

**Faculty Senate Minutes**  
5 February 2025  
Student Government Chambers (UC 225)

**Senate Leadership in Attendance**

Andy Milson, Chair  
Rhonda Prisby, Chair Elect  
Cindy Plonien, Treasurer  
Kathryn Warren, Secretary

**Senators in Attendance**, followed by the unit they represent  
(Department for TT, College or School for APT)

George Alexandrakis	Bioengineering
David Ardit	Sociology and Anthropology
Amy Austin	College of Liberal Arts
Mahmoud Bayat	Architecture
Alan Bowling	Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Kim Breuer	College of Liberal Arts
Janet Burka	Libraries
Christopher Chambers-Ju	Political Science
Morgan Chivers	Libraries
Manfred Cuntz	Physics
Imre Demhardt	History
Thomas Dombrowsky	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Carlos Donjuan	Art and Art History
Tom Graca	College of Business
Tom Hall	Accounting
Andy Hansz	Finance and Real Estate
Yaowu Hao	Materials Science and Engineering
Darlene Hunter	School of Social Work
Joowon Im	Landscape Architecture
Penny Ingram	English
Song Jiang	Computer Science Engineering
Theresa Jorgensen	Math
Carie Kapellusch	College of Liberal Arts
James Kelsay	Criminology and Criminal Justice
Cynthia Koomey	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Andrzej Korzeniowski	Math
Laura Kunkel	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Catherine LaBrenz	Social Work
Joohee Lee	Teacher and Administrator Preparation
Stephen Mattingly	Civil Engineering
Rachael Mariboho	College of Liberal Arts
Jessica McClean	Libraries
Hyejin Moon	Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Joyce Myers	College of Education
Kaci O'Donnell	College of Liberal Arts
Patti Parker	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Mark Pellegrino	Biology
Liliana Pérez-Nordtvedt	Management
Alejandro Rodriguez	Public Affairs and Planning
De'An Roper	School of Social Work
Ritesh Saini	Marketing
Phillip Schroeder	Theatre Arts
Don Schuman	School of Social Work
Aaron Smallwood	Economics
Whitney Tholen	College of Science
Dan Trott	Kinesiology
Regina Urban	Undergraduate Nursing
Jack Unzicker	Music
Venu Varanasi	Graduate Nursing
Nilakshi Veerabathina	College of Science
Rachel Voth Schrag	Social Work
Jingguo Wang	Information Systems and Operations Management
Shouyi Wang	Industrial, Manufacturing, and Systems Engineering
Logan Watts	Psychology
Richie White	College of Liberal Arts
Shelley Wigley	Communication
Naoko Witzel	Linguistics
Tim Wunder	College of Business
Xinbao Yu	Civil Engineering
Yi Leaf Zhang	Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

**Senators Not in Attendance**, followed by the unit they represent  
(Department for TT, College or School for APT)

Ishfaq Ahmad	Computer Science and Engineering
Adam Annaccone	Parliamentarian; College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Linda Barasch	College of Engineering
Heather Charles	College of Science
Donna Firouzbakht	College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs
Ceil Flores	College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Muhammad Huda	Physics
Andrew Hunt	Earth and Environmental Sciences
Aimée Israel-Pelletier	Modern Languages
Vinayak Kaushal	College of Engineering
Aera Leboulluec	College of Engineering
Fred MacDonnell	Chemistry
Cheryl Prachyl	College of Business
Eli Shupe	Philosophy

Gregory Turner	College of Engineering
David Wetz	Electrical Engineering

### **Ex officio Members in Attendance**

Jennifer Cowley, UTA President (via Teams)

Tamara Brown, UTA Provost

### **Guests**

Shanna Banda, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Success

Lowell Davis, Vice President for Student Affairs

Jackie Fay, COACHE Survey Steering Committee Chair

Ann Hawkins, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Success

Andrew Hippisley, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Jeff Jeter, Vice President of Government Relations (via Teams)

Drew Miller, Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students

Peggy Semingson, Center for Research on Teaching and Learning Excellence (CRTLE)

Peter Zuk, Philosophy (Subbing for Eli Shupe)

