

**Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso
Minutes of the Online Faculty Senate Meeting of May 11, 2021**

Meeting was held via Zoom: <https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/89322071871?pwd=U0lpQWk5VytDdjRsU3ErbWU4UktwZz09>
Meeting ID: 893 2207 1871
Passcode: 396519

1. Call to Order

President Núñez-Mchiri called the meeting to order at 3:01. Núñez-Mchiri publicly thanked Steve Varela for his wonderful assistance to UTEP and the senate and congratulated him on his move to the University of Notre Dame. She asked faculty “What support do faculty need to move forward with this summer and fall semesters to get through the epidemic?”

2. Determination of Quorum and Seating of Alternates

A quorum being present, the alternates were seated.

3. Consent Agenda

Fleck moved that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved. Padilla seconded the motion and they were accepted.

4. Modifications to the Agenda

No modifications were noticed.

5. Announcements

A. ARISE and Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Jeff Shepard introduced students of the ARISE student organization to explain the need for UTEP to adopt an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Eric Murillo, from instructional design and an alum of UTEP spoke of the need to recognize tribal land that had been lost and on which UTEP is now located; this acknowledgement can begin the process of addressing that loss and lead to future ways for Indigenous people to find a home at UTEP. Elizabeth Escapita, a sophomore biology major at UTEP, suggested that it is important to create solidarity with Indigenous people to overcome the injustices they have faced. Cheyenne Lazano, founder of ARISE, mentioned that UTEP has a mission to educate and that this statement would have an educational effect. Núñez-Mchiri asked Lazano to read the Indigenous land acknowledgement.

B. UTEP and Video Meeting Platforms. Luis Hernandez discussed UTEP’s need to decide between using Zoom and Collaborate (a feature of Blackboard). UTEP will renew its Zoom license through August of 2022 and will seek input from the UTEP community in the coming year about whether to continue the use of Collaborate or Zoom. Moya commented on some of Zoom’s shortcomings, around the issue of scheduling in particular. Dirck asked if Microsoft Teams will continue to be used. Hernandez replied that Teams will definitely remain in use at UTEP.. After the meeting, Hernandez followed up with information on how to use “Bookings” with this link: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business/scheduling-and-booking-app> and said the helpdesk would be happy to help the UTEP community make use of this resource.

C. Commencement. Provost Wiebe discussed commencement exercises. Several very creative celebrations have already been hosted at UTEP. University commencement exercises will occur on Friday May 14 and Saturday May 15 at the Sun Bowl. Parents living across the border, and not extended family, unfortunately, will be able to make arrangements to attend their children's commencement, but in addition to valid paperwork they MUST have a letter from the President's office to show when crossing into the USA. Some faculty have written letters for students, but students should use the official letter issued from the President's office.

6. Committee Reports

A. Faculty Welfare. Ashby listed accomplishments and unfinished business of the Faculty Welfare Committee. The committee shepherded a proposal to address ADA parking placards and a proposal for an ombudsperson's office through the senate. The committee hopes to develop a better faculty grievance procedure and to review tenure and promotion policies to be sure they are followed.

B. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. Duval presented two proposals. One, from Electrical Engineering, would change the prerequisites for EE 3353 to bring them in line with national trends encouraging students to take that course earlier in their programs. The second, from Theater and Dance, presented a set of revisions to the titles of practicum classes to rationalize the previously confusing or contradictory titles of these courses. Both proposals passed unanimously.

C. Academic Policy Committee. Badreddin did not have any items requiring action, but alerted the senate to the committee's new chair. Núñez-Mchiri commended Badreddin for his hard work as outgoing APC chair.

D. Teaching Effectiveness. Jimenez-Arevalo thanked Sirin and the CFLD for supporting a panel from the committee at the recent Support for Online Learning conference. He thanked Wiebe and Gates for promoting the Piper Award. He asked Sirin to speak about a proposal the committee was supporting from the CFLD. Sirin made a brief presentation: the CFLD has developed a new tool, a midterm feedback survey, that faculty can administer to their classes early in a semester in order to get a sense of how students are responding to the course and possibly make changes to the class before it's too late to improve a course; the current feedback system of student evaluations provides information only after a class has already finished, so it's essentially impossible to make improvements at the time these changes would be helpful. Other UT campuses have a similar midterm evaluation tool. The tool was piloted in Jimenez-Arevalo's marketing class in April 2021 and seemed to provide encouraging results. The CFLD proposal would be to make such a tool available to faculty as an option. Faculty would not be required to use the tool and if faculty opt to use the tool, the information provided would be confidential (so that a faculty member would feel encouraged to ask for such feedback without fear that it could negatively impact performance evaluations if the information were shared with personnel committees, for instance). Some data suggests that if faculty have immediate, in-process suggestions, it would allow for tweaks to a class and might improve the final student evaluations of the course that do go into personnel files. Kreinovich asked if it would be possible to get the names of anonymous survey takers so that they can be offered extra credit. Sirin replied that the CFLD hopes that in setting up the tool this would be possible. Jimenez suggested that

without an extra-credit incentive, it seems likely that the midterm evaluation response rate would drop significantly from the pilot, extra-credit driven version he conducted. Moya pointed out that extra-credit incentives can create biased results and asked whether the university could develop more institution-wide incentives, such as an incentive used at other universities of making final grades visible to those who complete their surveys earlier than to those who do not. Jimenez said that the committee and CFLD would meet with Hernandez to explore various incentives that could be built into the instrument. Sirin reminded the senate that the proposal would be for a completely optional tool with confidential results. The proposal passed unanimously.

