

UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Nathan Neale
Regular Scheduled Senate Meeting January 19, 2021 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Online through Zoom

Senate: Ronald Beebe, Edmund Cueva, Michael Duncan, Godwin Agboka, Franklin Allaire, Amy Baird, Nina Barbieri, Maria Bhattacharjee, Alexander Bielakowski, Kasi Bundoc, Dexter Cahoy, Prakash Deo, Isaac Elking, Lucas Fedell, Krista Gehring, Aaron Gillette, 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: Shohreh Hashemi, Jeffrey Martz, Arpita Shroff

Guests: Eric Link, Provost/VPAA; Michelle Moosally, AVP Programming and Curriculum, Jerry Johnson, AVP Sponsored Programs, Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds, Kevin Buckler, Professor and Chair of FAC, Michael Connell, Professor, Andrew Pavelich, Professor, Irene Chen, Professor, Patricia Ensor, Executive Director, W.I.D., Daniel Villanueva, V.P. of Enrollment Management, Meghan Minard, Lecturer, Sheryl Sellers, Dateline, David Bradley, Vice President Administration and Finance, Darlene Hodge, FS Admin, T. Alan Modrow, SGA President.

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

Minutes

A motion to approve the December 8, 2020 minutes was made and seconded.
Zero modifications were suggested
The minutes passed.

Reports

Mr. Villanueva provide a spring enrollment update. This included a year over year comparison of applications submitted to UHD, UHD enrollment (both zero days before the semester start and 1/19/21 vs. 1/19/20), admitted students, and an overview of headcount. For applications submitted, we are down 9.7%, but are up in new transfer (1.5%), new graduate (9%), and former enrolled students (10.5%) for a total increase of 1.9%. For enrollment (zero days before spring), we are down 2.2% in returning students, but up in FTIC (47.1 %), new transfer (5.9%), new graduate (1.2%), continuing undergraduate students (4.7%), and continuing graduate students (2.8%). When looking at admitted students, we are down 3% in new transfer and 5% in new graduate students. However, we see an increase in FTIC (23%) and former students (17%) for a total increase of 1%. We also have an increase of 4.3% in headcount and 5.4% in SCHs. Our +1.9% increase in headcount and +1.96% in SCHs can be compared to other universities in the

UH system include: UH +1.8% in headcount and .75% in SCHs, UHCL -1.6% headcount and -.9% SCHs, UHV +4.5% in headcount and 1.59% in SCHs.

His office is partnering with HISD and Spring ISD to offer admission services to high schools. Nationally, institutions are down about 18% in FTIC enrollment.

Q – A senator asked about differences at the college level.

A – Mr. Villanueva quickly shared how individual colleges are performing on these metrics.

Dr. Beebe thanked Mr. Villanueva for the good news and for sharing these details with the senate.

Task Force/Workgroup Reports:

Parking: Members of the group met with David Bradley. They spoke about construction, supply and demand, the I-45 expansion, a potential parking garage and other factors. The parking garage would not work due to the debt load without raising the parking fees. However, these other factors are “on the table” for discussion. We will need to find out how our post-Covid work environment will look like before making too many decisions. UHD is working closely with TXDOT about the eventual I-45 construction and the impact to our parking.

A member of the committee asked if senators had any questions or suggestions.

A senator stated that suggestions were sent directly to a member of the committee.

A member asked if the senate is comfortable with their progress so far and that they will be moving relatively slowly due to COVID now.

Dr. Beebe stated that this is fair. We do not know when things will get back to normal or what “Post-Covid” looks like. While many students state that they want FTF classes, his FTF class did not make and he sees some reduction in the desire as students are making decisions about the mode of learning they prefer.

The committee member stated that they agreed with Dr. Beebe. Many faculty and students feel much more comfortable.

Mr. David Bradley stated that they met for about an hour. The committee is looking at the big picture. There is a lot of uncertainty with what students want and the TXDOT project keeps changing start dates. It is likely early 2024 at this point. We need to keep looking at parking and how we can improve it for faculty, staff and students.

Another committee member stated that there is not much for them to address until next fall so that we better understand where we stand with all of these issues.

Dr. Beebe asked for other workgroup reports.

A senator posed questions about the letter in support of the SGA resolution for Election Day being a non-instructional day. First, as we now have an incoming president, should both Interim

President Tillis and Incoming President Blanchard be included in the letter? Would the senate be OK with addressing both?

