



**Faculty Senate  
Minutes  
Wednesday, April 15, 2020  
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Faculty Senate President Jeronimo Cortina called the April 15, 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 protocol for meeting online.

**MEMBERS PRESENT: (92)**

ARCH: D. Froehlich, M. Kimbrough, M. Kubo, P. Peters, Z. Qureshi  
COTA: S. Zalman  
BUS: D. Currie, N. Johnson, M. Murray, J. Porra  
EDU: W. Fan, J. Freiberg, S. Gronseth, K. Hassett, M. Lee, A. Thompson  
ENGR: J. Conrad, K. Grigoriadis, K. Larin, H. Love, M. Nikolaou, D. Shattuck, Y. Yao  
HON: S. Long  
HRM: J. Draper, D. C. Taylor  
LAW: J. Heppard  
CLASS: W. Breslin, 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, G. San Miguel, S. Scarrow, B. Tamber-Rosenau, C. Tamber-Rosenau, C. Sisk, C. Tolliver, A. Vujanovic  
LIB: K. Creelman, N. Dethloff, C. Gola, S. Thompson  
NSM: K. Bassler, B. Briggs, R. Capuano, R. Forrest, B. George, S. Gilbertson, S. Huang, R. Lee, J. May, A. Medrano, E. Papadakis, C. Ratti, Z. Ren, N. Rizk, V. Sisson, C. Wayne  
COM: G. Gomez, K. Rowland  
CON: C. Brohard, P. Schrader  
OPT: D. Currie, V. Das, R. Manny, S. Modi, J. Porter, J. Wheat  
PHA: D. Chow, R. Ghose, B. McConnell, D. Thornton, M. Trivedi  
RES FAC: O. Bannova  
GCSW: P. Leung  
TECH: B. Detillier, M. El Nahas, J. Evans, H. Hutchins, M. Kidd, F. Merchant, G. Zouridakis

**MEMBERS ABSENT: (44)**

BUS: S. Basu, J. Hess, P. Kumar, O. Miljanic, L. Silva, G. Smith, S. Werner  
COTA: T. Chapman, F. Fernando, N. Harren, T. Koozin, K. Rigdon  
EDU: C. Arbona, L. Hutchinson  
ENGR: J. Chen, L. Grabow, Y. Mo, M. Robertson, G. Song  
HRM: J. Bowen, J. Madera, C. Morosan  
LAW: B. Evans, D. Fagundes, A. Michaels  
CLASS: E. Aleman, R. Boul, F. Bunta, D. Papell, C. Sharp, J. Wingard, C. Spitzmueller  
NSM: B. Bodmann, A. Quaini, S. Xu, G. Toti, V. Lubchenko  
HON: D. Gish  
OPT: K. Fern, L. Frishman  
PHA: G. Cuny  
RES FAC: S. Chung  
GCSW: S. W. Jennings, S. Narendorf

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

**VISITORS:** Raymond Bartlett (Associate Vice Chancellor/Associate Vice President, Finance), Mark Clarke (Associate Provost, Faculty Development and Faculty Affairs), Amr Elnashai (Vice Chancellor/Vice President, Research & Technology Transfer), Michael Johnson (Chief of Staff, Office of the Chancellor/President), Renu Khator (Chancellor/President), Teri Longacre (Vice Provost & Dean, Undergraduate Student Success), Lorena Lopez (Honors College), Cindy Mejia (Chief of Staff, Academic Affairs), Paula Myrick Short (Senior Vice Chancellor/Vice President, Academic Affairs and Provost)

**Approval of Minutes: March 25, 2020**

Minutes from the March 25, 2020 Faculty Senate meeting were approved.

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

FS President Jeronimo Cortina reported on the following items:

- The Undergraduate Committee (UC) & Graduate & Professional Studies Committee (GPSC) approved interim grading policies. These policies have been extended to the summer term. Dr. Cortina thanked the GPSC and UC members for their help with these policies. He thanked the committees' leadership Drs. Martha Dunkelberger (UC) and George Zouridakis (GPSC) for moving the policies forward.
- Provost Short convened a taskforce to draft an Interim Course Evaluation Policy. The policy was created and approved. Dr. Cortina thanked the taskforce for their work.
- The results of the Remote Check-In Survey are posted on the Faculty Senate website. The highlights of the report were:
  - The transition was unprecedented: more than 3000 courses were transitioned to the remote instruction model.
  - Although the transition was generally successful, if online instruction is to continue in the near future, improvements are needed. The report was shared with senior administration and the Senate leadership is working with them on a plan of action.
  - There were variances between colleges (i.e., implementation) and significant variances among students with regard to issues with technology (i.e., lack of access to computers, etc.). CIO Dennis Fouty had arranged for 300 laptops to be loaned out to students who needed access to a computer.
  - All faculty were very appreciative of the IT staff (college and university levels).
- Community & Government Relations Committee (CGRC) Initiative: Plans to host "Wrap-up the term" sessions in the Faculty Café.

