UHD Faculty Senate

Minutes recorded by: Michael Cavanaugh
Out of Cycle Zoom Meeting June 16, 2020 2:30 – 4:01 pm
Online through Zoom

Senate: Michael Duncan, Ronald Beebe, Hsiao-Ming Wang, Michael Cavanaugh, Franklin Allaire, Maria Benavides, Alexander Bielakowski, Dexter Cahoy, Kristen Capuozzo, Stephanie Coleman, Prakash Deo, Isaac Elking, Krista Gehring, Angela Goins, Susan Henney, Pamela Hurley, Tahereh Jafari, Timothy Klein, Steve London, Jeffery Martz, Mitsue Nakamura, Nathan Neale, Andrew Pavelich, Joseph Sample, Johanna Schmertz, Pat Williams, Julie Wilson.

Absent: Felicia Harris, Cynthia Lloyd, Laura Mitchell, Jace Valcore, Ting Zhang.

Guests: Eric Link, Provost/VPAA; David Bradley, VPAF; Jerry Johnson, AVP Faculty, Research, and Sponsored Programs; Michelle Moosally, AVP Programming and Curriculum; Pat Ensor, Library Director; Hossein Shahrokhi, AVP IT; Sandra Dahlberg, Faculty Ombuds; Lucy Bowen, Executive Director Academic & Student Affairs; Darlene Hodge, FS Admin; Sheryl Sellers, Student/Dateline Correspondent; Ed Cueva, Professor; Rachael Hudspeth, Lecturer; Courtney Standlee, Lecturer; Rachna Sadana, Department Chair NS; Linda Dune, Associate Professor; Akif Uzman, Dean CST; Simon Jakubowski, Lecturer, Shohreh Hashemi; Associate Professor; Amy Baird, Associate Professor; Nina Barbieri, Assistant Professor; Rhonda Scherer, Staff Council President/Associate Director for Sports and Fitness; Caroline Smith, Staff Council Secretary/Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning; Stephen Wernet, Professor; Adriana Visbal, Lecturer; Meghan Minard, Lecturer; Paul Mandell, Associate Professor.

Call to order: The Senate was called to order at 2:30 pm by Senate President Michael Duncan.

Minutes

June 2nd and June 12th Out of Cycle Zoom minutes were passed unanimously.

Reports

Dr. Duncan gave a report on the meeting between UHD Leadership and FSEC and Staff Council Leadership. There were serious concerns about opening the university that prompted the letter and resolution. The university response was swift, and overall satisfactory. There were a bunch of asks in the resolution and we received almost all of them. The campus opening is delayed until a taskforce can evaluate the situation and make recommendations. Emergency paid leave was extended (we did not ask for this), and the President reaffirmed there would be no layoffs or furloughs for the staff this summer. Senate and Staff Council are also heavily involved in the return to campus plan as there are two representatives from each body on the taskforce.

Staff Council President Rhonda Scherer said that staff council was very appreciative of the welcome during the meeting and the response from university leadership.

Dr. Duncan said he thought the swift and decisive response was very favorable to the faculty and staff position. He asks the senate if they have any views on the response.

While the long-term decisions will be made later, the response was positive. We were able to get almost everything we asked for.

Simply outstanding.

Pleased with the response.

Exceptionally positive.

Quite a few senators simply agreed with their colleagues' views.

Dr. Duncan asks whether Senate should send an appreciation and acknowledgement to the President's letter coming from the Senate. We have done this informally from FSEC already. Dr. Duncan indicated that he could send it himself on behalf on Senate.

It would be appropriate to ask Dr. Duncan to do this, we just want to make it clear that this is an expression of the full Senate and not just the executive committee.

Dr. Bielakowski makes a motion for Dr. Duncan to create and send a statement of appreciation on behalf of Faculty Senate to the President in response to the quick action on our requests. The motion is seconded by Senator Jafari.

Motion is voted on and passes unanimously.

Dr. Duncan explains that the taskforce in charge of the reopening has at least one Faculty representative on it, but President Munoz slotted us two positions. We currently have 3 nominations for the two positions: Dr. Ronald Beebe, Dr. Pamela Hurley, and Dr. Heather Goltz. Are there any other nominations or self-nominations from the Senate? We need to act quickly.

Dr. Neale nominates Dr. Johanna Schmertz. Dr. Schmertz says that she appreciates the nomination but would have to decline due to her current workload.

Dr. Duncan is asked about his prior interest in serving and he indicated that the offer was only if no one else wanted to serve but since we have nominees, he removed his name from consideration.

