

## Faculty Senate Minutes for March 24, 2026

### Executive Committee Members in attendance (4):

Jaclyn Miller, Timothy Weber, Silvia Herrera, and Maria Cervantes.

### Senators in attendance (24):

**Business, Public Safety, and Technology:** Ruby Campuzano and Ana Valladarez.

**Liberal Arts:** Michah Bailey, Annie Liss, Robert Miller (Sean Kennedy proxy), Melissa Terry, Rachael E. Brown, and Robin Bell.

**Math, Science, and IT:** Courtney Galle, Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller, Juan Luna, Fidel Rodriguez, Isauro Zaragoza, and Reginald Gonzales.

**Health Science Professions:** Blanca Herrera, Alexia Trigo, and Sharon Rice, and Ntiense Otu.

**Social Behavioral Science:** Nihan Kayaardi Hinojosa, Pooja Rishi, Liza Veliz, and Celina A. Jorge.

**Bachelor's Programs:** Laura Garcia and Rebecca L. Lynch.

### Senators absent (4):

Jesus Amaya, Victor Fonseca, JoAnna Martinez, and Claudia Mercado.

## Meeting Agenda

### 4:00 pm: Faculty Senate Updates – Maria Cervantes

Maria read a message from Nicholas (Nick) Hinojosa to the Faculty Senate. The message covers several key updates:

- **Nominations & Elections:** Nick requests a discussion on proposed revisions related to nominations and elections.
- **Deadline Clarification:** A deadline mentioned is confirmed to be **Friday, April 3rd** (not February).
- **Parking Concerns:** Faculty raised issues about service vehicles parking in faculty/staff spaces at Building T. The Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services will coordinate with facilities leadership to address the issue, with a resolution pending.
- **Graduation Appreciation:** Nick thanks faculty volunteers serving as masters of ceremony or mace holders for upcoming graduation ceremonies.
- **Faculty Recognition:** Several faculty senators are acknowledged for contributions to initiatives, including:
  - Academic Calendar Committee
  - Lactation Room Initiative
  - AI Ethics Committee
  - Jaguar Student Workday Ambassadors
- **Strategic Initiatives (2025–2031):** Ongoing work is highlighted, including efforts in the Jaguar Support Hub, campus work groups, and guided student advising improvements.

#### **4:15 pm: Vote on February Meeting Minutes**

- Silvia motioned to approve November's meeting minutes and Liza seconded the motion.
- 30 poll responses (met quorum and passed).

#### **4:18 pm: Constitution Committee – Timothy Weber**

Timothy, Maria, Micah, Mehrzad, and other committee members discussed the major revisions to the Faculty Senate policy required by SB37, including changes to nominations, elections, officer appointments, and term limits, with the policy pending board approval and further alignment of the Senate Constitution to follow.

- **Policy Revision Process:** Timothy explained that Academic Affairs sent a recommended policy, which the Constitution Committee reconciled with SB37 to preserve Faculty Senate autonomy where possible. The revised policy was submitted for board approval, and the committee refrained from locking in details that could be addressed in the Constitution revision.
- **Membership and Election Changes:** The revised policy stipulates that each division will have at least two senators, with one appointed by the college president and the rest elected by faculty. The total number of senators is capped at 60, and term limits are defined for both appointed and elected members.
- **Officer Appointment and Independence:** Officers, including the presiding officer, assistant presiding officer, and secretary, will be appointed by the college president from the Senate membership, raising concerns about Senate independence. The possibility of maintaining a parliamentarian and other officers not specified in SB37 was discussed.
- **Removal and Meeting Procedures:** The policy outlines removal procedures for senators, requiring recommendation by the provost and approval by the president. Meeting procedures, open meetings, broadcasting, and attendance recording requirements are also specified, aligning with SB37 mandates.
- **Constitution Revision and Next Steps:** Maria and Timothy emphasized that the Senate Constitution must be revised to align with the new policy once approved. The committee will coordinate with the college president on details, and further discussions are scheduled for upcoming meetings.

#### **4:35 pm: Election Committee – Micah Bailey**

Micah, Maria, Liza, Timothy, and Mehrzad discussed the difficulties in proceeding with Faculty Senate nominations and elections due to the lack of procedures established by the college president, and considered options for providing vetted nominee lists to the president for appointments.