FS President Jeronimo Cortina mentioned that the Senate plans to continue working with senior administration. He expressed appreciation to President Renu Khator for inviting the Faculty Senate to discussions and taking into consideration recommendations from the Senate.

Dr. Cortina invited questions from the floor. Senator Holly Hutchins asked who can students contact for laptop loaners? He responded that students can go to the COVID-19 webpage and click on the link to procedures on borrowing a laptop from UH.

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

President Renu Khator thanked the faculty for doing a heroic job in transitioning to remote instruction. About 6500 course sections were converted from face-to-face instruction to online instruction. She also thanked the faculty for providing feedback on implemented policies. Administration had received emails from many appreciative students.

Dr. Khator reported on the following items:

- She attended three online meetings this morning:
  - Presidents group (meeting of university presidents): Discussed enrollment (esp. declining enrollment) after recovering from a crisis. UH needs to think about innovative ways to keep current students and attract new students (i.e., waiving mandatory fees).
  - Greater Houston Partnership (GHP): The group is optimistic about the COVID-19 pandemic, but concerned about the oil crisis. The group feels that the oil crisis will be worse than the pandemic and may have longer lasting effects on the economy. The GHP also began discussing about reopening the economy. A taskforce has been created to figure out the logistics of reopening the city. Dr. Khator recommended appointing a representative from higher education on this taskforce.
  - Attorney General meeting: What are the revenue numbers? The attorney general will need to wait until April for approximate numbers (dependent on March sales). The state is looking for available funds: including funds not spent in higher education. The funds the state was looking into were related to Hurricane Harvey funds (based on project completion). Fortunately, the attorney general stated that the state can't use those funds.
- Federal stimulus funding:
  - UH will receive \$35 million and half of it will go to students in a form of financial aid. The other half will go to university relief, but it's still unclear where to apply those funds (may take up to a month to receive the funds).
  - The second federal stimulus package is being discussed: about \$500 billion is planned. Higher education may get \$47 billion of this package. There are no guidelines/rules yet on how this money will be used in higher education. Dr. Khator stressed that it is important to help influence legislators on the importance of funding higher education recovery efforts (i.e., develop local workforce talent, especially when international activity is declining in the short term). VC/VP Jason Smith is continuing to work on this aspect.
- State funding:
  - Budget cuts may end up anywhere from ten to twenty percent. Pres. Khator felt that a ten percent cut is more probable.
- Forward plans for the current crisis, short term (summer & fall), and the long term (the new normal for next year):
  - Financial Taskforce (co-chaired by Jim McShan & Paula Short): creating a financial toolbox
  - New Normal Taskforce (co-chaired by Ramanan Krishnamoorti & Mark Clarke): how to move UH forward in new, innovative ways. Ideas are welcomed from everyone.
  - Reopening Taskforce: The state and city are thinking about reopening the economy. UH needs to be ready with a plan that includes instruction (i.e., multi-delivery model), research, and sports.
- Enrollment:
  - Summer enrollment is looking positive. The interest in summer school is high (i.e., Cougar Promise program helps).
  - Fall enrollment is too early to tell.
  - International students: visas may not be processed (huge impact for some colleges). Provost Paula Short and Dean Sarah Larsen are looking into this issue.
- UH Highlights:
  - Dr. Pradeep Sharma (Cullen College of Engineering) was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship
  - UH will announce the 2020 Truman Scholar fellowship this afternoon at 4:00 p.m.

Q&A session followed:

Senator Scott Gilbertson asked if there has been a decision on the hiring freeze? Dr. Renu Khator replied that the Financial Taskforce has made the decision to recommend not to bring new people onboard at this point. She said that the taskforce co-chairs would know more details on this issue.

Senator Debra Currie asked if hiring new residents is included in the hiring freeze. Pres. Renu Khator said she thought that residency is part of an academic program. Dr. Currie said yes, but they're considered staff and do receive a salary. Dr. Khator said the Financial Taskforce hasn't made any decisions in that aspect and she doubted that the group will make any decisions related to academic programs (i.e., UH needs graduate students, post docs, etc.). She said that Provost Short would know more about this issue.

Senator Holly Hutchins asked if the hire was a replacement (not new money), could hiring continue in spring or summer 2021? Pres. Khator replied that most likely the department couldn't continue hiring at this current time. She said that the Financial Taskforce will request from colleges a plan for a budget cut scenario. Dr. Khator felt it would be less painful for colleges/departments to return money to the state rather than doing a reduction in force.

