

Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso
Minutes of the Online Faculty Senate Meeting of October 12, 2021

The Meeting was organized as a “hybrid” meeting, with some senators attending in-person in the Tomas Rivera Conference Center and others attending via Zoom at: <https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/82495023707?pwd=SnB0M01wNjdDNnBwcUxxOUZBWExTQT09>
Meeting ID: 824 9502 3707
Passcode: Hr9f2q8B

- 1. Call to Order.** Núñez-Mchiri called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The newly-approved Land Acknowledgement was read.
- 2. Determination of a Quorum and Seating of Alternates.** A quorum being present, the alternates were seated.
- 3. Consent Agenda.** Fleck moved that the minutes of the September meeting be accepted.
- 4. Acceptance of the Agenda.** No amendments offered.

5. Announcements

A. Faculty Advisory Council Report: Núñez-Mchiri reported on the October meeting of the FAC of the UT System. The System will soon have a new Medical Leave pool policy that allows faculty to donate accrued sick leave to a pool available to other faculty who may have exhausted their sick leave and need more time. At UTEP, the Provost’s office is working with the office of Human Resources to develop local procedures for this new system policy. Also, the System’s Legal team briefed the FAC on the necessity for faculty members to disclose any contacts they have with foreign entities in connection with their sponsored research or teaching.

B. HOOP. The Executive Committee will form two ad hoc committees for the year ahead. One will review the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP), looking for areas that need to be clarified or which create conflicting policy.

C. Engagement with Indigenous Communities. The Executive Committee’s second ad hoc group will examine UTEP’s outreach to Indigenous populations, trying to develop a more complete record of initiatives so that they can be developed and enhanced.

D. The State Employee Charitable Campaign Again underway. Senators are encouraged to report on this campaign to their units. The Campaign is trying to reach an ambitious annual target (approximately \$110,000) for contributions as well as a target for participants. Even small contributions matter.

E. Provost’s Office.

Provost Wiebe reported that the System has a new procedure for campuses to create a donated pool for Family Leave purposes. His office is working with HR on how to implement the process at UTEP.

He also reported on a tool called Academic Analytics. This tool has been available to a limited number of campus administrators, but recently it was made available to chairs and directors. The System uses this tool, for instance, in order to evaluate individual programs, making comparisons with similar programs, especially in the case of proposals for expanding programs or launching doctoral programs. With new features, Academic Analytics has potential applications in recruiting faculty and deans or locating faculty who should be applying for prestigious awards that their peers elsewhere might recently have won. The tool has many limits and is best for measuring research output in the sciences. When chairs and directors were given access to Academic Analytics they were warned about its limits and about ways it should not be used (to evaluate an individual faculty member, e.g.). One way deans and chairs could use the tool is for evaluating their own programs.

Wiebe discussed changes in undergraduate advising at UTEP. He suggested that Heather Smith should be invited to a future senate meeting to provide more details. He said that the Strategic Enrollment Planning Group has made suggestions for improving advising in the past, but there have not been resources for implementing those suggestions. Still, better advising would lead to better retention and ultimately to a better bottom line at the university. With access to a one-time infusion of federal funds, the university has decided to hire sixteen new undergraduate advisors. They will be spread across the university, to areas of greatest need. By putting advising in the hands of professional advisors, faculty will be freed up to focus on their research and teaching. The advisors and the students they meet will be tracked to show effectiveness.

Wiebe also discussed SB 212. This new Texas law makes it mandatory for anyone on campus who learns of sexual violence to report their information directly to the Title Nine office. Reporting of this information to the Title IX office is mandatory; failure to report such information would result in termination of employment for a party who did not report. There is no leeway in this policy. It would be good to ask Gabriel Ramirez to address the senate with more information.

Someone asked if information about SB 212 has been part of recent training. Wiebe said it has been and that the law requires anyone at UTEP who learns of sexual violence to report that information directly to the Title IX office. Núñez-Mchiri said the senate will ask Ramirez to come to the November meeting.

Someone asked whether the new advisors will help with graduate students. Wiebe said that these advisors will help with undergraduates and that the graduate school has new efforts to help with graduate advising.

F. COACHE Survey Response. Ann Gates reported on recent efforts to respond to the results of the COACHE Survey. Gates said that in listening sessions, key themes have been observed and will be addressed. These include the fair distribution of workload and valuing of teaching; “invisible service,” done by many and neglected by others; the failure to account for Community-Engaged Scholarship in workload policies; the need for awards and recognition for faculty; and the need for mentoring.

The university will adopt an “inclusive excellence” model for addressing these concerns. In making sure that equitable workload policies are reflected in tenure and promotion policies and decisions, the university is working to educate evaluators about the variability across disciplines. Workload policies must be fair and must refer to standards and norms. There will be a differential workload policy to accommodate disciplinary differences. There must be accountability as well, so that faculty are held to the workload policies. Workload must be budget neutral and reflect the priorities of the colleges with regard to the strategic plan. There are working groups in place to develop policies to address interdisciplinary work (chaired by Kubicki) and to create policies to account for Community Engaged Scholarship (chaired by Slack).

