

Faculty Senate, Friday, February 7th 2025 12:00-2:30, STC 230

Present: Kate Houston, Puneet Gill, Andrew Hazelton, Malynda Dalton, Li-Zheng Brooks, Leonel Prieto, Seong Kwan Cho, Andrew Hilburn, Monica Chavez, Runchang Lin, Tatiana Gorbunova, Marvin Bennett, Ediza Garcia, Viridiana Vela, Tim Rubel, Cynthia Sosa, Won Kim.

I. Guests

a. Ms. Cihltalli Pérez, QEP Director

i. Presentation on the QEP to Faculty Senate

ii. QEP is LEARN: Learning Experientially Active Real-World Navigation

1. The goal is to have students gain “direct experience and focused reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values”
2. Expand experiential learning practices on campus
 - a. Internships
 - b. Service learning
 - c. Undergraduate research
3. Provost’s office will conduct a survey concerning what faculty are currently doing and what they’d like to see in terms of professional development opportunities.
4. Will be conducting some informational sessions that are activity-based to attract students and reach out to them about the QEP, opportunities, etc.

iii. Questions from Senators

1. Are there initiatives to expand capacity to do things off campus?
2. Things like vans, other transportation options, and overcoming the culture of extreme risk aversion at the university when it comes to the question of taking students off campus.
3. Response: The QEP process as it takes shape is engaged in thinking about ways to dismantle barriers to these kinds of off campus activities for students.
4. Discussion ensued concerning these barriers such as transportation in terms of needing to overcome these issues to lower the barriers for faculty to participate in these activities.
5. Is there a way to block out common time for these activities?
 - a. The planned survey will help determine when they can offer these experiential learning opportunities, what times/days faculty are interested in, etc.

iv. Go.tamiau.edu/qep to see more on QEP: LEARN.

b. Ari Gonzalez—SACSCOC

i. Associate Provost Ari Gonzalez is the SACSCOC liason

- ii. Important dates: March 31st-April 3rd, with April 1st-2nd as the days the onsite representatives will be doing their visit to TAMIU, meeting with stakeholders, etc.
- iii. SACSCOC onsite visit will include discussion with faculty members and representatives.
- iv. When the Office of the Provost has a final schedule for the site visit, they will reach out to those who are scheduled to meet with SACSCOC representatives. These requests may go out last minute depending on what SACSCOC wants to do with their visit.
- v. Faculty Senate Exec Com may be invited to a lunch with the representatives.
- vi. Our consultant for SACSCOC has been coming, and has been asking to meet with program coordinators and Faculty Senate to prepare for the site visit.
- vii. By Monday 2/10, we should have an idea of the schedule of major meetings, and will continue to hash out the rest of the details and communicate with faculty as soon as possible.
- viii. Questions from Senators: Can we see the reports?
 - 1. Process: TAMIU submitted the decennial report, SACSCOC comments, TAMIU submits a focus report, and currently the university is at that stage of the process with the focus report.
 - 2. Once that is submitted, provost's office will make the documents available to directors, chairs, deans.
 - 3. Sen. Houston requested that Senate get a copy of this report, to which Dr. Gonzalez agreed.
- c. Ms. Ana Vargas, Director, Digital Media for TAMIU
 - i. Updates to University website
 - 1. Web content accessibility guidelines are published by the World Wide Web Consortium
 - 2. This organization has a set of guidelines regarding website accessibility
 - 3. On April 8, 2024, the federal government created a rule for accessibility for state and local governments, including public universities
 - 4. We need to follow the web content accessibility guidelines, esp. 2.1. We are required to meet level AA in terms of compliance.
 - 5. The deadline for compliance with this new rule is April 24, 2026 deadline.
 - 6. If you have a grant website, you'll need to make sure these will be accessible.
 - 7. A&M System is asking us to comply with additional sets of guidelines, including
 - a. No broken links, including to PDFs
 - b. No misspellings

