

Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso

Minutes of the Faculty Senate Meeting of February 11, 2020

ITEM 1. Call to order. Faculty Senate (FS) President Sandor Dorgo called the Faculty Senate to order on February 11, 2020 at 3:05 PM in the Blumberg Auditorium of the UTEP Library.

ITEM 2. Determination of Quorum was made by President Dorgo, who called for a motion to seat the alternate members. That motion was made by Phillip Hill (Liberal Arts) and seconded by John Moya (Engineering). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 3. Consent Agenda: President Dorgo reminded the Senate that the December 3, 2019 FS Meeting minutes were uploaded on FS website. John Moya (Engineering) noticed two typos in the minutes: in Item 4, Liberal Arts was spelled with small l, and in Item 7B, after “Changes to Informed Consent”, there is an extra word “Need” that needs to be deleted. President Dorgo called for a motion to approve the December 3, 2019 FS Meeting minutes with these corrections. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Gina Núñez-Mchiri (Liberal Arts) and seconded by Jay Stratton (Liberal Arts). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 4. Acceptance or Modification of Agenda: President Dorgo requested a motion to approve the agenda for today’s meeting as distributed electronically to the Senate membership. The motion to approve this agenda was made by Paul Carrola (Education) and seconded by Omar Badreddin (Engineering). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 5. Announcements: President Dorgo.

- A. President Dorgo informed the FS that Carl Lieb, FS Parliamentarian and Past FS President (2010-12) has recently retired from UTEP. At the retirement party, President Dorgo and Arturo Olivarez, member of the FS Executive Council, presented Dr. Lieb with a memorial plaque on behalf of the FS. This retirement leaves the position of the Parliamentarian open. Also, Fadi Khasawneh, FS Secretary is leaving UTEP, so this position is also open. On behalf of the Executive Committee, President Dorgo proposed to elect Vladik Kreinovich (Engineering), former FS President, to fill these two positions. There was no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.
- B. President Dorgo reminded the FS that every year, at the May FS Meeting, new Senate Officers are elected. President Dorgo’s term expires in August 2020, so he cannot be reelected. Gina Núñez-Mchiri (Liberal Arts) is currently Vice President and President Elect, but election is open to any faculty. The positions of FS Parliamentarian and Secretary are also open. The FS Executive Council plans to nominate candidates for these positions, but other nominations are also welcome. President Dorgo encouraged FS members to ask colleagues for possible nominations.
- C. President Dorgo updated the FS on the Provost Search. An email about meetings with candidates was sent to all UTEP faculty. The FS Executive Council is scheduled to have breakfast meetings with all the candidates. Also, for each candidate, there will be an Open Forum for all the faculty to attend. President Dorgo encouraged all FS members to attend these forums, to invite their faculty to attend, and to share their opinion of the candidates.

- D. President Dorgo presented to the FS preliminary results of the open Faculty Forum held on January 24, 2020. More than 70 faculty members participated in this forum, there was a good representation of all colleges. Participating faculty appreciated the opportunity to come together and express their opinions on important topics. The Forum was facilitated by Dr. Arvind Singhal from UTEP, internationally renowned specialist in communication, democracy, and governance. Preliminary results are posted on the FS website. A more detailed analysis of the Forum results will be presented at the next FS meeting. These results will also be presented to the upper administration.
- E. President Dorgo reported to the FS about the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) meeting in Austin on January 30-31, 2020. These meetings are held 3 times a year, two representatives from each campus's FS attend, usually the FS President and Vice President. Notes from this meeting are posted on the UTEP FS website. Several issues mentioned by President Dorgo caused a FS discussion.

President Dorgo mentioned that for the first time, this meeting was partly held jointly with the UT System Employee Advisory Council that represents US System staff. There are many common issues with FAC, and a better collaboration and coordination is needed. One of these issues is that many faculty and staff are not aware of all the benefits. UT System plans to design a special website with this information.

President Dorgo also mentioned that the Coordinating Board is re-assessing the status of higher education in Texas in preparation for the next legislative session that will be highly focused on higher education; in particular, the Coordinating Board feels the need for more flexibility. They are looking for more flexibility in Core Curriculum, and also, because of need for more flexibility, the current development of fields of study is placed on hold. John Moya (Engineering) welcomed this development, providing examples how the current too-rigid fields of study requirements hinder education.

President Dorgo also mentioned that the FAC tries to develop system-wide recommendations on the faculty grievance process. At present, there is a huge variation between campuses. For example, UT Austin has an Ombudsperson, many other campuses don't. An additional problem is that many faculty are not familiar with their campus's grievance process. Interim Provost Wiebe informed the FS that Tami Keating from the Provost's Office recently gave a presentation on UTEP's grievance policy to department chairs and program directors, and that she – or somebody else from the Provost's office – is willing to give this presentation to the FS as well.

- F. President Dorgo informed the FS about the results of the 2019 Survey on Experiences in Academia for UTEP Women Faculty & Professional Staff. This survey – modeled after a UCLA survey – was administered by the UTEP Women Advisory Council, chaired by Ivonne Santiago. The results are posted on the FS website.
- G. President Dorgo informed the FS that, in line with UTEP tradition to have a faculty survey of administrators every two years, later this Spring UTEP will have a Harvard-initiated Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) faculty survey. A joint email signed by the Provost and the FS President will be sent to all the faculty. All faculty are strongly encouraged to participate. The survey will include questions about work productivity, climate, faculty governance, etc. All responses will go directly to Harvard, so confidentiality will be strictly preserved.

