



**Faculty Senate Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, September 15, 2021
12:00 p.m.**

Faculty Senate President Jeronimo Cortina called the September 15, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting to order via Microsoft Teams at 12:07 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: (93)

ARCH: D. Froehlich, M. Kyropoulou, P. Peters
ARTS: R. Koontz, C. Meals, T. Morgulis
BUS: S. Basu, B. Carlin, N. Celly, M. Murray, J. Porra, F. Sahin
EDU: C. Arbona, S. Gronseth, K. Hassett, M. Lee, April Peters
ENGR: D. Burleson, C. Chang, J. Conrad, H. Love, Y. Mo, D. Shattuck, G. Song
HON: D. Gish, D. Price
HRM: T. Legendre, S. Sirsat, D. Christopher Taylor
HSPA: D. Engster
LAW: K. Brem, E. Trujillo
CLASS: K. Anderson, F. Bunta, P. Butler, L. Camaj, J. Cortina, H. Glass, E. Goodin-Mayeda, Stella Grigorian, M. Ivey, L. Maher, D. Papell, S. Pott, R. Ramos, S. Scarrow, C. Sisk, C. Spitzmueller, J. Tolliver, Z. Xiao, L. Zhu
LIB: K. Creelman, V. Douglas, A. Wu
COM: G. Gomez
NSM: M. Almus, B. Bodmann, J. Brgoch, J. Briggs, A. Caglar, B. Dauwalder, R. Forrest, S. Huang, R. Lee, J. May, A. Medrano, M. Nicol, D. Pattison, A. Vershynina, C. Wayne, B. Xhabli
CON: C. Brohard, L. McWilliams
OPT: D. Coates, V. Das, L. Frishman, R. Manny, S. Modi, J. Porter
PHA: D. Chow, D. Thornton, G. Udugamasooriya
RES FAC: O. Bannova
TECH: M. Burns, W. Conklin, B. Detillier, M. El Nahas, M. Kidd, A. Lendasse, F. Merchant

MEMBERS ABSENT: (46)

ARCH: G. Chow, Z. Qureshi
ARTS: R. Bush, N. Harren, T. Koozin, S. Matijcio, K. Rigdon
BUS: C. Becker, P. Kumar, S. Werner
EDU: W. Fan, J. Freiberg
ENGR: K. Larin, S. Pei, M. Robertson, Y. Yao, C. Yu
HRM: Y. Koh, J. Madera
LAW: D. Fagundes, J. Nelson,
LIB: S. Thompson
CLASS: E. Alemán, R. Boul, S. Craig, S. Deyle, J. Kleinheider, M. Knoblauch, E. Simas, B. Tamber-Rosenau, C. Tamber-Rosenau, A. Vujanovic
COM: K. Jones, K. Rowland
NSM: R. Capuano, A. Czader, S. Gilbertson, M. Papadakis, Z. Ren,
PHA: G. Cuny, R. Ghose, M. Trivedi
RES CTRS: S. Chung

GCSW: S. Ali, S. Narendorf
TECH: X. Yuan

VACANT SEATS: (10) BUS – 3 seats (At-Large); LAW – 1 GPSC seat; CLASS – 1 seat (UC), OPT – 2 seats (At-large); GCSW – 2 seats (At-large) & 1 GPSC seat;

VISITORS: Raymond Bartlett (SVC/SVP, Administration & Finance), Wynne Chin (BUS), Mark Clarke (Associate Provost, Faculty Development and Faculty Affairs), Amr Elnashai (VC/VP, Research & Transfer Technology), Fleurette Fernando (KGMCA), Lisa Holdeman (VC/VP, Univ. Marketing & Communications), Anna Ingvarsdson (Crabtree Interpreting), Athena Jackson (Dean, University Libraries), Michael Johnson, (Chief of Staff, UH President's Office), Sarah Larsen (Dean, Graduate School), Janice McCann (Crabtree Interpreting), Paola Romanos, Lorraine Schroeder (Director, LGBTQ Resource Center), Paula Myrick Short (SVC/SVP, Academic Affairs & Provost), Nathan Smith (Chair, PHLS/EDU)

Approval of Minutes: May 12, 2021 Meeting and August 18, 2021 Meeting

Minutes of the May 12th and August 18th Senate meetings were approved.