8. Web Advisory Committee on campus oversees the process in terms of making sure these changes comport with new guidelines and scans of websites to ensure compliance.
- ii. Questions
 1. Will there be trainings? Provost's offices has said there would be trainings for updating Blackboard
 - a. Dr. Abrego's team at eLearning will oversee implementation of these standards
 - b. Sen. Houston will follow up with Distance Education and Instructional Technology Committee on what this means for faculty, course shells, etc.
 2. Discussion ensued concerning faculty who do not have access to webpage editing, raising the importance of communicating with dean's offices on updating dead links, old or outdated information, etc.
- II. Approval of December Minutes
 - a. Motion to approve by Tim Rubel, seconded by Andrew Hilburn.
 - b. Motion carried unanimously.
- III. Old Business
 - a. Update on Higher Ed Bills in Texas Legislature
 - i. Senator Houston outlined a number of bills that have been filed or have been proposed that affect faculty.
 - ii. There is a bill to end the awarding of tenure at public universities to future candidates, with an implantation date of Sept. 2025. Some tenure-track faculty have expressed a desire to go up now before that deadline in that proposed bill. Juan Castillo and Claudia San Miguel are meeting with the Board of Regents and will ask about these cases.
 - iii. There are proposed bills to reduce or deny funding to institutions that have programs studying topics such as women's and gender studies, and other programs that have been targeted by similar bills.
 - iv. We are also seeing institutions like UNT and A&M that have acted preemptively to comply *in anticipation* of these bills.
 - v. Faculty Senate Exec Committee is looking forward to meet with the provost and president to discuss what they might have learned about the progress of these bills.
 - vi. In general, there is tremendous pressure on higher education in this climate.
 - vii. Discussion:
 1. Discussion ensued concerning the private school voucher bill and its likely impact on TRS financial solvency. A state legislature budgetary analysis showed that the impact of the school choice voucher program on the TRS pension system would be negative.
 2. Other bills discussed:

- a. There is a proposed bill to enable board of regents alone to determine appointments of employees, reducing shared governance.
 - b. There are other proposals such as removing SACSCOC and replacing it with another accrediting body.
- b. Updating the Resolution Regarding Academic Freedom and Tenure
 - i. At the December meeting of the Senate, senators discussed potentially updating the resolutions passed in 2022 regarding academic freedom and tenure, and an additional one regarding faculty control of curriculum subject matter.
 - ii. Discussion ensued concerning whether or not to just let these stand, reaffirm them, or updating them.
 - iii. Discussion also included discussion of the wisdom of perhaps reaffirming but also updating to include shared governance. A&M Council of Faculty Senates is working with chancellor's office on a document concerning shared governance.
 - iv. Motion to reaffirm and revise to include shared governance by Ediza Garcia, seconded by Andrew Hilburn.
 - v. Motion carried unanimously.
 - 1. A copy of this letter is attached to the minutes.
- c. Increasing Transparency with Regards to Senate Complaints
 - i. Ethics Committee has been bringing concerns to Senate, who conveys to provost's office, but then there isn't much in terms of movement or feedback to the Faculty Senate.
 - ii. Ethics Committee drafted a letter concerning irregularities and concerns in the College of Education.
 - iii. The letter effectively states that we are asking the provost's office to clarify what steps are being taken regarding clear communications and decision-making processes after Faculty Senate brings these concerns to the Office of the Provost.
 - iv. Discussion of suggestions for changes, etc. Process would be to vote on it, then send to provost if approved and ask for a formal response.
 - v. Add the letter to the minutes
 - vi. Vote to send letter
 - 1. Senator Houston moved that we send the letter to the Office of the Provost, seconded by Tim Rubel.
 - 2. Motion carried unanimously.
 - 3. A copy of this letter is attached to the minutes.
- d. Proposal for Program Review Process which Centralizes the Role of Faculty
 - i. Currently, UCC has purview over program closure
 - 1. Chair can originate it, or provost's office can originate it, but it goes through UCC all the same.
 - 2. There is no faculty involvement at the program and department level, rather, only faculty involvement is at UCC

