

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Nathan Neale
Regular Scheduled Senate Meeting October 20, 2020 2:30 – 4:02 PM
Online through Zoom

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

Senators Absent: Jeffrey Martz, Arpita Shroff

Guests: Eric Link, Provost/VPAA;, Michelle Moosally, AVP Programming and Curriculum, Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds, Meritza Tamez, Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Erika Harrison, Hossein Shahrokhi, Associate Vice President, Information Technology, David Bradley, VP Administration and Finance, Rob Austin McKee, Assistant Professor, Patricia Ensor, Executive Director, W.I.D., John Lane, Director, Technology and Learning Service Information Technology, Caroline Smith, Meghan Minard, Tatum Hoppers, Sheryl Sellers, Dr. Irene Chen, Darlene Hodge, FS Admin, Timoteo Modrow, SGA President.

An individual joined via 12814516954.

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

Minutes

An amendment to the minutes to include Dr. Chen as an attendee but not a senator was presented. The October 6, 2020 minutes then passed as amended.

Reports

OER (Open Educational Resource) Task Force: Dr. Rob McKee shared a detailed presentation from OER on open education resources. Their task force began with a focus on compliance with the State of Texas and now have gone beyond the letter of the law or what is required. Texas defines OER resources as those “**teaching, learning, and research resources** that reside in the **public domain or have been released under an intellectual** property license that permits their **free** use and re-purposing by others with no or limited restriction”. Any intuition, including UHD must maintain a searchable repository or list of OER resources if used or offered.

OER is important to our students as many are under financial pressures. Expensive textbooks can be a burden. The task force is working on two new course categories or designations.

- 1) No Cost: This includes free resources, such as OER and other resources that are created by faculty or are located in the UHD library.
- 2) Low Cost: These cost less than \$50.

A link to the UHD Library's OER information page is

<https://library.uhd.edu/c.php?g=857187&p=6153699>

A link to the law (SB810) is <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/85R/billtext/pdf/SB00810F.pdf>

A link to the OER taskforce in the UHD News <https://news.uhd.edu/update-from-uhd-oer-task-force/>

Q – How does this differ from fair use?

A – Dr. McKee stated that fair use is related to using copy written material in limited ways. We cannot adapt or distribute.

Dr. Cueva added that the task force is more about complying with the laws and that we want to go above and beyond what is expected to reduce the financial strain related to fees students pay.

Dr. McKee argued that some students will have a desire to enroll in courses with low and no cost resources and that this may influence course enrollment. He also believes that the higher demand may cause some courses to fill faster than others. He said that studies show that some students will drop courses or choose not to purchase materials if textbook and other course materials cost too much.

Dr. Beebe asked about capacity if some courses and faculty offer low and no cost materials and others do not. How can we serve all students that want these courses? Will it be first-come, first-served?

Dr. McKee believed that this may happen at first. He believed that some faculty will experience pressure and this may create a “pseudo-competitive landscape”. We need to consider the ramifications for this new direction as many students will choose these courses over those that have to pay \$100 to \$300 per textbook. The task force wants to improve the financial pressures for as many students as possible while also complying with TX SB810.

Q – Is this aspirational or are we being required to do this?

A – Dr. McKee stated that we are not requiring anyone to use OER materials. We only need a searchable list so that students can view what courses require or recommend OER resources. The spirit of the law is to encourage us to use more OER material for our students.

Dr. Beebe thanked Dr. McKee for presenting and thanked the committee for their contribution.

Provost Link:

He began by thanking Drs. McKee and Cueva as well as all those that have been involved with the OER task force. This is very important work!

He provided a budget update about the market study and faculty hiring plan for this academic year. There is much more good news than expected.

