

# The University of Texas at Tyler

## Office of the Faculty Senate

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Thursday April 16, 2020  
12:30-1:30 p.m.  
Zoom Meeting

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### Minutes

**Zoom Attendance:** Colin Snider, Amy Hayes, Tai Wang, Cheryl Parker, Vicki Jowell, Lauri John, Melinda Hermanns, Kleanthe Caruso, Debbie Gibson, Gracy Buentello, Randy LeBlanc, Sonja Morale, Sarah Bowdin, Wycliffe Njororai, Gloria Duke, Amentahru Wahlrab, Rick Helfers, KT Helgesen, Danielle Bailey, Lynette Sutter, Denise Duncan, Jimi Frnaces, Belinda Deal, Brenda Burton, Barbara Haas, Charles Brown, Blake Bumbard, Kerri Camp, Kim Nimon, Kouider Mokhtari, Venu Gopalakrishna, Vivek Pandey, Trisha Brinton, Sarah Sass, Jennifer Klein, Jennifer Chilton, Jessie Reuter, Jerry Stuff, Colleen Swain, Frank Dykes, Cory Sills, Cynthia Martinez, Mena Souliman, Annamary Consalvo, Andrea Oliver, Christine Forisha, Cindy Strawn, Cindy Sherman, Christy Graves, Heshium Lawrence, Jackie Richardson, Kassie Archer, Lou Ann Viergever, Margo Duncan, Mary Fischer, Matthew Brinton, Nathan Smith, Collen Marzilli, Neil Dong, Rebecca McKay Johnson, Ona Tolliver, Sarah Norrell, Scott Dillingham Kerri Anne Ambort-Clarke

**Guest Speakers in Attendance:** Dr. Michael Tidwell & Dr. Amir Mirmiran

12:30	<b>Welcome and Call to Order</b>	Colin Snider
12:31	<b>Approval of February Meeting Minutes</b>	Amy Hayes
12:32	<b>President's Updates</b>	Michael Tidwell

- President Tidwell gave some highlights from his bi-weekly town hall meetings.
- Working with UT System to look at options for different budgeting scenarios that we might be facing. There will most likely be a budget cut or a budget call back in the upcoming fiscal year. He does not expect that it will be too big of a cut. Will also depend on things that happen in upcoming TX legislative session beginning in January 2021.
- Dr. Tidwell spoke with the Senate Executive Committee recently about some short-term changes to our undergraduate admissions standards. There are issues related to students being able to take the SAT or ACT (the most recent testing sessions have been cancelled, and future ones might as well). UT-Tyler will not require the SAT/ACT for the upcoming semester of applicants (this is a decision that is pending approval by the board of regents). The second admissions change is that they will adjust the GPA admissions requirement down to 2.75 and

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not look at class rank just for the upcoming semester (because of effects on GPA and rank to current graduating high school seniors).

- There will be a soft freeze on hiring for the beginning of the next fiscal year. The administration wants to protect current employees and only continue on with hires for essential personnel.
- Don't forget about the town halls as an opportunity to hear more about updates and issues getting resolved at the university and UT-system level.

12:43

### **Provost's Updates**

Amir Mirmiran

- Dr. Mirmiran thanked faculty for being flexible in converting their courses in the Spring and the Summer semester. They don't anticipate having to do online classes only in the Fall, although they are looking into social distancing measures (such as smaller class size caps).
- Dr. Mirmiran updated us on the recommendations for changes to the tenure and promotion clock that he has been working on in cooperation with UT System and Faculty Senate leadership. The tentative plan is to have an automatic one-year extension for faculty who are on the tenure track with an option to opt-out of the extension right before the year that they would have normally gone up. The opt-out would be viewed as going up early for tenure, according to their reading of the HOP. Dr. Mirmiran thinks that you would be able to still go up for tenure again the regular(extended) year with no penalty.
- Access to campus: if you would still like to come to campus regularly because you need to use their lab or equipment, you can email your dean to make sure that you are on the essential employee list and can have access to the buildings.
- Hiring process: Dr. Mirmiran has been working with deans of each college to identify which hires are "essential" for their college. Dr. Laird and HR have been developing a process so that the chairs and deans can fill out a one-page docuSign for to argue for why that position needs to be filled.
- Update on the steering committee for the merger with the UT Health Science Center: they are still working on a draft of the prospectus to send to staff and they are getting input from faculty senate.

