

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Michael Cavanaugh
Zoom Meeting May 5, 2020 2:30 – 4:01 pm
Online through Zoom

Senate: Michael Duncan, Ronald Beebe, Hsiao-Ming Wang, Michael Cavanaugh, Franklin Allaire, Alexander Bielakowski, Dexter Cahoy, Kristen Capuozzo, Stephanie Coleman, Prakash Deo, Isaac Elking, Krista Gehring, Angela Goins, Felicia Harris, Susan Henney, Pamela Hurley, Tahereh Jafari, Timothy Klein, Cynthia Lloyd, Steve London, Jeffery Martz, Laura Mitchell, Mitsue Nakamura, Nathan Neale, Andrew Pavelich, Joseph Sample, Johanna Schmertz, Jace Valcore, Pat Williams, Julie Wilson, Ting Zhang.

Absent: Maria Benavides.

Guests: Juan Munoz, UHD President; Eric Link, Provost/VPAA; Jerry Johnson, AVP Faculty, Research, and Sponsored Programs; Michelle Moosally, AVP Programming and Curriculum; Pat Ensor, Library Director; Hossein Shahrokhi, AVP IT; Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds; Lucy Bowen, Executive Director Academic & Student Affairs; Darlene Hodge, FS Admin; Irene Chen, Professor; Sheryl Sellers, Student/Dateline Correspondent; Candace TenBrink; Assistant Professor; Katharine Jager, Associate Professor/Chair of Gen Ed; Lucy Bowen, Executive Director, Academic and Student Affairs; Ed Cueva, Professor; Rachael Hudspeth, Lecturer; Creshema Murray, Associate Professor; Eszter Trufan, Assistant Professor.

Call to order: The Senate was called to order at 2:30 pm by Senate President Michael Duncan.

Minutes

April 21st Zoom Senate minutes were passed unanimously.

Reports

Dr. Duncan explained that we will have two reports today, one from Provost Link and one from President Munoz.

President Munoz starts the reports with a state of the university update. He says that it is great to see everyone on Zoom, but really wishes he could see everyone in person. He hopes that everyone is staying healthy and safe during the challenging time. It is a difficult time for the UHD community, difficult for Houston, hard for Texas, and difficult for the country. Hopefully, we can all remain optimistic in this trying time.

President Munoz explains that he will try to help answer some lingering questions about campus safety and measures being taken for returns to campus. Additionally, he wanted to touch on the budget and Dr. Creshema Murray (Co-chair of PBDC) is on the meeting in case he misrepresents anything from those discussions.

Over the summer, the university will be completely online, according to President Munoz. While originally the plan may have had in person classes resuming in July, consultation with the major stakeholders on campus (deans, chairs, faculty) lead to new strategy.

We are continuing to receive updates from the city, county, and state in terms of safety measures and these are likely influence our decision as a university and system. These can change quickly, so we are following this closely. We generally will not operate in isolation from the other system campuses and it is likely that the system will decide what direction UHD will go.

Having said that, we have a few working groups formed at UHD to look at reintegration of personnel on campus. The groups will focus on reopening the campus safely and in the best interest of people's health. The Budget working group will be chaired by Mr. David Bradley and the Reintegration Task force will be chaired by Ms. Ivonne Montalbano, who is also on the UH System working group.

The leadership's plan is to have a series of white papers from the working groups which will be delivered by May 26th and then the leadership will work through those recommendations and ideas. Overall, the leadership is talking about four separate scenarios for the fall: Modified face to face, a hybrid fall, an online fall, and a face to face/hybrid fall with possible interruptions. The last option is a more traditional fall that could face interruptions from a resurgence of COVID (with more stay at home orders) and then we would have plans in place for a smoother transition to online.

Overall, we are still working out what to do for the fall, but the summer is set. Ironically, according to Mr. Bradley and Tim Rychlec (AVP Facilities Management) we are making great progress on campus fixes. All elevators are currently working! We are also trying to figure out how to spend the stimulus dollars. We also received an award (\$700,000) for minority serving institutions. The stimulus money and new award has quite a few limitations, restrictions, and criteria for how to spend the money. For example, the first part of the stimulus money (around \$4.5 million) must go directly to students and be deposited into their accounts.

As President Munoz further explained, this is a counting year for the university so retention, persistence, and completion in the spring are important, as well as enrollment persistence in the summer and fall. President Munoz was able to see some early survey data and was impressed with faculty member's preparedness for online. Areas for improvement have been identified and there are recommendations to provide all faculty with laptops, to purchase new software, and possibly hire new instructional designers and Blackboard support people (need to check regulations to see if stimulus funds can be spent in this way).

