UHD Faculty Council – Minutes

Date: May 5th, 2026

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.

- **Approval of Minutes**

The April 7th minutes were approved with 17 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

- **Policy Updates/Core Curriculum Review Update**

Dr. Judith Quander reported that the Department Chair Policy (PS 10.A.17) has been released for public comment. Dr. David Ryden provided an update on the course evaluation survey, noting that it will be revised to include a new set of survey questions. He indicated that the new survey questions are expected to be completed around June 15, with a final version anticipated in early October. A soft implementation of the revised survey is planned for the Winter Mini-mester. Dr. Ryden also provided an update on General Education, noting that the committee is undergoing several changes. The proposed membership structure would shift from one representative per department to representation from each college, with additional representation from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and the College of Science and Technology (CST), reflecting their significant roles in delivering the core curriculum. Another proposed change would establish the committee chair position where the chair would be a faculty member serving a three-year term, with course releases and a summer stipend provided to support the responsibilities associated with the position.

- **Shared Governance Council Reports**

University Curriculum Council

UCC reported that several academic programs are currently progressing through the approval process. The M.S. in Biological Sciences and Instrumentation and the M.S. in Workforce Analyti**cs** are undergoing review through the Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The BBA in Entrepreneurship and Family Business and BBA in Business Intelligence have received approval, while the Graduate Certificate in Blockchain is pending approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, with anticipated approval during the summer. The council also reviewed and acted on several curriculum proposals. Cold War in Latin America course was approved, while U.S. Supreme Court and Engaging with Cultural Humility courses were not approved. In addition, the Council reviewed the High-Impact Practices Research Course Designation Project, incorporating and evaluating work submitted by the relevant subcommittee. The Council also considered a Notice of Intent for the B.A.S. in Logistics and Supply Chain Management**.**

Faculty Affairs Council

UCC held its second-to-last meeting of the academic year, with one additional meeting scheduled. Key outcomes included the reconsideration and approval of the previously denied POLS course on the U.S. Supreme Court. The Council's subcommittee also revised the definition of High-Impact Practices (HIP) courses to establish clearer criteria for identifying and designating qualifying courses. Additionally, the Council was informed that the university will transition from IDEA course evaluations to Watermark, which is expected to provide improved integration with Canvas. The Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies program was also approved. The Council continues to review individual department course objectives, with several departments already approved and the remaining reviews expected to be completed at the next meeting.

Faculty Affairs Council

FAC met twice in April and addressed several key faculty-related initiatives, particularly the Faculty Development and Faculty Awards processes. The Council discussed piloting a college-level allocation model for faculty development awards, with responsibility for reviewing and selecting award recipients shifting to college-level review committees. The proposed timeline includes applications in November, awards in December, Provost approval in January, and a subsequent Faculty Affairs Council review in May. The Council is also revising the Faculty Awards Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to establish clearer and more consistent evaluation rubrics across award categories. As part of this effort, the Outstanding Lecturer in Teaching Award is being renamed the Outstanding Lecturer Award to better reflect differing expectations and workload responsibilities across colleges and departments. Additional changes include having the full Faculty Awards Committee review finalists and announcing award recipients during the awards ceremony rather than notifying winners in advance.

Research & Innovation Council

The Research and Innovation Council is scheduled to hold its final meeting on Thursday and is nearing completion of revisions to the ORCA procedures. The primary changes will include additional time for departmental review to allow for a more robust feedback process for applicants before proposals advance through the subsequent review stages. As a result of the revised timeline, final award notifications are expected to shift to January. The Council also discussed the timeframe for using ORCA awards. Under the revised process, award funds will be available during the fall and spring semesters, rather than the previous spring-fall-spring cycle. This adjustment is intended to provide recipients with a more practical timeframe to plan and utilize their awards.

Policy Advisory Council

PAC met to discuss improving the policy review process. A primary focus was establishing a clearer and more transparent system for determining whether a proposed policy or provision qualifies for expedited review.

