

UHD Faculty Council – Minutes

Date: April 7th, 2026

Location: A300 - Buffalo Bayou Room

Attendance: See final page for information on attendance at this meeting.

- **General Welcome:**

The meeting was called to order by the presiding officer, Dr. Paul Mandell, at 2:30 pm who stated that at a recent meeting at the University of Houston-System Faculty Council Executive Committee it was clarified that the state law requires meetings to be live-streamed and the official minutes be published. However, the law does not require recording to be made publicly available. Instead, the recordings must be retained and archived.

- **Approval of Minutes**

The March 3rd minutes were approved with all in favor (22 votes).

- **Policy Updates:**

Dr. Quander reported that they have concentrated their efforts on advancing priority policy initiatives targeted for completion this year, with some expected to carry over into the next. Several policies, namely 06A03, 06A07, and 06A09 are being released for public comment, primarily reflecting updates to language and references rather than substantive revisions. Additional work is underway on the 10.A.02 Faculty Grievance policy, which may extend beyond the current semester. Upcoming releases include the 10.A.06 Faculty Dismissal policy, the 10.A.17 Department Chair policy and a new policy on internal grants and awards.

Dr. David Ryden directed faculty to the Faculty Council webpage, where the Institutional Compliance section provides access to policies currently open for community comment as well as a record of prior feedback and responses. He highlighted several curriculum-related policies. Updates to the 03A35 Academic Programs and Credentials policy clarified definitions and resolved inconsistencies, while revisions to the 03A21 Experiential Courses policy established general expectations for activities such as internships, allowing flexibility across disciplines. Feedback was also received on the 03A26 Student Course Opinion Survey policy, which aligns with state requirements to make student evaluations publicly accessible in a summarized format. Ongoing efforts include transitioning to a new evaluation platform, developing updated survey instruments, and piloting changes ahead of a planned implementation in the fall.

Additionally, a significant proposal concerning the PS 03.A.41 General Education Program is currently under review. This includes restructuring committee representation to better reflect teaching contributions, introducing a faculty director of general education, and extending committee terms. These changes aim to improve assessment processes, streamline evaluation tools, and ensure that assessment results are more effectively utilized for program improvement.

- **Faculty Ombuds Search Committee**

The Faculty Ombuds search process was conducted by a committee comprising faculty representatives and a member of the Provost's Office. The committee reviewed three

applicants—Dr. Jeff Jackson, Dr. Katherine Jager, and Dr. Jerry Johnson—each of whom presented their qualifications and vision to the faculty in a session made accessible both in person and via recording. Faculty feedback was collected through a two-week survey period following the presentations. After thorough evaluation of application materials, presentations, and faculty input, the committee deliberated and reached a final recommendation. While all candidates were considered highly qualified, Dr. Jeff Jackson was selected based on his extensive experience, including over 15 years of service as a department chair, prior involvement on grievance committees, and strong faculty support highlighting his neutrality, fairness, approachability, and effectiveness in conflict resolution. The recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the Faculty Council Executive Committee.

A motion to forward Dr. Jackson's nomination to the Provost for final consideration passed with 24 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

- **Shared Governance Council Reports**

University Curriculum Council

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) has held multiple meetings since the last council session, focusing on accreditation updates, policy review, and ongoing curriculum improvements. Discussions included reflections on the recent SACSCOC visit, as well as upcoming policy changes, particularly those related to General Education Committee (GEC) restructuring and broader policy alignment efforts. Significant attention has been given to reviewing and updating outdated materials across institutional websites, including legacy course documents, to ensure accuracy and consistency.

The committee is also advancing efforts to clarify standards for experiential learning courses, such as internships, by aligning contact hours and credit allocations with guidance from the Higher Education Coordinating Board. Additional initiatives include continued work on High-Impact Practices (HIPs) course designations. Faculty are encouraged to submit any pending curricular proposals promptly to ensure consideration before the end of the semester. Finally, two new academic programs—an M.S. in Workforce Analytics and a B.S. in Legal Studies—have been submitted to the Provost for review.

Faculty Affairs Council

FAC did not convene during the past month due to scheduling conflicts with spring break and the Presidential Search Listening Tour.

Research & Innovation Council

The committee has been actively engaged in advancing the ORCA policy and has scheduled two meetings tomorrow to further its development. A more comprehensive update will be provided following these discussions.

Policy Advisory Council

The Policy Advisory Council continues to review expedited policy updates, focusing on non-substantive revisions required for legal or system compliance. Since the last meeting, four policies

have been reviewed. Two policies, PS 01.A.15 on Notices and Announcements and PS 04.A.02. on student use of alcohol, were approved.