### **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](#)**

Dr. Paula Short reported that Academic Affairs has been very active in working with the Faculty Senate in creating/implementing policies with a focus on flexibility and sensitivity to help students and faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Provost Short echoed President Khator's remarks that 6500 course sections were converted to online instruction in a very short period of time (one week) and was very grateful to faculty for adjusting quickly despite difficult circumstances. Dr. Short added that the online instruction model is continuing to evolve and she encouraged faculty to bring forth ideas for improvement (i.e., remove barriers, etc.).
- Interim alternative grading policies: Dr. Short thanked the UC and GPSC for their work in moving the policies forward quickly for implementation. She received positive feedback from students.
  - April 10 Last Day to Drop a Course: Course withdrawals this spring are two-thirds less than spring 2019 withdrawal total. The interim grading policies to some extent are helping keep students in classes (immediate impact).
- Modification of Promotion & Tenure process: The Provost Office is using the current policy with the built-in emergency provision to help review probationary period extension requests based on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on faculty member's tenure process. This has been well-received by tenure-track and promotion-eligible non-tenure track faculty.
- Interim Student Course Evaluation Policy: Provost Short had asked FS President Cortina to convene a taskforce to draft an interim course evaluation policy for the current situation. Dr. Short has reviewed and approved the policy. The policy maintains the use of course evaluations for information and helpful feedback to the faculty member only. It's the faculty member's choice to include the evaluation in their promotion and tenure portfolio. The taskforce made sure that the evaluation wasn't used unfairly particularly in light of the pandemic and rapid transition to online instruction. She thanked Dr. Cortina for his extraordinary leadership and the taskforce members for their tremendous work.
  - Provost Short stressed to the Senate to encourage faculty colleagues to read the policy and know that the evaluation is intended for constructive feedback for the faculty only (can't be used against them). The evaluation is for the benefit to the faculty member and it's their choice to add this to their portfolio.
- Provost Paula Short encouraged senators to direct faculty colleagues to the Provost COVID-19 Resource website (<https://uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/covid19/>). All the policies that were mentioned are located in there.
- Cougar Jumpstart: This recruitment initiative offers high school seniors to enroll in a summer course at UH. HS seniors who haven't applied can experience UH. Also, high school seniors who've already applied to UH can get a jumpstart on their academic career.

Q&A Session followed.

Senator Stella Grigorian asked how would the intent of "choice" be applied to NTT (both PE NTT and non-PE NTT) faculty given that most if not all of their APR and merit reviews are based on teaching"?

Dr. Short responded that the course evaluation feedback is for all faculty and that faculty have the choice to include the evaluation in their APR or not. Dr. Grigorian asked if the different departments will have to figure out another weight to determine faculty APR if the majority of their criteria is based on course evaluations. Provost Short replied that Dr. Grigorian's assumption was correct.

Senator Benjamin Tamber-Rosenau said that regarding the option to extend promotion timelines, he has heard from colleagues at other universities of automatic extensions to promotion clocks (with either opt-in or opt-out decisions from the individual affected faculty members). This contrasts with what he understood to be the UH policy, which takes the decision to allow an extension on a case-by-case basis decided by a college/university process. He asked if there is any thought that UH might shift to an automatic process like some peer institutions (which saves paperwork)? He's not sure if a case-by-case basis would attain the same level of fairness as a blanket policy.

Dr. Short responded that faculty was consulted on this particular area of the P&T policy and they felt it was fairer to do a case-by-case basis option. The blanket approval was not a popular option among UH faculty to use at this time. Many faculty members had put so much effort at this point in their work and it seemed unfair to do a blanket extension when it didn't apply to everybody. She mentioned that the case-by-case option has worked well so far and added that she has been flexible with these cases.

FS Pres. Cortina added for transparency purposes that during the discussion of the policy extension, one of the key cornerstones of this policy was flexibility. This would allow the provost to act on flexibility versus a blanket policy that would tie up the actions that the provost and the departments would take. That way the policy can guarantee that a faculty member can get a fair shot at extending the tenure clock depending on their circumstance.

Senator Scott Gilbertson asked for clarification if the hiring freeze extends to all units, including the College of Medicine? Provost Short replied that President Khator exempted the College of Medicine from the hiring freeze, because the College of Medicine is opening this summer. They're in the process of remotely interviewing the first class of students for the fall and faculty are needed to open the new medical school.

**Report from and Discussion with the University of Houston System Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and University of Houston Senior Associate Vice President for Finance: [Raymond Bartlett](#) (on behalf of Jim McShan)**

Mr. Raymond Bartlett thanked the faculty for their resiliency and responsiveness to the COVID-19 crisis as it relates to the rapid transition to online instruction. He also thanked FS President Jeronimo Cortina and all the senators who have engaged in collaborations with the Office of Administration & Finance these past weeks and will continue in the months to come.

