculty and staff evaluations differ from students. Our evaluations are expected to be evenly distributed. If we all have poor performance when compared to previous years, so will most of our peers. The distribution should not change much. This differs from students that are struggling.

A senator commented that some faculty are slightly in favor with about a 60/40 split. Some of the adjuncts voiced a similar concern about the extended time frame. The arguments for the S/U

policy is that it is equitable as students do not know if, when or how they will be impacted by COVID. Though there may be a few that try to take advantage of the policy, they will be in the minority. We do not want to penalize students for something outside of their control.

A senator suggested that we can input both the S/U and the actual grade so that if a student wants to change the grade later, this can easily be accomplished.

A senator reported on another department. Some offered support but others suggested that this is not a good idea. Those disagreeing used stronger words. Some are concerned that the department is being more flexible and providing more support to students. Students may be becoming more proficient in online learning.

Dr. Beebe said that he did not want to speak for a department but another department strongly disagrees with the S/U. A senator from that department said that it was nine against the policy and one for.

The next department stated that it was about a 50/50 split. The reasoning from those disagreeing suggested that this may look poor on transcripts when students apply to graduate school. Another issue is that this was erratic because we used the S/U, then did not and now will bring it back again. Though the pandemic is worse than before, we are all used to it. Still, it was about 50/50

Another department stated that the response rate was 50% with almost all wanting to offer the S/U. There is a concern that we should have offered it last fall. A recommendation was made to only offer this to students taking 3 or less courses. For those taking more, they are overburdening themselves and will likely take advantage of the policy. A second recommendation was that graduate course grades of A and B would count as pass and other grades would be U.

A department did not have much feedback.

A senator suggested that there is not much of an interest in this now. Could we wait? It seems that more faculty have been affected recently and that this is now closer to home. If things get worse, then we should consider it.

Dr. Beebe asked Mr. Villanueva how soon we would need to make a decision.

Mr. Villanueva stated that this is already set up in PeopleSoft. We generate rosters toward the end of the semester. We need two weeks before the end. For students, they need to know ASAP. There is also an issue with the calendar and deadlines. The Provost's office needs to be involved and make the final date decision. We are able to act with two weeks' notice. It may be best to move earlier.

A senator suggested that we could use a grade appeal to complete this. It would place a burden for chairs.

Dr. Beebe stated that this is a lot of work for chairs.

Dr. Moosally explained that 13% of our students used the S/U option for multiple classes in the spring. This is a lot of work for multiple chairs and the one registrar's office. What is the motivation for this decision? Is it grades or to support students?

Dr. Duncan called the question.

A quorum of 25 senators were in attendance during the vote. 13 voted yes, 9 voted no and 2 abstained. The S/U motion passed.

The UHD Sustainability Council presented a resolution that they sent to the senate for review. They are asking for formal recognition for the council. They wanted to further explain the importance of the council and to answer questions. There are many initiatives they work on around campus. They are currently housed in the College of Science and Technology. They are actually an interdisciplinary unit. They seek to practice long-term sustainability. They seek Faculty Senate and Staff Council support. Then, they can develop the website to expand awareness. As an overview, the council is separate from urban agriculture.

The goal is to be interdisciplinary and to include staff and students too. UHD and UHV are the only two universities that did not have public statements regarding sustainability. This would help us begin communicating this and to have public recognition of our efforts. We are asking for senate to support the council becoming part of the institution. We want to also provide students an opportunity to learn marketable skills.

Having a comprehensive website is important. Many organizations emphasize sustainability. This may also help us come together as a community. If students are worried about sustainability, global warning, etc., they may find resources. Currently, it is difficult to find anything beside the garden on the UHD website.

The group asked for questions.

Dr. Cueva asked for clarification on point 2 from the statement.

A member of the council explained that explaining what they do and that they exist during orientations may be important. This would help improve buy-in from stakeholders and to emphasize it as being part of the UHD culture. They want to stress the importance of sustainability practices being implemented across the university.

Dr. Cueva asked what these practices are.

Council members explained that all students, scholars, staff and other stakeholders may become aware of all of the practices and opportunities. The orientations would be tailored to different levels and would likely only be five minutes to explain that they exist and may become. The long-term goal is to become an actual office with a budget.

A senator asked if there would be a student leadership position.

Yes, there is a student representative that is also involved in student government.

Mr. Modrow stated that he had met with a center representative. The SGA executive board and senate are supporting the council. They currently brief SGA about their progress.

Dr. Beebe asked if they were looking for Faculty Senate to vote support for the current version of the resolution.

Council members explained that the answer is yes. They want to move this to the university level. They are looking for legitimacy.

Dr. Beebe asked if this would be presented to the Staff Council.

A member of the council stated yes.

A senator motioned for the Faculty Senate to support the resolution. It was seconded.

Dr. Cueva asked if there was a quorum.

A count confirmed that there were 22 senators in attendance. 16 voted yes, 0 no and 1 abstention. If adding all those that did not vote, the total would be 16 yes, 6 abstain. The motion passed.

Dr. Beebe asked senators to discuss the S/U option with colleagues again. Specifically, we may follow what was done last spring, where students had a period of time to review final grades before choosing the S/U option or if we should require their choice by the drop date.

A senator asked if we need to address implementation so that we can include both the original grade and the S/U grade.

Dr. Beebe said that would be a question for Mr. Villanueva as it is a PeopleSoft issue.

A senator argued that the best option would be to require students to choose by the drop date as this may make things easier for all.

Dr. Beebe asked if we had a quorum. If so, we could entertain a motion now.

A senator motioned that the S/U deadline would be the same date as the drop deadline. It was seconded.

Dr. Neale stated that we no longer had a quorum as we only had 20 senators.

A senator asked if we could table this and discuss it with each department.

Dr. Beebe stressed that this is what he originally hoped for. As we do not have a quorum, we cannot vote.

Dr. Beebe stressed that senators needed to obtain feedback from those they represent and bring this to our next senate meeting. He said that we needed to follow up with Mr. Villanueva about the option suggested to include both a letter and S/U grade.

Dr. Beebe asked for a motion to adjourn. One was made and was seconded.

The meeting ended at 4:13 PM.