The Council is also examining the overall policy development procedure to make it more efficient, streamlined, and predictable for applicants. The goal is to provide clearer guidance at the outset, enabling applicants to understand the appropriate review pathway and ensuring that proposals move through the process as quickly and efficiently as possible, even when expedited review is not applicable.

Academic Affairs Council

The Academic Affairs Council held its final meeting of the academic year and reviewed the Council's activities and effectiveness over the past year. The Council recognized Ms. Alvarez's work on the policy dashboard and welcomed Interim Provost Davis, who participated in his first meeting as presiding officer. A significant portion of the meeting focused on the purpose and value of the Academic Affairs Council and the university's current shared-governance structure**.** Members discussed concerns that the current structure may concentrate responsibility and decision-making authority among a relatively small number of individuals, potentially limiting broader faculty participation. The Council also raised concerns about the increasing number of committees being chaired by administrators rather than faculty. Members noted that this structure may place additional burdens on administrators while reducing opportunities for faculty to participate meaningfully in university governance. Another key discussion centered on faculty leadership development. Members expressed concern that faculty appointments to major committees are increasingly drawn from a limited pool, reducing opportunities for broader faculty involvement.

- **New Business**

  - **New Ombuds**

The incoming Ombuds, Dr. Jackson, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and noted that the official start date is **June 1**. In preparation for the transition, he has been working closely with Dr. Dalhberg, recognizing her extensive knowledge, dedication, and service in the role and emphasizing the importance of acknowledging her contributions. Transition meetings are scheduled through June 1 to address ongoing matters and ensure continuity. The incoming Ombuds will also participate in intensive professional training through the International Ombuds Association, scheduled online in July.

  - **Shared Governance Survey**

Ms. Emily Leffler talked about the recent elections for new Faculty Council members, with a strong pool of candidates. Faculty members elected last year to one-year terms were thanked for their service, while newly elected members will begin two-year terms. Looking ahead, continuing and incoming Faculty Council members will have opportunities to serve on shared governance councils. A survey will be distributed to newly elected members to identify their interests and preferences for council assignments. The goal is to finalize shared governance appointments by the end of the month and issue appointment letters shortly thereafter. During the summer, attention will shift to matching faculty nominees with opportunities on numerous university-level committees, including academic, admissions, calendar, service-learning, and other institutional

committees. Faculty members may continue to nominate themselves or colleagues for these positions.

- **Interim Provost**

Interim Provost Davis addressed the Faculty Council and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with faculty in his new role. He indicated that a key priority over the summer will be to evaluate and assess the university's shared governance processes**,** including how feedback is gathered, how decisions are made, and how those decisions are communicated. The goal will be to identify approaches that best support faculty, staff, and students. Drawing on his recent experience as Dean of the College of Business, Dr. Davis noted that he has some familiarity with the university's operations and is looking forward to using the summer to learn more, review existing processes, and determine opportunities for improvement.

- **Accommodation Practices**

Dr. Kevin Buckler raised concerns regarding accommodation practices and processes within the Accessible Education Center**,** particularly the need for more consistent faculty engagement before accommodations are finalized and implemented. He noted that certain accommodations may be difficult to reconcile with the structure, instructional design, and learning objectives of individual courses. He emphasized that course design should not override approved accommodations, but that earlier communication could help identify course sections that better align with students' needs. Dr. Buckler specifically highlighted concerns regarding the expanded use of flexible attendance and flexible deadline accommodations, citing instances where policy language and guidance appeared unclear or inconsistent. He described challenges applying a flexible attendance accommodation in a flipped course where graded activities and assessments occur during each class meeting. He also encouraged the Faculty Council to use its representative role to help ensure that updated accommodation procedures are clearly communicated to faculty and that meaningful faculty consultation occurs before accommodations are finalized.

