

Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso

Minutes of the Online Faculty Senate Meeting of June 9, 2020

ITEM 1. Call to order. Faculty Senate (FS) President Sandor Dorgo called the Faculty Senate to order on at 3:02 PM.

ITEM 2. Determination of Quorum was made by President Dorgo, who called for a motion to seat the alternate members. The motion was made by Ana Schwatz (Liberal Arts), seconded by Natalia Villanueva (Engineering). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 3. Consent Agenda: President Dorgo reminded the Senate that the minutes of the April 14, 2020 FS Meeting were uploaded on the FS website. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Richard Langford (Education), seconded by Patricia Herbias (Nursing). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 4. Acceptance or Modification of Agenda: President Dorgo asked for a motion to approve the agenda for today's meeting. The motion was made by Tim Cashman (Education), seconded by Gaspare Genna (Liberal Arts). The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 5. Announcements: President Dorgo read the following statement on supporting diversity and inclusion proposed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate: "Current tragic events have brought attention to the urgent need for equality and respect for all individuals. On behalf of UTEP faculty, we want to reaffirm our commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion. We respect the essential worth of all people and firmly believe that diversity strengthens the scientific enterprise and society as a whole. We are committed to creating an environment that welcomes new ideas and perspectives, and where hostility or other harmful behaviors are not tolerated. We stand with those who promote inclusivity."

President Dorgo proposed a motion to approve this statement. In the resulting discussion, several FS members – Gina Nunez-Mchiri (FS Vice President), David Novick (Engineering), Yolanda Leyva (Liberal Arts), Tim Cashman (Education), and Ana Schwartz (Liberal Arts) – suggested that this statement needs to be made more contextual, by explicitly mentioning the current tragic events. Yolanda Leyva also proposed to replace "equality" with "equity". Tim Cashman suggested to explicitly mention the border context of our university. Ana Schwartz also recommended to look into a statement by Dennis O'Hearn, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, for appropriate phrasing.

Based on these comments, President Dorgo proposed to table this motion. He suggested that FS members send their suggestion to him and to Vladik Kreinovich, FS Secretary, by Thursday June 11 morning, so that the FS Executive Council will revise the statement and present the revised statement to the FS for an online vote.

ITEM 7. Reports of Standing or Special Committees

- A. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) – Carla Ellis, Committee Chair, presented several proposals approved during the June 1 meeting of UGCC. The motion was made to approve the report. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. Undergraduate Scholarship Committee – Diane Golding, Committee Chair, informed the FS about the committee's activity. She informed the FS that with the automation implemented by UTEP Scholarship Office -- that includes automation of many functions previously performed by the committee, the committee needs to rethink its role. The committee plans to discuss the new role in its July meeting. Dr. Golding also informed the FS that two faculty members and a student member whose terms expire would like to continue serving on this committee, and asked FS if such an extension is possible.

President Dorgo informed the FS that such extension has been granted in the past, because of the need to preserve the institutional memory, but it has to be approved by the newly elected FS. He mentioned that, in general, the current committee is recommended to prepare as much material as possible to make the transition to the new committee members as smooth as possible.

Vice President Nunez-Mchiri reminded the FS that the 2020/21 committee membership has to be approved at the first (September 2020) meeting of the newly elected Faculty Senate. It is, in principle, possible, as an exception, to extend the member's term. Gaspare Genna (Liberal Arts) explained, based on his previous experience as the chair of this committee, that in order to extend the term of committee members -- since the term limits are explicitly mentioned in the FS Bylaws -- the FS will need to vote to suspend the Bylaws. About the student member who wants his/her term extended.

Vladik Kreinovich (Parliamentarian) informed the FS that student members are selected by the Student Government Association (SGA); the newly elected SGA will decide, so the current student member need to inform the SGA about his desire to stay in this committee. In Dr. Kreinovich's experience, SGA usually welcome someone volunteering to serve on a FS committee.

