



**Faculty Senate
Minutes
Wednesday, March 25, 2020
1:00 p.m.**

Faculty Senate President Jeronimo Cortina called the March 25, 2020 Faculty Senate meeting to order which was held via Microsoft Teams at 1:02 p.m. He welcomed senators and guests and briefly described the procedure for meeting online.

MEMBERS PRESENT: (99)

ARCH: M. Kimbrough, M. Kubo, P. Peters
COTA: T. Chapman, F. Fernando, N. Harren, S. Zalman
BUS: S. Basu, D. Currie, N. Johnson, M. Murray, J. Porra, G. Smith, S. Werner
EDU: W. Fan, J. Freiberg, S. Gronseth, K. Hassett, L. Hutchinson, M. Lee, A. Thompson
ENGR: J. Chen, J. Conrad, L. Grabow, K. Grigoriadis, K. Larin, H. Love, M. Nikolaou, D. Shattuck, Y. Yao
GCSW: S. Narendorf
HON: S. Long
HRM: J. Draper, C. Morosan, D. C. Taylor
LAW: J. Heppard
CLASS: R. Boul, W. Breslin, F. Bunta, P. Butler, J. Cortina, S. Craig M. Dunkelberger, J. Fix, H. Glass, E. Goodin-Mayeda, S. Grigorian, K. Hopkins, M. Ivey, J. Kleinheider, L. Maher, R. Ramos, S. Scarrow, C. Tamber-Rosenau, B. Tamber-Rosenau, C. Tolliver, A. Vujanovic
LIB: K. Creelman, N. Dethloff, C. Gola, S. Thompson
NSM: K. Bassler, B. Bodmann, J. Briggs, R. Capuano, R. Forrest, B. George, S. Gilbertson, S. Huang, R. Lee, J. May, A. Medrano, E. Papadakis, C. Ratti, N. Rizk, V. Sisson, G. Toti, C. Wayne
COM: G. Gomez, K. Rowland
CON: C. Brohard, P. Schrader
OPT: D. Currie, V. Das, K. Fern, R. Manny, S. Modi, J. Porter, J. Wheat
PHA: D. Chow, G. Cuny, B. McConnell, D. Thornton, M. Trivedi
RES FAC: O. Bannova, S. Chung
TECH: B. Detillier, M. El Nahas, H. Hutchins, M. Kidd, G. Zouridakis

MEMBERS ABSENT: (37)

ARCH: D. Froelich, Z. Qureshi
BUS: J. Hess, P. Kumar, O. Miljanic, L. Silva
COTA: T. Koozin, K. Rigdon
EDU: C. Arbona
ENGR: Y. Mo, G. Song, M. Robertson
HRM: J. Bowen, J. Madera,
LAW: B. Evans, D. Fagundes, A. Michaels
CLASS: E. Aleman, D. Papell, C. Sharp, C. Sisk, C. Spitzmueller, G. San Miguel, J. Wingard
NSM: A. V. Lubchenko, Quaini, Z. Ren, S. Xu
OPT: L. Frishman
PHA: R. Ghose
GCSW: S. Jennings, P. Leung
HON: D. Gish
TECH: J. Evans, F. Merchant

VACANT SEATS: (3) COTA – 1 seat (GPSC) / CLASS (HHP) – 1 seat / GCSW – 1 seat

VISITORS: Mark Clarke (Associate Provost, Faculty Development & Faculty Affairs); Amr Elnashai (Vice Chancellor/Vice President, Research & Technology Transfer); Suzy Harrington (Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs – Health & Well-Being); Mike Johnson (Chief of Staff, Chancellor/President Office); Melody Karle (University Libraries); Renu Khator (Chancellor/President); Teri Longacre (Vice Provost & Dean, Undergraduate Student Success); Jim McShan (Sr. Vice Chancellor/Sr. Vice President, Administration & Finance); Cindy Mejia (Chief of Staff, Provost Office); Paula Myrick Short (Sr. Vice Chancellor/Vice President & Provost, Academic Affairs); Anne Washington (University Libraries)

Minutes: The minutes of the February 19, 2020 meeting were approved.