### **Meeting called to order by Faculty Senate Chair Andy Milson at 2:31 pm**

#### **Updates on legislative session**

##### **Jeff Jeter, Vice President of Government Relations**

- In the development stage of the session; they are following bills that are being filed.
- Expect to see a higher education governance bill (bringing together all the bills important to the Lieutenant Governor and the Senate), including things like
  - language from SB 16 from last session, which prohibited faculty from compelling students to adopt beliefs about racial, social, or political superiority
  - establishing frameworks for faculty senates, probably similar to what we have at UTA
  - establishing a core curriculum committee at each campus, which will include local industry representatives
  - a bill that would look at degrees with low-earnings, high debt, and a process for how to examine those
- None of those bills made the governor's emergency list, so they can't move out of the Senate or House until the 60<sup>th</sup> day (end of March); do not see any of them moving right now
- The House is expected to appoint committees next week

##### **President Cowley**

- Flurry of executive orders at the state and federal level over the last two weeks
- There will be a task force headed by Shelby Boseman to coordinate responses to all the executive orders; will take time to have more clarity about what actions we need to take.
- On research: have received information from two federal agencies notifying a handful of PIs on campus to cease and desist; expect to see an increase in that number after the review at various agencies is complete. Office of Research is reaching out to individual PIs. Jewel Washington, Tamara Brown, and Kate Miller are working together to figure out what the plan is if grants are canceled. Planning going on in the background. There

has been a risk assessment done across all of the grants to determine which are the most likely to be impacted by these directives.

- NIH has recommenced its review panels, back up and running with panels that are not in conflict with the executive orders.
- NIH has shut down portal for automatic one-year extensions; not clear whether that's temporary or not. There has been outreach to PIs with those grants to ensure they can complete their work in a timely manner.
- State level
  - Executive order last week related to Deep Seek (Chinese software); working with UT system and outreach to state government around exceptions for research and teaching purposes. Will take a while to figure out whether there will be approvals for exceptions.
  - Color-blind hiring and also a reference to “color-blind curriculum”; not yet sure what that means or how to interpret it. It will be delegated to the legislature. We will keep an eye on the language in the higher ed bills.
  - Focus on curricular processes, not curriculum itself.

**Senator:** As one of the PIs who did have a program officer reach out and have their project flagged, I am concerned about the sub-awards we have with community partners. For those of us doing community-engaged work who have staff at community agencies funded through sub-awards on our projects, what possibilities are there to support these positions if there are cease-and-desist orders or freezes on funding?

**President:** You raise an important point about what other personnel are impacted. It is likely we are not going to be able to fund people outside of the university, but I'll bring it up with our team. The cease and desist orders are immediate. We will not be able to bill for any time after that day. That's the directive we're getting.

**Senator:** Currently they came out with a ruling saying we're not supposed to use either personal or a UTA device that has any of the banned apps or programs on it.

**President:** We understand this has impacts on teaching and research. There was a meeting over the weekend between UT and UT System to talk about the technology issues. We're trying to work as quickly as possible; what we're trying to delineate is the difference between the app and the platform and the transmission of data. If you want to send to Kate Miller or Shelby Boseman your specific issue, then we can make sure we bring that back up as we're having conversations with the state.

**Chair:** Part of the question was about personal devices—e.g., if I have my UTA email on my phone, can I log into it on my phone if I also have TikTok on my phone?

**President:** That question should be referred to Shelby Boseman and to our cyber security office (Cheryl Nifong). Things are moving rapidly; we'll stay in touch.

\*\* (Teams call ends)

**Chair:** If you follow the letter of the law, that means not checking UTA email on your phone if you have TikTok on your phone.

**Senator:** The problem is two-step authentication. I can't log into anything without accessing my phone because of two-step authentication.

**Provost:** That's a question for Shelby Boseman.

Discussion of two-factor and multi-factor authentication (MFA) followed, raising the following workarounds and issues:

- A dongle, land line, or hardware device (like a USB drive) can be an authenticator
- MFA on campus exists because of a targeted attack on campus networks; that's why it's going to stay. Trying to make more of the critical data harder to reach.
- Issue: if we need this second device (phone, dongle, USB drive, etc.) to access our work email, shouldn't the university pay for it?

