

UHD Faculty Council – Minutes (DRAFT)

Date: December 2nd, 2025

Location: A300 - Buffalo Bayou Room

Attendance: See final page for information on attendance at this meeting.

- General Welcome & Introduction:**

The meeting was called to order by the presiding officer, Dr. Paul Mandell, at 2:30 pm. Dr. Mandell announced that the Faculty Council Executive Committee moved not to hold a Faculty Council meeting on January 6th, the day before the Spring Faculty Retreat.

- Approval of Minutes**

The November 4th minutes were approved with 23 votes in favor and one abstention.

- Policy Updates:**

Dr. Judith Quander reported that the public comment period for policies PS10A5 and PS10A21 closed last Monday and both policies will advance to the next stage of review. Although there have been requests to finalize and publish these policies before the December 15 deadline for departmental annual evaluation criteria, publication by that date cannot be guaranteed.

The next policy scheduled for release is PS3A38, addressing procedures for centers and institutes. In development since 2021, it is expected to be released for public comment as early as this Friday and will likely be the final policy action of the year. In the coming year, work will begin on the department chair policy and grant-related policies.

In response to Faculty Council questions, it was explained that faculty comment review processes vary by policy, with standard comment periods of one to two weeks. After each comment period, the policy writer reviews submissions and posts responses to all comments on SharePoint. While not all comments result in revisions, transparency is ensured through documented responses. Faculty are notified by email when updated materials are posted. SharePoint serves as the central repository for policy drafts, comment histories, and revisions, and the institution is developing individual policy pages to further improve accessibility and clarity.

Dr. David Ryden provided updates on academic policies PS 03A12 and PS 03A29, both of which received faculty feedback. Revisions to PS 03A12 were driven by Board of Regents requirements and the implementation of the University Curriculum and Catalog Committee, as well as the need to resolve inconsistencies with historical practice and to recognize existing curriculum support bodies in some colleges.

PS 03A29, the syllabus policy, completed one review cycle, as additional feedback did not necessitate further revisions. The revised policy streamlines prior language, clarifies that each course has a single official syllabus, and aligns institutional requirements with state law. While faculty may provide supplemental materials, one publicly posted syllabus with required elements

is mandated. The policy designates Simple Syllabus as the institutional tool, with many required components pre-populated to reduce faculty workload and retains the Texas Education Code requirement to list high-level topics for each class meeting. Ongoing support is provided through training sessions and open office hours.

- **Salary Updates:**

AVP Carole Clerie presented results from a 2024 adjunct faculty compensation survey of approximately 200 peer and comparative institutions, including public, urban, Texas-based, and AACSB-affiliated universities. Despite low response rates, the survey revealed wide variability in adjunct pay by institution and discipline, higher compensation in specialized fields, limited standardization of pay structures, infrequent market benchmarking, and pervasive budget constraints. Many institutions reported challenges with adjunct recruitment and retention, with retention often influenced more by non-monetary factors than compensation. Based on these findings, five recommendations were identified: establish or refine a structured adjunct pay framework; consider a formal adjunct compensation policy; conduct regular market reviews; explore non-monetary incentives informed by adjunct feedback; and address budget limitations.

Discussion highlighted faculty concerns regarding stagnant adjunct pay, cost-of-living pressures, equity, and instructional workload, and proposed a direct survey of UHD adjunct faculty to better understand retention drivers. Questions addressed access to external benchmarking data, noting that adjunct-specific CUPA-HR data requires an additional, currently unfunded purchase. While UHD participates in system-wide CUPA-HR surveys, securing limited funds for adjunct data was identified as a potential next step. Clarification was also provided regarding adjunct benefits eligibility, which is contingent on course-load thresholds.

An update was also provided on the full-time faculty salary study. A summer 2025 workgroup selected the same vendor used in 2021 to update market data at a cost under \$20,000. The study will establish standardized salary ranges by rank and discipline, identify market gaps and compression, and estimate remediation costs. Due to budget constraints, implementation will be phased, with results released in spring, increased promotion pay in FY27, and proposed market and compression adjustments in FY28, subject to funding approval.

- **2025 Faculty Handbook Taskforce:**

The task force reported that it has completed its review of the 2025 Faculty Handbook and has formally notified Dr. Quander of the task's completion via email.

