

FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

FRIDAY, May 1, 2026

12:00 pm – 2:30 pm

STEM 169

In attendance (FAC members): Matt Watson, Berenice de la Cruz, Karen Burgard, Eve Lee, Lisa Polk, Donna Lehman, Robert Vijana, Butch Miller, Sanikan Wattanawongwen, Michael Mary, Myriam Jimena Guerra, Maria Acevedo-Aquino, Kun Gou, Emily Naasz, Danielle Fenimore (virtually), Alan Daniel, Rector Arya, Merritt Rehn-DeBraal (virtually), Elena Foulis (virtually), David Brooks, Danny Malone

Not in attendance (FAC members): Dennis Elam, Alice Liu, Qi Han, Mike O'Brien, Scott Gage, Kandice Diaz

In attendance (non-FAC members): None

In attendance (virtually on livestream non-FAC members): Sarah Flotte, Ashley Teufel, Elizabeth Leyva, Bill Bush

OPEN SESSION

A. Call to order

B. Approval of April's FAC Minutes

- Butch moved to accept the April FAC minutes
- Danny seconded
- Vote – 14 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention
- ***Please note that there were 15 voting members in attendance for the approval of the minutes vote. Two additional members arrived after this vote. Therefore, other subsequent FAC votes at this meeting have 17 votes cast. One member (the Presiding Officer) did not vote in any of the votes taken. No virtual members voted.*

C. Administrative Updates—Provost Abdelrahman and President Ochoa (30 minutes)

- President Ochoa Updates:
 - The VPR search was successful. The inaugural VP for Research will be Dr. Guido Verbeck. He is a chemistry with a long history of successful research endeavors. He will be a wonderful colleague. The president thanked the committee members for their hard work and being able to get a quality candidate to fill the position. He also commented about how unified and in agreement the committee was in the selection. The new VPR will begin on July 1st.
 - Departure of Provost Abdelrahman – The president thanked Provost Abdelrahman for his years of service at A&M-SA and acknowledged the growth of programs under his time here. The president has asked Dean Debra Feakes to be the Interim Provost/VPAA and that decision will need to go to the entire Board of Regents. Anyone with the title of president or Provost (including Vice or Assoc. Provost) needs go to the Board of Trustees. Kate Gillam will be the Interim Dean of A&S and Megan Wise de Valdez will be Associate Dean. The President, the Provost, and Dean Feakes will meet over the next few weeks to ensure a smooth transition and handoff of duties and responsibilities. The President has convened a committee for the search for a new

Provost. This committee includes members from all ranks: a Dean, a Chair, a Full Professor, an Associate Professor, an Assistant Professor, a Lecturer, 2 staff members, and one Faculty-at-Large position. We are using WittKeifer as the consulting firm again. We have been successful in using them in the past. The search will launch in the summertime. He hopes to bring people onto campus in late Oct./early Nov. and bring the name to the Board of Trustees meeting in Feb. (2027).

- New FAC Officers for next academic year – the three new officers will be: Berenice de la Cruz (Presiding Officer), Bill Bush (Vice Presiding Officer), and Sonya Eddy (Secretary). These officers represent different colleges, different programs/departments, different experiences and backgrounds, different ranks, etc. and that will provide different perspectives at the table.
- Corrin is working to get everyone moved into the new Public Health and Education Building. Genomics faculty are almost completely moved in including their equipment, etc.
 - College of Education and Human Development will move in during the summer – probably first week of July. Then, some faculty from A&S will move into Madla (as some of the faculty in A&S now are doubled up in offices).
 - Also, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs will also move into Madla. Corrin will work with everyone to make sure the move goes smoothly. She will let everyone know how to box things up, what dates the move will occur, how to handle the belongings, etc. The Deans are the ones who made office assignments.
- Core curriculum review is nearly complete. The president thanked the faculty who served on that committee. The syllabus review is almost complete. There were 42 syllabi in CAS that needed further review and over 80 in the COEHD. This review pertains to compliance with 08.01. He hopes to have all those finished and approved in the next few weeks.
- Provost Abdelrahman Updates:
 - Departure – now that it is official – announced departure for Univ. of Houston. He expressed how much he enjoyed working at A&M-SA and that he is sad to be leaving but excited about the new opportunity. His final day will be June 30th.
 - Various curriculum reviews
 - Review of the core curriculum – The Provost thanked David Brooks for serving on the committee and representing faculty (in general, but also faculty who teach in the core).
 - One thing they noticed is that there was variation between what was written in the course catalog and what people wrote in their syllabus. Often, faculty would have a “general overview” of the course that did not match what was in the course catalog. What is provided to students must match the course catalog because that is what they see when they sign up for the course.
 - With the learning outcomes – programs need to look at the larger “overall core curriculum objectives” and make sure the courses were aligned with the core curriculum components (workforce development, future career goals, fundamental need, student success, etc.).
 - 88 courses reviewed – only about four .or five needed revisions or corrections – a Women’s and Gender Studies was removed from the core but not removed as an overall course offering – just from the required core. Also, a philosophy course – again, just can’t count it in the core. And then two sociology courses.