A senator stated that this is a good idea.

Dr. Beebe stated that this was an excellent point.

Q – When will the new president be sworn in?

A – Dr. Beebe believed that his first day is March 15.

A senator agreed that this was a good idea.

A member of the committee stated that they would update the letter and send it to FSEC.

Dr. Beebe asked Mr. Modrow about his thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Modrow was supportive.

The home office stipend group met. There are many different approaches by various universities. Some are doing nothing, some are offering lump sum payments, and others are offering monthly payments. As a group, they have a survey ready. They asked Dr. Beebe to contact Staff Council to see if they wanted to participate. They responded that they are working on other priorities. The survey will be sent out to faculty soon.

Dr. Beebe asked senators to follow up with their groups as reports from the other groups will be asked to report on Feb 2th.

UHD formed a transition team. Dr. Cueva is our representative. Dr. Cueva provided a report: There are some workgroups. The first will identify high level meetings with individuals and small groups. The second will identify standing events for his calendar. This includes a resources document for the incoming president. The third group will focus on a virtual welcome reception. The fourth group focuses on a proposed communication plan. The BOR will be voting on his appointment on January 20th. There will not be an official announcement from the system. Instead, this will come from UHD. We should think about a formal senate welcome. While he will receive welcomes from many, so it is encouraged that all groups coordinate these. As Faculty Senate is important, we should work on this soon.

Q – Can someone ensure that President Blanchard’s biography is listed on our website? Please also include the welcome letter in the faculty handbook. This is also important for our upcoming assessment visits.

A – Dr. Cueva stated that the group is completing a survey to find every document that lists the president so that all can be updated. This will help us avoid having a previous president listed.

Dr. Beebe asked for other comments or questions that may help the team.

Dr. Cueva asked if we may want a full investiture.

Q – How long will he be here? An investiture is a big deal and most of our presidents are not here long. This would likely not occur for at least a year due to COVID.

A – Two senators said that he stated that he would be here a very long time.

Mr. Modrow agreed that he will be a great fit, that his experience will help him lead and that he believes that Dr. Blanchard will grow with the university.

Dr. Beebe agreed due to his interactions and that he has demonstrated that he follows through and finishes what he begins.

Dr. Beebe believed that the only recent investiture was for President Flores.

A senator thought that if we had given one for Dr. Castillo, it would have paid off.

Mr. Bradley could not remember one for Dr. Castillo.

A senator stated that we should not have one with Zoom. We should hold this question until we have some sort of stability.

Q – When will his first day be and what will he do?

A – Dr. Cueva stated that his first day will be March 15 and that it will be a glorious day for the university. How the day will play out will be up to him. He still has some responsibilities at his current institution. How many days before the 15th he will be here is up to him.

Dr. Beebe pointed out that the 15th is the first day of Spring Break.

Q – Are we inviting him to a senate meeting to welcome him, not just invite him for business? This is important for PR or a social investigation versus a business invitation.

A – Dr. Beebe wants to invite him to our first meeting after his arrival.

Dr. Beebe asked Dr. Cueva to find out if a welcome from Senate can be included right away.

Dr. Cueva reiterated the importance of drafting a welcome.

Dr. Beebe expressed concern about an email from Ivonne Montalbano about policies, freedom of expression and other policies. This email stated that the policies had gone through shared governance and that Senate was on the list. FSEC met and could not remember any of these policies coming to Faculty Senate. It is important if policies are vetted through the shared governance process that we actually review them. The email was surprising. This is a point of information as we need to ensure that those involved in the process are actually involved.

Dr. Beebe mentioned that there is communication about the final exam schedule. Some faculty believe that it is inadequate and creates difficulties with assessing students in a two hour block where students have to leave early to attend other final exams. This was brought up in senate last year. We are trying to meet the 45 contact hours required for accreditation. We discussed that we could reduce the number of reading days or collapse the exam schedule. We have been using this exam schedule for about a year. We may want to revisit this issue and obtain faculty input. Are

faculty members willing to keep the current schedule? Please reach out to your colleagues to obtain their input.

A senator stated that multiple faculty contacted them about the fact that the exam schedule does not follow the class schedule. This is a problem as many students work and have families. Some students are damaged by this. From a personal note, I do not understand how cutting the final exam schedule helps us reach the contact hours. Students that work must reconfigure work and family schedules. This is not conducive to a positive experience for our students. For example, one of my courses has an evening final exam for a day course.