Report from and Discussion with the Faculty Senate President: [Jeronimo Cortina](#)

FS Pres. Cortina thanked the senators for their hard work over the past week. This hard work required much patience, flexibility, and compassion during the COVID-19 situation. He encouraged senators to continue to stay in contact with their students and keep them motivated.

Dr. Jeronimo Cortina reported on the following:

- Faculty Senate leadership has been trying to keep the senators up-to-date. Leadership and administration have been meeting daily planning and updates. Dr. Cortina acknowledged and thanked the president, provost, and the vice for research, vice president for administration & finance, and their respective teams for working with the faculty. He felt that this is an example of shared governance at its best. FS leadership will continue to update senators and Pres. Cortina asked that senators update their constituents directly.
- Tomorrow the Faculty Senate will roll out one of the first of a series of surveys to faculty. The survey will ask faculty on aspects that range from well-being to remote teaching to how things are going in general. The Senate wants to gather data to design any interventions that may be needed.
- The Faculty Senate is currently working on policies that fall in the parameters within the Senate. The Senate is also collaborating closely with administration and stakeholders to produce the best outcome and maximum impact for the UH community.

Report from and Discussion with the University of Houston System Chancellor and University of Houston President: [Renu Khator](#)

Pres. Renu Khator thanked the faculty for doing an amazing job for transitioning to remote online teaching during the COVID-19 situation.

Dr. Khator reported on the following:

- The latest news from the federal government is that they're passing the economic stimulus package. Dr. Khator is working with Jason Smith, VC/VP for Governmental Relations and faculty experts to figure out how to best position UH during this critical situation.
 - She met with CEOs of hospitals/medical schools as part of the Greater Houston Partnership. It was discussed that the COVID-19 crisis peak time for Houston will be around April 7.
 - Also, Dr. Khator met with deans to discuss the crisis timeframe. The consensus was to figure out academic and financial scenarios in order to work through the transition. For example, will classes be held online for the upcoming summer and possibly fall?
 - During and after the recovery phase, what is the most impactful way to best fulfill UH's mission (especially the future). She welcomed ideas from faculty.

- Tomorrow, President Khator and Provost Short will meet with the Faculty Senate's executive leadership for guidance on the economic impact of COVID-19 on higher education.
 - There will most likely be cuts in state funding. About eighty percent of UH's budget is comprised of faculty and staff salaries (out of the 80%, 60% is from tuition and 40% is from out of state). In addition, UH needs to figure out how to help students succeed during this pandemic. Dr. Khator and her team will continue to build a framework for a financial toolbox that can be deployed quickly if needed.
- Pres. Khator will charge Provost Paula Short and CFO Jim McShan to co-chair a transition taskforce to create a financial toolbox. In two weeks, she will set up another taskforce to discuss the "new normal". UH needs to reform itself and find a new way to fulfill its mission. There is still a critical need for well-rounded graduates for the present and the future and UH is in a position to provide this. Dr. Khator encouraged faculty for their help and ideas to help the university move forward into the upcoming months and beyond.

Q&A session followed.

Senator Manos Papadakis commented that UH's cashflow needs to be examined for the next few months in case of insufficient summer enrollment. He suggested the possibility of curtailing expenses for the fall term (i.e., postpone hiring high-level positions).

Dr. Renu Khator responded that her team has been looking at cashflow and also coming up with parameters/assumptions for the upcoming summer and fall terms. Without state help, UH will need to survive on its own and therefore will need to refocus.

Senator Benjamin Tamber-Rosenau asked if there's any freedom to take funds for long-term capital projects and shift the fund to sustain salaries?

Dr. Renu Khator replied that funds come in separate buckets from the state legislature. There is no flexibility of shifting university funds from construction projects to salaries. Also, bonds cannot be used. The financial taskforce has been created to look at what funds UH has at hand, create a financial toolbox and deploy as quickly as possible. UH is required by the board to have three months of cash on hand. However, all the cash isn't at the central level. She referred the senator to Sr. Vice President for Administration & Finance Jim McShan for more clarification.