Dr. Gehring spoke on the qualifications of Dr. Goltz with a background on infectious diseases. She is currently a medical social worker doing shifts at Baylor.

Dr. Duncan says that Dr. Hurley's background is in risk management and Dr. Beebe is the incoming Faculty Senate President and was the chair ASA COVID committee.

Dr. Duncan says that the nominations will stay open today (6/16) until 5 pm and then Ms. Hodge will set up a Qualtrics poll to vote on the representatives. Senate agrees to the procedures. As soon as the vote is concluded, Dr. Duncan will forward the names to the President's office for appointment.

Dr. Henney came to Senate to give a presentation from the Online Taskforce on preliminary recommendations (see attached).

Questions and comments occurred during the presentation.

Q - When would these guidelines go into effect? Would this blackboard foundations course be required by fall?
A – Dr. Henney said that this rollout would be nuanced. Ideally, everyone would get this done before fall, especially with COVID in the background. However, this will likely involve a soft rollout with it being voluntary prior to fall and then becoming more urgent as we progress through the fall semester. Dr. Henney said that with today being June 16th, having a requirement for fall teaching didn't make logical sense. For those who believe in quality online teaching, Dr. Henney said they are likely to complete this prior to the fall. Additionally, she hoped that schedulers would take this into consideration when hiring adjuncts to teach classes for the fall.

Q – Will there be a test out option for those who have already mastered blackboard, maybe a blackboard/CLTE type of thing?
A – Dr. Henney said that a refresher course for blackboard should not be perceived as a negative thing. There are always things to learn and an experienced blackboard user could probably benefit from the foundations course.

Q – How much overlap is there with these options for additional training? Can someone writeup a recommendation on when to take this class over that class? Additionally, with so many different options, it seems like we would lose some of the cohesion and uniformity in delivery that we were looking for when we were laying out the goals of the taskforce.
A – Dr. Henney stated that the concern is understandable. However, the idea is for the standards to come from the college/department level so that there would still be similar requirements for faculty in the same fields. The options are there for different time commitments. Some of the ones listed will take 6-8 hours to complete by themselves, while others may take one hour. So, the idea behind requiring a set number of hours is that faculty can take the 6-hour training course or 6 of the one-hour training courses. It is there to give options for faculty and units.

Q – I think faculty are only allowed to take a certain amount of OLC and QM workshops (maybe 3) and still receive the stipend. Will this stipend also be restricted?
A – According to Dr. Henney, the recommendation is that every faculty member who takes the blackboard foundations course this summer should be able to receive the stipend.

Maybe we can add a VoiceThread training to the list for ongoing education.

Q – Dr. Courtney Standlee said that there are only two workshops currently offered by CTLE, Blackboard Foundations and Passport, and both are very limited in that there are not many spots available. Currently there is no stipend attached to the Foundations course. Will the system be able to handle all those faculty taking the Foundations course?
A – Dr. Henney explained that they will ramp up a lot of things in CTLE. The foundations course would be a university priority as mandatory training and there would be enough infrastructure to support it.

Q – Dr. Shohreh Hashemi asked when these courses would be offered and whether it would be in time for the faculty to implement for the fall semester? What about mandated versus volunteer materials?

A – Many of these courses are available now. The Foundations course is available year-round and while the Passport class is currently being retooled, many other courses are free and can be taken during the summer. Dr. Henney further stated that some of the courses have a cost associated with the class, but that training monies are available, so please talk with your chair if you are interested in taking these courses. The Blackboard Foundations course, if put into place as a requirement from the university would be an on-demand course. The rest of the courses would have more of the regular schedule that you have seen in the past.

Q – When will this recommendation be decided?
A – Dr. Henney said that the Provost has already received the recommendations. We are currently having a discussion among the faculty right now. The idea is that if we are okay with the university minimum the administration can make that happen and give the go ahead with funding the stipends and making sure the foundations course is available.

Q – Professor Rachael Hudspeth asked a question on what would happen for faculty who run out of courses to take. What about those faculty who have already taken most of those courses listed?
A – Dr. Henney said that while she doesn't endorse a particular organization, QM and OLC add new courses all the time, so someone should not run out of new courses.

Q – Dr. Standlee asked what about having a UHD showcase (count for hours) for faculty who are expertly qualified online and who have taken a bunch of these courses?
A – Dr. Henney stated that she would argue for her area to count those hours as continuing education. The CTLE/TTLC has a conference during the year (maybe spring) and that would fit well there.

