Following are the minutes of the regular Faculty Council meeting of May 06, 2019.

The ninth regular meeting of the Faculty Council for the academic year 2018-19 was held in the Main Building, Room 212 on Monday, May 06, 2019, at 2:51 PM.

ATTENDANCE


Voting Members: 55 present, 22 absent, 77 total
Non-Voting Members: 9 present, 24 absent, 33 total
Total Members: 63 present, 57 absent, 110 total
I. REPORT OF THE SECRETARY (D 17050-17053).

President Fenves has appointed Memorial Resolution Committees for Richard N. Adams, Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, and Albert D. Sellstrom, Professor Emeritus, Department of French and Italian.

Memorial Resolutions were completed and submitted for James Clayton Browne, Professor Emeritus, Department of Computer Science; Jeanne M. Lagowski, Professor Emeritus, Department of Neuroscience; and Terence “Terry” C. Todd, Director, Stark Center.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved the Update to the Core Curriculum Course Lists for the 2019-2020 General Information Catalog, but the School of Undergraduate Studies continues ongoing negotiations for some of the courses that were included in the legislation.

From the Faculty Council’s slate of nominees for the Intercollegiate Athletics Council, President Fenves has appointed Gayle J. Acton (Associate Professor, Nursing) and John M. Gonzalez (Professor, English) for four-year terms beginning September 1, 2019. President Fenves has granted final approval to the Council’s proposed change to the Retroactive Withdrawal Policy and to proposed changes in standing committees. The proposal to create an Undergraduate Curriculum Changes Committee has also been approved. Faculty Council 2019 summer meetings have been cancelled, and the meeting schedule for 2019-20 has been set.

The Report of the Committee to Nominate Faculty Members to the Police Oversight Committee was transmitted to President Gregory L. Fenves for his consideration.

The Staff Council withdrew its resolution to encourage increased funding for the Employee Assistance Program in order to reconsider and amend the final language.

The Resolution to Gather Best Practices on Tackling Difficult Dialogues and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Classrooms was approved by the Council on a no-protest basis. The Proposed Changes to the Honors Day Criteria for Selecting College Scholars and Distinguished College Scholars were also approved by the Council on a no-protest basis. Final approval resides with the President.

Items currently under review of Faculty Council include a Resolution of Appreciation for UT Austin’s Administrative Professionals, a Proposal to Change the Policy of Retaining the Symbol X (Temporary Delay of Course Grade) after Assignment of Final Grade, and a Resolution for Improving Financial Aid to Students.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

Secretary Friedman said the minutes for the April 15 regular Faculty Council meeting (D 17043-17049) had been posted online. When no corrections or additions were proposed, he announced the minutes approved as submitted.

III. COMMUNICATION WITH THE PRESIDENT.

President Greg Fenves said that the Texas state legislature, which adjourns at the end of May, has added formula funding for higher education in both the Senate and House budget bills; he noted that “this has been a very good budget session for higher education and for UT Austin.”

President Fenves announced that the first floor of Perry-Castañeda Library (PCL) had been flooded, but the flooding has not affected student use of the library. Library staff were able to save the library’s map collection, and restoration is in progress for the maps that suffered water damage. The contractors working on the new visitor center in the PCL will “have some responsibility” for the flooding, and they have worked with the University to clean up the damage.

President Fenves answered the question on federal funding summer salary caps posed by Lorenzo Sadun (Professor, Mathematics) at the March 11 Faculty Council meeting. He said that in 2011, the University decided to use institutional funds to pay for the full salary differential for faculty with grants subject to the cap. In 2016-17, however, the University changed this policy. Starting that year, the University transferred to Deans the amount of money that would have gone to supplementing faculty salaries affected by the cap. The Deans decided how to use that funding to best support their faculty. The transfer of institutional funds to Deans is “ramping down,” and by 2020-21, “the University centrally will not be providing any support to schools or colleges for the salary cap.”

There were no questions from the floor.
IV. REPORT OF THE CHAIR.

Chair Charlotte Canning (Professor, Theatre and Dance) presented a Resolution of Appreciation for UT Austin’s Administrative Professionals (D 17023), which passed unanimously.