- The Provost commended the committee for their hard work and especially the external partners who read every single syllabus thoroughly and intentionally.
- VPR search – will begin on July 1st. He is going to head up the Division of Research and Innovation.
 - A&M system research and innovation grant proposals – 5 proposals total (4 from A&S and 1 from BUS). These are smaller than the ones submitted last month. Two collaborations with other A&M institutions.
- Q: Re: the core curriculum review work, did you look at assessments too?
A: (Provost) Looked at syllabus to make sure the courses matched the core curriculum components but yes, also looked at how the assessments and assignments aligned with the core curriculum components.
- Q: Will those who didn't get approved for the innovation grants be provided with feedback so they can submit again and try later?
A: (Provost) It is great that these are competitive and there was strong interest. Yes, there will be another cycle and those who proposed and were not selected will be provided feedback to resubmit.
- Q: Warnings about weather – local schools sent out early dismissal notices and faculty who had classes late (that ended at 8 PM or 9 PM) had students who were quite worried about their safety. Is there a policy on notifying students and faculty when it comes to dangerous weather that is unexpected?
A: (President) We do have a policy. The police get very detailed weather information. We reach out to county officials about the road conditions. One local (K-12) school had flooding but we assessed the situation and determined that the poor conditions were only going to affect a small area. Most roads were openly accessible and only one school (Schertz-Cibolo) had a concern. At 4:30 in the afternoon, the weather was in only one targeted area. UPD talks to city and county police and officials and emergency personnel to determine safety for our faculty, staff, and students. If you have students who cannot attend because of safety, it is up to the faculty member for how they want to handle it. If the campus remains open, the faculty member still has discretion to move the class virtually, or you can let the students leave class early. You have the authority to do that for your class.
- Q: We can move it online for inclement weather but we cannot punish them for not attending (virtually) if they are unable to do so (because of wifi connection, etc.)?
A: (President) Right. Some students do not have reliable internet access. So, you can offer the class online in the case of bad weather, and to ensure the safety of you and your students, you have that discretion. But you cannot penalize them if they cannot attend virtually.
- Q: Will you remind faculty of this in the fall? Will you remind them of their ability to make these decisions for themselves and their class (even if the campus remains open)?
A: (President) Yes, we will remind the faculty in the fall. Also, you can always reach out to your deans for guidance.
- Q: (duplicate question from another faculty member) Can we have a faculty announcement at the beginning of the year about this? I was concerned (about the weather, about the roads) and I asked, "Can we have our class session online?" and no one really gave me an answer. I appreciate that we have the freedom to decide on our own. A student said to me, "The university doesn't care about me. They don't put our safety first." So, can we have a university-wide announcement at the beginning of the year explaining that it is up to our discretion when it is bad weather?

A: (President) The students get the safety alerts for campus through their phones. The university police chief and I will always take the side of caution. We monitor these situations very closely. We feel very good about our decision. Every school district, except one, and all universities in the immediate area all still held classes as normal. Yes we will review this in the fall.

- Q: But if the university campus *is* closed, and a faculty member still wants to have class online/virtually, they cannot do that though, right?

A: (Provost) Right. If the university is closed, it is closed. Faculty cannot hold classes (even online) if the campus is closed.

D. Introduction of New Members – Review of 2026-2027 FAC Roster (10 minutes)

- Outgoing members were recognized by Matt and he extended his gratitude for everyone's hard work getting the FAC off the ground. He said that their service and their time was greatly appreciated.
- The new members (for the 2026-2027 academic year) were recognized. The new roster was provided to all members.

