

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Michael Cavanaugh
October 1, 2019 2:34 - 4:01 pm
UHD Travis/Milam room

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

Absent: Krista Gehring, Laura Mitchell, Nathan Neale, Pat Williams.

Guests: Juan Munoz, President; Eric Link, Provost/VPAA; David Bradley, VPAF; Jerry Johnson, AVP Faculty, Research, and Sponsored Programs; Hossein Shahrokhi, AVP IT; Jimmy Jung, VP of Enrollment Management; Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds; Lucy Bowen, Director SI; Darlene Hodge, FS Admin; Pat Ensor, Library Director; Anne Zwicky, Interlibrary Loan & Distance Education Librarian; Lisa Braysen, Assistant Director Library Planning and Assessment; John Lane, Director of TTLIC; Creshema Murray, Associate Professor.

Call to order: The Senate was called to order at 2:34 pm by Senate President Michael Duncan.

Minutes

Minutes of the September 17th, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.

Reports

Dr. Jimmy Jung came to Senate and gave a report on UHD's fall enrollment (see attached).

Opened the floor to questions

Q – For the increase at UHV, do we know if that was caused by an increase at the branch campus in Katy?

A – Dr. Jung said that at this point we are unsure. We are still waiting for the details to come out about the individual campuses increases and decreases.

Q – Why is graduate enrollment down?

A – Dr. Jung indicated that graduate applications and the yields on those applications are down. PeopleSoft factored into this decrease, as graduate applicants are more sensitive to delays than undergraduates are. However, this also is not an isolated problem at UHD as graduate enrollment dipped across the system.

Q – Dr. Michelle Moosally asked Dr. Jung to talk about strategies to communicate goals, especially timelines, to schedulers in academic departments.

A – Dr. Jung said they are already starting this process by looking at this past year as a baseline. Looking at the funnel (yields), UH has been fairly stable with applications. We plan on bringing that information to departments and using a similar strategy for the fall.

Initiatives

Dr. Duncan gave an update from FSEC on the status of the joint resolution on compensation with Staff Council. During the President's remarks last week, he announced a merit pool of 2.5% this year and some CUPA adjustment issues in the near future. Because of this, the status of the joint resolution is a bit up in the air.

Due to the President's remarks, FSEC recommended to Staff Council to put the resolution on the back burner and they agreed. FSEC would recommend the same of the Senate. However, FSEC did continue to work on the resolution as was asked (see attached).

There was no motion to move on the compensation resolution at this time and the motion held back for the time being.

Dr. Duncan also gave an update on the status of inquiries into Blackboard Ally. The system purchased Ally for the other institutions too, so all UH system schools are all planning to use it. We may be in different stages of implementation though. As for it being required legally, Dr. Duncan spoke with Hope Pamplin and Erika Harrison who assured him that Ally (or something similar) is required. Dr. Duncan has also reached out to UH legal and is awaiting a response.

Discussion ensued

This sounds like just purchasing Ally was enough to meet the mandate.

No, implementing the system (Ally) actually gets us there.

In the PowerPoints on Ally, there is mention of a 67% mandate. Is that state law or an in house mandate?

I do not know.

The Texas Code said April 2020 is the compliance date. That is not internal.

How do we evaluate if we are 67% compliant?

67% refers to each document.

100% of documents have to be 67% compliant.

FSEC should continue to try to figure out whether this is an in house mandate and, therefore, malleable.

Dr. Duncan also brings up another issue that was not originally on the agenda, but something that he thought needed to be discussed. He received faculty feedback on the school closure during Tropical Storm Imelda, with some complaints about too little notice on the closure.

Q – Who makes the call on the closure? When and why do they make it?

A – Provost Link, who was in the audience, was able to answer the questions. He explained that there were a number of people involved in the decision, myself (Provost), the President, Mr. David Bradley (Vice President of Administration and Finance), and the rest of the VPs. We are all part of an Emergency Management Subgroup. During an event like this, we are tracking a number of modes of information (i.e., internet, television). It is always difficult to render a judgement in something like this, especially considering the pop-up nature of the storm. UHD was ahead of our sister institutions when it came to closing down the university but obviously, we were not quick enough. Hindsight is 20/20 and we will learn from each of these incidents similar to how we learned from Harvey. I was one of the people who stayed here late into the evening while some faculty, staff, and students stayed overnight. We were able to get Red Cross cots for everyone and make sure students were fed. Many thanks go out to the faculty and staff who helped during the flooding.

Questions and Discussion opened

Q – These events were supposed to be 500-year floods, but they seem to happen too often, especially flooding at UHD. Is there anyone thinking of ideas on how to hold classes when we have campus closures like this?

A – Provost Link indicated that there has been no coordinated response from the university but some individual faculty may have been doing as you suggested.