She reported that conversations are ongoing with Dell Medical School to identify their voting members. The task force on exterior-facing window signs held its first meeting and anticipates meeting the August 1, 2019, deadline for submitting its recommendations. Chair Canning has been involved with the two task forces that will address teaching and course evaluations and with the graduate school’s task force. She is also participating in conversations about how to revise the faculty grievance process. She attended the last meeting of the Council for Racial and Ethnic Equity and Diversity (CREED) for 2018-19. The co-chairs will submit their final report to the Provost’s office; the Council should have that report available on its website in the fall.

Chair Canning closed by reflecting on what the Council accomplished in 2018-19. It heard reports on “initiatives underway, changes being made, and the state of particular offices and situations” including the implementation of Workday, multifactor identification, the Faculty Ombuds report, the UT district representative program of the University of Texas Police Department (UTPD), the UT diversity statement, diversity and classroom management, Athletics access to Canvas, the presidential award for global learning, and the annual report from the Director of the Libraries. The Council hosted a successful joint meeting with A&M and participated in Orange and Maroon Legislative Day. Faculty Council passed resolutions to address the fields of study question, to oppose the Trump administration’s policy on gender definition, to create the two task forces on redefining course instructor surveys and instructional impact on teaching and learning, to gather best practices on tackling difficult dialogues and trauma-informed pedagogy in the classroom, and to offer faculty support for UT staff. The Council also created a new committee to address proposed changes to the undergraduate curriculum.

Chair Canning said that she will remain strongly committed to serving the faculty in years to come, both in her role as Past Chair of the Faculty Council and beyond.

V. REPORT OF THE CHAIR ELECT.

Chair Elect Brian Evans (Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering) presented Chair Canning with a gift from the Faculty Council thanking her for her service. He announced that the one-year committee assignments for Faculty Council members had been largely completed. Next year’s members should have been notified of their assignments. He then announced that Anthony Brown (Professor, Curriculum and Instruction) would be the Chair Elect for the 2019-20 Faculty Council. Rowena Fong (Professor, Social Work), Amanda Hager (Associate Professor of Instruction, Mathematics), and John Yancey (Professor, Art and Art History) will serve one-year terms as members of the Faculty Council Executive Committee for 2019-20.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS—None.

VII. REPORTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY, COLLEGES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMITTEES—None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS.

A. Victim’s Advocate Network.

Don Verett (Assistant Chief and Chief of Staff, UTPD) introduced Marica Wright (Interim Program Coordinator, Victim’s Advocate Network) to present on the Victim’s Advocate Network (VAN). Marica Wright told of the impetus for the VAN. Four years ago, a long-time faculty member suffered a sudden, massive heart attack in front of several close colleagues. While UTPD and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provided medical care and took statements, no one could provide immediate crisis support for the staff and faculty involved. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides counseling services to faculty, staff, and their dependents, lacks the resources to provide sudden crisis response and support services on the scene, so leadership with UTPD, in collaboration with EAP, created the Victim’s Advocate Network.

1 https://utexas.box.com/shared/static/2nxm4m8uinpz19ggsqftbq1kp3yi7vry.pdf
The VAN is “a twenty-four hour, on-call network of volunteers drawn from the staff and faculty population [that responds to] distressing events on campus that involve faculty or staff members.” The volunteers provide “mental health first aid” and practical assistance to victims. They are equipped with a special parking placard that allows them to get near the scene and with an easily visible and identifiable orange vest.

There are currently eighteen volunteers, but the VAN hopes to eventually have forty. Volunteers need to obtain a supervisor approval form, undergo a background check and an interview, participate in two ride outs, attend a two-hour orientation training with UTPD, complete the Texas Victim’s Advocate Training online, take the eight-hour mental health first aid course offered through Travis County Integral Care, and shadow Austin Police Department Victim Services on a ten-hour ride out. Volunteers are asked to sign up for sixteen or more hours of on-call shifts each month. Those hours can be broken up into four-hour blocks at a time.

President Fenves has approved VAN volunteer eligibility for up to four hours per month of paid work time for their VAN service.

B. Resolution from the Committee on Financial Aid to Students (D 17032-17035).

Max Snodderly (Committee Chair and Professor, Neuroscience) said there were three main points to the committee’s resolution. First, the University should “publicly articulate an explicit criterion for affordability at UT Austin.” Second, the University should increase need-based aid. Finally, information concerning affordability and financial aid should be improved. Better data regarding debt accrual are needed. Students and their families need financial literacy training. After presenting these three main points, Professor Snodderly took questions from the floor.

