

Faculty Senate of the University of Texas at El Paso
Minutes of the Online Faculty Senate Meeting of March 8, 2022

Meeting was held via Zoom:

- 1. Call to Order.** Núñez-Mchiri called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.
- 2. Determination of a Quorum and Seating of Alternates.** A quorum being present, the alternates were seated.
- 3. Consent Agenda.** Fleck moved (Morales seconded) that the minutes of the February meeting be accepted. They were approved unanimously.
- 4. Acceptance of the Agenda.** No amendments offered.

5. Announcements

A. Faculty Advisory Council Report: Núñez-Mchiri reported that the FAC continues work on a Covid Legacy Project and continues to be briefed about the danger of foreign influence in research and teaching. She reported that the FAC corresponded about recent pronouncements from prominent state politicians but decided not to comment publicly at this time.

B. Provost's Office: Provost **Wiebe** offered information in response to a request from Núñez-Mchiri about the recent one-time payment to faculty and about NTT titles. Because UTEP's faculty have been doing "online everything" for almost two years and because the university budget allowed it (as long as it happened rapidly, due to other calendar, policy, and legal concerns) the president in consultation with other administrators thought a one-time payment to demonstrate the university's appreciation for the stress and sacrifices faculty have made was appropriate. There were certain conditions required for faculty to be eligible for these payments. 803 full-time tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty received these payments and a round of payments to 126 adjunct faculty were also made. As for NTT titles: UTEP spent a long time working out new policies and these are serving as an example for other universities in the system. It is true, though some may not be aware, that faculty are eligible for two-year rolling contracts once they have been promoted. Upon full promotion, they are eligible for three-year rolling contracts. There are many benefits to granting these longer-term contracts to NTT faculty, not least that it creates stability for the faculty members and for the institution. Núñez-Mchiri reminded senators that they should communicate this information to their programs.

C. Women's and Gender Studies: Núñez-Mchiri announced that March is Women's History Month and March 8 is International Women's Day. The Women's and Gender Studies Program will host its annual conference on March 21 and 22. The conference will honor UTEP's feminist trailblazers and offers an excellent opportunity for undergraduates to participate in a scholarly event by presenting their research.

D. Family Friendly UTEP: Penelope Espinoza reported on efforts to make UTEP a more family friendly environment. She distributed a survey for senators and their colleagues to take, asking us all to think about ways to make the university more family friendly.

6. Committee Reports

A. Committee on Committees: Duarte presented a slate of nominees for positions on the Student Media and Publications committee. These were approved unanimously.

B. Undergraduate Curriculum Committee: Fleck presented a proposal from the UGCC that would allow some simple curricular changes to be approved without needing to go through the UGCC, the Senate, and the President's desk. Such streamlining would handle fairly obvious changes and give curriculum committees more time to focus on key curricular issues rather than needing to approve such changes as whether a department wants to impose its own departmental approval before a student can register for a course, e. g. If approved, the policy would go to the Graduate Council for similar consideration and then would be hosted on the Provost Office's website to guide future curriculum change proposals. The proposal was unanimously approved. Fleck then presented three curriculum change proposals. The list of courses that could satisfy the prerequisite for MUSL 2321 would be expanded. This proposal was approved unanimously. Industrial and Systems Engineering would remove departmental approval for registration in IE 1333, IE 2333, and would remove the IE 2333 prerequisite for IE 3373. This proposal was unanimously approved. Finally, Electrical and Computer Engineering would reorganize the courses it already offers to allow the present BS in "Electrical Engineering with a Computer Engineering Concentration" into a BS in Computer Engineering. This proposal also received unanimous approval.

7. Reports

A. Open Educational Resources (OER): Tessy Torres gave a report on UTEP's OER initiatives, prompted by legislative initiatives, and commented on how the library can help faculty with these programs. UTEP is trying to track courses with "Low-Cost" required materials (less than \$40) and "No-Cost" required materials (those using free, Open Access, Library, or OER materials). A recent survey showed that 66% of UTEP students could not afford to buy a required material in at least one class. The state mandates that the cost of materials required for a course must now be available to students before registration; Goldmine can now be searched for classes that are "Low-Cost" or "No-Cost." UTEP librarians are interested in helping faculty find ways to access materials that will lower the cost of their class; mttorres3@utep.edu would be pleased to assist. Kreinovich asked whether a course for which the new textbook would be very expensive but for which a previous, out-of-date edition would be inexpensive would qualify as "Low-Cost." Torres said no. Cohn asked whether it's a good idea for students to select classes simply because they have inexpensive materials; in other words, is making the Goldmine schedule searchable by "Low/No Cost" educationally sound. Wiebe replied that this is required by law. Blum added, if a student registers for a required class but can't afford the books, is that a good idea?

B. Newest CDC Guidance: Emilio Rodriguez reported on the campus response to the most recent CDC guidance around Covid-19. The old guidance was created before vaccines and treatments had been developed; in the current version, the focus is on hospitalizations to

classify the riskiness of counties. In response, the university has issued new, relaxed guidance about masks, though of course individuals are free to take more precautions than are recommended. Masks are still available for classes and N95 masks are available to faculty through EHS, now located in the basement of EPNGC. Núñez-Mchiri reported that some faculty remain anxious, since they may have immuno-compromised or underage family at home who cannot get the vaccine.

6.C. “Infrastructure” Committee: Freudenthal presented a revised proposal to merge the Senate’s Information Technology Committee and Library Committee. This new “Infrastructure Committee” would advise on all elements of research and technology infrastructure at UTEP. The proposal was unanimously accepted.

8. Faculty Acknowledgements

Three books were recently published in the English Department (by Perrillo, Zimbalist, and Rohrleitner). Jorge Nunez in Physics was named a Cottrell Scholar.

9. Old or Unfinished Business

None

10. New Business

None

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.