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

FS Pres. Jeronimo Cortina reported on the following items:

- UH has been managing the fall 2021 soft opening well. He thanked the COVID Committee for their work and guidance.
- UH made the Big 12 conference
- UH flu clinics are open.
- Curative Testing kiosks – testing is on-going and well attended.

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

Provost Paula Short reported on the following items:

- Fall 2021 Enrollment:
 - Undergraduates: .1% from last year; new undergraduates (up 7.1%), transfers (down .5%); continuing students (down 2.6%) – concerned with retention/graduation rates; Graduate level: new graduate students (up 5.5%); returning graduate students (up 9.3%); new professional school students (up 4.6%); returning professional school students (up 4.2%)
- Fall 2021 SCH (down 2.7%):
 - Undergraduates: FTIC (6.7%); Transfers (down 2%); Continuing students (down 6%)
 - Graduate level: New students (up 8.84%); continuing students (up 7.54%); new professional school students (up 4.31%); continuing professional school students (up 4.27%)
- Course Delivery:
 - 71% of organized classes in-person; Dr. Short thanked the faculty for holding in-person classes.
 - 29% online classes (synchronous/asynchronous)
 - Total classes taught: 5,626
- Core Classes:
 - 63% classes in-person
 - 37% classes are virtual

Provost Short thanked the faculty for their efforts to hold in-person classes and responding to the need.

Q&A Session:

Sen. Stella Grigorian asked if the soft opening would be extended past this week. Prov. Short responded the soft opening is still extended through next week. Administration is working with the COVID Committee and referring to CDC guidelines, etc.

Sen. Bernhard Bodmann commented on the UH wireless outages affecting classes. Prov. Short replied she had discussed and understands this issue. SVP Raymond Bartlett thanked Sen. Bodmann for mentioning this concern. He said he takes full responsibility for this problem and mentioned the issue is the delivery of the service itself (not the equipment). He said he would follow-up and figure out a bypass solution with UH IT.

Sen. Atife Caglar asked what the graduation rate for undergraduates (within four years) and what is the cause of the decrease in returning students. Dr. Short responded that the four-year graduation rate rose by six points (she didn't have the exact number with her) and the six-year graduation rate is sixty two percent. Financial reasons, course availability, and not taking a full-time load (15 hours) have contributed to retention issues. She said that she would be glad to send summaries of graduation data to the Senate.

Sen. Ferenc Bunta commented that it would help to use hard-wire internet in the classroom when wifi is disrupted.

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

SVP Raymond Bartlett reported on the following items:

- UH Wireless: SVP Bartlett reiterated he will continue to work on resolving this issue.
- Hurricane Nicholas: UH weathered this storm well. A few campus trees were blown down, some minor leaks and general debris strewn about. UH facilities and maintenance crews are attending to these issues. Mr. Bartlett encouraged senators to contact their building coordinator and/or FIXIT if they find any building issues affected by this storm.
- UH Budget:
 - The FY 2022 budget was presented and approved at the August Board of Regents meeting. Among the budget items, the two percent merit raise for faculty and staff was approved. Also, the additional faculty hiring lines, increase in graduate student pay, funding to address planned maintenance, strategic staffing hires to address student needs (i.e., staff for the Student Accessibility Center).
- Lab Renovation Task Force:
 - Four work groups will be meeting to help develop a draft policy and procedure (each group assigned a specific topic) related to lab renovations.
- LUB: Lab Utilization Guide
 - Refining and finalizing the guide.
- Curative Testing:
 - Incentive Initiative: there were 18,000 uploads to the UH portal (good response)
 - There are 500 testing slots available, 7 days a week
 - Working on an extension of the contract agreement

Sen. Jacinta Conrad asked what the current turnaround time of the COVID test was. FS Pres. Jeronimo Cortina responded that the turnaround time is around 25-50 hours for results. Test result turnaround times have increased during the fall term due to more people getting tested compared to the summer term when there were less people on campus. Dr. Conrad asked if the turnaround time could be faster given the increased demand in testing (i.e., some people are getting results in 4-5 days)? SVP Bartlett said the increase in turnaround time may be a resource issue in the lab. He said he will keep pushing for Curative to address this issue: especially if some people are receiving test results four to five days later which is not adequate.