- ii. Sen. Houston has pulled together a policy based on other policies around the state that do have more involvement for faculty at lower levels.
 - iii. We can recommend a policy change, but the provost's office can say no.
 - iv. UT and A&M have a process—resources are given to low-enrolled program to try to boost. If doesn't work, then there's an additional process of review for both the program and any faculty negatively impacted by a program closure.
 - 1. Program Review Committee—to examine the process, make sure it's by the book, procedures have been followed in trying to rehabilitate the affected program, etc.
 - 2. Then there is also a committee on faculty terminations who examine if faculty can be redistributed if program closure leads to a reduction in force in that department.
 - v. This proposal involves greater levels of faculty shared governance with steps that bring it through different levels, including Faculty Senate.
 - vi. Discussion ensued concerning:
 - 1. Clarifying that this is the current process at A&M and UT, but not at TAMIU, so we'd like to move more toward that model
 - 2. There's no proposed timeline for this process.
 - 3. Discussion over wisdom of trying to insert into UCC handbook vs. just sending as a letter to start the conversation. But we are at the letter point of this process, so trying to open a dialogue with Office of the Provost about revising our policies to involve more faculty shared governance in the process.
 - vii. Motion to vote on sending the letter to the Provost by Sen. Houston, seconded by Senator Vela.
 - viii. Motion carried unanimously.
- e. Update on Request to Office of the Provost for Document Detailing Process of Identification and Review of Low Enrollment Minors Submitted to the A&M Board of Regents
 - i. At December meeting, Dr. San Miguel noted that there was a process to document and identify the low-enrolled minors, with a rubric.
 - ii. Was due to regents by end of December—rubric, identification of any low enrolled minors, and then the plan for improvement.
 - iii. Faculty Senate President Houston has asked for that document, which was promised to Faculty Senate, but those requests so far have gone unanswered. We will continue to follow up and request this document.
- f. Discussion of Departmental Guidelines for College and University P&T in Norms for Specific Fields of Study.
 - i. At the College and University level of P&T, yes, there are department representatives, but would a document outlining disciplinary norms be advisable?

- ii. Discussion ensued concerning the risk in such a document being used punitively against P&T applicants by scholars from fields outside their area of expertise.
- iii. Could we suggest guidance on departmental letters being highly specific in terms of translating an applicant's portfolio for the next level of review? Could we ask the provost to reinforce to department chairs the importance of their letters in P&T process and that their letters should be clear in evaluating the strengths of their candidate and conveying those strengths to the next level of review.
- iv. Discussion continued regarding the difficulty of trying to evaluate dossiers when outside of the higher committee members' areas of expertise.
- v. This problem has come up with Fine Arts especially at the University P&T level in terms of trying to gauge a portfolio.
 - 1. Would it make sense to create guidelines or a document that outlines guidelines based on norms at peer institutions among faculty/departments?
- vi. Senator Houston suggested that we raise with the provost the problem that University P&T level of the process experiences with evaluating dossiers outside their areas of expertise, and perhaps suggest that she meet with that committee, but that these suggestions must originate with the affected department.

IV. New Business

- a. Delays to Faculty Development Leave Review and Update on Timeline
 - i. Faculty Development Leave applications were due in September, arrived to provost by October. The FDL committee is to meet, with decisions rendered in November.
 - ii. That committee is chaired by FS president, but that committee had not met, nor had they received the applications.
 - iii. Office of Provost has only recently transmitted the applications, but the process has started; it's just very compressed. Decisions will be forthcoming.
- b. Faculty Questions/Comments Submitted to Senate for Discussion.
 - i. Suggestion box is up on Faculty Senate website
 - ii. Discussion ensued about these comments, esp. concerning the provost office's role in scheduling and course enrollment caps.
 - iii. It highlights the need to follow up on scheduling and how that takes place.
 - 1. The schedule used to have far more input from dept chairs and deans, but these are now being heavily edited and changed. Sections are just moved online unilaterally.
 - 2. Discussion ensued about scheduling, whether chairs are advocating appropriately for faculty who have caps raised, sections moved online, and other issues with the schedule.