Jim Shan mentioned that around \$70M (not a confirmed amount) has been identified in facilities/construction funds. There may be some local funds within that area that can be used for non-construction needs. However, HEAF and bond funds cannot be used for salaries. The chancellor has implemented a thirty-day pause on spending so that the university can keep any flexible cash on hand through the end of the year. He said there will be a thorough review of everything: including what UH did during the last financial crisis, seeing what other universities are doing, etc. Upon completion of this review, UH's financial situation will be known as it stands currently, by the end of the fiscal year, and the end of the calendar year. The financial taskforce will help recommend the next steps and options to keep UH stable and have minimal impact on its mission.

Senator Natilee Harren asked if there is any concern regarding tenure processes moving forward in the immediate future? Tenure-track faculty – any concern of processes moving forward?

Dr. Renu Khator felt this question belongs under the provost's purview. However, she said her objective would be to not halt the process, but be flexible and be sensitive to the faculty. She emphasized that she didn't want anybody to be hurt or delayed during the tenure process because of the COVID-19 situation. Dr. Khator said she would add this topic on her priority list.

Report from and Discussion with the University of Houston System Senior Vice Chancellor and University of Houston Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost: [Paula Myrick Short](#)

Mark Clarke, Associate Provost for Faculty Development & Faculty Affairs:

Dr. Clarke reported on the following items:

- Promotion & Tenure Processes are continuing. All P&T processes are online. The Provost sent out guidance to deans and department chairs regarding questions about extensions in terms of probationary periods. The current policies already have provisions to allow requests for extension of probationary period: especially during events outside the control of the faculty member (i.e., COVID-19 situation would be covered). Also, those individuals who are coming up for the mandatory review in September, if there are specific issues that may have impacted this process the Provost will review those requests with flexibility.
- Academic Affairs is working on a grading policy (graduate & undergraduate) for this semester. A working group has drafted a policy for the Provost and it will be forwarded to the Undergraduate Committee (UC) of the Faculty Senate for a formal vote and recommendation this afternoon. The policy is flexible, responsive to the students' needs, and maintaining faculty concerns about the rigor of the online course.

Q&A session followed.

Undergraduate Committee Chair, Martha Dunkelberger asked UC members to hold their questions until the UC meeting this afternoon. She felt questions regarding the interim policy could be dealt with more efficiently in the committee rather than during the Senate meeting.

Senator Randy Lee said given the financial constraints due to the COVID-19 situation, some faculty have expressed concerns if their promotion will be accompanied by the normal boost in salary. He asked if faculty should be concerned about this.

Dr. Mark Clarke responded that those processes will move forward as normal and salary boosts in promotions is covered under "previous commitments" of the Chancellor's 30-day financial moratorium statement.

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost Paula Myrick Short:

- Dr. Paula Short thanked the Senate committee members for working on the alternative interim undergraduate grading policy. She also thanked Dr. Jeronimo Cortina for leading this work. This policy will help students during this stressful time. There is also an alternative interim graduate grading policy that will be reviewed by the appropriate Senate committee this week.
- Provost Short expressed her deep gratitude to the faculty for stepping up to the transition to remote instruction in a short span of time.
 - Overall, the beginning of the transition week went well
 - There were a few issues along the way – will improve online delivery
 - A sample of students were surveyed if they had the tools to work/study remotely.
 - Posted online resources on the COVID-19 update website
 - Dr. Short shared some positive feedback from faculty regarding the online transition
 - There were over 1000 hits on the technology tutorial website for faculty
- Dr. Paula Short thanked her team for their tremendous support and guidance: Jeff Morgan, Teri Longacre, Mark Clarke, Sarah Larsen, Joseph Curtain, Cindy Mejia, and Brian Waddle.

Q&A session followed.

Senator Holley Love asked about fall enrollment of international student issues. She mentioned that depending on the visas, these students are limited to courses they can take online. Has any one thought about this concern and are there any guidelines for international students as they prepare for the fall term? Dr. Short replied that this concern hasn't been examined thoroughly yet. UH definitely wants to help its international students as much as possible. She plans to have the appropriate individuals look further into this issue and come up with options for international students.