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:

- Presidential Frontier Faculty Hiring Lines: 25 additional assistant professors approved by the Board of Regents
 - Issued a call for proposals to the college deans; received 61 proposals
 - Created an integrated strategy – draft proposal to be presented to President Khator
 - Faculty lines will be managed in the Provost Office
- Space and Core Facilities:
 - Plan to hire 100 additional faculty hire

- Plan for research space for faculty
 - DoR will survey equipment that UH owns (include plans for maintenance, upgrades, etc.)
- \$20M to expand research infrastructure
- Highlights of UH Research Activity 2021
 - Research expenditures increased despite the pandemic
 - Dollar amounts for grants that UH have won during 2021 are unprecedented.
- DoR Office of Contract & Grants (OCG) Reorganization:
 - A finalist has been identified for the Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Programs position.

Special Presentation by Faculty Senate President: [Jerónimo Cortina](#)

FS President Cortina presented Dr. Raúl Ramos with a crystal gavel plaque commemorating his years of service as a senator and the 2019 Faculty Senate President.

Farewell Address by the 2020 Faculty Senate President: [Jerónimo Cortina](#)

I first would like to thank all of you for your service and commitment to the University. I want to thank you for trusting me, for giving me your counsel and in many cases for the new friends that I made during this time. I want to thank all the members of the executive committee Paul Butler, Jaci Conrad, Vallabh Das, Martha Dunkelberger, Fleurette Fernando, Susie Grosenth, Norm Johnson, Randy Lee, Anna Medrano, Jason Porter, Raul Ramos, Carla Sharp, Dave Shattuck, Steve Werner, and George Zouridakis that helped all of us navigate these times. I want to thank President Khator, Provost Short, VP Elnashai, VP Bartlett, Dr. Clarke and Mr. Johnson for truly embracing the principle of shared governance, for their counsel and for always taking our recommendations very seriously. I want to thank our colleagues in the staff for their beyond the call commitment to our mission. I want to thank my Department and CMAS for their support, and lastly I want to thank my partner and my children for their love and support.

We have accomplished remarkable things during these unparalleled difficult times. We spent hundreds of hours transitioning to remote instruction; enrollment broke all expectations not only due to the superb recruitment efforts by the administration but because of the world-class quality of the tenure and non-tenure track faculty who teach the more than 10,000 sections every semester.

During this time, we demonstrated that the Faculty is ready to do its part; we should be excited about what lies ahead for our University, and we should keep being motivated and committed to our values by embracing our diversity and by serving those who are less fortunate than us.

During my tenure I only had one thought when making decisions: we are the custodians of instruction and research which are the essential reasons for the existence of the University. Our role will continue to be proactive co-participants in the shared governance of the institution. We should always keep in mind that the Board, the administration, and the Faculty have different areas of competence. Still, it is this convergence of diverse voices and expertise that determines the short- and long-range priorities of the University. The Faculty is but one voice in this process, but that voice is a vital one.

Today, I pass the helm to my dear friend Dr. Das from the College of Optometry and to Dr. Shattuck from the College of Engineering. I am confident that we are in very good hands; Dr. Das's leadership, commitment, and steady hand will propel us to the next era. Thank you, Vallabh. Thank you for your counsel, for putting up with me and thank you for your friendship. I wish you all the luck and know that I will be here to support you in any way I can.

As we move forward with the new strategic plan, with athletics being part of the Big XII we have to remember that we are a University, a Universe of ideas, backgrounds, sexual orientations, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic identities, but above all we are Cougars, and that's what unites us.

