

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

May 29, 2024

TO: Dr. Bernardo Pohl, President, UHD Faculty Senate
UHD Faculty Senate

FROM: Dr. Deborah E. Bordelon
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Response to Faculty Senate Resolution - SR 24-02 Date: 04/30/2024

I am in receipt of the Faculty Senate Resolution 24-02, which was approved by the Faculty Senate on April 30, 2024. In the resolution, there is a concern expressed about the process for appointing an interim dean for the College of Public Service. Dean Jonathan Schwartz has accepted a position as the Associate Vice President for University Advancement and will start this new role on June 1, 2024. It is important to note that this Faculty Senate Resolution is substantially similar to a Grievance filed on April 8, 2024, amended on April 12, 2024 and amended a third time on April 25, 2024. This Resolution was issued by the Faculty Senate prior to the Grievance Hearing taking place.

The Grievance Hearing was held on May 14, 2024 at 9:00 am. The Grievance Hearing Committee Report, which was received on Thursday, May 16, 2024, indicated that there was no violation of policy. President Blanchard concurred with that decision and notified the Grievance Committee, grievants, and respondent on May 22, 2024.

I understand that my decision to consider outside candidates for the interim Dean's position in the College of Public Service was upsetting and/or insulting to the grievants, and perhaps others in the College and Faculty Senate. Please know that I made this decision after careful consideration. The temporary assignment of an interim Dean is mission critical—it directly impacts student success, accreditation, the business of leading a financially healthy College, and other relevant operations—and that is precisely why Board of Regents Policy delegates that crucial function to the Chancellor, and me, in this instance. I'll explain that further below.

The Faculty Senate Resolution 24-02, stated that numerous policies and laws were violated. This was simply not the case and my actions were governed by UHS Board of Regents Policy 57-10 - Executive Management Employees. The UH-System Board of Regents policies necessarily take precedence over all other policies. The UH Board of Regents System Policy 57.10 makes clear that the authority to make interim administrative appointments is delegated to the Chancellor or her designee. In this case, I am the designee. There is also no policy, constitutional concept nor university practice, nor can there be, consistent with Board Policy, that requires interim administrative appointments to be internal candidates. In fact, our sister campuses in the UH System have used the Registry to find outside candidates for interim leadership roles.

The Board Policy is written to allow flexibility for the Chancellor or her designee to appoint an interim in a manner that best meets the needs of the institution. The Board of Regents Policy 57.10 provides absolute authority for the appointment of executive management interims and does not provide any exceptions or conditions on the authority to appoint an interim. This is evident in the wide variety of methods used to make appointments throughout the system by me, former Provost Link, President Blanchard, and Chancellor Khator. Previous protocols that have been developed and/or implemented cannot overrule Board of Regents policy. Interim appointments have occurred through a variety of methods: internal appointments within the university, appointments from other system institutions, external appointments, Registry appointments, processes that included faculty input and others that did not. On the UH campus, the interim dean of the Graduate School of Social Work is a chemist, which represents another example of an interim placement.

As we move forward with the interim appointment and the start of the search in August for the permanent dean of the College of Public Service, the focus must be on providing the leadership and support for the College of Public Service to be successful.

I will certainly consider the sentiments expressed in the Faculty Senate Resolution, should additional interim appointments arise and I am called on to make further mission critical decisions. The work of the Faculty Senate and the faculty and staff of the University of Houston-Downtown is valued and greatly appreciated. When we work together, we are able to move forward with policies and procedures that support and enhance the work of our faculty, staff, and students. I look forward to our continued collaborative work in bringing UHD, and especially the College of Public Service, to even greater success.