President Munoz explains that he is feeling as optimistic as he can during this time. He is worried about the physical and mental health of students, faculty, and staff at UHD. The doubt is really wearing on people and he encouraged everyone to reach out and check on colleagues across the university and support them if you can.

As for the budget, President Munoz said that the original budget looked very good for UHD with an estimated \$10 million new dollars based on improved enrollment, increased retention, modest tuition increase, etc. Now, we are looking at a 5% reduction in enrollment (estimated) which is conservative and nowhere near the 10% and 20% projected at other universities. Other schools are furloughing faculty and staff, some are eliminating programs. I read about one university that was shuttering colleges. We are not there. We are putting things on hold (hiring freezes, investments in infrastructure)

and not implementing new priorities. We are projecting the 5% enrollment decrease and a 10% state funding decrease. If those things do not happen, then we will try to implement as much of the PBDC priorities as we can.

Finally, related to mitigation and returning to campus, you will start to see communications related to issues of faculty and staff access to campus and their offices and labs and student workers for this summer. Our team at UHD, the leadership, the deans, the chairs, the faculty – they have done a wonderful job. We have kept UHD moving forward and have great summer enrollment and encouraging fall enrollment. As President Munoz mentioned before, he is optimistic, but it is a restrained optimism.

There will be a virtual townhall in the next few weeks hosted by President Munoz and Provost Link. It will be similar to what he is doing here, but on a larger scale with more of the UHD community involved.

Discussion and Questions followed

Q – Will the hiring freeze apply to faculty who depart and need to be replaced?

A – Dr. Munoz explained that he believes we need to maintain the overall numbers of faculty that we have. Hiring replacement faculty is different than new faculty because those lines being replaced are already in the base budget. Having said that, President Munoz did say that we don't want to overextend ourselves financially in the case that we may have to absorb significant budget cuts. We do not want to release anyone after hiring them. President Munoz said that he would be concerned with eroding the current faculty base if they did not replace the faculty leaving.

Provost Link added that he agrees with the President. There are a lot of variables to figure out before thawing the hiring freeze. We need to get good budget projections about what 5% enrollment declines look like for the university to determine how we can redeploy that money to hiring the replacement faculty. Prior to COVID, we wanted to increase the number of faculty and increased the number of lines in the budget. Now we have to see our enrollment projections to determine what we can do. Right now, there are many variables and unknowns, but we will know more information soon.

President Munoz stated that he believed the pre-COVID budget would have been largest faculty hiring in recent memory. Faculty hiring was one of the top priorities. We were both extremely disappointed by the developments with COVID, but we are committed to growing the faculty. There are plenty of possibilities out there related to the budget, but we should know more in the next few weeks.

Q – Are there any staff required to come to campus for the summer and/or fall?

A – President Munoz said that more details will come out soon, but he will go over the basics. The idea for staff is to come back in thirds, 1/3 on June 1st, 1/3 on July 1st, and 1/3 on August 1st. Who will come back will be determined by supervisors and managers along with personal circumstances (i.e., staff caring for elderly parent). We will have PPE gear available and will set up specific entry points to the buildings. Face masks and sanitizer have been ordered and are available. Disinfecting wipes will be available too and there will be limited numbers of face shields.

Q – Are we looking at faculty and staff cuts beyond the hiring freeze if the state budget projections are correct?

A – President Munoz said that at this moment, no.

Q – With the replacement hires, we are speaking of replacing tenure track with tenure track and not adjunct faculty, correct?

A – According to President Munoz, he would like to replace tenure track with tenure track. Provost Link agreed with President Munoz and in the pre-COVID budget, we were headed in the opposite direction by moving contingent faculty into tenure track lines. We want to keep moving in that direction if we can.

I am most particularly concerned about reopening the library. I am grateful to the university for extending the tenure process for a year, but without access to the library and its staff I will be unable to complete my research for tenure.

Provost Link responded by stating Ms. Pat Ensor and the library team are making great strides to make sure library resources are available online to the UHD community. Online access is not a replacement for a physical library, but it does help in these times.

Ms. Ensor added that the library is likely to open in phases just like the rest of the university. Once the staff start coming back to campus, it is likely that the library will be able to make the books available to people who are physically there. Most everything else, with the exception of interlibrary loan, can be done online.

Q – If a staff or faculty member has a pre-existing condition that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19, would they be required to be on campus in the fall? It sounds like some or all staff are required to come to campus. If they can do their job online successfully, and choose not to contribute to contagion, will they be allowed to continue online?