- iv. The other major issue centered on COAS interim dean and the need for greater transparency on the timeline for a permanent dean.
- v. The third major issue raised was personnel-related, and there's not much we can do there.
- vi. We can categorize the complaints into those three categories: 1) personnel, 2) interim positions and lack of faculty involvement there, and 3) communication and micromanagement, but esp. the schedule.
- vii. Will follow up on them at Executive Committee meeting with provost's office
- viii. President Houston moved that we follow up on these items from the suggestion/comment box by breaking them down into those three categories (personnel, interim positions and communication with faculty, and the schedule), seconded by Sen. Cynthia Sosa,
- ix. Motion carried unanimously.
- c. Request for Faculty Senate Representative to Web Advisory Committee
 - i. Hayley Kazen was the representative, so they need a replacement.
 - ii. Senator Hilburn volunteered to serve.
- d. Request for Faculty Senate Representation to Nomination Committee for System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee.
 - i. Interim president would like a Faculty Senate member to serve on the nomination committee, it's a one-off, one-hour time commitment.
 - ii. Sen. Gorbunova volunteered.
- e. Update on Election of New Members to Senate.
 - i. Nursing representative is Viridiana Vela
 - ii. UC representative is Monica Chavez

V. Committee Reports

- a. In light of the limited time, the Senate opted to take committee reports updates from any committees that had news or updates.
- b. Academic Oversight—no report
- c. Budget and Finance—no report
- d. University Ethics—no report
- e. Committee on Creation, Composition, and Responsibilities of Committees—no report
- f. Awards
 - i. Awards committee needs an additional person since member departure
 - ii. Sen. Vela volunteered.
 - iii. There have been a fair number of questions concerning issues, with ideas of a creating a FAQ for faculty to better understand the awards process.
 - iv. Discussion ensued about ensuring that nominees get clear instructions of how to produce an Echo360 recording for the teaching demonstrations that have good audio and video so the committee can review adequately.

- g. Faculty Handbook Revision
 - i. Appendix E on fixed-term faculty should be moved into a new chapter on fixed-term faculty in the Faculty Handbook.
 - ii. This change would be substantive and would require vote by Senate and by full faculty.
 - 1. President Houston moved to vote to make this handbook change.
 - 2. Sen. Marvin Bennett seconded,
 - 3. Sen. Sosa amended that the changes to fixed-term faculty promotion will also be included. Amendment passed unanimously.
 - 4. Motion as amended passed unanimously.
 - iii. We also need to vote on moving the deadline for full professor applications. The provost office had mentioned wanting to move the notification of intent to go up for full professor moved to September of the year prior to going up to provide enough time to gather external letters, etc.
 - iv. Discussion ensued, but Senate was of the opinion that we need the proposal to come from the provost so we can deliberate over the new proposed timeline.
- h. Assessment
 - i. Assessment committee met and created the evaluation instruments.
 - ii. Didn't make any changes to these evaluation instruments.
 - iii. Evaluations will be sent to full Senate for a vote.
 - iv. Vote will be digital to save time at next month's meeting and get these approved and out to OIT to start setting up the evaluations.
- i. Distance Education and Instructional Technology—no report.
- j. Technology Advisory—no report.
- k. Fixed-Term Faculty—no report.
- VI. Announcements and Other Business
 - a. Dr. Cho brought up PPE and the required 9 in research over 2 years in order to get the research productivity course release down to a 3-3 load. Noted that if you have one middling year with a 3, you get a 4-4 load, even with a 5 the previous year.
 - i. Can we move to 12 over 3 years rather than 9 over 2 in order to get the PPE course release mechanism to work on a more sustainable basis for faculty?
 - ii. President Houston suggested adding this to the agenda for the March meeting and for the Executive Committee meeting with the Provost.
- VII. President Houston moved to adjourn. Sen. Dalton seconded.
 - a. Motion to adjourn carried unanimously.



TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

TAMIU Faculty Senate

February 11th 2025

Dr. Claudia San Miguel
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Texas A&M International University
5201 University BLVD
Laredo, Texas, 78041

Subject: Request for Greater Transparency Regarding Ongoing Complaints

Dear Dr. San Miguel,

The TAMIU Faculty Senate is writing to express our concerns regarding the lack of transparency surrounding decisions related to issues raised with the Office of the Provost by the Faculty Senate. We believe that greater clarity and open communication on this matter are essential to fostering trust, collaboration, and shared governance within our university community.

As faculty members, we are deeply committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability that form the foundation of shared governance. However, recent developments in the College of Education have raised questions and concerns among the Faculty Senate regarding the decision-making process and the review of complaints raised by the Faculty Senate to the upper administration at TAMIU.

Specifically the following concerns have repeatedly been brought to the Faculty Senate on behalf of the faculty in the College of Education:

1. **Exclusion:** Faculty being summarily dismissed from program, curriculum, and college-level meetings by the Dean of the College without explanation.
2. **Failure to Uphold Procedure:** Meetings being held within the College of Education, specifically but not limited to Promotion and Tenure meetings and curriculum committee meetings, which do not follow the due process of TAMIU's procedures.

3. **Removal of P&T Materials:** Allegations of direct tampering with Promotion and Tenure binders, resulting in the removal/loss of an entire binder from a Promotion and Tenure applicant's portfolio.

The Faculty Senate wishes to emphasize that, as a body, we have not directly observed the actions in question. Rather, these are recurring allegations brought to the Faculty Senate by faculty members during the Fall 2024 semester. In response to these concerns, the Executive Council of the Faculty Senate has consistently raised these issues with the Office of the Provost during monthly meetings. However, the Faculty Senate has not been informed of any substantive actions taken by the Office of the Provost to address these matters, and faculty from the College of Education continue to bring these complaints to the Senate's attention.

This led the Faculty Senate to unanimously vote in favor of writing a letter to the Office of the Provost requesting greater transparency over actions taken regarding these allegations.

To address these concerns, the Faculty Senate respectfully requests the following:

1. **Clear Communication of Decision-Making Processes**

1. A thorough explanation of the processes, criteria, and stakeholders involved in making decisions related to complaints raised by the Faculty Senate to TAMIU's upper administration.
2. Clarification of the communication pathways back to the Faculty Senate regarding action taken to resolve issues of concern.
3. An update on where the decision-making process stands with each of the aforementioned concerns.

We believe that fulfilling these requests will not only enhance transparency but also strengthen the collaborative relationship between faculty and administration. By working together, we can ensure that concerns are communicated in a manner that reflects the values and priorities of the entire university community.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response and to continuing our shared efforts to advance the mission and values of Texas A&M International University.

Sincerely,

TAMIU Faculty Senate

Letter approved by a vote of: 17 in favor, 0 against.





TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

TAMIU Faculty Senate

February 11th 2025

Dr. Claudia San Miguel
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Texas A&M International University
5201 University BLVD
Laredo, Texas, 78041

Subject: Proposal for Evaluation of Programs Marked for Elimination

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, we write to propose a revised process for evaluating programs identified as low enrollment/scheduled for elimination at Texas A&M International University. As part of our commitment to robust processes of review, shared governance and transparency, we have carefully examined current trends and developed a structured approach that ensures both the viability of our academic offerings and the integrity of our curriculum.