Thank you very much, it has been a privilege.

Presentation of Gavel Plaque by incoming Faculty Senate President: [Vallabh Das](#)

FS President-elect Vallabh Das presented out-going Senate President Jeronimo Cortina with a gavel plaque to celebrate his leadership from January 2020 – September 2021.

Gavel Inscription:

“A genuine leader is not a searcher of consensus, but a molder of consensus” – Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Cortina is a true leader who served the faculty in the most difficult of times.”

Passing of the University Commencement Mace by outgoing Faculty Senate President: [Jeronimo Cortina](#)

Outgoing Senate President Jeronimo Cortina transitioned the presidency by passing the University commencement mace to Dr. Vallabh Das.

Inaugural Address by the 2021 Faculty Senate President: [Vallabh Das](#)

Good afternoon everybody! It is such a privilege and honor to be addressing you all for the first time as President of the Faculty Senate. I could never have imagined this moment as an engineering undergrad student in India, as a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, as a young faculty member at Emory University or back in 2009 as a new faculty member in the College of Optometry here at the University of Houston. I am immensely proud and grateful for this opportunity and thank you all for putting me in this position.

As I take over the reins from Jeronimo, let me say a few words about my colleague and friend. This man whom I have got know over the last year has genuinely been a fantastic leader for the senate and a good friend to me in these trying times. His high energy level and commitment to all the things that are the senate was something I have appreciated. For Jeronimo, trying to keep the senate unified and maintaining open communication channels with central administration and faculty was very important. I have learnt a lot from him this last year and for this I thank you my friend.

So back in Jan of 2020 when I became President-elect and Jeronimo became President of the Faculty Senate, the seas were calm and COVID far from our shores. To keep this maritime analogy going a bit further, Franklin Roosevelt once said – A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor. This last year and a half has been one heck of a bootcamp as far as training for the faculty senate president position goes. In the last year as circumstances were changing on a daily basis and the national, state and local conversations on masking, vaccines, pedagogy in terms of online teaching, grading, technology solutions, financial impact on university etc. were all over the place, shared governance could have just been a phrase to give some lip service to. It is to the credit of the leadership of President Khator, Provost Short, SVP Bartlett, VPR Elnashai, and their teams in central administration that right from the very beginning, faculty input was sought, faculty senate leadership were made members of various task forces and committees, interim policies were shepherded through normal faculty senate committee channels, communication lines were kept open and faculty senator questions were answered transparently in open forums. I sincerely appreciate everyone here from the President on down for your engagement with the faculty senate and your commitment to shared governance. I hope this productive relationship will continue and on my part pledge to be a constructive partner who always has the interests of the faculty and the university's mission of excellence in teaching and research at the forefront of my thinking.

In a body as large as ours there is obviously no such thing as 100% agreement on any issue. Faculty have it in their DNA to think freely and deeply and come up with different viewpoints and this is our strength. At times, we can also be intransigent but that's just because we believe deeply in what we believe. Believe me, I understand and I take no offence when anyone disagrees with me. It is my hope for the upcoming year and years ahead that the faculty senate continues to be the safe-space where varied viewpoints can be expressed freely. The senate works most effectively when everyone is engaged and voicing the views of the faculty of the various colleges that each of you pledged to represent when you got elected. Faculty also have it in their DNA to discuss and discuss and discuss but we must also in the end converge and develop within a reasonable time a consensus view that represents the majority. I am confident that in this upcoming year, our seasoned committee chairs will do the needful to keep the various committee agendas moving.

Although the faculty senate president tends to be a little more in the public eye, the work has always been a team effort. Let me introduce to you all once again, Dave Shattuck, the new President-elect. Dave is a seasoned veteran of the university and of the faculty senate – 39 years at the university I believe. Just as Jeronimo and I worked closely together, Dave will be as much part of the decision making as I am.

Let me also introduce to you the executive committee of the faculty senate for this upcoming year. I would appreciate it if you could turn on your cameras when I call out your name.