A senator agreed that students suffer and that adjustments needed to be made to accommodate many students.

Dr. Neale stated that there seems to be some constraints, including the contact hour requirements and that some faculty do not believe that they can assess learning or performance without using a full two hour exam. Could we look at reducing the number of reading days? As Dr. Beebe suggested in another meeting, one of our sister institutions may not have reading days. He asked Mr. Modrow to involve SGA in this discussion too and to see how student leadership views this issue.

Mr. Modrow stated that he would inquire and keep Faculty Senate updated.

Dr. Beebe said that as we have been doing this a while, it would be best to check in to see if this process is working. If there are some hiccups, it would be best to figure out if we can address them. While we ask faculty to be flexible, there are limited to how flexible we can ask them to be. Please reach out to your department faculty about this.

Dr. Beebe encouraged Senate to revisit the S/U grades. We used this in S20 and summer 2020 but went back to normal grading in F20. There were 1600 that signed an online petition. We do not know if they were all students. Is this something that we want to revisit?

A lecture stated that there was a disagreement about using the S/U option in their department. However, many are experiencing difficulties now and that many students and their families have COVID now than before.

A senator stated that many universities allow students two or three pass/fail grades throughout their program. This is done outside of COVID. Then, students could opt in.

Dr. Beebe asked Mr. Villanueva if it is possible in PeopleSoft to have an S/U option without opening it to every section. Mr. Villanueva stated that he believed that this option is either on or off. However, faculty members can send in updates.

A senator believed that the previous policy allowed students to choose what classes they used the S/U option.

Mr. Villanueva stated that the system is either all on or all off.

The senator suggesting the two to three pass/fail grade option provided clarification to the proposal. We would allow students a maximum number of times they could use the option. This is different than all of their classes. This is similar to the maximum number of “D”s they can have in a degree plan, where we would have a maximum number of “U”s.

A senator stated that there was a similar policy at their previous institution. Students would have to choose this option by a specific deadline. This provides faculty time when grading. Also, faculty would only be able to choose S/U in the gradebook.

As senator asked us to consider what happens if a student chooses this early but then gets COVID or a family member has COVID at the end of the semester.

A senator suggested that an incomplete could be granted.

A senator argued that this should be decided by departments. Some students are required to reach specific grades to be eligible to sit for State or other exams. If students choose an S/U, they may not be able to advance in their career plans.

A senator remembered using an S/U system for three courses in their undergraduate degree. Still, some students may use this to “game” the system. This may allow those that decide to not take the final exam serious to have a protection. There should be a way to require proof.

A senator agreed that we do not know why students choose one versus the other. Some students may choose this and this would be unfair as it is not legitimate.

Mr. Villanueva added that many students requested the S/U option at the end of the semester. Some students are dual-enrolled with sister institutions that are using the option. They were concerned that we did not align with other universities in the UH system. He recognizes that some students did not consider how the S/U could impact their program standing or admission to graduate school. His office has been asked if they would change their grades. This cannot occur without faculty interaction. This complicates advising and prerequisites. It also is a problem for students that are required to earn A’s and B’s in specific classes for graduate school as graduate admissions cannot discern if a student earned an A or C.

Dr. Neale asked if faculty are able to complete a grade change for these students.

Mr. Villanueva stated that faculty and departments are able to change grades in these situations and that his office suggests students reach out to faculty.

Dr. Johnson urged faculty to look at all angles and that the pandemic is not any better than when we implemented the S/U options. All of us, with the exception of one or two are looking at this from a privileged view. It is impossible for most of us to know how this is affecting out students. While some students may try to “game us”, we should not assume the worst of our students. We should fully assess this situation to ensure that we are making the best choice.

A senator stated that there is a difference between this semester and the semester that we used it. Many signed up for a F2F course and the environment was disrupted. Now, they know that they

are signing up for an online course. Still, they or their family members may contract COVID later.

A senator argued that we need to consider the current state that some students signed up for F2F this semester but are pushed into online learning now. This is similar as before.

Dr. Beebe believed that the percentage of students using the S/U was small. He asked Mr. Villanueva for clarification.

Mr. Villanueva did not have the information available but believed it was about 12-15%. We do not know the total number of courses as some chose one course and others chose multiple.

Dr. Beebe wondered if offering the S/U may be the best option for our students. He suggested that senators speak to their colleagues and that we do not make a decision today.