- **Procedure Uncertainty:** Micah reported that the election committee cannot solicit nominees or proceed with elections until the college president establishes the required procedures, as mandated by the revised policy and SB37. Communication with Nick and the president's office is ongoing, but no response has been received.
- **Nominee Vetting and Appointment Suggestions:** The committee discussed the possibility of providing the president with a list of vetted nominees who were not elected,

including vote counts, to assist in presidential appointments. The group debated the wording and potential biases of such a process.

- **Criteria for Senate Representation:** Liza raised questions about the criteria for nominees, suggesting that leadership experience and other characteristics should be considered. Micah clarified that vote counts and nomination status would be the primary information provided to the president.
- **Motion and Timing:** Timothy advised that a formal motion is needed to proceed with the suggestion, but Maria recommended tabling the discussion until after the policy is approved and procedures are clarified, with plans to revisit the topic at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

#### **4:55 pm: Salaries and Compensation Committee – Fidel Rodriguez**

Fidel reported that the committee is drafting a proposal for multi-year contracts, highlighting their benefits and faculty preferences. The proposal is being reviewed by committee members and will be submitted to Dr. Petrosian, though support from administration is uncertain.

#### **4:59 pm: Campus Safety Committee – Jaclyn Miller**

Jaclyn shared that there are no current updates.

#### **4:59 pm: Academic Classification Committee – Mehrzad Mahmoudian-Geller**

Mehrzad and Nihan explained that the committee is awaiting feedback from Dr. Petrosian's office on their recommendations. Nihan noted that only the board can change the classification policy, but procedural improvements are underway to enhance transparency and clarity for applicants.

#### **5:04 pm: Student Success Committee – Maria Cervantes**

Maria described recent meetings with student advising and Starfish program representatives, with the committee compiling a list of student success resources to improve access and awareness for faculty, staff, and students.

#### **5:06 pm: Benefits Committee – Maria Cervantes**

Maria shared that the Benefits Committee is close to finalizing a policy for faculty sick leave donation, working with HR and planning to present it to the Faculty Senate and board for review and potential approval.

#### **5:07 pm: General Discussion**

**Faculty Salary Step System and Transparency Concerns:** Maria, Timothy, Liza, Rachel, Reginald, and other faculty discussed confusion regarding the faculty salary step system, its alignment with TASB guidelines, and the need for improved transparency, including a proposal to invite Workday representatives to clarify salary calculations at the next meeting.

- **Step System and TASB Guidelines:** Timothy explained that salary increases are now based on TASB guidelines, which average state college salaries, but some step system elements may still be in use. Maria noted that the pay scale remains in the handbook, but step-based increases appear to have stopped.

- **Workday and Handbook Review:** Faculty expressed difficulty understanding salary information in Workday and the handbook, prompting Maria to propose inviting a Workday representative to the next meeting and encouraging faculty to review the handbook for clarity.

**Parking and Smoke-Free Campus Discussions:** Maria relayed Nick's update on parking concerns involving service vehicles, with resolution pending, and Liza raised the idea of making the campus smoke-free, prompting discussion about designated smoking areas and potential future surveys.

- **Parking Issue Follow-Up:** Nick reached out to the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services regarding service vehicles parking in faculty and staff spots, with assurance that the issue will be discussed with Facilities for resolution.
- **Smoke-Free Campus Proposal:** Liza suggested making the campus entirely smoke-free, similar to UTRGV, and Maria agreed to add the topic to a future agenda, possibly involving a survey to gauge faculty and staff opinions.

**Dual Credit Feedback Collection:** Maria, Nick, Pooja, and other faculty discussed the new Microsoft Forms feedback initiative for dual credit concerns, clarifying its differences from the previous Padlet, its non-anonymous nature, and the deadline for submissions.

- **Feedback Form Details:** Maria explained that the new Microsoft Form requests specific information, including name and email, and is not anonymous, unlike the previous Padlet. The form will be compiled and presented to the dual credit task force.
- **Padlet Feedback and Follow-Up:** Faculty noted that the Padlet was taken down due to negative responses, and Maria suggested following up with Nick to see if the anonymous feedback could still be used.

#### **5:19 pm: Meeting was Adjourned**

- Mehrzad motioned to adjourn the meeting and Fidel seconded it.
- 24 poll responses (met quorum and passed)
- Meeting was adjourned.

**Total Time Duration:** 1 hour and 19 minutes