### Remarks from Provost Brown

- Update on gainful employment that the President presented on last semester.
- Focus being driven by external forces, but what we're doing is our priority. We're doing it to ensure that our students are successful when they're with us—and when they leave us. It fits with our student success goals, but we haven't done it very well in the past.
- Legislators are creating formulas and timelines that are guiding us in this work. It will feel uncomfortable. We ought to care about the salaries our students make when they leave us, but we're operating within a larger context.
- The state is increasingly aligning their priorities, policies, and laws because the state has it as a strategic priority for the state.
- National data (recap), 4/10 students graduate and go into job that doesn't require the degree they earned. Part of the challenge is a failure to launch problem, but it persists; 10 years later only 55% of bachelor's degree holders are in a job that requires a degree. It's critical that we do all we can to help our students launch well, into a job that requires a bachelor's degree. This is less about earnings differential—it's about launching into a job that requires a bachelor's degree.
- UTA students on a Reddit; these are *our* students, not just a national problem.
  - someone with a bachelor's in biology—can't find a job with their degree. Regretting paying for a bachelor's degree—wishes they'd just paid for an associate's in a practical field.
  - Another student saying that universities see students as sources of money; that we faculty and administrators pay no attention to their actual success after they leave.
- THECB has set a goal that by 2030, 60% of adults will hold a postsecondary credential of value (threshold is salary of \$33,184); 89% of UTA graduates meet that standard.
- Manageable debt: looking at how much it costs to get a degree. 10% or less of salary should be going to student loan debt that can be repaid within 10 years. With that threshold, we're talking about \$29K median (about \$14 an hour).
  - UTA has 19 programs where 25% or more of graduates don't have manageable debt. Of those, 4 have median earnings below the threshold.
- Getting out ahead of the problem

- Title IV, an education program needs to lead a degree and prepare people for gainful employment. If 8% or less of your annual earnings is going to pay your student loan debt, you're good (by the federal standard; Texas says 10%). If more than 12% goes to student loan debt, that's a fail (federal standard). Also paying attention to how much of your income is discretionary. There are a variety of formulas.
- All public universities have been required to submit the data on their students and how they're doing over the course of a number of years. Ours has been submitted and a national clearinghouse is conducting analysis. A report and scores will be sent to universities by the end of the spring.
- If a program receives a failing score we cannot enroll new students in that program or distribute financial aid into the programs. We have to inform students that the program they want to enroll in is failing, and they have to sign a letter testifying that they know—"financial value transparency"—which will be submitted to the Department of Education.
- The government has access to data like tax returns.
- The information doesn't include people who go on to graduate school; it only pertains to educational debt. The estimate is about 1% of programs at public universities nationally could fail.
- At the state level, they have their formulas. Whatever they consider to be failing, they will recommend we close. We already get low-producing program reports from the state. If the program is right at the line, the program will be sanctioned. Sanctioned or recommended for closure, no more formula funding. We have seven programs that could be at risk, depending on the numbers they settle on.
- UTA has come up with two groups: 1) Priority Action Plan, 2) Action Plan.
  - Priority Action Plan—at risk for higher consequences, like giving the notice to students ("are you sure you want to enroll in this?") or hearing from the state that the program has to be shuttered. 50% or more of graduates 1<sup>st</sup>-year median earnings are below \$31,000. Less than 5% of a difference in median earnings gain between bachelor's and master's. Less than 10% of median earnings is going to pay student loan debt. Earnings price ratio of 40% or below.
  - Action Plan
- A memo identifying these programs will be sent; Provost will be meeting with departments and chairs that are on the priority list to start having conversations about how things can get turned around. Andrew Hippius will be talking to programs on the list for the action plan. Things might be shifting once we have actual numbers from the clearinghouse. Idea is to get out ahead of any call made by THECB.
- Departments will have access to data sources and resources, like Seek UT, Stepping Blocks, and Equifax.

**Chair:** Since there is a flurry of activity at both the state and federal level right now, how much confidence do you have in what you're hearing about the likelihood of any of this to be put into place? Or are we taking action now because it's in the best interests of our students, whether or not any legislation passes?

**Provost:** From what we're hearing, there are some elements of this that are almost certainly going to happen. There will be some aspect of financial value transparency. At the federal level, there's College Cost Recovery, default rates from student loans. Too many students are

defaulting, and the federal government's position is that they gave the loans, and if the outcomes aren't obtaining, universities should have some skin in the game (making interest payments for students who are defaulting); idea is that we'll share in that burden with the federal government.

**Senator:** What are your thoughts on Promise Plus and Blaze Forward? Surely they'll have an impact on these metrics.

**Provost:** It's going to take a combination of things. With those funds available, we'll have an increasing number of students who leave us without debt or very low debt.