On behalf of the committee, Dr. Golding then presented two motions. The first of these motions stated:

“Pandemic hardship consideration:

The committee recommends that undergraduate students that do not meet the GPA and credit hour requirements for institutional academic scholarships be provided with leniency for the 2019-2020 academic year. The Office of Scholarships is well aware of the need to hold students as harmless as possible during this unprecedented time and will provide a one-time exception to those students needing to remain in good academic standing in order to continue receiving the student's scholarship.”

The motion passed unanimously.

The second motion:

“The Undergraduate Scholarship Committee considers the safety and well-being of our Office of Scholarships (and Financial Aid) personnel as paramount, since by nature in their office and roles at work, the staff members directly interface with the students and the public; whose safety we equally respect and seek to maintain. We note that especially high traffic is commonplace both immediately before and at the start of the

semester, at which time, there is a high influx of students with a multitude of needs.

We understand that the fall entry point into UTEP can be a difficult, challenging and stressful time for everyone involved. While we know the health risks, we also must consider the physical, emotional and mental risks that our UTEP community may be experiencing. We fear that, for any number of reasons, an individual or persons may react in an unacceptable manner that puts others' health and wellbeing in jeopardy. Even one incident could be catastrophic, and we cannot ignore this possibility; in fact, we must do all we can to avoid such occurrences. For these reasons, we recommend and urge our administration to enable staff to continue to work from home, especially those who normally have a high degree of interactions with the public.

We must be proactive and broadly utilize effective technology platforms to provide services to our stakeholders, and support healthful outcomes for all, most especially, in these uncertain and unprecedented times.”

This motion also passed unanimously.

- C. Research Committee – Nigel Ward, member of the committee, presented the report. A preliminary version of this report was presented during the May FS meeting. During that meeting, the FS asked the committee to provide data on how many URI grants were awarded to different colleges, and to clarify the recommendation about proposals involving human subjects. The revised report was presented to the FS. The revised reports contained the following motion:

“It appears that the Graduate School decided to reject all Dodson grant applications that focus on human subjects research, presumably due to concerns about the feasibility of such work during the pandemic. The research committee recommends that the rationale behind such decisions should be communicated more clearly to the applicants prior to decision making so that the applicants can have an opportunity to explain what modifications were made to their research to adapt to the pandemic response. Looking forward, as human subjects research is critically important for many fields of research at UTEP, and since human-subjects researchers are generally capable of adapting research plans to achieve goals in novel ways, even during a pandemic, we urge that funding for such work be preserved.”

The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Student Grievance Committee – Daniel Tillman, Committee Chair reported on the work on the committee during the past academic year – his first year on this committee. This Spring's abrupt transition to online complicated the work of the committee, the committee had to come up with way to make the grievance process more efficient. The work of the committee was also complicated by the fact that several members of the committee had to leave the committee, while the number of grievances drastically increased, since the transition to online education was not always smooth. Dr. Tillman asked for volunteers to serve on this committee and for volunteers to help this committee without officially joining it.

Dr. Tillman explained how the committee works. Typically, a student receives a grade that he or she considers to be unfair. The student is then supposed to discuss this issue with the instructor. If the issue is not resolved on this level, the student is supposed to complain to the chair of the department or program. If this issue remains unresolved, the student can appeal to the Student Grievance Committee by filling an online grievance. The committee chair checks whether all the technical requirements are met – e.g., that the student did meet with the instructor and the chair before submitting a grievance, that no more than 12 months have passed since the grade was assigned, etc. If all these requirements were met, the Committee Chair assigns a conciliator – usually, a member of the committee. The conciliator talks to the student, talks to the instructor, tries to check the validity of the student's claim, and, if the claim is valid, to find a compromise solution. If the conciliator is unable to find a solution, the Committee Chair forms a Hearing Panel. In some cases, the Panel recommends changing the grade.