12:58

### **Faculty Senate Matters**

Faculty & Faculty Senate

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- The plan is to have an online May meeting.
- Updates on Committees: Senators who have served on university committees have sent a summary of what the committee has done this year to Colin. The summary report will be sent out and posted on the senate website when it is completed. Hopefully it will come out by the end of May.
- Update on Senate Elections: there was a tie between Dr. Sass and Dr. Marzilli for the senator at large election. There will be an emergency run-off election that will be open for the next week.
- Faculty Matters and Concerns
  - Re Pass/Fail, stress need for Faculty to reach out to their students through Canvas and articulate the Pass/Fail, the implications for their students for their respective courses, and reaches out to students as well
    - We haven't abdicated our role; we just haven't insisted all Faculty do what may be onerous and unnecessary to some [leave flexibility to faculty]. We are leaving it up to students to decide what is best for their grades and career path, with the understanding that they will be fully informed of what the potential drawbacks are.
    - Refer faculty to COVID-19 page, and then have faculty add what they think is appropriate to their courses.
    - Faculty are encouraged to reach out to their classes to let them know what the ramifications of the P/F option are for your class specifically.
- White paper on Course Evaluations and Tenure and Promotion in the Context of COVID-19
  - Faculty Senate has been working on writing a White Paper to address effects of COVID- 19 on teaching and research (teaching evaluations, research productivity, effects for TT and contingent faculty, and scope of the timeline of the consequences).
  - Draft was sent to senate on March 23 to get feedback. We were the first UT-System school to draft a white paper on these issues.
  - The full draft will be posted on the senate website.
  - Senate Vote to Approve White Paper:
    - Approve: 20
    - Do not approve: 0

1:15

### **Faculty Issues and Questions**

- Are we going to make any changes to IT support for students during the shift to online learning (also are there going to be changes to minimum requirements for students in terms of technology and equipment in online courses)? Answer: Ona Tolliver's office is working with students who need equipment or internet access.

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Also, the library computer lab is open for student use. Ona Tolliver said that it would be helpful for students to know in advance what the requirements will be so that they can reach out to the Student Success office for assistance ahead of time for resources.

- Question: will there be any changes to the university wide policy about faculty only being able to have one device (either a laptop or a desktop). Dr. Mirmiran says that the policy is only one portable device, not an either/or. Other faculty mentioned in the discussion that many colleges/departments have not been interpreting the policy in this way. Dr. Mirmiran said that he would clarify with chairs and deans moving forward.

1:23

**Adjournment**

**The University of Texas at Tyler**  
**Office of the Faculty Senate**

Dear UT Tyler Faculty & Staff,

Obviously, much has transformed since we last met in February, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your flexibility and determination in ensuring our students continue to receive the best education they can in such circumstances. Equally importantly, I want to thank you for continuing to speak up for Faculty's interests and needs.

Given the tumult of the past several weeks, Faculty Senate has been working hard to ensure that Faculty interests and rights are ensured in the context of the profound and abrupt shifts that have occurred this semester. We will be updating Faculty on these matters in our April meeting – to be held online through Zoom – and Faculty will also have the chance to receive updates from President Tidwell and Provost Mirmiran on COVID-19, the merger with UT-Health, the Medical School, and other matters important to faculty and to campus.

Attached is the Faculty Senate agenda for the April 16 meeting along with the following links—

- [February Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Zoom link for the virtual Senate meeting](#)

Again, thank you for your grace and tenacity in these trying times.

Colin Snider  
President, Faculty Senate