**Senator:** I don't know about using anonymous postings on Reddit, because one can't be sure who made the post. But my question is, I feel like you're in a bind with what the state expects. I think what ends up getting lost is the point of a university education. My understanding, going back to the enlightenment, is that universities are here to educate the populace so that they can be effective citizens in the public sphere, so that we have a robust democracy. When we get too caught up with the value of the degree, we become a job-training facility. If the government can regulate public schools, they get to tell us how to teach. Meanwhile, legislators went to private schools, where they can study whatever they want. I understand the bind, but then we're talking on their terms, which means we already lost. If our mission is to educate the public, then the goal is to get them to be participants and to revisit things like what W. E. B. Du Bois really articulated.

**Provost:** Those things don't have to be mutually exclusive: educating the populace *and* equipping them to have careers predicated on them being more educated. On "if we speak their language we already lost," I push back a little: to the extent that we rely on those legislators for funding, we can't not talk their language. In many instances, the task is understanding the questions and concerns and helping them to see what we're doing. Private universities have a host of other resources to support their initiatives. For us, there has to be a little bit of both. Educating legislators is us articulating our value in a language they can understand. I do hear your sentiment.

### **Jackie Fay, COACHE Survey Steering Committee Chair**

- Job satisfaction survey
- The survey is launching this week; should show up in email inboxes any time and those of full-time faculty colleagues working at UTA a minimum of one year from an email with COACHE in the address, *not* from a UTA email address
- Make sure faculty colleagues know what to expect so that they don't delete it thinking it's spam.
- Ours is the only COACHE project of all universities in the US led by faculty.
- Provost Brown and Jackie Fay were asked if we could be featured in the twenty-year anniversary update of COACHE. A huge Senate achievement.
- Last time, she provided us with a presentation that we can give to our colleagues. We have to have a high response rate for the data to be meaningful. Jackie or Leaf Zhang can also give the presentation. Would like to get a presentation in front of every faculty member on campus.
- The COACHE website is fully updated.

**Chair:** Unlike the Gallup survey, this survey has questions directly relevant to faculty, so spread the word to fill out the survey. The President and Provost take it seriously.

December minutes approved by acclamation.

**Lowell Davis, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Drew Miller, Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students**

- Faculty breakfast in Carlisle Suite 9-10:30 as part of Academic Integrity week. Opportunity for faculty to meet the academic integrity team.
- Division is proceeding with thorough review of all policies and procedures. Spoke about adding the ability for faculty to put in an appeal. That is under review by legal. The next step will be to run it by Faculty Senate.
- Starting process of reviewing everything that has to do with conduct policy for residential students.
- Recently rolled out update to student death protocol. Process by which university community is notified, families of students supported; process needs to be clear.
- Trying to be more proactive about student well-being. Have been going out to off-campus housing complexes to educate their teams about student well-being and the resources on campus, since there may be an emergency with an off-campus student.
- Have launched a membership in the TX Higher Ed Collaborative for Well-Being; will be surveying entire student body, 3000 responses received so far; supplies data about student well-being. Will be launching a dashboard where people can look in semi real time to see how students are doing based on college. Can do education and targeted interventions.
- Grand opening of fraternity/sorority life center 2/27 2pm, which can serve as bridge for broader community; available for reservation for events.
- In the new UC, early in the design process, there will be another student government chamber; have asked for an upgrade in terms of seating (more space).

**Shanna Banda, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Success**

- Starting an AI task force; Chair is Lee Pierce; an offshoot from AI Council. Actively charged with listening to faculty and staff and hearing what it is that they need so that they can be successful using AI and being aware of what is possible. Also making recommendations on necessary policy and procedures related to AI.
- Looking for use cases for AI. Will be a press book with some AI use cases coming out at the end of February. Faculty are doing amazing work with AI in the classroom already; Shanna is interested in hearing about it. In the process of creating awards for AI innovation. Let her know.
- Reminder about faculty breakfast in the FAN; another AI community event happening on 2/20.
- Partnered with Student Success on new early alert system for students that goes through advisors, where there is action and feedback. Having a training for that on Teams. Not only for students who may not be doing well; also to give students kudos.

**Ann Hawkins, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Success**

- 4/16 12-2, lunch, launching initiative for Associates to Full (any mid-to-full promotion, not just TT); bringing in via Teams an academic coach who's going to do some workshopping; going to look at mentoring of Associates to see what that program will look like, whether it's one-on-one or cohorts.

**Peggy Semingson, Interim Director of CRTLE**

- 2/12 workshop on AI and AI proofing or effective AI integration into teaching
- 2/18 workshop on microcredentials
- "In case you missed it" blog post in CRTLE newsletter

Senate entered Faculty Forum (in executive session) at 4:30.

**Meeting adjourned 5:00 pm**

**Next meeting: March 5, 2025**