A - President Munoz explained that there will be some staff/units that are able to do their jobs effectively off campus and we will need to identify them, but we are not there yet. We are currently discussing that issue. As for the pre-existing issues, we will work with the faculty and staff to accommodate them where we can. We do not yet have a form for people to fill out to identify an underlying condition or pre-existing condition (or another reason) that would prohibit them from returning to campus in the fall. People will be given the opportunity to explain those circumstances and we will try to accommodate them to the best of our ability. All the universities around the country are trying to figure this issue out. We have to honor our responsibilities as a university while honoring those who work here with a safe and professional circumstance.

Q - Related to that, I have heard a couple older faculty express a desire to teach online or hybrid in the fall out of concern for COVID-19 persisting. Even if courses go fully face-to-face in the fall, will objecting faculty be offered the option to continue online or hybrid?

A – President Munoz said that the Provost’s working group will explore this issue. President Munoz further explained that there were numerous faculty (who otherwise would not be online teaching) thrust into online teaching and who found they had an aptitude for it. Some telecommuting and some online instruction can reduce population density on campus which can improve social distancing. This is a good thing. - The subject of how a faculty member can identify their interest to teach online in the fall and then communicate that to their department chair and dean will be explored. Provost Link stated that the group is currently working on the issue and trying to consider all the options. Hopefully, we will have good guidance soon.

President Munoz encouraged everyone to zoom in to the Gator Grit series tomorrow on anxiety stressors.

Q - Will funding be provided for developing online courses (the question was passed to me, so I’m not certain what expenses are anticipated, although it is definitely a greater time commitment)?

A – President Munoz explained that we may be able to use the second part of the stimulus money to fund initiatives like that.

President Munoz thanked the faculty for their hard work this semester and explained that the administration is doing its best to send out messages of hope and support but also did not want to oversaturate people with correspondence. He could not be more proud of the way the UHD faculty pivoted in response to COVID. The administration will continue to update the faculty and provide transparency. We know what is occurring in the summer and we just need to plan for a safe fall. Provost Link explained that he came to Senate with six topics for discussion but all of them have already come up. However, he wanted to make a couple of points. He wanted to thank the Senate and the Senate leadership group for all of their collegiality, thoughtfulness, and hard work. Faculty Senate is one of the best assets at UHD and I've enjoyed the meetings and the work with the FSEC group. Thank you for the great year and I hope you all have productive summers. Finally, please check your emails as we will be sending regular updates and important information through that medium.

President Munoz thanked everyone again and said that we are a small enough institution to know each other on a personal level. If you hear of a colleague who is going through a difficult time, please let the higher ups know. We may be able to help them out with equipment, finances, resources, I'm not sure. We will try to support them where we can.

Dr. Katharine Jager came to Senate to present on an updated draft resolution from the general education committee (see attached).

Discussion and Questions ensued

Dr. Schmertz moved to consider the revised proposal. Dr. Martz seconded the motion.

The proposal started with the recognition that the majority of our students (or the ones who took the assessment) don't speak English at home. That dropped out of the resolution somewhere. I was expecting something more focused on teaching writing or teaching communication to non-native speakers.

Dr. Jager responded by saying the students are just not comfortable communicating in English.

Yes, but the proposal is focused on writing in general and not on specific issue of our students struggling with English because they tend to speak other languages, primarily Spanish, at home. The second issue is course caps and it is tricky. Course caps in CHSS tend to be set by precedent. I can have different course caps for the same class. History negotiated high course caps for lower level courses to get low course caps for higher level classes. Basically, it is not standard across the university.

Dr. Jager stated that the best practices in writing pedagogy is that lower numbers are better. Our desire in including course caps it to open up that conversation about best pedagogical practice. We know from research that you get better results teaching writing in smaller classes. Therefore, English 1301 and 1302 are capped at 23 students. As to the reason we are leaving the first part broad, this is because there is a lot of diversity at UHD. Our students do not just speak Spanish. We also wanted to stay away from ESL as many of these students do not actually fit that definition. We have some, but we have plenty who grew up here and just do not speak Standard American English at home. We are asking for opportunities to improve the fluency of our diverse student body.

I'm not sure the additional language focus would need to be added. As I understand it, immersion is the best method for someone to become fluent to a new language. It is not clear that there is a practical difference between someone who is a non-native speaker and a native speaker who is not very good at it. If there are additional resources for non-native speakers, that should be brought up afterwards. We should not incorporate that into this. Adding more support for the writing center is also important especially if this extended outside of English. Writing is a big increase in workload for faculty so more support from the center would be helpful.

Dr. Moosally had a question about the bullet related to resource allocation incentivizing faculty teaching these courses. I am supportive of this but wondering if Senate has thought about the costs associated with it. The additional resources for the writing center would be another cost. Are we going to prioritize them and how does that look for the students?