A third policy PS 04.A.03 on student organizations and activities was conditionally approved, with requested clarifications to address potentially broad language, reflecting required updates under Texas law. A fourth policy, addressing student rights and responsibilities, PS 04.A.01, was not approved for expedited review due to the extent of substantive changes and will instead undergo a full review process.

Additionally, five policies are currently under review. Three are proposed for rescission: the ORCA policy, which is being restructured under the Research and Innovation Council; the Security-Sensitive Positions PS 02.A.17 policy, which has been superseded by system-level policy; and the Faculty Development Award FDA program, now reassigned to the Faculty Affairs Council. Two other policies—Voluntary Modification of Employment and Procurement and Procurement Card—are undergoing non-substantive updates.

Academic Affairs Council

Updates were provided across several areas. The Faculty Awards event is scheduled for April 14 at 2:30 p.m. Course reviews are currently in progress and are due by April 27. The presidential search process was discussed, including faculty engagement with the Chancellor and Board of Regents; formation of the search committee is forthcoming. The P-Card policy, including the \$500 threshold, was reviewed, with further clarification to be provided. Enrollment updates indicated that summer registration opened on April 1, with current figures slightly trailing last year's pace, though expectations remain to meet or exceed prior totals. Concerns were raised regarding the new Campus Solutions interface, particularly the clarity of course modality displays.

The Policy Advisory Council reported on recent actions, including the decision to move the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy to full review. The next PAC meeting is scheduled for April 17. A Budget and Financial Town Hall is planned for April 30, and campus-wide participation is encouraged. Additional updates included confirmation that Rank & Tenure decisions have been submitted to the Board of Regents.

New Business

- **Purchasing Policy:** A faculty council member raised a concern regarding operational purchasing impacts related to recent policy and system changes. Two key policies and procedural changes were highlighted. First, a Texas compliance requirement now mandates verification that vendors are not indebted to the State of Texas prior to approving purchases over \$500. Second, the transition from Citibank to US Bank for procurement cards has created implementation challenges, including limited vendor coding and transaction declines. The faculty member reported multiple card declines requiring manual intervention by the purchasing office to validate and approve transactions, resulting in delays in routine purchasing activities.

Ms. Lorena Sanchez provided an update on the ongoing transition to the US Bank procurement card system, noting that the initial months have been challenging not only for the institution but across the state. They clarified that the \$500 pre-verification requirement has always been part of state policy but had not been consistently enforced until recently identified through an audit, prompting stricter compliance going forward.

Regarding procurement card declines, it was explained that merchant category codes (MCCs) are initially provided in bulk by the state, but institutions must continuously refine and update internal approval templates as new vendors are encountered. Because MCC identifiers are not always clearly mapped to specific vendors, transactions may be declined until additional classification or verification is completed. In some cases, cardholders are asked to provide further details to confirm whether a purchase qualifies under allowable categories, particularly when transactions are categorized under restricted services. She noted that improvements are expected over the next several months as the system is further refined and institutional templates are updated based on accumulated transaction data, which should reduce the frequency of declines and improve overall efficiency.

- **Commencement:** Ms. Emily Leffler from the Provost Office provided an update on commencement planning and faculty participation roles. The current process for selecting commencement marshals continues to draw from faculty award recipients identified during the April awards cycle, a system established in collaboration with prior Faculty Senate leadership. These individuals are typically assigned to serve as marshals for December and May ceremonies. As the available pool of awardees has now been exhausted for the upcoming ceremonies, additional faculty volunteers are needed, including one Grand Marshal and two Associate Grand Marshals. She also announced the launch of a dedicated faculty webpage on the commencement site, which provides information about commencement roles, responsibilities, and participation opportunities. This includes descriptions of marshal duties as well as a centralized sign-up form for faculty interested in serving as marshals, banner carriers, or seating marshals. Early engagement has been strong, with 103 faculty already registered to attend commencement. Continued faculty participation is encouraged to support upcoming ceremonies.

Other:

- **Grant related question:** At the request of several constituents, a member of the Faculty Council raised the possibility of reviewing grant fund disbursement processes, timelines, and procedures to promote the timely implementation of externally funded projects and to strengthen institutional partnerships. Faculty across disciplines administer external grants that support research, educational programming, and community engagement, often in collaboration with partners such as school districts, nonprofit organizations, and community groups that rely on prompt reimbursement. Recent instances suggest delays in the disbursement of grant funds that may be systemic in nature and indicative of procedural complexity across administrative units. Such delays have the potential to disrupt project timelines and deliverables, strain external partnerships, diminish partner confidence, and affect the institution's reliability as a fiscal steward. Accordingly, it was proposed that the Faculty Council formally request a review of grant disbursement procedures by the appropriate administrative offices. The purpose of this review would be to clarify existing processes, identify sources of delay, and recommend improvements to support the more timely distribution of funds.

