

FACULTY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026

12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

STEM 169

In attendance (FAC members): Matt Watson, Berenice de la Cruz, Karen Burgard, Eve Lee, Lisa Polk, Donna Lehman, Alice Liu, Sanikan Wattanawongwen, Michael Mary, Myriam Jimena Guerra, Maria Acevedo-Aquino, Qi Han, Kun Gou, Emily Naasz, Alan Daniel, Rector Arya, Mike O'Brien, Merritt Rehn-DeBaal, Elena Foulis, Scott Gage, David Brooks, Danny Malone

Not in attendance (FAC members): Dennis Elam, Robert Vinaja, Butch Miller, Danielle Fenimore, Kandice Diaz

In attendance (non-FAC members): None

In attendance (virtually on livestream non-FAC members): Alexandra Quintero Deleon, Daniel Braaten, Kimberly Grotewold, and Ashley Teufel

OPEN SESSION

- A. Call to order
- B. Approval of February's FAC Minutes
 - There was a question raised as to what happens to the minutes already posted if there is a change or edit to them – will the revised minutes replace the current ones? The answer was yes.
 - There were two items that were not included in the February minutes regarding questions FAC members posed to the administration (about the core curriculum and the review process). The request to postpone voting on the February minutes until the April meeting was made after those two points were added. That was agreed upon by the FAC, and Karen will update the minutes and place the revised version in Teams for the FAC to review. The February and March minutes will be voted on at the April meeting.
- C. Administrative Updates—Provost Abdelrahman and President Ochoa (30 minutes)
 - President Ochoa Updates:
 - Women's basketball team – invitation to play in the 2026 Red River Athletic Conference (RRAC) Tournament finals. This is their second year in the tournament, which is quite impressive given the team's youth.
 - The new Public Health and Education building is nearly completed. President Ochoa has met with the Deans and has determined which faculty will move into the offices and when. They have also discussed how to better serve faculty to make the transition smoother – When will the spaces be ready? When will the furniture be installed? Etc. The genomics and genetics faculty will move in in April, hopefully, and the College of Education and Human Development faculty will move in sometime over the summer, probably July.
 - Re: the AI review of courses from the fall (compliance with SB37). There was understandable concern from faculty over the review, but very few courses

were identified. The Provost will discuss the results of that AI review during his updates.

- Re: the review of the core curriculum – President Ochoa has compiled a group of individuals who will review the core curriculum. This group is convening soon with the work to be completed by May and submitted to the Board of Regents before December. These individuals include business leaders from the community, community members, faculty from the university, and other stakeholders who will review the core to make sure the courses are aligned with citizenship, workforce alignment, and are cost-effective. This review does not have anything to do with 08.01 (DEI review). This is a separate review that looks at alignment with career and industry. The individuals are: Jorge Villegas, Emma Savage-Davis, Kate Gillam, David Brooks, Jennifer Correa, Eric Lopez, Josephine Sosa-Fey, Carol Heubner (University Public Health), Jeff Goldhorn (Region 20), Jeff Wentworth (former member of the Texas Senate, helped to establish the university), and Provost Abdelrahman as ex officio.
- Provost Abdelrahman Updates:
 - Following from the President’s comments about the group reviewing the core curriculum – there are a lot of reviews that need to happen. The first meeting will take place on March 27th. There are 80+ courses in the core. The group will review the courses to look for the coordinating board requirements. There is a tight turnaround to ensure all the work is completed by May. 90-95% of those courses are in A&S.
 - Re: the first review of all courses (fall 2025) to ensure compliance with SB37 08.01 occurred. There were 9 sections total (3 sections in the College of Education and Human Development and 6 sections in A&S), which is less than 1% of the courses. The colleges have been notified, and we are all working through how to handle it. The President is the ultimate decider of what is/will be approved when a course is flagged, but the instructors (along with the chairs and the deans) will provide justifications and information to the President to make those decisions. The administration wanted to make sure all faculty knew that their perspective is *not* that no classes should ever talk about any sensitive topics but that it has to relate to focus and purpose of the course and align with the course syllabus and course catalog description.
 - Re: continued review of courses for SB37 08.01 compliance. We are doing our own review based on courses that have been taught (in the past, like last fall) or will be taught (right now, this summer, and then moving forward). There are two steps: 1) the courses after we report on them and 2) a full review of all sections of all courses and all syllabi. We want to “make sure what we are teaching is in compliance moving forward.” There is also a process in place for all new courses added to the course catalog (ones that have just been approved and will be new to the university).
 - Q: There was a question about the phrase “there are no exceptions to the core”. Within the guidelines and definitions provided by the system, they define advocacy, but they do not define ideology. Is the university saying there can be no mention of any topics pertaining to race, gender, etc.? Are we just checking boxes on a form? What are the implications of this in terms of enforcement and day-to-day teaching?
 - Pres. Ochoa: There is a reasonable exception if you are talking about those topics in a course and it is important to the course and aligns with the course. In COEHD, the two sections (of the same course) was

flagged but they provided a justification for why they needed to talk about those topics, aligned it with the required TEA standards they had to meet, and explained how it was relevant to the discipline. The courses need to be able to provide information on how it is aligned with the teaching of the course material.