E. Discussion Item – Review of Recent FAC Elections – What Worked, What Were the Challenges? (10 minutes)

- Matt said that changes for the next round of elections for the new/incoming folks may end up being addressed in the bylaws. Should the outgoing representative (from each department) run the election in their department for the new/incoming member? Should they ask for nominations? What role, if any, should the Department Chair have in the elections?
- Karen explained the agenda item – there was a discussion in some departments that the Department Chair essentially “appointed” or “highly encouraged” individuals to be on the FAC for this academic year, and there was a question as to whether the election of FAC members should be more standardized throughout the campus.
- For example, one recommendation was to have the two department representatives be one tenured faculty member and one TT (but not tenured yet) faculty member. Other departments want clinical faculty to be able to serve.
- It was recommended that the outgoing departmental representatives handle the elections for the new/incoming member each year. But there was concern about being too prescriptive in the bylaws (e.g., limiting service to tenured or TT members, or not permitting clinical faculty to serve, etc.). The suggestion was to open membership to all full-time faculty members, regardless of position/rank.

Matt then took a point of privilege to talk about his time as Presiding Officer. He again thanked all of the FAC members from this academic year for all their hard work. He said, “There are a lot of challenges ahead of us. The pendulum swing has affected us all but that doesn’t mean we should abandon this space. We have a right to be in this space. We just need to rebuild it. The only way to rebuild it is to be here. Be present. Do the work. We need to still push and make our voice heard even when we are not comfortable doing so.” Matt talked about the bylaws referencing a parliamentarian, but we don’t currently have one sitting on the body. We should create that position. He talked about the bylaws needing to be revised and updated now that the FAC is constituted. He said he was still a resource and everyone could reach out to him if they need anything. He encouraged the FAC to be a strong voice for the faculty.

F. Discussion and Action Item—Amendment to the FAC Bylaws Regarding the Start and End Dates of Members’ Terms (20 minutes)

- The current bylaws have an overlap where the outgoing members and new/incoming members are serving at the same time. We can't have that because we would be over the permissible number of seated FAC members.
- Two members of the bylaws revision task force agreed, and they recommended changing the wording as well. It needs to be clearer that the outgoing and new/incoming members will not overlap in their terms. It was recommended to modify the bylaws to state this directly.
 - Butch moved to modify the FAC bylaws to state that each FAC member's term starts each academic year on September 1st and ends on August 31st.
 - Alan seconded
 - Vote – 17 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions

G. Discussion and Action Item—Amendments to the FAC Bylaws (50 minutes)

- Currently, the Presiding Officer does not vote. However, since the President appoints that person from the elected FAC body, that person's department loses a vote. It was recommended to change that in the bylaws and have the Presiding Officer be a voting member. The Democratic Rules of Order (which the FAC uses) does not prohibit this.
 - Alan moved to amend the bylaws to specifically state that the Presiding Office can vote as an equal voting member of the FAC.
 - Michael Mary seconded.
 - Vote – 17 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions
- There was a follow-up to this vote, and it was suggested that the Presiding Officer should also be able to make motions and suggest amendments just as any other voting member of the FAC.
 - Alan moved to have the bylaws state that the Presiding Officer can make motions and suggest amendments like any other voting FAC member.
 - Emily seconded.
 - Vote – 16 in favor, 1 against, 0 abstentions
- There was a discussion about expanding the Officers membership.
- There was a discussion about the meeting format. The current wording (7.5.5) states that all meetings will be held in person but there is nothing in the state legislation that requires that. Should we change that? There was also a discussion about the one-way streaming (as opposed to two-way streaming where the virtual attendees can comment). It was stated that Zoom does have a feature that has livestreaming capabilities. This is something to think about in the future.
- In 7.5.7 – do names of members need to be recorded (in the minutes)? Should this be made public? Does it have to be? Also, do we have a process for removing members who do not show up and/or do not participate when they do show up?
 - There is a process for that – missing 3 consecutive meetings or 4 meetings total over the academic year is grounds for removal.
 - How do we handle replacement when someone leaves (steps down, leaves their FAC position, leaves the university, etc.)? Do we have a formal process for that?
 - The suggestion was that the department hold an election to finish out the previous FAC member's term (but *not* start a whole new 2-year term). So, if a person leaves in the first semester of the second year of their term, then the newly elected FAC member would only serve out the rest of that academic year.
- In 5.3 wording states all full-time faculty (so, not adjunct) but later it says all faculty members (which would include adjunct). Do we need to be more specific? Or is that clear enough?

- When the bylaws state no one in an administrative or supervisory role can serve, does that include Associate Chairs? Are they supervisory?
- There was one last question about following up on the Deans and Chairs document. It was suggested to look into that again in the fall.

There was no vote to adjourn. Matt closed the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 PM

ADJOURN

** Asterisks indicate additional documents available as attachments to the calendar invite.*