For example, in one recent case, the syllabus stated that a student does not have to talk in the discussions, it is sufficient to be present and listen and perform other tasks, but at the end of the semester, the student received a B grade with the only explanation that this student did not talk during the discussions. In this case, the panel recommended changing the student's grade to A.

According to the FS Bylaws, conciliators have to be tenured. This restriction is imposed to protect the participating faculty, since a conciliator often finds himself/herself in a position of conflict with another instructor, and non-tenured faculty are more vulnerable in such situations. However, non-tenured faculty can also be of help. In some cases, students may not want to change the grade, they just want to be heard. Sometimes, a student files a grievance even those more than 12 months have passed, realizing that in this case, the committee is not empowered to change the grade, this student just wants to be heard. The committee is not required to take on these cases, but it tries to help all the students. In such cases, the Committee Chair assigns what is called a junior conciliator – who can be non-tenured.

Summarizing: the main role of the committee and of faculty serving as conciliators is to serve as peacemakers. Volunteers to help this committee are needed.

- E. Graduate Scholarship Committee – Fernanda Wagstaff, Committee Chair, presented a revised version of the new guidelines on deciding who gets the graduate scholarships. Dr. Wagstaff presented the preliminary version of this report at the May 2020 FS meeting; the FS recommended to clarify the guidelines in several places. Based on these recommendations, the committee revised its guidelines. In the revised document, a reference to department/program has been replaced with a reference to college/school. It is now explicitly mentioned that each college/school should have its own committees to decide on graduate scholarships. It is also explicitly mentioned that for inter-disciplinary programs, the selection should be made by this program and communicated to the FS Graduate Scholarship Committee by the college hosting the program. Finally, it is explicitly mentioned that these guidelines refer only to scholarships awarded by UTEP Graduate School.

Dr. Wagstaff made a motion to approve the guidelines. The motion passed unanimously.

- F. Faculty Welfare Committee Report – Vladik Kreinovich, Committee Chair. First, Dr. Kreinovich proposed the following statement prepared by the committee that he asked the FS to approve:

“Dear Friends,

Many thanks for your active participation in the shared governance. Faculty are a vital part of the university. Faculty's ideas, suggestions, opinion are very important. Because of this importance, the university administration regularly attends Faculty Senate meetings, regularly meets with the Faculty Senate leadership, so that the faculty's opinion be taken into account in all decisions affecting the university faculty.

In these difficult times, not only higher administration, administration at all levels needs our support and our advice. Based on the experience of other UT System institutions such as UT Austin, we strongly believe that every college would also benefit from regular meetings between the college administration and the elected faculty representatives. Faculty will have an additional chance to express their opinions and concerns, and the college administration will get a good update on the concerns of the faculty and issues of interest to the faculty — in addition to what comes from the chairs. The college administration will also have an additional opportunity to discuss important issues with the faculty representatives (whose opinion may supplement information from the chairs), and to have an additional channel through which the college decisions can be explained to the faculty -- and the need for more communication was one of the main issues raised by the faculty at this year's Faculty Forum.

Some colleges already have elected faculty councils that regularly meet with their administration. We encourage these colleges to regularly -- at least annually -- provide a brief report of their activity to the Faculty Senate, with a special emphasis on issues that may be of interest to all UTEP faculty.

In other colleges, where no such councils exist, members of the Faculty Senate elected from this college are strongly encouraged to form such a group, to schedule regular meetings with the administration of their college, and to regularly report related issues and solutions to the Faculty Senate.

Let us all continue to work together. As the popular Chilean song says: El pueblo unido jamás será vencido: when we are united, nothing can defeat us!”

There were no objections to this statement. However, in the discussion, Gaspare Genna (Liberal Arts) expressed the opinion that the role of the elected representatives of the college faculty needs to be explicitly described in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HoOP), otherwise the deans may just ignore the faculty recommendations. He therefore suggested that the committee propose specific changes to HoOP. President Dorgo agreed to these suggestions and requested that the Faculty Welfare Committee propose specific amendments to the relevant sections of the HoOP. This motion was tabled.