Q – Does this list include the bulk of the recommendations you sent to the Provost? Is there going to be a recommendation for how online teaching will be assessed?
A – This is the exact list of recommendations sent to the Provost according to Dr. Henney. There will be a recommendation on how online teaching should be assessed but that is not being presented right now. That was one of the charges and we were just asked to talk about the training aspect today.

Q – If I were trying to decide between the two hybrid workshops (OLC or QM), how would we go about making that decision?
A – Both the OLC and QM workshops will have a detailed description about the course. Dr. Henney explained that these descriptions will give you ample information to determine which course best suits your needs.

Dr. Henney also wanted to discuss the default course shells for blackboard courses. The basic shell is the same across the university and this is visible on the left-hand navigation. Faculty did not have input on the default options before and this seemingly caused problems. This became very apparent during the online conversion in the spring where students complained of lack of organization in online courses and difficulty in finding certain materials. The navigation does not even have a label for syllabus.

The committee is reorganizing the basic shell to include the important information on the left-hand navigation (i.e., syllabus) while reorganizing the labels into easier to navigate groupings. This does not change any of your courses and everything is still customizable, it just allows for the basic shell to have better organization. Furthermore, a course copy would still copy everything over although, the old materials would keep the old labels.

Discussion on the new shell occurred.

I always changed the course shell and really disliked the "content" label. I have 5 separate units, with each having its own sequence. So, I would have a label for each unit rather than placing them under "content".

Dr. Henney said this new structure would still need modification under that example. However, the new structure was created for basic organization and for those faculty who do little modification of the shell. This will help students navigate the course more easily.

Dr. Hashemi suggested that the committee look at the MDCOB shell, which is used in most MIS courses. It was developed in consultation with an online teaching expert and may help with UHD basic structure.

Dr. Henney explained that the committee did look at the MDCOB shell as part of the process and the taskforce has business faculty members on it who presented on the shell during meetings.

Dr. Henney asks for everyone on Senate to send her some feedback on the blackboard shells. If the faculty are okay with changes being made, they can be made while BB1 is being updated. If there are concerns, please let her know so that they can be discussed in the committee. The taskforce will be working with Academic Technology Committee, the Provost's Office, and FSEC to get this done.

Initiatives

Dr. Duncan explained that the next item on the agenda is a Resolution on BLM, although there is no current written resolution. He mentioned that people have approached him about Senate writing some kind of statement on the great societal awakening. At the same time, others have said that we should not make any statement. He is open to anything the Senate would like to do. There were recent statements put out by the UHD Library, the Center for Critical Race Studies, and the UH Victoria Senate.

Discussion ensued.

Can those statements be shared? Can we just endorse one of those statements?

As a minority serving institution, it will look troublesome if the faculty do not have something to say.

Dr. Duncan shared the UHD Library statement and the Center for Critical Race Studies statement (See attached).

Dr. Jerry Johnson stated that words are one thing, action is another. UHD needs action regarding BLM and other social justice issues.

We probably should not endorse someone else's statement, rather we should have our own. We should move quickly, and I would suggest that someone prepare something that Senate can look over.

Could we ask FSEC to present and prepare a statement we would then look at and vote on?

Dr. Bielakowski made a motion to have FSEC write an appropriate statement for Senate to review at the next meeting.

What would be the statement?

That would be the point of feedback doing it, rather than trying to hash it out with 50 people in the room.

How about a review of faculty and staff policies?

I'm not sure how that would apply.

For embedded racists practices.

That sounds separate.

A policy review could be one of the action items.

Who would we be calling to do those policy reviews? If it is the Senate, we don't need a statement, we just do it.

I like idea of reviewing staff and faculty policies to see if anti-racist principles are embedded in them.

Dr. Johnson suggests adding anti-racism trainings.

APC and FAC are the appropriate entities to charge with reviewing policies. There should be real emphasis in those committees to read them in this way. We, not ESO, must look at the faculty and academic policies to police ourselves.

There seems to be a theme of a policy audit developing. Would that be part of the statement FSEC would be charged with drafting?

We can put in a mention of being dedicated to improving our standards and policies on racism but saying we are currently reviewing our policies seems like a very specific thing to put in a general statement of support.

We can issue multiple statements, one general and one specific.

We are probably trying to do something similar to what the library did: recognizing the nature of the problem, issuing support for minority students, and issuing support for minorities within America.

The early July meeting would be the time to pass it, if not sooner.