Mr. Bartlett reported on the following items:

- Dr. Khator has convened the Financial Taskforce has been created and Raymond thanked Dr. Cortina and other faculty for their support and dedication serving as members of this group. They are currently developing a set of recommendations for President Khator's consideration.
- The FY2021 budget was scheduled to be presented at the May Board of Regents (BoR) meeting, but was rescheduled for the August BoR meeting. This delay gives administration time to have as much input at the state level and impact on enrollment to better inform decisions for fiscal year 2021.

Q&A Session followed.

Senator Manos Papadakis asked if there's any possibility to roll back payments for bonds or rollover the bonds by issuing new bonds to cover payments for the next fiscal year? He also mentioned that several of UH constituency was asking how much of the direct Athletics subsidy can be reduced since there won't be a football season in the fall.

Mr. Bartlett replied that prior to COVID-19 and before the impact of the pandemic, UH refunded \$150 million worth of UH bonds. UH's financial advisor continues monitor this: much of it is dependent on what the market rates are and what UH is paying on those bonds. As for Athletics, Raymond Bartlett said that the Financial Taskforce has the football season under consideration.

**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 reported on the following items:

- Division of Research (DoR) Operations:
  - DoR offices are operating smoothly at 100%
  - Dr. Elnashai reduced meeting with DoR office directors from daily to twice weekly.
- Division of Research (DoR) Communications:
  - Restarted the Virtual Faculty Café series
  - New Virtual VPR Office Hour: DoR already held two virtual office events
    - April 3 (60 attendees)
    - April 10 (58 attendees)
    - Meeting notes are posted online.
  - A COVID-19 letter was sent out regarding an online form to reopen labs
  - Reopening of laboratories: Lab director is required to obtain consent from individuals who operate in the lab (noted in the online form). DoR wants to make sure UH is in compliance with Harris County regulations. Also, DoR wants to make sure lab employees are protected (esp. employees who are reluctant to return).
- Continued plans for reopening:
  - Looking at what other institutions are doing
  - Dr. Elnashai mentioned that there's an extensive listserv of VPRs of the APLU institutions in which he keeps frequent contact with regarding the latest COVID-19 news.

Q&A session followed.

Senator Olga Bannova asked if completion deadlines for UH internal grants would be extended? Dr. Elnashai replied positively and said that requests will be dealt by a case-by-case basis.

Senator Randy Lee asked what if a lab member feels pressured to come to work, but is uncomfortable to do so? Is there a mechanism for the employee to not feel pressured to say "yes" and to give their opinion freely? VP Elnashai responded that he didn't have an ideal answer. He suggested that the employee could decline the request to return to work and send an email to Legal Affairs or HR regarding his/her concern. Dr. Elnashai mention any mechanism that that requires consent could be abused by the requester (i.e., lab director, etc.) and he didn't know how to overcome this difficulty (maybe sending an anonymous email to General Counsel). Dr. Randy Lee recommended adding this topic to the agenda of this Friday's RSC meeting so that RSC members can help VP Elnashai come up with a solution.

Senator Diana Chow asked if the hiring of RAs, research staff, and research faculty from PI grant funding will be allowed soon? Dr. Elnashai said that this hiring is currently allowed: cost centers that are funded externally and gift accounts are exempt from the financial freeze.

Associate Provost Mark Clarke added Faculty Affairs is processing all hires which are funded from external research grants.

VP Amr Elnashai appealed to the faculty to use their spare time to draft proposals and take advantage of every funding opportunity. He would like to see an increase in research proposals: especially since there was an increase in research funding opportunities before the pandemic.

**Presentation of the 2020 UH Grievance Committee Slate by Faculty Governance Committee Chair:**  
[Raúl Ramos](#)

FGC Chair Raúl Ramos presented the 2020 UH Grievance Committee slate to the Faculty Senate by announcing the number of seats available and terms of service (3 years). The candidates are as follows:

**Tenure Track candidates:**

- Jeronimo Cortina, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
- Jay Derrick, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
- Basheer Khumawala, C. T. Bauer College of Business
- Jaesub Lee, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
- Ernst Leiss, College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics
- Ogjen Miljanic, College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics
- Norma Olvera, College of Education
- Jaana Porra, C. T. Bauer College of Business
- Ke-He Ruan, College of Pharmacy

**Non-Tenure Track candidates:**

- Martha Dunkelberger, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences
- Anita Gostivic, College of Optometry
- Catherine Hatfield, College of Pharmacy
- Swati Modi, College of Optometry
- Jeff Scherer, College of Pharmacy
- Donald Van Nieuwenhuise, College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics

Dr. Ramos opened the floor to additional nominations, but no additional nominations were made and the floor was closed. Lastly, he announced that voting will be conducted online and faculty will be notified by email when the election has been launched.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.