The committee also prepared another motion, to extend granting emeriti status to non-tenured faculty. UTEP has non-tenured lecturers who have been doing an extraordinary job of teaching, it is a good idea to recognize them for their service when they retire. The committee proposed an appropriate change in the section of the HoOP that deals with the emeriti status: namely, that current HoOP sections 4.1.2.3.1-4.1.2.3.3 be replaced the following new text; the only change is in the first

paragraph of Section 4.1.2.3.1, which now includes what was previously section 4.1.2.3.3:

4.1.2.3.1. The Emeritus/Emerita status recognizes meritorious service by a retiring faculty member: e.g., a recognized faculty member retiring at the rank of Professor becomes Professor Emeritus or Emerita, a recognized faculty member retiring at the rank of Assistant Professor of Instruction becomes Assistant Professor of Instruction Emeritus or Emerita, etc.

Exceptional and meritorious service may be demonstrated by contributions to instruction, to a discipline, to the University or community, or to student life in such a way as to bring honor to the University.

The privileges of this honorary rank shall include: a) technology services, such as e-mail and UTEP Wi-Fi, b) discounted inner campus parking, c) discounted software purchases, d) library access, e) access to the University's Employee Assistance Program for legal, travel, and other services, f) discounted dinner theatre and athletics tickets, and g) other services normally available to active members of the faculty.

4.1.2.3.2 Nominations for Emeritus/a status shall be initiated in the faculty member's department. The nomination must be accompanied by documentation of exceptional and meritorious service, including at least two letters of support from faculty or others outside the candidate's department. The documents shall be reviewed and recommendations made, in turn, by departmental colleagues, the Department Chair, the Dean of the College, and the Provost. If it is determined that the criteria are met, the recommendations shall be forwarded to the Chair of the Emeritus Committee.

The Emeritus Committee shall comprise distinguished faculty at the rank of Professor to be appointed by the President of the Faculty Senate. The Emeritus Committee shall make recommendations to the Provost, who shall then present his/her recommendations to the President for appropriate action."

Ana Schwartz (Liberal Arts) asked why this issue was not raised earlier. Dr. Kreinovich explained that in the past, non-tenured faculty rarely got long-term appointments. However, lately, such long-term contracts have become a rule, the university recently even codified special titles for such faculty, so a need appeared to extend emeriti status to this new category of long-term faculty.

The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 8. Presentations

- A. Calvin Stewart (Engineering) and Michael Williams (Liberal Arts) informed the FS that they are organizing the Black Affinity Group. This group is being formed in response to the racial injustice being observed today. The black population at UTEP exists as a *Minority within a Minority* and it can be difficult to feel included and have their voices heard. The purpose of the Black Affinity Group at UTEP is to promote a sense of community for the Black Faculty, Staff, and Students on campus addressing issues of cultural and social isolation, to provide a safe space for those experiencing inequality and injustice, to provide opportunities for mentorship and network within the community, to ensure the successful recruitment, retention, and matriculation of the black population on campus, and to provide feedback to the Provost's Office and

the President's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The first planning committee was held on June 5, the second will be held on June 12, and the General Meeting is scheduled at 2 pm on June 19 – "Juneteenth" – the day when in 1865 the last remaining slaves in the US were officially proclaimed free. The Black Affinity Group and its meetings are open to everyone, everyone is welcome. The event flier is available at

https://events.utep.edu/event/utep_black_affinity_group_first_general_body_meeting

The group is also distributing a survey available at <https://utep.questionpro.com/t/AOrUJZhqfY> to help identify more members.

The organizers asked the FS members to distribute the information about the event and the survey to faculty, staff, and students of their departments. Provost Wiebe said that the Provost's office will also distribute this information to UTEP faculty, staff, and students.