The current process for program elimination at TAMIU is housed solely within the University Curriculum Committee (hereafter UCC). As per pages 23 and 24 of the UCC Handbook, the request for program closure can originate either with the Department or from upper administration (Office of the Provost). The current process for review of program termination does not require nor request faculty input. This lack of formalized process involving faculty is out of alignment with other schools in the A&M System and other institutions of higher education within Texas (such as UT) and is out of alignment with our institutional commitment to shared governance. Our proposed process aims to provide a transparent, data-driven framework for assessing academic programs identified for closure/termination. This process proposes a collaborative approach involving faculty, department chairs, the university curriculum committee and upper administration. We believe this will allow for informed decision-making that balances student interest, faculty expertise, and institutional priorities.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you and working collaboratively to refine and implement this process in a way that benefits students, faculty, and the broader university community. We welcome the opportunity to meet at your convenience to review the details and address any questions or considerations you may have.

Proposal of the TAMIU Faculty Senate for Revised Process for Review and Termination of Programs

Committee Definitions:

1) Program Review Committee

- i) Conducts a review of current program functioning.
- ii) Exists at both Department and College Level.
- iii) Both levels ultimately submit a report to the Dean that includes the committees' decision as well as written input submitted by interested parties to include faculty whose position may be terminated due to a program closure.

2) Ad-hoc Committee on Faculty Termination

Reviews proposed actions in cases where faculty member's positions may be affected or even eliminated due to program closure.

Process of Review

Below is a detailed breakdown of the proposed process of review for a program identified for termination, for which remediation efforts have been unsuccessful. This process is consistent with the processes found in the A&M and UT Faculty and Curriculum Handbooks. Please note this process only activates in the event of an entire major/minor or other program of study having been identified for possible closure. This process must complete within one academic year of the Department Chair being notified of a program identified for termination/closure. This does not apply to individual courses being removed from course catalogues as part of regular housekeeping and programmatic growth.

Level 1: Department

- i. Department Chair appoints the Program Review Committee from faculty in the department which includes at least two individuals not affiliated with the program proposed for closure, to conduct a review of current program functioning.
 - a. The review can include but is not limited to:
 - i. Enrollment numbers and trends over time.
 - ii. Report on remediation efforts and why they have been unsuccessful.
 - iii. Program faculty input (committee can call program faculty to meet with them).



- ii. If faculty positions may be affected or even eliminated due to program closure then the Department Chair must notify the Dean of a need to appoint an ad-hoc committee on faculty termination. Only tenured faculty should serve on this advisory committee. The committee is tasked with exploring where else in the Department affected faculty could teach.

Level 2: College

- i. College Dean appoints a College level Program Review Committee from faculty in the college and department and includes at least two individuals not affiliated with the program proposed for closure to conduct a review of current program functioning.
- ii. College level committee reviews Department level Program Review Committee report and, if applicable, the ad-hoc committee on faculty termination report, in addition to the attempts at remediation efforts.
- iii. College level committee can call on program-connected faculty to speak with the committee.
- iv. Makes a recommendation regarding the program proposed for closure. Submits Program Review Committee report and, if applicable, ad-hoc committee on faculty termination report and makes recommendation regarding program closure to the Dean of the College.
- v. Dean of the College reviews materials and writes a recommendation regarding program closure to the Provost. All letters and reports from the Department and College level committees are then submitted by the Dean to Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Faculty Senate and the University Curriculum Committee. If the program is at the graduate level the reports are also submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Level 3: Faculty Senate

- i. Reviews the Program Review Committee reports and the Dean's recommendation.
- ii. Provides recommendation regarding program closure to the Provost.

Level 3: Graduate School (only required if the program is a Graduate Program)

- i. Reviews the Program Review Committee report and the Dean's recommendation.
- ii. Provides recommendation regarding program closure to the Provost.

Level 3: University Curriculum Committee (UCC)

- i. Reviews the Program Review Committee reports and the Dean's recommendation.



- ii. All other guidelines set in the UCC Handbook for Program Elimination are to be followed.
- iii. UCC provides recommendation regarding program closure to the Provost.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

TAMIU Faculty Senate

Letter approved by a vote of: 17 in favor, 0 against.