- **Public Comment/Open Forum**

Dr. Eszter Trufan raised several questions regarding the practical implementation of PS03A31, Learning Outcomes Assessment in Educational Programs, and PS03A41, the General Education Program Policy.

Regarding the Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy, Dr. Trufan described Chemistry's mature assessment process, which has been in place since 2019 and aligns with American Chemical Society accreditation requirements. Her primary concern was the feasibility of closing the assessment loop within a three-year cycle, given that some upper-level courses are offered only once annually. Under the current sequence, data may be collected in year one, analyzed and used to plan improvements in year two, and implemented in year three, leaving the first opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of those changes in year four. In response, Dr. Ryden explained that the revised policy is intended to make assessment more focused, practical, and actionable. Rather than attempting to assess broad program outcomes in their entirety, programs would identify specific, measurable skills or competencies that can be evaluated through course-level work and rubrics.

Dr. Trufan also questioned the meaning of “continuous improvement” when assessment data demonstrate that established success criteria have already been met. She asked whether programs may retain effective learning outcomes and instructional practices, particularly when they align with disciplinary or accreditation requirements, or whether the policy requires further changes simply to demonstrate improvement. It was mentioned that successful assessment results should be recognized and that improvement does not necessarily require changing practices that are demonstrably effective. However, programs may use assessment to identify other areas for improvement.

Dr. Trufan’s final assessment-related question concerned the relationship between SACSCOC requirements and faculty-led assessment. She asked whether disciplinary faculty’s professional judgment should prevail when their conclusions differ from review feedback, or whether revisions would be required, and, if so, how the scope of those revisions would be determined. Dr. Ryden noted that he was not part of the policy editing team and therefore could not provide an authoritative interpretation. He nevertheless emphasized the importance of demonstrating collective, faculty-driven curricular improvements while recognizing that meeting established learning outcomes does not automatically require changes to effective practices.

Dr. Trufan then raised questions about PS03A41, the General Education Program Policy, beginning with the issue of representation on the General Education Council. She asked how departmental representation would be determined in colleges where multiple departments contribute courses to the general education core and whether a department would receive additional representation if the General Education Director came from that department. Dr. Ryden clarified that representation would be determined at the college level, rather than through fixed departmental allocations. The college would determine which faculty member is best positioned to serve. The revised council will also be smaller and more focused, with particular responsibility for assessment and closing the assessment loop.

Dr. Trufan’s second General Education question concerned communication between the General Education Council and individual departments. She asked how council decisions, expectations, and changes would be communicated effectively to departments that teach and administer the courses. Dr. Ryden’s response indicated that the policy intentionally does not prescribe a detailed communication process. Instead, it establishes responsibilities and accountability while allowing implementation procedures to evolve.

Finally, Dr. Trufan asked about the accountability and reporting structure of the General Education Director, specifically whether the director would primarily answer to the General Education Council, the Office of Assessment and Accreditation, or the Provost. Dr. Ryden’s response emphasized that the role involves balancing the interests of students, faculty, administration, and external stakeholders, including state and accreditation bodies. The director’s primary mission is to promote student success and improve the General Education Program. It was further clarified that the director would not have a single, narrowly defined reporting relationship. Instead, the position requires collaboration and accountability across multiple stakeholders, including faculty governance bodies, the Provost’s Office, assessment and accreditation leadership, and the General Education Council. The director is therefore expected to operate collaboratively within a shared-governance framework rather than through a single hierarchical reporting line.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.

Attendance Information:

Faculty Council Member Name	Present	Absent
Mandell, Paul	X	
Shroff, Arpita		
Benavides, Maria	X	
Bowden, Gabriela		
Akins, Casey		X
Albrecht, Sarah	X	
Ali, Syed		X
Alvarez, Jose	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
Jonathan Davis
Judith Quander
David Ryden
Mayte Alvarez
Emily Effler
Kevin Buckler
Eszter Trufan