Dr. Bordelon responded by highlighting ongoing efforts to improve and streamline processes associated with the management of externally funded grants, with particular attention to reducing delays arising from procedural and documentation-related issues. She noted that while some delays have been linked to paperwork errors and coordination challenges, these issues are not attributable to any single individual or office and typically involve multiple administrative units, including college-level administrators and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. She emphasized the importance of further strengthening these processes by ensuring that all relevant

stakeholders have a clear understanding of required documentation and workflows at the outset, thereby minimizing avoidable delays. Dr. Bordelon also acknowledged broader external factors that can affect grant administration, such as federal agency restructuring and shifts in grant oversight across departments, which may introduce additional complexities into funding timelines. While these factors vary by funding source, she underscored that efforts remain focused on addressing internal procedural inefficiencies. She further affirmed a commitment to follow up with faculty to gather additional information and to collaborate with the appropriate offices to enhance processes and better support principal investigators.

- **SACSCOC update:** Dr. Bhati expressed appreciation for the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and administrators for achieving a positive SACSCOC reaffirmation outcome, noting that the result still awaits final approval. She emphasized that the achievement reflects sustained collaboration, expertise, and significant time and effort across the university community. Additionally, she reported positive feedback from external reviewers, noting that visiting evaluators provided strong commendations for the institution's work. She concluded by expressing gratitude and recognition for the faculty and staff whose contributions supported the successful review process.

- **Course review question:** A Faculty Council member requested clarification from the Provost regarding a recently distributed course review process sent to departments, which required faculty to complete a checklist evaluating courses based on learning outcomes, materials, and assignments. Feedback from faculty constituents raised concerns about the scope and interpretation of certain review criteria, particularly in relation to the expectation of presenting opposing viewpoints in the classroom. While affirming faculty support for balanced academic inquiry, concerns were expressed about ambiguity in defining what constitutes a "viewpoint" within instructional practice, and how different pedagogical approaches might be interpreted under the review framework.

The Provost responded by stating that faculty are expected to conduct course reviews in good faith as part of compliance with core curriculum requirements, including SB 37. Faculty are responsible for reviewing their own courses to ensure alignment among learning outcomes, assignments, and course descriptions, in coordination with their chairs and programs. She noted that this review process is conducted at the faculty and departmental level, rather than through external evaluation, with the expectation that faculty confirm and document alignment within their courses. The administration expressed trust in faculty expertise and affirmed that properly completed reviews will be accepted as evidence of compliance.

- **Interim Provost question:** A Faculty Council member inquired about the status of the Interim Provost appointment. Provost Bordelon responded that an announcement is expected to be made no later than the following week.

- **ORCA policy question:** A Faculty Council member inquired whether departmental committees would continue to play a role after the restructuring of the ORCA and FDA policies. Dr. Quander responded that the Research and Innovation Council will address this matter and indicated that the departmental role is not likely to be eliminated; rather, it may be strengthened.

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 pm.

Attendance Information:

| Faculty Council Member Name | Present | Absent |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Mandell, Paul | X | |
| Shroff, Arpita | X | |
| Benavides, Maria | X | |
| Bowden, Gabriela | X | |
| Albrecht, Sarah | X | |
| Ali, Syed | | X |
| Alvarez, Jose | X | |
| Dowie, Cheryl | X | |
| Elking, Issac | X | |
| Fedell, Luke | X | |
| Foster, Anthony | | X |
| Harris, Judith | X | |
| Henson, Billy | | X |
| Hoang, Toni | X | |
| Hu, Jingxin | X | |
| Hussein, Abdelnasser | | X |
| Johnson, Kenya | X | |
| Moore, Kyle | X | |
| Nakamura, Mitsue | X | |
| Pakhrin, Subash | X | |
| Pepper, Ryan | | X |
| Perez, Daniel | X | |
| Petts, Ashleigh | X | |
| Rountree, John | X | |
| Rufino, Katrina | X | |
| Shoemaker, Katherine | X | |
| Sullivan, Nell | X | |
| Thomas, Jarvis | X | |
| Yilmaz, Emre | X | |
| Zhang, Chris | X | |

| Other Attendees |
|------------------|
| Deborah Bordelon |
| Judith Quander |
| Mayte Alvarez |
| David Ryden |
| Emily Leffler |
| Divya Bhati |
| Lorena Sanchez |
| Theresa Meneley |
| Zach Dailey |
| Zewuze Ladzekpo |