- **Faculty Ombuds Search Committee Update:**

The committee has not convened since November 1; however, the job advertisement for the Faculty Ombud position was distributed on November 20th. Faculty were encouraged to share the posting and recommend qualified candidates to apply. All relevant information, including application dates and deadlines, is available in the November 20th email from Dr. Quander.

- **Shared Governance Council Reports**

University Curriculum Council

The UCC reported significant recent activity following the December 1 deadline for curriculum updates and changes. To manage the volume of submissions, UCC plans to meet weekly through the end of the term.

UCC reviewed and discussed multiple academic initiatives, including two-plus-two articulation agreements with Lone Star College and Houston Community College, as well as new program proposals in the Marilyn Davies College of Business. Additional actions included curriculum revisions and course eliminations, particularly in History and Humanities, minor corrections to degree plans, and extensive updates within the College of Business, including revisions to MBA and BBA core curricula and updates to leadership, accounting, finance, and supply chain certificates.

Further discussions addressed proposed curriculum changes in Data Analytics, including course replacements and the removal of courses no longer offered, as well as revisions to Math and Statistics requirements for upper-division data and statistics courses. These included updated course descriptions and the removal of outdated cross-listings. Most proposed changes were approved unanimously, with a substantial number of additional items remaining for review.

Faculty Affairs Council

The FAC provided several key updates. First, the university will discontinue use of the IDEA student evaluation system and move toward developing an institution-specific student opinion survey. A faculty-led task force, including student representatives, will be formed under the leadership of Dr. Ryden in collaboration with the deans. The task force is expected to develop a new set of survey questions by April 2026, with additional details to be shared in the coming semester.

FAC also received a report from the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) regarding enhancements to support faculty evaluation and professional development. Proposed initiatives include structured program guides categorized by rigor, time commitment, and instructional impact; tiered classifications of professional development activities; documentation through badges or certifications; and development of a faculty dashboard to track completed programs. Recognition of faculty participation may be incorporated into faculty award ceremonies and retreats.

Additionally, FAC reviewed upcoming senior lecturer contract renewals, as the first cohort of senior lecturers approaches their three-year renewal period. The committee discussed policy guidance and the potential development of a climate-style survey for lecturers and clinical faculty to identify policy gaps and issues related to non-tenure-track faculty life, such as voting eligibility, reappointment timelines, and related governance matters.

Upcoming FAC priorities include review of the department chair policy and anticipated workload policy revisions in the spring, following removal of outdated provisions. It was clarified that senior lecturers are currently not permitted to vote in department chair elections. This issue has been

identified as an area for review, and potential changes will be addressed in the forthcoming revisions to the department chair policy scheduled for next semester.

Research & Innovation Council

An update was provided on the work of subgroups formed to enhance support for research activity. One subgroup focused on strategies to better highlight and support researchers, generating several proposals, including exploring increased donor support to expand ORCA funding and developing more structured opportunities for research presentations to improve visibility and dissemination of faculty scholarship.

The group also reviewed several research-related policies, including standards of conduct in research, financial conflicts of interest, and research misconduct. These reviews are largely technical in nature, focused on ensuring accuracy, updated references, and functional links, with no substantive policy changes anticipated. A more comprehensive review of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) policy is planned for the spring, along with an examination of ORCA-related policies to identify opportunities for streamlining.

The committee anticipates more frequent meetings in the spring semester, following an irregular meeting schedule in the fall.

Policy Advisory Council

PAC reported on a productive meeting held in mid-November. The primary focus of the discussion was improving and streamlining the process for managing anticipated policy changes. The committee is currently transitioning responsibilities following the departure of a key staff member and is receiving administrative support to ensure continuity and effective tracking of policy revisions.

A key decision was made to allow administrative staff to make non-substantive edits—such as copyediting, correcting broken links, and formatting adjustments—without requiring prior PAC review or a formal vote. Substantive policy changes will continue to be reviewed and approved by the committee. This change is intended to increase efficiency while maintaining appropriate governance oversight.

Academic Affairs Council

The committee convened on November 7th, during which updates were received from multiple groups, such as the Policy Advisory Council, Faculty Affairs, Research & Innovation Council.

New developments include the on-site visit for SACS COC, scheduled for March 2–5. The council is scheduled to meet again on Friday. The council also discussed recent QEP updates, highlighting the pilot of three micro-credential programs. Currently, around 420 students are enrolled in this initiative.