- B. Gina Nunez-Mchiri (Vice President of FS) and Stephen Crites (Chair of the Recovery Task Force) provided an update on the recovery plans. Dr. Nunez-Mchiri emphasized that while many faculty members with different expertise work on the Recovery Task Force, there is a need for more faculty inputs. The main objective if the Task Force is to promote safety for faculty, staff, and students.

Dr. Crites explained the status of the Fall scheduling. Not counting individual studies, there are about 4,000 courses at UTEP. It is necessary to schedule all these courses in view of the current situation – and it is also necessary to prepare for the possibility of Plan B, when after re-opening, the second wave may require us to close the university again. The big problem is that because of the 6 feet distance requirement, each classroom can fit much fewer students than before. As a result, it is necessary to have most classes either online or in a hybrid form. Some time ago, the Task Force sent the survey to all the department and program chairs, to understand which classes will be taught online, which face-to-face, and which in a hybrid format. To all the faculty who indicated that they will teach online or in a hybrid form, an additional survey was sent to learn whether they want to teach synchronously or asynchronously. For synchronous classes, the Fall schedule on Goldmine will include class times, to make sure that students do not enroll in two classes that require their presence at the same time. We also need to find out when exactly hybrid classes plan to meet face-to-face.

It is also necessary to take into account that some classes require specially equipped rooms, such as labs, studios, etc. One option is having open labs, when students make appointment to attend the lab at a certain time.

The Task Force needs this information about each course. For some courses, information is still missing. This is especially true for courses for which an instructor has not yet been assigned. The Task Force is planning to send an email to all the chairs asking to provide information about these courses. As soon as all this information will become available, the Task Force will prepare the Fall schedule.

Several questions were asked. President Dorgo said that several faculty complained to him about the disagreement with their chairs on the preferred course delivery mode. In some cases, the faculty would prefer to teach face-to-face, but they are forced to teach online, and vice versa, some faculty who would prefer to teach

online are forced to teach face-to-face. Dr. Crites explained that usually, the schedule is formed 4 months in advance, with plenty of time to resolve such disagreement, but now decisions have to be made fast. Good news is that these decisions are not made in stone, it is possible to later change these decisions. Provost Wiebe explained that, in general, scheduling is done by chairs. Faculty who are not happy with their scheduling arrangement can, as usual, ask their deans (and, if needed, to Provost's office) to interfere, but we all need to take into account that this is an unusual situation, it is not possible to make everyone happy.

President Dorgo also asked a question about international students. Some of them cannot get a visa or have a visa but cannot come to the US. Some are worried that as international students, they can take only a limited number of classes online. Provost Wiebe suggested that these students seek information from UTEP's Office of International Programs (OIP). OPI has Frequently Asked Questions on their website, this should hopefully answer most of their questions. President Wilson informed the FS that for Spring 2020, all international students in the US received an official dispensation allowing them to take all their classes online. We expect that this dispensation will be extended to Summer.

Visas are a big problem. One of the biggest challenges is that the US consulates are not open in most countries, so accepted students are not even able to apply for the visas. The Chancellor of the UT Systems, AAUP, ACLU, and many organizations are all aligned, asking the Federal administration to provide clarity on this issue.

President Dorgo also informed Dr. Crites that some faculty did not get their surveys. Dr. Crites explained that the Recovery Task Force website plans to be launched in a few days, this website will include a link to the survey, so faculty will be able to fill them.

Another question was whether it will be necessary to wear masks all the time. Provost Wiebe advised to look at the matrix that was recently sent to all the faculty, this issue is clarified there. In short, in the present situation of potential danger, masks will be required. Dr. Nunez-Mchiri informed the FS that the subcommittee of the Task Force on which she serves has been discussing how to teach with a mask on. It is not a good idea to take off the mask, it will not only violate the rules, it will also provide a bad example to the students. The committee recommends to have as much lecturing online as possible and to reserve the face-to-face time for activities that cannot be moved online. If needed, one can use a microphone under the mask.