Professor Sadun said “you can’t look at these affordability questions only from the side of providing aid,” but must also examine “how much you’re charging for tuition, and where we’re spending our money on.” Professor Snodderly said that the University needed to inculcate more loyalty from alumni and do better at communicating the University’s standing as a force for public and private good.

Ian McEntee (Student Government Representative) commended the resolution. Christina Baze (Incoming Graduate Student Assembly President) said that stipends require more attention and that international students face “unique [financial] challenges” that need to be acknowledged and addressed.

The resolution was then approved.

C. Graduate Task Force.

Daina R. Berry (Professor, History), co-chair of the Graduate Education Task Force along with Chris Kirk (Professor, Anthropology) and Tanya Paull (Professor, Molecular Biosciences), said the Graduate Education Task Force spent the spring collecting data, listening to constituents across campus, and developing a list of issues and concerns. While working with the Office of Institutional Reporting, Research and Information Systems (IRRIS), the task force developed a software tool that departments can use to “examine trade-offs with respect to TA (teaching assistant) salaries, the number of TAs, the number of faculty and staff, and so on.”

Next steps for the task force include seeking outside forms of support. They are looking at joining the Association of American Universities (AAU) PhD initiative and possibly securing grants from the Mellon Foundation. They are also working on preliminary recommendations to be circulated across campus after their May 10 meeting. The task force hopes to have their final of recommendations submitted to the Provost by December 10.

Professor Berry shared several graduate education successes. In the College of Natural Sciences (CNS), students admitted are guaranteed five years of twelve-month support assuming satisfactory academic progress and job performance. Their minimum twelve-month stipend not counting benefits and tuition is $27,540. Moody College of Communication has also recently made increases to their stipends.

Chris Kirk said the task force had learned that “disparities between units across this campus are stark” in terms of graduate student stipends, with “the ‘haves’ [being] those departments that have a funding model based on overhead for external grants going to faculty members with graduate students funded largely by [Graduate Research Assistantships].” For most

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2 https://utexas.box.com/shared/static/u87tf5zqgj1khtlmdsk1cz5hmsx4q2.pdf
of the “humanities…liberal arts, and fine arts,” students are funded by TA positions “at levels that are completely inadequate for their needs” and “do not allow departments to compete” with other institutions. Norma Fowler (Professor, Integrative Biology) said that CNS graduate students are supported not by overhead but by grants: “We write into the grants salary, fringe on top of salary, overhead on top of salary and fringe…and then we write in tuition.” She also noted that “pretty much everybody…in CNS has cut down dramatically on the size of our labs. I’m not saying this is bad. I’m just saying be aware that’s what happens.” Professor Kirk apologized for oversimplifying the funding situation in CNS.

D. Proposal from the Educational Policy Committee and the Senate of College Councils Concerning Incomplete Grades (D 17025-17029).

Christine L. Julien (Committee Chair and Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering) introduced Elena Ivanova (Senate of College Councils President) to present the proposal. Elena Ivanova said that currently, students who receive incompletes in courses retain the symbol X on their transcripts even after they have completed the course requirements and received a grade. This has put students in the awkward position of explaining the symbol in job opportunities or internship interviews. Many students, faculty, and administrators were not aware that this policy was in place, meaning it has been an ineffective deterrent for students who might be tempted to abuse the system of using incompletes.

This proposal would remove the X for students who have finished their incomplete course. It would also enable students to be eligible for University Honors once their incomplete is finished. Finally, it would also remove the incomplete symbol for graduate students who complete the course in question. Jonathan Kaplan (Assistant Professor, Middle Eastern Studies) asked whether the transcript change would be retroactive. Elena Ivanova and Professor Julien specified that “no, transcripts for students who have already graduated cannot be changed, but it will apply to the X marks of all students who are registered at the time it goes into effect.”

The resolution passed.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS

A. Summer meetings of the Faculty Council have been cancelled.
B. The 2019-2020 Faculty Council meeting schedule is posted online at https://facultycouncil.utexas.edu/

X. QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR—None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Canning adjourned the meeting at 3:57 PM.