TV was saying 10-12 inches of rain on Wednesday night. I found out my 11:30 am class was cancelled just minutes before. Knowing the flooding concerns and where we are, maybe responding with an abundance of caution (especially for commuters) is warranted for these types of events.

Q – I wonder how much UHD takes into account the greater Houston Area – Downtown versus Suburbs.

A – Provost Link said that this was a big concern although quantifying it would be difficult. Travel to and from the campus played a big role as we have faculty, staff, and students from all over the metro area.

Mr. Hossein Shahrokhi explained that UHD has a Disaster Recovery Plan for continuing classes. All courses at UHD, even individual courses and those face to face, have blackboard shells created. As long as these courses are activated on blackboard, faculty and students can communicate. If the worst occurs, face-to-face classes can be converted and run on blackboard.

The pedagogical implications provide a good discussion. However, this does not seem very practical as some students simply do not have the technology at home and come to campus to complete their work. Also, if the power is knocked out, so is blackboard, zoom, etc. Technology and online is not the answer.

Maybe as a general practice, we have faculty place something on their course syllabus for “in case of disaster” or when the university is shut down.

Q – If the university is open but it looks bad, can professors cancel class?

A – Provost Link explained that he did not know the policy off the top of his head, but there are certain rules regarding contact hours with college classes. Students pay for a certain amount of contact hours in a specific mode and we do not want to run afoul of any laws or accreditation issues.

Dr. Duncan also brought an update from the calendar committee. There was a problem regarding contact hours and the university has to add another day to the calendar. Two possible solutions were

thought of in the committee: take a reading day away to add to the regular semester or shrink the final exam schedule by a day to add to the regular semester (possibly having flexible schedules for faculty).

Dr. Duncan wanted to bring this to Senate for immediate feedback and then do a full faculty Qualtrics Survey.

In the Marilyn Davies College of Business, we have proctored exams, which would make it more difficult if we shrunk the final exam schedule. Better to lose a reading day.

Maybe we should ask students.

Students do not actually know their schedules yet, though.

This would be a more hypothetical survey.

Dr. Moosally suggested that the committee should be clear about what the problem is. Having flexible faculty final schedules could be problematic.

Q – Is this for the spring?

A – Dr. Duncan explained that this was actually for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Someone with student organizations should be able to get ahold of student opinions on the issue.

Q – Does having class on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving help?

A – Dr. Duncan said he would pass that suggestion along to the committee.

Q – How does the Wednesday before Thanksgiving help M/W classes get an extra day?

A – According to Dr. Duncan, we just need one extra day, not one for T/R and M/W classes.

Dr. Joanna Schmertz gave an update on the progress made by the Senate Constitution Review Committee. Revisions have begun to be identified. Dr. Duncan had already pointed out certain areas that needed clarification from his work last year. With further examination, more issues in the constitution were discovered.

The process should be straightforward. An amendment would be brought to the senate to change the constitution (notice) and then the amendment would be voted on during the next meeting. If the amendment received 2/3 of the vote then the amendment would be sent out to the faculty.

Dr. Schmertz identified some of the issues the committee dealt with including: cleaning up T/TT and Non-Tenured, adding procedures to the awards committee, took out a mention to the planning and budget committee, adding a bio to all elected offices, and adding a statement on the President-Elect serving on major committees. There are still a few questions about certain committees, i.e. Gen Ed.

Q – What is the ability of Visiting Assistant Professors (VAPs) to serve on shared governance?

A – Dr. Schmertz stated that it is understood that VAPs would not be eligible for certain committees.

Dr. Moosally explained that Gen Ed now has its own policy, which was not always the case. She is also concerned about lack of references to the Budget and Planning Committee.

Dr. Duncan said that there are still references to the Budget and Planning Committee; we are just recommending the removal of one reference.

Dr. Moosally said that elections for the committee should take place.

Dr. Dahlberg suggested that the name change to Budget and Planning changed the composition of the committee.

Dr. Schmertz asked for anyone who was a part of the previous Senate constitutional revision to talk with her about it, as the context for the changes would help.

President Munoz

Report

President Munoz joined Senate to give a follow up to his State of the University. He indicated that fall enrollment and new student enrollment was up for the fall. Retention is great and we have a record high freshman class number. Second and third year persistence is also up over past years. This is very positive for increasing our graduation rate, which currently sits at 28%. This is the highest 6-year (FTIC) graduation rate we have had at UHD and quite an improvement from a couple of years ago when we were in the low teens.

We also have new facilities in various development across campus. The new Science and Technology Building is partially open and we are even having outside companies coming to campus to hold strategic planning meeting in the new building. We are in the final stages of the RFP process for the Student Wellness and Success Building. The idea is to break ground on the building in the spring. Ideally, we would open the building before the I-45 expansion gets underway, as that is a 7-year project. Imelda showed us a number of things, one being that public transportation is big for our students. This along with parking and traffic will greatly impact our enrollment moving forward.