Senator Susan Scarrow asked if thesis and dissertation deadlines would be extended.

Provost Short responded that thesis and dissertation deadlines have been extended already. She will contact Dean Sarah Larsen to make sure that faculty are aware of the deadline extension.

Senator Gangbing Song asked if there are any guidelines for final exams?

Dr. Short said that faculty are being asked to be flexible with course work make-up and administering exams from the rest of the spring term into the final exam week (i.e., same guidelines during Hurricane Harvey).

Report from and Discussion with the University of Houston System Senior Vice Chancellor and University of Houston Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance: [Jim McShan](#)

VP Jim McShan reported on the following items:

- He is working with Paula Short to create a transition taskforce. There will be a Faculty Senate representative who will serve in this group and make sure that Senate concerns are communicated to the taskforce.
- With possible state budget cuts and reduced summer/fall enrollment, his office is beginning to look at ways to reduce expenditures for this summer and the upcoming fall term. The top priorities are to take care of and educate UH's students and making sure that faculty and staff are financially whole.
- There are plans to gather feedback from the campus community as the transition taskforce comes up with financial tools and methods. Jim McShan encouraged senators to email him directly with questions/concerns.

Report and Discussion with the University of Houston System Vice Chancellor and University of Houston Vice President for Research & Transfer Technology: [Amr Elnashai](#)

VP Amr Elnashai prefaced his report by informing senators that the DoR website is updated frequently and that there's a large amount of helpful information for faculty to reference.

Dr. Elnashai reported on the following items:

- Research labs have been operating normally until the stay-at-home order went into effect. Research activities that are not dependent on traveling to the campus (i.e., labs) have come to a halt and only essential services will be in operation.
- Six DoR offices are working remotely with the exception of essential employees. Essential research operations such as: clean rooms, biological cultures, and animal care facilities are looked after by essential employees.
- Current pay for research personnel:
 - Sponsored Research projects: Non-contributing staff pay – Institution (UH) is responsible for paying research staff to a certain extent (i.e., NIH will cover a period of 3 months, if institution has a policy to cover non-contributing research staff);

- DoR stresses that researchers should be flexible and creative as much as possible so that everyone is contributing and the project doesn't suffer. For example, researchers can shift work focus to: simulations, analysis, data, compose a conference paper, etc.
 - More detailed information regarding this topic is posted on the DoR website.
- Internal DoR Awards:
 - Applications that haven't been reviewed by the RSC will be put on hold.
 - Applications that have been reviewed by the RSC and recommendation have been made to DoR
 - DoR will try to find sources to fund the awards (utilize funds that aren't subject to the 30-day financial moratorium). Dr. Elnashai emphasized he wants to make sure faculty success is awarded.
- DoR is working with the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) in sharing updates (i.e., federal requirements on how to deal with delays, reporting and invoicing). Updates are issued twice weekly.

Update on COVID-19 by University of Houston Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs – Health & Well Being: [Suzanne Harrington](#)

Dr. Suzy Harrington thanked the Faculty Senate for giving her the opportunity to present today.

- Dr. Harrington introduced herself. She oversees the following departments:
 - Student Health Center, CAPS, Campus Rec Center, UH Wellness, Center for Students with DisABILITIES, and Cougars in Recovery
- UH has been ahead of the curve with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the UH Emergency Management team heard about the COVID-19 crisis in Wuhan, China (December 31st), they decided to re-do UH's pandemic plan (i.e., mitigation plans such as: social distancing, proper hygiene, etc.). The team has been working closely with the CDC, the state, and Harris County Public Health during the pandemic.
- Student Services Update:
 - CAPS and the Student Health Center are working remotely and providing telehealth care to students.
 - Student Housing and Dining Services are still operating on campus for students living on campus.
- Dr. Harrington emphasized continued COVID-19 mitigation practices and also staying connected to friends and family during this difficult time.
- Resources:
 - UH COVID-19 Update website
 - State Health Department website
 - CDC website
 - Harris County Public Health website: testing locations

FS President Cortina thanked Dr. Suzy Harrington for taking time to share her update with the Faculty Senate.

New Business

There was no new business brought forward.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.