- C. President Wilson and Provost Wiebe provided an update on the financial situation. The university recently received a letter from the UT System informing it that the state appropriations will be cut by 5% -- but not appropriations for the next academic year, but for the whole 2-year budgeting period. Since we have already spent most of the money allocated for the academic year 2019/2020, this means, in effect, that for the next academic year 2020/2021 the state appropriations will decrease by 10%. We have some cushion: during the quarantine period, we saved some money on travel and on utilities. We leave positions unfilled; we will continue to have an almost hard freeze on new hiring -- this will help us save more money, but this does not compensate for all the proposed cuts. We also received a special contract for student employment, which allows us to spend less money on employing students on campus.

We still have about 2.5% uncovered. At first glance, the situation may not sound that critical, since the state appropriations constitute only 26% of our budget, so a cut of 2.5% out of 26% means a less than 1% cut of our budget. However, the problem is that different spending categories are not fundable, we cannot easily move money between accounts. For example, student fees can only be used for certain very specific purposes. This hurts, e.g., academic affairs, since they are disproportionately funded by the state funding and by the student tuition.

UTEP has to reply by June 15 describing how we plan to cut our expenses. The administration has asked all the deans to prepare their plans, these plans will be combined into a UTEP reply. We expect to submit a final budget by July 30. Once the budget is finalized, the summarized budget will be presented to the campus, not just to the FS, but to the whole campus via a townhall meeting.

For the budget, it is critically important to maintain good Fall enrollment, since the enrollment largely determines how much money we will receive from the state.

Somewhat good news is that Texas universities are in better position than many universities nation-wide, where budget cuts are more severe. We also hope that we will have the same 5% budget cut for the next 2-year period, which means that after the rough 2021/22 academic year – where we will have to weather a 10% cut in an annual budget -- our annual appropriations from the state will be only 5% smaller than in the 2019/2020 academic year.

Senate President Dorgo asked President Wilson about the possibility of furloughs, position cuts, and department mergers. President Wilson replied that this all depends on the deans. So far, this is not being planned – other than cutting unfilled positions. President Wilson promised to continue informing FS and campus in general about any new developments with the financial situation. Senate President Dorgo thanked President Wilson for this commitment to transparency.

- D. Toni Blum, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, gave a presentation on synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching and related SACSCOC requirements. In Spring, when we needed to urgently switch to online teaching, students wanted synchronous teaching, since this was the closest to the face-to-face format to which they were accustomed. However, it was not possible to switch all classes to this format. There were technical problems for instructors: not enough bandwidth to transmit the lectures in real time. There were also technical problems for many students: they often did not own computers powerful enough, and even if they had one, they often had to share the computer with their siblings or with their children, since everyone switched to teaching online. Because of this, in the Spring, UTEP sent a guidance – not a ban – discouraging the use of synchronous teaching. The current guidance explicitly allows synchronous teaching, but asks instructors who select this format to follow ADA recommendations about access of students with special needs, to take into account possibility of unusual situations when a student cannot access the lecture at the scheduled time, to also take into account that many of our international students are currently stuck in their countries, in different time zones, for them the usual class times may be very inconvenient.

Beth Brunk-Chavez, Dean of Extended University, provided specific recommendations for synchronous teaching: that it is important to announce contact

times to students beforehand, as early as possible, that these times should be when most students can be present, and that it is important to record the sessions, so that students who could not attend will still be able to see this material.

A question was asked if it is possible to require students to have their webcams on during tests and quizzes, to avoid cheating. Provost Wiebe explained that this may not be possible for some students whose connection does not have enough bandwidth or whose webcams are not working properly. As an alternative, UTEP is considering organizing a special proctored test center in the Fall. However, we need to be flexible. All our plans for opening in the Fall are conditioned on the recommendations by health authorities of the City of El Paso. These authorities are also warning us that there is a possibility of a second wave, so we need to be flexible, we need to be ready to switch all the classes to fully online if needed.