Dr. Jager said that many faculty are already teaching writing courses even though they are not classified as such. Some of these courses do not make and that can be challenging for the faculty. We wanted to find ways to incentivize faculty.

Q - Why are we requiring professional development for all core faculty (including those not teaching WI classes) but not for those teaching upper level WI courses? I think an additional requirement will become problematic when trying to find people to teach these classes.

A – Dr. Jager explained that all faculty in core are required to teach some writing because of the way the gen ed program has been organized (signature assignment). So, all gen ed faculty could improve their outcomes if they focused on these strategies.

There is a kind of professional development that has not been discussed in the movement to online education: teachers can be added by Bb staff to the courses of writing courses that are online already. This way a faculty member new to WI can simply model their courses on a range of existing online models.

If classes don't make, then incentivizing faculty to teach them wouldn't help.

Dr. Jager said the comment on incentivizing is true. We need to incentivize them to find new ways/modes to teach the class so that it does make. Adding faculty to courses in BB would be a good resource. This would only work for the courses/disciplines that have already moved online, but the models could be applicable across disciplines.

Dr. Schmertz moves to approve the motion and Dr. Martz seconds the motion.

Dr. Moosally added a point for clarification. Right now, it looks like the resolution only calls for incentives for faculty teaching the specific courses spelled out in the resolution. It does not seem to allow for faculty to designate other courses writing intensive. Additionally, there are other courses listed that already have incentives built in (English 1301 has low caps). I'm trying to understand if the incentives are restricted to those courses or are applicable to other courses.

Dr. Jager responded by saying that the hope was that faculty could seek out the designations if they wanted to do so. The incentives could be used then.

It is not going to be if they want it, there will be pressure to provide these.

Vote is called for the resolution. Resolution Passes – 13 yays, 8 nays, 3 abstentions

Dr. Jager thanked everyone for the help. Dr. Eszter Trufan will be the new Gen Ed chair in the fall, but Dr. Jager said she will be working on Gen Ed over the summer and will be happy to receive any comments you have through email.

Dr. Duncan explained that we have a temporary committee (the ASA workgroup) that was formed, and two Senate members were elected to it, Dr. Beebe and Dr. Schmertz (Dr. Henney, another senator, is also on the committee representing the online taskforce). The question for Senate is whether we should give them a charge? Topics that have been brought up today were faculty and staff being required to come to campus, faculty wanting to teach online because of health concerns.

Some discussion occurred

Good reading on fall from faculty perspective:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/04/plans-fall-assume-professors-will-be-willing-teach-will-they>

Is it too late to change from face to face to online?

Dr. Beebe wanted to address some of the issues that the working group has been tasked with. The group has been charged with writing a white paper and there are five current options. One option is a two-week late start but then would go back face to face. Another option is hybrid where classes would online and then go face to face in the middle. A third option is two 8-week semesters, 1st 8 weeks online and the 2nd 8 weeks face to face. The fourth option is completely online, and the fifth option is normal start, with social distancing and PPE.

Dr. Beebe explained that the group has been tasked with considering each of those options accounting for specific factors. We are meeting 3 times a week. We will submit the paper and present the findings on May 26th.

Dr. Schmertz asked the senators to go back to their chairs and faculty to see what the mood is on returning to face to face instruction in the fall. How many would prefer to stay online or how many would be prepared to switch as conditions warrant? It would be good to get a sense of what the faculty want from each department.

We had a faculty meeting on this last Friday and a lot of the faculty in our department expressed concerns about having physical ailments that would make them more susceptible. I have asthma and respiratory and I teach a lot of labs as a lecturer and am going to be at higher risk for developing COVID. I know that there are other faculty in our department who have expressed similar concerns. So that would be one thing I would definitely want the Senate to consider as they move forward in these task force. Teaching live online is not easily done. But there has to be a way to make exceptions to do that.

I would like to add some concerns related to student access to technology. While we may shift to more online-type instruction, I've had many students struggle with regular access to computers, webcams, etc. without access to the computer labs.

For your reading pleasure, here is the UH System page on the fall reopening:
<https://uhsystem.edu/chancellor/special-task-force/>

Can the faculty require face to face students to wear masks in class if they have higher risk of illness?

Has anyone spoken with the student government to get feedback on what students need?

Dr. Duncan said that he and Dr. Beebe have been in contact with SGA during the shutdown. They are part of the discussions.

UHD has laptops that can be loaned/given to students.

Are the laptops gone now?

The last I have heard is that they have run through the inventory.