Emily Christenberry (Pharmacy) asked whether this survey will include individual evaluations of all the administrators as we had in the past, and if not, why not use the same survey that we used two years ago. Dr. Wiebe explained that the proposed survey will have fewer questions about the specific administrators, but we cannot use the same survey that we used in 2018; this survey was already outdated then, we had to ask for a special one-time exception to use it since it does not satisfy the accessibility requirements. The CIERP office that administered this survey in the past would need at least a year – taking into account that they are also doing a lot of other data processing – to come up with a new version of the survey that would satisfy all the accessibility requirements. The FS leadership and the Provost's office decided that it is more important to have a survey on schedule, so as to have a good understanding of the faculty opinions and concerns, even if some previously asked questions are not explicitly included in the new survey. Good news is that the new survey includes an open-ended section, so faculty can provide their opinion on all the issues of interest anyway. An additional advantage of using the COACHE survey is that since many institutions are using this survey, we will be able to compare ourselves with other institutions.

Also, a large amount of information about the faculty concerns was obtained from the recent Faculty Forum. If faculty supports this idea, we can have such forums on a regular basis.

Melissa Warak (Liberal Arts) asked whether full-time non-tenure-track faculty will be included in the COACHE survey. Provost Wiebe explained that UTEP paid extra money to make sure that the survey is sent to as many full-time faculty as possible, in particular it will be sent to all full-time non-tenure-track faculty. The only people who will not receive this survey will be first year faculty, administrators – starting from the Associate Dean level and higher – and faculty who have been denied tenure; these faculty are excluded from the survey by the COACHE rules.

Because of this exclusion, to better understand the needs of the first year faculty, the Provost Office plans – in addition to the COACHE survey – to bring these faculty together as a special focus group.

ITEM 6. Reports of Standing or Special Committees

- A. Executive Council – Sandor Dorgo, President. President Dorgo proposed a change in Item 6 of Section 4.4.5 of UTEP HoOP about the size of the executive summary that candidates for tenure and promotion need to submit. At present, the HoOP requires up to 2 pages summary for each of the three areas: teaching, research, and service, up to 6 pages overall. However, the UT System requires a 3-page overall summary. In the past, according to Interim Provost Wiebe, the Provost's office staff composed such 3-page summaries for all the candidates, which took a month of work. The proposal is to change the HoOP so that candidates themselves prepare 3-page summaries describing all three areas. This way there is no need for the Provost's office to waste time composing what candidates could easily (and more competently) do. A motion was made to approve this proposal and passed unanimously.
- B. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee – Carla Ellis, Chair. Ms. Ellis stated that the committee approved 11 different curricular change proposals on February 3, which she presented to the FS (as detailed in their reports on the FS website).

Ricardo von Borries (Engineering) informed the FS that there is a typo in the posted summary, in the number of the corresponding ECE class. Ms. Ellis informed the FS that the number listed in the actual report is correct.

A question was asked about the multiple changes proposed by the College of Education. Alyse Hachey (Education) explained that until recently, it was against the Texas law to call Bachelor's degrees in Education BSc degrees, even when the contents of the degree was about science. This law has recently been changed, now BSc degrees in Education are allowed, so the College of Education would like to change the name of several programs from BA to a more appropriate BSc. She also reminded the FS that some of the proposed changes – e.g., changes from BA to BSc – will not be automatically approved by the FS. After the FS approval, such changes go to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board since they need to be approved on the state level.

A motion was made to approve all the proposals approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 7. Presentations

- A. Steve Crites, Dean of the Graduate School and member of the UTEP 2030 Strategic Plan Committee made a presentation on the current status of the Strategic Plan. This presentation was developed by him in collaboration with Virginia Fraire, Associate Provost, and with Roy Mathew, Associate Vice President. The presentation is posted on the FS website. This time, instead of the more traditional SWOT approach, UTEP decided to analyze where we want to be in 10 years. This is called an “alternative futures” approach to strategic planning. The planning team came up with five alternative futures. These alternative futures were presented to different audiences, and as a result, two more alternative futures were added, so now we have seven. The final plan will probably involve aspects of all these alternative futures. Dean Crites encouraged all the faculty to actively participate. We need to select 2-3 key ideas for each future, ideas that take into account what is already done. Then, we can all analyze and compare these ideas, refine them, specify them, narrow them down. The Committee plans to schedule several town hall meetings for these discussions. Faculty are also encouraged to send emails with ideas, to talk directly with members of the Committee.

Hugo Gutierrez (Science) asked how students are involved in this planning process. Dean Crites explained that representatives of student leadership are already included in the Committee, and that once the proposals become more detailed, the whole student body will be involved in the corresponding discussions.

ITEM 8. Old or Unfinished Business

None.

ITEM 9. New Business

None.

ITEM 10. Adjournment: There being no further business before the Senate, President Dorgo entertained a motion to adjourn. So moved by Richard Langford (Science), and seconded by

Omar Badreddin (Engineering), and unanimously approved by the Senators. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM.

Note: The next meeting will be March 10, 2020.