Maybe FSEC could solicit volunteers from the faculty to help develop the statement.

Sounds like a good idea.

Dr. Johnson shared the University of Nevada-Reno webpage (https://www.unr.edu/blacklivesmatter) on this issue.

Dr. Adriana Visbal said she thinks the faculty needs to acknowledge the importance of this moment for their entire student body, BIPOC students especially, and all faculty and staff of color. She believes the senate should discuss this and discuss their reasons for wanting to make the statement. The statement without having the difficult conversations will serve no purpose.

An empty statement would be worse than no statement.

FSEC is mainly white and male so other voices are needed.

Dr. Moosally stated that the senate can issue a general statement with some immediate actions for the community and then establish a standing committee to advise on issue of racism, bias, etc. That would allow a longer-term rollout of recommendations, policy review, etc.

Dr. Johnson said long-term and sustainable change takes time and intentional action.

Dr. Bielakowski restates his original motion and Dr. Benavides seconds the motion.

Maybe a timeline should be attached.

Dr. Bielakowski suggested that FSEC have the draft ready by June 30th and Senate could vote on it for the next Faculty meeting on July 6th.

Professor Hudspeth asks whether incoming senators can be sent the draft as well.

Dr. Bielakowski indicates that he is okay with amending the original motion to include that.

Incoming senators start their term on August 15th.

The statement needs to be out sooner, and we can have a very simple straightforward message. We are already way behind.

I agree, we have to move on this now.

Dr. Neale says he would like to amend the motion to solicit involvement from our colleagues that are interested, form a task force by June 19th and the task force would present the statement on June 23rd. Dr. Beebe seconds the amendment.

Can we have a succinct brief statement with a reference to future action items?

Dr. Duncan says that he can make a call to the whole faculty for volunteers for a taskforce and have that taskforce meet somewhere between the 19th and 23rd. Then FSEC can wordsmith the draft and present it to Senate through email by the 23rd. We can figure out some way of amending it through email.

Vote on the amendment. Amendment passes unanimously.

Vote on Motion. Motion passes unanimously.

FSEC will get to work on draft and set up taskforce.

Dr. Duncan mentions that we need to schedule the next meeting. It sounds like we have agreed to meet on July 6th, but we may want to meet earlier than that to finalize the wording on the statement. Dr. Duncan thanks the senators for working over the summer even though they do not have to as nine-month employees.

Dr. Bielakowski makes a motion to meet on Wednesday July 1st at 2:30 pm. Dr. Sample seconds the motion.

The motion passes unanimously (19-0).

The topic brought up by Dr. Duncan was the status of the interim president search. Dr. Duncan sent an email a couple of days ago to Chancellor Khator inquiring about the status of the search and the role of shared governance. A previous statement from the chancellor's office said that there would be a meeting with UHD shared governance leaders to discuss the search, but to Dr. Duncan's knowledge nothing has happened. Provost Link indicated that the chancellor met with the President's cabinet briefly on the search about two weeks prior, but that was the last he had heard of it. Dr. Duncan said he was still awaiting a response. Dr. Beebe said that part of the original letter was that there would be a presidential search committee for a new full-time president and the UHD Faculty Senate President will be a member which is a positive for the future.

Dr. Deo made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. Goins seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.

Online Taskforce Draft Recommendations 6/16/20

Establish /require minimum basic training and preparation for all instructors teaching online.

- Every academic area/unit must have a written procedure for approving faculty to teach online for the first time
    - University : Minimum, that everyone has to follow (Department has to enforce it).
        - Pre: Do this before you get approved for a course or before a course opens
        - Post: Training is on your yearly evaluation
        - What is the minimum?
            - TTLC "Blackboard Foundations for Instructors" Course would be required of all faculty teaching online. TTLC will manually enroll faculty by request.
            - Departments to monitor compliance by requiring that faculty turn in their course completion certificate to department chair.
    - Colleges and departments can (and should) require more:
        - TTLC "Blackboard Orientation" (all faculty are automatically enrolled in BB, a confirmation can be pulled by the TTLC)
        - CTLE "Real Talk on Best Practices in Online Teaching: A Mini-Course for UHD Faculty" – Three Badges, then microcredential, counts toward CTLE Certificate in Evidence-Based Instruction and Course Design. (Minimal monitoring on part of facilitators)
        - CTLE "UHD Online Teaching Passport": For beginners, get an intake. Then a learning path. (moderate monitoring on the part of facilitators)
        - OLC "New to Online" series of workshops
        - Relevant QM workshops
        - Workshops on accessibility, including OLC, QM, TTLC Ally training, Magna Videos, and LinkedinLearning.
- If training is to be required during the summer when faculty are not technically employed, financial incentives must be part of this plan. A stipend will help assure that all faculty, particularly adjuncts, will do the extra work.