Just a suggestion for classes offering multiple sections with more than one professor. Fully online and face to face sections could be offered, giving both faculty and students the option to do either.

Dr. Jerry Johnson said that the SGA President is on the Task force.

Dr. Moosally said right now, we do not have a surplus of laptops at this point. We'd need to purchase more.

There will be more laptops if we go online

What about laptops for new fall students?

Mr. Hossein Shahrokhi said we are running out of laptops but aren't out of inventory yet. We are trying to source more inventory for summer and fall though.

Dr. Michelle Moosally wanted to make sure that all faculty looked at the student admissions policy revisions that Amelia Hewitt sent out recently. There is a discussion about transient students, and we would like to get that resolved soon. We are having issues with prerequisites for these students and we are seeing if we can streamline the process for them. Please look it over and send feedback. It is on AAC's agenda at the end of the month.

There has been some discussion of offering incentives for fall enrolment that could be added to the mix.

Dr. Jerry Johnson said the CARES Act funding may allow for this if we get clarification from the Department of Education.

With this being our last formal meeting, how will discussions be handled moving forward and throughout the summer that would have typically been brought to Senate for consideration?

Dr. Duncan explained that he is expecting an emergency Senate meeting this summer due to the coming changes. We can schedule one for the first Tuesday in June. And if it is needed, we will call it.

Dr. Duncan also wanted to summarize the last year. We have accomplished some things. Our resolution on compensation and reduction of workload (although we may have erased that this semester). This is a pretty good university to be at. We seem to have a good summer enrollment and I'm fairly optimistic about the university, our faculty and students.

Dr. Duncan also said that we had an orientation for new senators scheduled for the spring semester that was canceled. We can have an informal one during one of the FSEC sessions this summer. It can be a brief – what to expect and what the two-year term will look like.

Dr. Neale made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. Gehring seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR THE INSTITUTION OF CURRICULAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR ESL/ELL STUDENTS AT UHD, Spring 20

- “Whereas 61% of entering FTIC UHD students* indicated English was not the language they were most comfortable communicating in (*Collegiate Learning Assessment instrument 2018); and
- whereas this trend is a consistent data point over the last 5 years; and
- whereas faculty at the Fall 19 General Education shared assessment of student artifacts event identified this trend as an ongoing concern impacting student success across all disciplines; and
- whereas faculty have been collaboratively identifying these concerns regarding students’ written fluency in Standard American English, through assessment reports from 2009-present, through the 2012 Writing Task Force, through the 2019 Writing Task Force, and through the 2014-15 QEP proposal development; and
- the faculty of UHD have a strong history of advocating for resources to support student needs for improved learning; therefore

We recommend that, in order to improve students’ written fluency across the disciplines, UHD administration allocate resources and that the University Curriculum Committee address curricular mandates via the following:

- That those already “Writing Intensive” courses within the core be specifically designated as such: ENG 1301 and 1302; ENG 2301, 2302, 2305, 2309, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314; HIST 1305, 1306, 1312, and 1314; PHIL 1301, 2305 and 2310; HUM 2301 and 2302; SPAN 2301 and 2302; ART 1301, 1302, 1308 and 1310; and
- As per the HIPS Committee, a Writing Intensive course should include “various forms of writing, depending on the course’s discipline. Enhancing student writing skills should be a primary outcome of the course. Writing should be an integral part of the course’s content. Students should receive direct feedback about their writing from faculty throughout the semester;” and
- That designated “Writing Intensive” courses should in the future include a minimal wordcount (3K words) and should also provide instruction on all forms of student writing including but not limited to: drafts; bibliographies; term papers; lab reports; mathematical proofs; essays; freewriting; outlining; peer review; exams; and Signature Assignments; and
- That teaching “Writing Intensive” courses be incentivized for faculty via the following: a lower course cap; a course release; and/or the support of a Supplemental Instructor or Writing Associate; and
- That professional development resources be made available to support those faculty seeking to learn how to make courses “Writing Intensive” *and* to those faculty who teach those skills

PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR THE INSTITUTION OF CURRICULAR AND
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR ESL/ELL STUDENTS AT UHD, Spring 20

- That all faculty teaching in the Gen Ed core participate in professional development to support writing and consider inclusion of at least one of the following “tips” for integrating writing into their pedagogy: freewriting; scaffolded drafts; peer review; using a Supplemental Instructor or Writing Associate; explicitly teaching the prompt for writing assignments; grading content and argument instead of marking or grading grammar errors; building in revision of written assignments; and
- That a volunteer pilot of interdisciplinary faculty willing to designate their courses “Writing Intensives” following the above be established, funded, and assessed for future data on improving written fluency in Standard American English for UHD students.”