Dr. Neale believed that some students may view this as an insurance policy in case their world falls apart due to COVID.

Dr. Moosally pointed out that when we implemented the S/U option, we also extended the grading period. This is important to consider when speaking with colleagues about the S/U option. If we used the same process, we would need faculty to calculate grades, allow students to discuss them with faculty to decide if they want the S/U and then allow faculty to record grades.

Dr. Beebe stated that he believed students would need to choose this before the end of the course. They may not be able to wait until they received the final grade. It would depend on how we set this up.

Dr. Moosally wants us to include this in conversations with colleagues and if we use a different policy than previously implemented that we clearly communicate with all those involved. The communication process will need to be swift.

Dr. Beebe agreed.

A senator asked if we could use May 5th as a deadline for students to choose the S/U option as this is the last day to withdraw.

A senator asked if we could make the policy conditional on students losing a job or having COVID.

A senator agreed that we need to require documentation so that students do not take advantage of the system. Then, if they have a legitimate condition, they will receive the option.

Dr. Neale argued that if people are opportunistic, they will find ways around the documentation. Also, he worried about requiring documentation for family members that may have COVID. This will also create a lot of work for our staff members. He is against requiring proof because of the policing efforts required.

A senator worried that students would need to require medical documents for family members and that this may lead to a legal issue. Echoing Dr. Johnson's earlier points, the senator believed that we should think the best of our students, rather than the worst.

Dr. Beebe asked Mr. Modrow about his sense of student concerns.

Mr. Modrow said that we may be in a different time but the concerns are the same. From personal example, a family member had COVID, then another had COVID. It was difficult to navigate in the home with masks and protections. Then, internet was not working well at home. This leads to a loss of income and added mental fatigue and stress. When it rains it pours. My car broke down and I had to get a new one. I am not immune as the student boy president. Sure, there are a few students that may choose the S/U option because of their GPA but many need it. It is definitely an insurance policy but is also a way for the university to show that we are there for students. He was grateful that Faculty Senate was willing to engage in this conversation and that faculty truly care about students.

Dr. Beebe asked senators to provide various options when discussing the S/U option with the faculty they represent. Is this a fair request?

A senator said that this is appropriate.

A senator asked if we could use a general survey for faculty.

Dr. Beebe pointed out that we have a low participation rate with these surveys. If we send a Qualtrics, we may not obtain the response needed. However, senators going to colleagues will likely lead to a better return.

Q – A senator asked when we needed the information from colleagues.

A – Dr. Beebe asked Dr. Moosally and Mr. Villanueva for clarification.

Mr. Villanueva said that we needed it at least a week before the end of the term. This does prolong the certification of degrees. This would be around the early part of April. If we are requiring students to choose the option earlier in the term, we need this completed soon. This is because we will need to build and test the option in the system. Then, we need to announce this to students.

Dr. Moosally asked for clarification. The previous policy required students to contact their faculty. Are you proposing a policy where students can choose the S/U within Peoplesoft?

Mr. Villanueva understood there are two options. The first is to use the previous policy. The second would include a total number of S/U grades that students could use in their programs. This would require us to work rather quickly.

Dr. Moosally requested that we finalize this by March so that we can communicate this to students.

Mr. Villanueva emphasized that we need to consider “optics” as we offered it in spring and summer, then removed it and are now offering it again. We need to explain why.

A senator said that they may not be able to have an intelligent conversation with colleagues as they did not teach in the spring and did not remember using it in the summer. Is there a pdf. Or other document that they can use to guide discussion. Also, it seems that there are so many options and that they are not clear.

Mr. Villanueva offered to send out a document created by Dr. Moosally’s office that explained the rules for the previous policy. Then, he reiterated that one option is the same as we previously used. The new proposal is up to faculty to decide.

Dr. Moosally wanted faculty to review the S/U equivalents for undergraduate and graduate students. This was decided previously and is different than other institutions. We need to decide a basis why we will only allow a specific number of S/U grades.

A senator asked if we can move quickly as they are teaching an 8-week course that ends much sooner than the end of the semester. These students would likely want to be involved.

A senator asked if senators would consider the long term option when speaking with colleagues and not just focus on COVID.

Dr. Beebe stated that we will include this on the agenda to make a decision on February 2nd.

Dr. Beebe asked for a motion to adjourn. One was made and was seconded.

The meeting ended at 4:02 PM.