Performance evaluations must be based on clear expectations. Teaching effectiveness from peer observation should be focused on how to improve (rather than how to be punitive). Much work to be done to make sure service is visible and counted. There should be a clear connection between workload and performance evaluation. Professional development should be connected to performance evaluations. There will be a full-time addition to the Center for Faculty Leadership and Development. A three-part series was held concerning tenure and promotion to articulate expectations. On the Provost’s website (under “faculty” then under “tenure and promotion”) there is a process memo intended to help demystify the tenure and promotion process. The HOOP needs some revision to make its language concerning tenure and promotion more deliberate.

To address campus climate, the Provost’s office will be working with chairs and directors to set department goals in line with the strategic plan. Programs should consider how they and their individual faculty can contribute to the strategic plan and how to foster an inclusive atmosphere. To build collegiality, mentoring programs will be developed. In interpersonal interactions, we should all be critical of the underlying assumptions that may contribute to conflict. The university wants to find ways to recognize and honor the faculty. How can the faculty recognize each other?

Faculty Senator asked how workload and budget are connected; some courses require extensive, nearly-personalized attention from faculty. Gates responded that chairs need to better understand what faculty need in order to execute their workload. Data should be gathered to support requests for changes to workload. Someone noted that classes with large enrollments are not always more challenging than seminars with small enrollments. Gates responded that the interdisciplinary workload committee (Kubicki) should be made aware of this. Another person asked whether the unusual element of teaching in health-related fields has been accounted for in new workload policies and whether faculty from the health-related fields were included in these committees. Gates said that health-related fields were represented and that their contexts need to be understood and made explicit. Wiebe added that there can’t be bean-counting, clock-punching micromanaging of workload, but the Provost’s office is trying to get a finer-grained, discipline-specific understanding of workload to allow for greater fairness and variability. Gates concluded that decisions will be evidence-based, but the Provost’s office is working on understanding the kinds of evidence to be inclusive and nuanced.

(Time on the agenda requested for Academic Policy report at 3:30 pm. [Academic Policy Committee](#). Nigel Ward (nigel@utep.edu) reported on APC’s five priorities for the year. 1.

Should “option 2” for first-years be redesigned? 2. Can hassles in the fit of financial aid and degree plans be resolved? 3. Should the spring term academic calendar begin earlier in January? 4. How can scheduling, including classroom usage, be rationalized? 5. Should the university have a flat-rate tuition option?

G. Mid-semester Course Evaluations CFLD: Sigdem Cirin reported on the new midsemester course evaluation tool. The tool was developed in the spring and made available in September. The SOLT team met on 10/7 to discuss it and will have a recording of their meeting available online. CFLD working with UTEP’s distinguished teachers to help change the faculty culture for more buy-in on mid-course assessment and revision. These evaluations can be viewed in the faculty portal. Olivarez asked about the form the instrument took; Cirin replied that there were two open-ended questions and six Lickert-scale questions.

6. Committee Reports

A. Committee on Committees. Maria Duarte presented a new slate of faculty to serve on committees. Devesh Misra was added to that slate as a member for UGCC. Fleck moved to approve the slate; Carrola seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

B. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. Fleck presented six proposals that had passed unanimously in the UGCC on October 4, 2021. First was a proposal to modify the BS in Forensic Science (concentration in Forensic Biology or in Forensic Chemistry). Would add CRIJ 4315 (Homicide) as an alternative (“or”) to CRIJ 1301 (Intro to Criminal Justice I) and a note cautioning that CRIJ 1301 cannot be double-counted for the minor or major in Criminal Justice. The senate approved this proposal without objection. Second, was a proposal to change the name, course description, and contact hours of ANTH 4365 to “Material Culture and Museums.” The senate moved to approve this without objection. Third was a proposal to change the name and course description of THEA 3335 to “Latinx Theatre” to reflect current practice and terminology in this course. The senate approved this without objection. Fourth was a proposal to delete MUST 2321 (which has evolved from its earlier form) as a prerequisite for MUSL 3321 and MUSL 3322 and to add clarifying language to the catalogue description of MUST 1314. The senate voted to approve this unanimously. Fifth was a proposal to allow DANC 3349 (American Dance Forms Hip Hop) to count in the College of Liberal Arts Block Electives. The senate moved to accept this proposal unanimously. Sixth, there was a proposal to reduce the number of upper-division hours for the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science from 45 to 39 in alignment with recent changes in the college’s requirements for block electives and to clarify some catalogue language. The senate approved this proposal unanimously.

7. Presentations/Acknowledgements of Faculty Achievements

Aaron Velasco has been chosen to join the California Academy of Sciences.

8. Old or Unfinished Business.

A. Toni Blum reported that a previous curriculum proposal had been tabled because there was some confusion and disagreement between Mathematics, which had proposed a name change for one of its concentrations to “Data Science,” and Computer Science, which also has a data science emphasis. The entities have resolved the difficulty, so Blum moved that

the previous proposal now be accepted. Faculty Senator on the floor moved the motion; Fleck seconded. It passed unanimously.

9. New Business

Gabriel Mendoza (Mathematics) announced that the program “Great Minds in STEM” has upcoming poster sessions and is asking for volunteers to judge the posters.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

**Next Meeting of the Senate, November 9th, 2021 (not on the 14th). Note correction.
GGNM**