- New Business**

Updates were provided on upcoming changes to food services for the Spring 2026 semester. The UHD mobile app will also launch in Spring 2026. Further details will be communicated via email

from the Faculty Council. Additionally, all members are encouraged to support Gator Mart through donations.

- **Public Comment/Open Forum**

- Two emails were received, including one from Dr. Buckler, prompting discussion regarding student course loads and academic performance. Dr. Henson reported conversations with Dr. Buckler concerning an observed increase in students enrolling in six courses (approximately 18 credit hours) per semester. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some students taking heavier course loads, particularly those with significant external responsibilities such as employment and caregiving—are experiencing academic difficulties, including frequent requests for assignment extensions. A university-generated report analyzing student academic performance in relation to the number of credit hours taken each semester, to determine whether excessive course loads negatively impact outcomes was suggested.

University administration acknowledged the concern and confirmed that students are generally encouraged to enroll in 12–15 credit hours, with approval from the department chair required for 18 credit hours or more. Administration expressed willingness to generate the requested report and indicated that outreach to institutional research staff had already begun. The administration emphasized that advising practices are not intended to push students into excessive course loads, but rather to support timely degree completion, financial aid eligibility, and student retention. It was noted that concurrent enrollment outside the university may not be visible to department chairs and is outside institutional control.

- A faculty representative raised concerns stemming from a recent presidential email regarding compliance with state law (SB 37), noting that the statute applies specifically to core curriculum (general education) requirements. The email's language was perceived as broader, suggesting a review of all courses, which prompted concerns about overcompliance. The faculty member requested clarification on the university's plan and rationale for appearing to exceed the law's requirements. In response, Dr. Bordelon clarified that SB 37 focuses on the core curriculum and that the university's review is limited to core courses. She indicated that system leadership and legal counsel are currently developing systemwide guidance, including a rubric or review framework, and that additional information will be shared once available. The initial phase of the review is expected to conclude by the end of January, followed by review through the University Curriculum Council and the Board.
- Additional discussion focused on instructional implications. A faculty member expressed concern that requirements emphasizing exposure to multiple viewpoints could conflict with evidence-based teaching and contribute to self-censorship among faculty due to fear of professional consequences. Administration responded by emphasizing that instruction should remain grounded in course learning outcomes, data analysis, and disciplinary methods, while acknowledging the prevalence of misinformation students may encounter outside the classroom. The administration recognized faculty concerns about the current climate but encouraged continued focus on evidence-based pedagogy, critical examination of data, and clearly defined learning objectives as the foundation for instruction.

- Dr. Mike Duncan, president of the UHD Chapter of the AAUP addressed the body to express strong dissatisfaction with the administration's responses to concerns about the ongoing course audit. He referenced a letter sent one week earlier by the UH Main AAUP/AP chapter—representing approximately 150 members and prepared with legal input—which critically examined the course audit process now being implemented across multiple campuses. The speaker stated that no response had been received to the letter and urged the faculty body to formally endorse it. He emphasized that the letter consists of a set of questions regarding the audit and argued that endorsing it would require minimal effort while signaling faculty engagement and advocacy.

The meeting adjourned at 4 pm.

Attendance Information:

Faculty Council Member Name	Present	Absent
Mandell, Paul	X	
Shroff, Arpita	X	
Benavides, Maria	X	
Bowden, Gabriela	X	
Akins, Casey		X
Albrecht, Sarah	X	
Ali, Syed		X
Alvarez, Jose	X	
Colon Rivera, Edgardo		X
Dowie, Cheryl	X	
Elking, Issac	X	
Fedell, Luke	X	
Harris, Judith	X	
Henson, Billy	X	
Hoang, Toni	X	
Hu, Jingxin	X	
Hussein, Abdelnasser	X	
Johnson, Kenya	X	
Moore, Kyle	X	
Nakamura, Mitsue	X	
Pakhrin, Subash	X	
Pepper, Ryan	X	
Perez, Daniel		X
Petts, Ashleigh	X	
Rountree, John		X
Rufino, Katrina	X	
Shoemaker, Katherine	X	
Sullivan, Nell	X	
Thomas, Jarvis	X	
Yilmaz, Emre		X
Zhang, Chris	X	

Other Attendees
Deborah Bordelon
Judith Quander
David Ryden
Carole Clerie
Divya Bhati
Annie Ring
Shovna Tripathy
Mike Duncan