Gina Nunez-Mchiri (FS Vice President) informed the FS that, based on the survey that her subcommittee of the Recovery Task Force sent to faculty, even when fully synchronous teaching is not possible, there are many ways to engage students in a synchronous way. Even when teaching is, in general, synchronous, instructors have to take into account that connection can collapse, students may get disconnected. With this in mind, instead of giving students one try to take a test, we need to allow for 2-3 tries.

A survey was also sent to students, students are still answering this survey, but the preliminary analysis of the students' responses is that their main concern is health. Their second-in-importance concern is that some of them have no appropriate hardware, some do not have internet connection at home. Synchronous teaching makes all this more complex.

Dr. Nunez-Mchiri also reminded us that all re-opening plans are conditional, to reopen, we need permission from the health authorities of the City of El Paso. As of now, we do not have this permission yet, this will depend on the state of the epidemic.

President Dorgo asked whether the official UTEP guidelines for online teaching posted on the website of Extended University will be required and enforced. Provost Wiebe explained that in the Spring, we received a special dispensation of the rules from SACS, our accreditation agency, this dispensation will be extended to Summer classes. According to Dr. Brunk-Chavez, what most of us had in the Spring, when we could not follow these guidelines, was not, strictly speaking, online teaching – it was what is legally called remote teaching. In the Fall, we have to follow the guidelines as much as possible. Some of these guidelines are still not possible to follow – e.g., that everyone teaching online needs to go through special training and that an instructor preparing a new online course should be given 4 months to prepare this course. However, other guidelines that can be implemented should be followed. These remaining guidelines were described in a special message sent recently by the Provost's office. There was some misunderstanding about this email, many faculty mistakenly understood these guidelines as imposing some new rules, these rules are not new, these are the guidelines that the Extended University established some time ago and that all online classes had to follow in the past – minus the guidelines which are not possible to follow.

Provost Wiebe announced that while a special training in online teaching is not required, faculty are strongly encouraged to take some training. Some training is provided by BlackBoard in collaboration with UTEP; the corresponding emails were sent to all the faculty. There is also Teaching Online Academy that all faculty are encouraged to take; if there is no space left at some sessions and an instructor cannot take sessions which are available, please contact the Provost's office, it is possible to squeeze in more instructors into each session. Provost Wiebe reminded the FS that this academy is NOT about the nuts and bolts of BlackBoard, it is about the pedagogical idea of how better to teach online. For technical support, we need to contact UTEP designers. To every department, there is assigned an online course designer who can help. At this moment, there is not enough designers to make all the online classes perfect, but we expect to do much better than in the Spring.

John Moya (Engineering) asked a question about software. In his technical labs, he uses special software. Some of this software may be under export control rules, according to which it is not possible to export it to some countries. Dr. Moya is worried that international students who got stuck in countries like Kuwait may not be able to use this software. Other software packages that he uses are only licensed to be used on campus, so students cannot use it when studying from home.

Dr. Brunk-Chavez explained that she, Toni Blum, and Frank Poblano, Assistant Vice President and Director of the Technology Support Group, met recently with the Associate Deans to discuss related software problems. For most software, UTEP expanded licenses to allow students at-home use. If there are remaining issues, these need to be reported. Provost Wiebe recommended to follow the usual supervisor chain: talk to your chair, then to you dean, then, if needed, inform the Provost's office about the problem.

ITEM 9. Old or Unfinished Business

None.

ITEM 10. New Business

None.

ITEM 11. Adjournment: There being no further business before the Senate, President Dorgo entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by David Novick (Engineering), seconded by Gina Nunez-Mchiri (Liberal Arts), and unanimously approved by the Senators. The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 PM.

Note: The next meeting will be on July 14, 2020.