

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Sandra Dahlberg
November 28, 2017; 2:32-3:50 pm
Room A300

Senate: Beverly Alford, Luis Cedeno, Travis Crone, Sandra Dahlberg, Michael Duncan, David Epstein, Trevor Hale, Jillian Hill, Ruth Johnson, Karen Kaser, Cynthia Lloyd, Paul Mandell, Kendra Mhoon, Mitsue Nakamura, Rebecca Quander, Vida Robertson, Jacqueline Sack, Rachna Sadana, Benjamin Soibam, Clete Snell, Nell Sullivan, Doug TeDuits, Hsiao-Ming Wang, Joan Wedes, and Zehai Zhou

Regrets: Carolyn Ashe, Shannon Fowler, Creshema Murray

Absent: Susan Baker, Ray Cao, Michael Tobin, Pat Williams

Guests: Juan Muñoz, President; Ed Hugetz, Interim Provost; Pat Ensor, Dir. Library; Tyra Hessel, Ombuds; Elaine Pearson, AA; Lucy Bowen, AA; Darlene Hodge, FS.

Call to Order: The Senate was called to order at 2:32 pm by Senate President Trevor Hale.

Minutes

Minutes of the November 7, 2017 Senate meeting were unanimously approved as written.

Announcements

Hale first announced that the January Senate meeting regularly scheduled for January 16 will be rescheduled for January 23, rather than try to hold a regular meeting the first day of spring semester when faculty are very busy. He also announced that the six Senate subcommittees will present their findings at the January 23, 2018 Senate meeting. The subcommittees are investigating ways to address the following issues: adjunct salary inequities, academic year salary inequities, promotion raises, summer salary inequities, a 3-2-1 proposal for junior faculty, and workload policy strategies.

Hale also announced his discovery of wording in Texas Education Code 51.908 (see agenda), instituted in 1987, that required Texas universities to maintain faculty salary levels at national averages. A discussion followed with several Senators noting that other legislation, including superseding legislation, changed or nullified this provision. TeDuits also noted that only 12 universities nationwide are designated Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) with similar missions. Sullivan warned that asking for national peers without regard to location (rural vs. urban) may further suppress salaries. Hugetz added that funding formulas and other guidelines and rules do contradict this statute.

Faculty Workload Discussion

The Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) will hold an open house to solicit faculty input on the existing Faculty Workload Policy (PS 10.A.04) as it considers changes to the policy. The open house is scheduled for December 7 at 2:30 in the Robertson Auditorium.

Hale opened the floor for a general discussion on faculty workload.

Snell asked about previous efforts to look at the number of committees, and the work of those committees, to see if any could be eliminated. TeDuits added that not all committee work is the same and that, for evaluation and workload assignment, the committee work be weighted.

Crone, on behalf of Williams, said that the workload policy needs to encompass all areas of faculty workload (teaching, service, scholarship) instead of primarily focusing on teaching load.

Hugetz said that the State of Texas requires each institution to submit a faculty workload summary that itemizes the work of each faculty member to ensure that each faculty member is working at least 40 hours a week, but that this reporting has not been done in the UH System for many years. He also reminded the Senate that the Board of Regents approves reasonable workload expectations at each university in the system. A general discussion ensued about weighted teaching units (WTUs) for reporting as is done in the California State System, and the possibility of two tracks (teaching-service or teaching-scholarship) for faculty.

Sullivan expressed a concern that by creating a two-track system, those on the “service” track would lose momentum on their scholarship that cannot be easily recovered. She recognized that the service work has to get done, but stressed that part of being a good university professor is the ongoing involvement in the creation of knowledge. We need to maintain and reward scholarship if we want to continue our growth as an institution, especially as we expand graduate programming.

Hill asked how a two-track system would impact junior faculty who are expected to show excellence in all three evaluative areas in order to earn tenure. Crone stated that the protections for junior faculty are not meant to limit their input in service, but rather to provide them with a way to say “no” when they are being asked to serve too much. Robertson said that the goal of the tenure system is to tenure faculty and create a system to allow junior faculty to succeed. A general discussion ensued.

Hale suggested that junior faculty might be given a “summer sabbatical” for which they would be paid the summer stipend to conduct research and have adjuncts teach the summer courses. The following discussion raised points about how such a “sabbatical” would undermine our current 9-month contracts and ultimately undermine scholarship. Robertson added that if scholarship is required, then faculty should have sufficient time in existing contracts to fulfill the scholarship expectations—that we should not have to use summers for scholarship that is expected of faculty when faculty are not paid during the summer. Sack reminded the Senate that approaches to and the conduct of research and scholarship differ by discipline.

Snell asked if there was any research on how UHD faculty are using their time. Sullivan noted that the Faculty Climate Survey has a section on workload, and Hale noted that Claude Rubenstein collected data on committee engagement a couple of years ago. Sadana, Snell, and Quander suggested that perhaps we need to look at these instruments, revise them, and use them collect more current data.

Old Business

Senators discussed the administrative adjustments that were tabled from the October 3 Faculty Senate meeting: Adding an “All Attended” button to roster certifications, how Official-Day-of-Record attendance is defined in hybrid/online courses, removing target graduation dates from rosters, and standardizing academic semester calendars so that contact hours are consistent for all classes.

Discussion focused first on the intent behind the Official-Day-of-Record certification, and what counts as course engagement. Currently, students who attend one face-to-face class session (but doing no work), or students who log into Blackboard for an online or hybrid course (for as little as a minute), have met the requirement and should be certified. Hugetz explained that this certification is required for federal funds oversight, and that de-certified students can appeal being dropped. Those appeals go to the Registrar, and faculty complained that when the Registrar overrides faculty, faculty are not told why. Hugetz reminded Senators that SACSCOC will require universities to have a 25% 6-year graduation rate. Our peers are at 38% and we need to get to that point soon. Hale suggested that FSEC look into threshold options for certification and bring those options back to the Senate for further discussion.

The target graduation dates on the rosters indicates when FTIC students will reach the 6 year mark, or the date before which their graduation counts positively for UHD. Many faculty did not know why the dates were on their rosters. Most of the Senators said that the dates on the rosters are not a problem, and may allow them opportunities to casually advise students to ensure retention and success.

There was a livelier discussion about having standard scheduling for all courses each semester, and the ways that the final schedule is created. Specifically, there was much discussion about problems with hybrid courses, or courses that meet only one day a week, having their finals scheduled for Saturday. This is a serious problem for students who work on the weekends. It was also noted that having evacuation drills (Commerce at 11am on November 27) the last week of the semester is academically disruptive. Faculty need to know in advance to ensure that instructional integrity is maintained.

Hale will create some language for resolutions on the above issues for Senate to address.

Sadana moved and Johnson seconded a motion to adjourn at 3:50 pm.

The next Senate meeting is on January 23, 2018.