E. Student Welfare. Chacon-Silva presented the report the committee assembled on challenges and best practices surrounding faculty advising of student organizations during the pandemic. There were many barriers in the pandemic. The best practices might be useful even after operations return to normal. Student groups need good faculty advisors and faculty should consider whether they could help such student groups.

F. Executive Committee. Núñez-Mchiri invited Yolanda Leyva to read the final version of the land acknowledgement. The senate then unanimously passed the resolution approving the acknowledgement and recommending it to be used in appropriate contexts.

G. Information Technology and Library. Freudenthal offered a proposal to transform these two committees, which have in fact been meeting as one committee, into a single committee focused on infrastructure. He offered a rationale for this evolution of the committee. Zubia asked whether the new committee would handle research infrastructure. Freudenthal said that seemed reasonable in some cases. Zubia pointed out that the university purchases some expensive infrastructure and equipment for research and this committee would be a good one for communicating needs to the administration. Kreinovich pointed out that the proposal needed to be developed more completely and it should use the language of the HOOP. The proposal was tabled to allow time to review the language and proposed changes with Freudenthal inviting faculty to send him suggestions for what such a committee should be doing, if the senate is interested in pursuing this transformation of the two existing committees.

7. Announcements.

A. Strategic Plan. President Wilson remarked in general about the complexities of the 54 pages of the plan, encouraging everyone to read the plan and thanking the participating faculty and the UTEP community for its input in developing the plan. The university must now find ways to put the plan in action. Some items, such as raising funds for student scholarships, can be started immediately. Some items, which cut across units, will take some time to become actionable. Fleck asked if there is a thumbnail version of the plan. Wilson said that there is a two-page version of the plan, with its highlights and themes, available at <https://www.utep.edu/strategic-plan/resources/index.html>

B. HyFlex Classrooms. Pitcher gave a remote presentation from a HyFlex Classroom in the UGLC showing how HyFlex classrooms can be used. These special rooms make it possible for an instructor to teach an in-person, face-to-face class that is also available for students who need to access the course remotely. There are now 15 classrooms equipped in this way, with several more to be completed soon. These are available for use this summer. To

schedule regular use of these special rooms, faculty should contact the helpdesk or scheduling, both of which offices will loop each other in. Moya asked who controls the HyFlex camera. Pitcher replied that the faculty member does. Moya asked does the camera actively follow a faculty member pacing the lecture hall. Pitcher said that it should, but will need some tweaking as classrooms have more people in them. Moya asked if it's possible to allow students to opt out of being on camera. Pitcher said they hope to have "no camera" zones in the lecture halls where such students can sit without fear of being on camera. He said he appreciates these questions and ideas and that any other suggestions should be sent to him. Wiebe said that more rooms of this sort are in the works in the College of Business. He said Toni Blum is engaging consultants on how to make more and better pedagogical use of these rooms. He asked if some portable HyFlex technology is available. Pitcher said there are some portable units. Rosas Acosta asked if faculty will have access to support personnel. Pitcher said there are personnel who will help faculty learn to use this technology if they need help.

C. Undue Foreign Influence. Nate Robinson made a presentation on the possible danger of undue foreign influence in UTEP research and teaching. UTEP wants to promote international collaboration, but faculty should know that there are nefarious actors who might try to exploit UTEP faculty-researchers. This could include espionage or theft of intellectual property or the compromise of research or even propaganda. There is a particular risk around "Talent Recruitment Programs." The issue has the potential to be very political, so faculty should be alert and on guard. At UTEP there will be some changes to disclosure forms; granting agencies, especially federal ones, will have more changes to disclosure requirements and cyber and data security contracts going forward. Núñez-Mchiri asked Robinson what faculty should know or do with this information. Robinson indicated ORSP wants to raise UTEP awareness of this issue; this information will be part of future compliance modules at UTEP. Kreinovich asked a couple of questions about being invited to speak at foreign conferences with honoraria and about honorary titles or degrees from foreign institutions. Robinson said that ORSP can help with whether these actions need disclosure.

8. Adjournment

Contreras moved to adjourn. Gunn seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:54. Next Faculty Senate Meeting will be June 8th at 3 pm via Zoom.