The PBDC met in February/March and had 2 to 3 times as many requests as resources (this is normal and typical). There were many faculty and administrators involved, including some in

this meeting. The budget was presented to and accepted by President Munoz. They had a “tiered approach” that was contingent on any enrollment gains that may occur. The tiered approach had mandates, that UHD must address, then Tiers 1-4. However, this was pre-pandemic. This approach provided a framework for operation. It included funds set aside for the market study and other important initiatives. However, due to the pandemic, we had to shift our thinking and preparing for various tiers of declining enrollment (5%, 7.5% and 10% decline). We used 5% as a baseline. Then, Governor Abbott and the State of Texas required us to return 5% of the funds they contributed to UHD. This was additional funds that we had to address in our budget

The summer and fall had impressive enrollment. We are up 4% in headcount and 4.5% (+) in SCH. We are in a much better position than we thought we would be in. We then had the chance to look at the PBDC budget and process. We made sure that this would be the framework for allocation of funds if they became available.

To paint a broad picture and as a result of the “swing”, we have been able to do some things that we thought that we could not do. We had to leverage our reserves in case of an enrollment decline. We knew this would be temporary and that we would have to pay ourselves back and “right the ship”. We could return to the mandated items, such as system service fees that equated to about 2MM. We had to address the 2.5% merit increase from about a year ago. This was about \$950,000 that had to be put into the base budget.

Now, with the increased enrollment, we wanted to focus on structural deficits. These are items that should be in the base budget but were not. We are slowly addressing these items. We often find that the adjunct pay and summer pools are often higher. The commencement budget often runs over. We were able to return and address many of these. This is important as once we address all for these, we will better be able to protect ourselves from future recessions or issues.

We are funding the market study via \$250,000. The RFP has gone out and they are meeting with vendors that may have questions. They hope that much of this will be done in the spring but this is outside of his office’s control as it involves vendors. \$650,000 is set aside to fund the potential outcomes of this study. The amount of funds that will be required to address the outcomes of the study are unknown. This amount helps UHD prepare or to have the ability to act on the market study. The original PBDC budget had a total of 1.3MM. The first \$650,000 was in the mandate column and the second \$650 was in Tier 2. This does not mean that this is all that we will have. This is only what we have earmarked. The market study may be completed in the spring but may not be implemented until next fall or later. Again, this is outside of their control and that time may be required to prevent or lessen equity issues across campus. Going forward, this spring, the PBDC process will attempt to address this further. We have to be cautious, but not overly-cautious when addressing the base budget.

While we may have higher enrollment, we do not know if it is sustained. Some of the community colleges that are our feeder or transfer partners have lower enrollment. This may impact us the future or at least over the next two to three years. The enrollment management team will be working much harder now to attract these students. This team did a great job this year and now have a lot of work to do in the future.

Dr. Beebe called the discussion short as we were running out of time. He asked about the faculty hiring plan.

Provost Link explained that we could fund many of the Tier 1 funds. They are not ready to publish the budget yet as some small details are being worked out. In regards to the faculty hiring plan, all of the deans received a green light for specific searches. All of the positions that were frozen are unfrozen. In addition to these positions, they are adding about seven brand new lines that are additions to our faculty. We will be launching 34 full time searches. Most were frozen positions, including 23 assistant professors, 5 lecturers, 1 associate professor, and 5 that are undetermined. This represents about a 10% increase to our faculty.

Dr. Beebe asked Provost Link to briefly speak about President Tillis' initiative of opportunity hires for each college.

Provost Link stated that these positions are yet to be determined. President Tillis has granted one position to each college through a targeted plan to hire professors from underrepresented populations to help increase the ratios of diversity on campus.

Dr. Beebe asked how this would impact University College.

Provost Link said that he cannot as the details were still not worked out yet.

Dr. Beebe invited questions from the senate.

Dr. Duncan asked if any of the faculty lines from Tier One were unfunded.

Provost Link said that he did not believe so. While the money is allocated for positions, some deans have changed the priority ranking due to faculty retirements and other demands.

Q – When do we receive the 2.5% merit increase?

Provost Link stated that began about a year ago.

Dr. Beebe thanked Provost Link for his report.

Dr. Kevin Buckler shared an update from FAC regarding the lecturer policy.

He began with the importance of lectures being eligible for faculty development awards.

Meghan Minard shared a presentation to explain the need to allow lecturers to apply for these awards. Tenure, tenure-track and librarians are eligible but lecturers are not. While FAC is addressing this, she advocated for senate support.