Janna Porra is the new secretary of the senate

Jeronimo Cortina as past-president takes over as chair of the faculty governance committee

Susie Gronseth continues as chair of the Community and Government relations committee

Jim Briggs is the new chair of the Budget and Facilities Committee

David Papell is the new chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Karolos Grigoriadis is the new chair of the research and scholarship committee

Kristen Hassett is the new chair of the undergraduate committee

Consuelo Arbona is the new chair of the graduate and professional studies committee

Kerry Creelman has been elected to serve as a member at large on the executive committee

Jeremy May has been elected to also serve as a member at large on the executive committee.

Dave and I will be working closely with this veteran group as we tackle the issues faced by the faculty. The executive committee are your representatives who will carry your concerns forward to Dave and I and to central administration. So please do not hesitate to communicate with Dave and I or any member of the executive committee expressing your views on any matter.

Well I have been prattling on for a fair bit and it is time to stop. As I wind down, my promise to you all is that the faculty senate leadership will continue to interact with all of you and will engage with central administration on issues pertinent to the faculty including our current ongoing battle with this pandemic that we all hoped would be a memory by now. I ask that we as a faculty senate spread the message to our faculty colleagues to stay positive and start to look forward, hopefully to beyond this pandemic, while incorporating many of the lessons we have learnt in the past year. Lets support and advocate for each other, our staff and our students paying special attention to those of our faculty and staff colleagues and students who need

additional support. Finally, lets keep our focus on the mission of our beloved university and do what we all love to do – to teach and to expand knowledge by conducting cutting edge research.

Thank you... go Coogs.

Faculty Senate President Vallabh Das opened the floor to new business.

Proposed Resolution by Sen. Christiane Spitzmueller

FS Pres. Das brought forth this motion to the floor and called for a second (seconded by Sen. David Shattuck).

Senator Spitzmueller along with Dr. Nathan Smith and Ms. Lorraine Schroeder presented the proposed resolution to the Faculty Senate.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PREFERRED NAME POLICY

WHEREAS: Transgender and non-binary students experience micro aggressions and traumatization every time they are not addressed with their preferred name and pronouns; and

WHEREAS: Research shows a 65% decrease in suicide attempts by transgender youth (age 15 – 21) when they can use their chosen name (*Journal of Adolescent Health, May 2018*), and Transgender people have a 40% rate of lifetime suicide attempts compared to 5% for the general population (*2015 US Transgender Survey*), and

WHEREAS: The University of Houston’s nondiscrimination policies include gender identity and expression.

WHEREAS: Faculty and staff, in their efforts to support the University of Houston’s diversity and inclusion efforts and treat all students equitably and with respect, need to be provided with guidelines and consistent information regarding students’ names.

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Faculty Senate of the University of Houston supports the petition by the UH LGBTQ Resource Center Advisory Board, which requests the creation of a top-down policy (MAPP) that requires preferred names and pronouns to be used whenever legally possible on all platforms and correspondence.

Q&A session followed the brief overview of the resolution. Concerns such as putting preferred names/pronoun into different across different platforms (i.e., Blackboard, etc.), students illegally changing their name, intent to extend policy to faculty/staff, etc. were discussed.

Vote on the motion for the Faculty Senate to support the Preferred Name Policy.

In favor: 72 (85%) – motion carries

Oppose: 5 (6%)

Abstain: 8 (9%)

Announcements

FS Pres. Vallabh Das reminded the Senate that the 2021-2022 APeX Speaker series will begin with its first talk with Dr. Emily Beverly from the College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics on September 22, 2021, at 12:15 p.m. via [Microsoft Teams](#)

“Using soils of the past to reconstruct the landscapes of human evolution”

Old Business

Senator Dustin Gish updated the Faculty Senate about the Calhoun Road name change to Martin Luther King Blvd (portion of the street located within UH campus is moving forward. However, the remainder of Calhoun Road located south (off UH campus) will change more slowly due to bureaucratic procedures.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:42 p.m.