Establish minimum standards for ongoing education while teaching online

- Departments to invest in monitoring the training of their faculty who teach online.
- Departments should require ongoing (yearly) training for faculty as part of yearly evaluation.
- A minimum number of training hours should be specified (I.e., 3-6) from the following:
    - CTLE "Real Talk on Best Practyices in Online Teaching: A Mini Course for UHD Faculty" – Three Badges, then microcredential, counts toward CTLE Certificate in Evidence0Based Instruction and Course Design. (Minimal monitoring on part of facilitators)
    - CTLE "UHD Online Teaching Passport": For beginners, get an intake. Then a learning path. (moderate monitoring on the part of facilitators)

- UHD Online Teaching Certificate Program (joint training between CTLE &TTLC, a week of synchronous work is bookended by asynchronous work online)
- OLC "New to Online" series of workshops
- Other relevant OLC workshops/certifications
- Relevant QM workshops/certifications
- TTLC workshops
- CTLE Online Course Development Initiative
- Workshops/certifications in UHD supported technologies (i.e., VoiceThread)
- TXDLA accessibility certification
- Workshops on accessibility, including OLC, QM, TTLC Ally training, Magna Videos, and LinkedinLeraning

- If training is to be required during the summer when faculty are not technically employed, financial incentives must be part of this plan. A stipend will help assure that all faculty, particularly adjuncts, will do the extra work.

Establish university-wide mandatory training expectations for faculty teaching hybrid courses, as this is a unique teaching modality. These could include:

- OLC workshop: Designing a Flipped Classroom
- QM workshop: Designing your Blended Course

Statement from Center for Critical Race Studies

Dear UHD Community,
The past three days have witnessed uprisings in cities from Minneapolis to Houston as protestors demand justice in the wake of recent murders of unarmed Black Americans by police officers. George Floyd, a Houston native, was publicly executed by police in Minneapolis earlier this week; Breonna Taylor, an EMT, was shot and killed by police in her home in March; and Ahmaud Arbery was followed and murdered by a former police officer and his son in Georgia. These acts of racist terror are met with threats of further violence from the President to "assume control," while invoking the words of a known racist who championed police brutality in the 1960s.
Once again, the discrepancy between protestors who are described as "very good people" and those described as "thugs" lays bare the racism and inequality that confront Black Americans and people of color daily. Similarly, the outrage reserved for a damaged Target store, CNN building and other corporate structures rings out louder than the outrage expressed over the loss of Black life.

We are simply devastated.

In moments of great injustice, speaking out is the very least that can be done in a long list of actions that must be taken. Since our inception, the Center for Critical Race Studies at UHD has invited students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders to join us in our mission of producing knowledge, transforming lives, and empowering communities. To dismantle racism and other forms of social inequality and injustice, we need long-term structural and systemic changes. Lasting social transformation begins with individual and collective action.

Although our present circumstances prevent us from physically joining together in solidarity and support at One Main Street, we invite you to join us on our social media platforms, where we are working to curate timely information, resources, and recommendations for actions to take now.

Even with tears streaming and hearts breaking we know that the work we have committed to must go on.

Will you partner with us?

Join us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.
In solidarity,
The Fellows of the Center for Critical Race Studies

UHD W.I. Dykes Library Anti-Racism Statement

Along with many around the country and the world, we, the staff of the University of Houston Downtown W.I. Dykes Library, mourn the murder of Houstonian George Floyd. We stand in solidarity with the Black community everywhere and condemn the centuries-long racism and violence of which Mr. Floyd's murder is an expression.

We acknowledge the shameful history of exclusion of people of color in higher education. In line with the Library's mission, vision, and values (https://www.uhd.edu/library/about/Pages/Library-Mission.aspx), we pledge to oppose racism and systemic violence against people of color in our campus community, whether intentional or unintentional.

We as an organization promise to continually examine ourselves to ensure we are meeting our commitment to anti-racist organizational procedures and practices. We invite you to hold us accountable.

Work that strives towards racial justice will never be finished, and the Library maintains an ongoing commitment to providing an inclusive physical and digital environment in support of, and reflective of, the diversity of the UHD community. We strive to remain a place of comfort and safety and implore members of our community to dedicate themselves to this goal.