This is closely tied to the UHD mission. As lecturers teach so many courses, their improvement directly contributes student experience through teaching up to five courses per semester. This may improve lecturers' ability to improve their annual review scores. This is important as the

review scores are tied to raises. Also, as they currently cannot apply for grants without co-principle investigators, these funds are important.

Dr. Beebe explained that this is currently a senate priority.

Dr. Buckler asked if the senate could consider a resolution to support lecturers. This would support the policy and to increase the amount of funds available. He is prepared to assist with drafting the resolution.

Dr. Beebe asked Dr. Buckler to speak to the lecturer to senior lecturer policy.

Dr. Buckler stated that it was approved in FAC. It would require departments to discuss a process to move senior lecturers forward that is similar to the current rank and tenure process. It would require discussing, deliberating and voting on the process as well as on individual candidates. This provides a process where the chair, dean and provost would review the applications, with one vote being required to move out of the college. The application will be judged on both the quality of the application and department needs. It would include a salary increase and a four year contract. A provision is included to revoke that is similar to how tenure can be revoked. This protects the institution.

Q – Has it been approved by one level but not another?

A – Dr. Buckler stated that it has been approved by FAC and will now go to the academic affairs council before going to the president for signatures.

Dr. Beebe thanked both for presenting.

Dr. Beebe invited Timoteo Modrow, SGA President to present a resolution from SGA.

Mr. Modrow shared a “resolution in support in designating November 3rd as a no instruction day campus wide at the University of Houston-Downtown”.

He provided a summary and rationale. The UHD mission statement focuses on community engagement. This is related to voting. Many similar resolutions have been passed all across the United States. They are asking for the first Tuesday that follows November 1st on even number years to be a student holiday. They are asking for this year to be an “optional” no instruction day due to the short notice. They hope that faculty will allow students to not attend classes so that students can vote. This is also being sent to staff council. They are asking for senate support.

A senator commended SGA for doing this.

Mr. Modrow stated that they were not able to get a polling station on campus this year due to COVID-19.

A senator stated that most of their class have voted and thanked Mr. Modrow for this.

Dr. Duncan motioned to adopt the resolution as is.

Ms. Hudspeth seconded the motion.

Dr. Beebe said that this is a good example of SGA, Staff Council and Faculty Senate working together and supporting one another at UHD.

Q – Would there be due dates and deadlines on that day?

A– Mr. Modrow stated based on other resolutions, they are only asking not to hold class. Assignments would still be due. This provides students the chance to vote.

Q – Why are we doing this if there is a voting stations on campus next time around?

A– Mr. Modrow stated that they are having conversations but we do not know if they will be on campus.

Dr. Beebe stated that if students are manning the stations, they will not be able to attend.

Dr. Cueva asked for a point of clarification regarding what recourse faculty have if they choose not to honor the resolution. Would students be counted absent?

Dr. Beebe said that the optional component only applies this year.

Mr. Modrow stated that professors would have the ability to opt in or opt out this year.

Q – Is it possible for this not to take effect this year? What happens when some faculty honor it and some do not?

Drs. Duncan and Neale argued that this already occurs during Thanksgiving and other breaks.

A senator stated that we should not penalize students for being civically engaged.

Other senators echoes this and stressed that we care about this and care about our students.

Q – Can we address course schedules and contact hours for accreditation?

Dr. Duncan stated that we are not meeting the requirement.

Dr. Moosally stated that the current calendar process was complicated.

A senator suggested that we remove Labor Day as an instructional holiday.

A writer for Dateline argued that this would show commitment to students from faculty to administration.

Dr. Beebe stated that there were two years to figure out how to make this happen.

Dr. Beebe called the vote it passed unanimous 27 yes, zero no, zero abstentions.

Dr. Beebe reminded senators to send their suggested priorities so that the senate can vote and decide where we want to focus our attention. He said that we have a basic list but want to make sure all are heard. He emphasized the importance of providing a rationale that supports each of the priorities so that other senators can better understand each. Dr. Neale would then create a Qualtrics vote and we will discuss the results in the next senate meeting.

A motion to adjourn by Ms. Hudspeth was seconded by Dr. Pore. The meeting adjourned at 4:02PM.