There are also numerous enhancements around campus including new banners, letters, and a new gator. As was announced previously, President Munoz stated there would be a 2.5% merit pool for faculty and staff. This will be the second increase during his time as President. There are a number of people across the university working to implement this for faculty and staff for this to hit soon. The goal is for people to start seeing the raise on their paychecks at the end of October or the December 1st checks, depending on how people are paid.

This is in stark contrast to the spring, where we were looking at close to a 10% decrease in revenue. At that point we could not do pay increases nor could we do technological advancements or basic improvements across campus.

The President also stated that he asked ESO and the Provost to do some proposals for a market study on faculty. The idea is to look at how faculty are comparably and equitably to others in the department and on the market, then respond accordingly based on resources.

The President also explained that he had a good meeting with the full professors yesterday. He explained that it is important for parity of effort among faculty to serve the institution. There should be recognition of workload for the important committees.

He is very enthusiastic about the direction of the university. The new commissioner of the THECB is starting today and UHD already has a phone meeting with him set up later this week. Enrollment is important, but we need to move away from that narrative as being the only factor. We need to start focusing on building programs, reputation, rigor, and more development.

Some questions and discussion

Q – The annual security police report just came out. It is really great. None of the other system schools are as good as ours was.

A – President Munoz agreed and said our police chief (Michael Benford) deserves a lot of credit and we have great officers. We are providing a safe environment to faculty, staff, and students. Generally, our campus is very safe. Mr. David Bradley also deserves some credit.

Q – The I-45 expansion has had an erosion of public support over the past few years. Are we helping to discourage the project in any way?

A – As a public entity, we are not taking a view according to President Munoz. We are greatly involved in the discussion though. This seems like a fully funded project. Two additional projects could cause headaches for us were they to occur at the same time – rail spur project and the north canal project. The north canal project would result in a cut through for the bayou, which would lower the flood plain 3-5 feet. In the past, we were not always visible in these project discussions. Now we are and now we advocate strongly for UHD.

Q – Dr. Creshema Murray asked if the changing demographics of students changes the views of on-campus housing?

A – Dr. Munoz asks Dr. Murray to email him the question, he will respond directly to her, and he will come back to Senate to address this question. He explains that it is already 4:00 and he does not want to keep Senate beyond its scheduled time.

Dr. Pavelich makes a motion to adjourn and Dr. Henney seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.

Fall 2019 Enrollment Summary

- Registered 15,037 students
- 14,680 Total Enrollment (+2.9%)
- 13,168 Undergraduate Students (+3.8%)
 - ~ 1,500 FTIC
 - ~ 2,250 New Transfer
- 1,512 Graduate Students (-4.6%)
 - ~ 460 New Graduate

Spring 2019/Fall 2020 Initiatives

- Meeting with colleges to establish recruitment priorities
- Optimize scholarships and set-aside aid strategies
- Expanding market reach within Houston
- Partnering with University College on student retention best-practices

A Joint Resolution on Faculty Compensation (3rd Draft incorporating faculty, FSEC, and Staff Council feedback, 09/27/19)

**University of Houston-Downtown Faculty Senate
University of Houston-Downtown Staff Council**

Whereas faculty and staff are integral and central assets to UHD, without which the university cannot function;

Whereas the failure to consistently recruit and retain excellent faculty diminishes the quality of UHD's teaching, research, and service, and unduly burdens the existing exceptional faculty who strive to further the mission and vision of the university;

Whereas the recruitment, retention, and development of qualified and experienced staff is instrumental in building a culture of student success, and the inability to do so makes it less likely that UHD will meet the goals established in the university's strategic plan, continue its growth as reflected in the UH System Progress Card, and contribute to the state's goals set out in Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30 plan;

Whereas the UHD faculty and staff have not had access to a merit pool for raises since 2017; Whereas both the 2019 and 2017 UHD Faculty Climate Reports found that two-thirds of the faculty, and a majority of all ranks, felt they were not adequately compensated for their work;

Whereas in the absence of a merit pool, the expenditure of considerable time and effort on the part of both UHD faculty and staff in composing annual review reports and staff evaluations which are mandated in policy, may represent an undue burden and the assignment of scores linked to a merit pool is not justified;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the President and Provost of UHD take under advisement the following proposals from the UHD Faculty Senate and UHD Staff Council, which are intended to begin to alleviate the long-running low levels of compensation at UHD:

1. That a merit pool for full-time faculty and staff raises of at least 3% be prioritized in UHD's budget cycles moving forward;
2. That relevant CUPA-HR data in relation to peer institutions be obtained, and any UHD full-time faculty salaries lower than the disciplinary CUPA of our peer institutions be brought to equivalence by 2022 (in the case of the College of Business, AACSB accredited institutions);
3. That the UHD Staff Council and UHD Faculty Senate executive committee be provided status reports, and that both be informed on progress toward the above proposals.