- Q: But is it “an exception” or are we just already following the policy already? It does not seem like anyone at the university is “advocating” for a particular stance or point of view. We let students make their own decisions. We are not telling them *what* to think, but rather how to think, and we need to talk about various theories in order to teach those skills.
 - Pres. Ochoa explained his knowledge of curriculum and his experience working with disciplines and programs from across all disciplines, and that he understands the topics, matters, and issues that need to be addressed in various disciplines.
- Q: What is the actual number of courses that need to be addressed, though? There are a lot of courses in A&S that we have to review, but most of the courses don’t actually conflict with the written policy. With regards to SB37, are we writing justifications for exceptions that don’t really need it because they don’t actually conflict with the written policy?
 - Pres. Ochoa: I want the faculty to feel comfortable and have the assurance to know that the courses have been reviewed at various levels, and there is a good faith and confidence down the road that the course was approved, and you have that assurance. We are navigating this as we can. Your deans are very good; they are your advocates. We need to focus on the course description, the syllabi, and the topics (readings/assignments) within the course. Does that all align? Most specifically at the undergraduate level. Is there curriculum fidelity and alignment?
 - Prov. Abdelrahman: Our review (# of courses/% of courses flagged) matches College Station's. At A&M-College Station, 100 were flagged, and only 50 went to the President (of A&M-College Station), requiring justification and exceptions. Less than 1% of all courses.
- Q: There was a question about the student hotline (as an extension of the discussion about SB37 compliance) and how students might interpret the word advocacy. Is the university administration doing anything to protect the faculty, and what kind of support are you providing to faculty when they face that situation?
 - Pre. Ochoa: John Wickline is an excellent resource. I appreciate working with him regarding due process. If you are very concerned about a topic, I recommend contacting him and saying, “This is a topic I am going to teach about. Can you come observe me?” He is very fair. You have an opportunity to voice your opinion and your point of view. John can visit with you on the side and explain the process and what happens if that occurs (a student complaint).
 - Prov. Abdelrahman: We cannot control what may or may not happen in the future, but at least if your course is approved, there is a level of protection.
- Q: There was a question about the process for this review. What is the process for a course that is flagged during this internal review if the instructors want to

change something (in the course description, etc.) to get it into compliance?
Will there be an expedited process for course catalog changes, or will those (flagged courses) need to go through the regular year-long curriculum change process?

- Prov. Abdelrahman: We will expedite approval for those courses.
- Re: doctoral programs – Ed.D. will go to the final stage, which is SACSCOC, on March 15th. We will submit a Ph.D. in genetics and genomics to the system in August and hope to receive full approval by next May, but this depends on several approval timelines and factors.

D. Update on Members of the Distinguished Faculty Awards Committee (5 minutes)

There was some discussion about the process for selecting members to serve on the Distinguished Faculty Awards Committee. It was mentioned that the Dean of A&S had a good process (using the current A&S college's awards committee and selecting from there). The other two colleges said their selection process was fair and equitable. There were questions about the length of terms (to serve on the committee, if the membership was open to only TT, only full-time, but both TT and non-TT, etc.), and we did not have answers to that. The FAC thought that it should be a good discussion for the next topic on the agenda (standing committees).

E. (Continued) Discussion and Action Item—FAC Committees (75 minutes)

- Determining primary function(s) of the FAC
- Define and establish the standing committees to address those functions (action item)
- Determine committee membership guidelines, length of terms, rotation schedule of members, eligibility requirements, roles, and responsibilities (action item)
- The parliamentarian is mentioned several times in the bylaws but the new Senate Bill did not mention a parliamentarian so the conservative view was to remove that position altogether. There was a question as to whether the FAC had a copy of the new/current FAC bylaws. Those are available online on the FAC website. The roles of President and Vice-President (of the Faculty Senate) are now the Presiding Officer and Vice-Presiding Officer, respectively, and are appointed by the university president.
- Matt asked if we, as a body, were interested in revising the FAC bylaws. The FAC said that they were interested in that. Matt then mentioned that today we needed to approve the standing committees (for the FAC) and then determine how those committees will complete their work. He recommended that the committees do most of their work outside the monthly FAC meeting, and then use the monthly FAC meetings to report on their work and bring action items for the full body to vote on.
- There was a discussion about service committees and the makeup of those committees. There was a concern raised about the need for broader representation on the committees. Some senior faculty members feel overwhelmed by all the committees/services they participate in, but junior faculty want that experience and often don't get the chance. When there is voting (in departments, in colleges), the senior faculty are often selected because people know their names, while the junior faculty are not well-known yet. How can we revise our processes and procedures to ensure a more diverse voice on committees? How do we get fresh eyes and new opinions? For example, how long should individuals serve on a particular committee?
 - It was stated that we can't control the direction and membership of all committees on campus but can control the ones that the FAC has.

- A comment was made that we do need more junior faculty on committees who can bring new energy and new ideas but we also need to balance that too, with senior faculty who have institutional memory and long-term knowledge. It is difficult though, to have it not be a popularity contest, which it often is.
- The suggestion was made that the beginning of each academic year, the FAC provide documentation/a description of the committees to the committee members, but also the full FAC, so everyone knows the function of each committee. The FAC agreed with this suggestion, and it was further suggested that the Elections Committee (if the FAC continues to have that committee) should address these issues (of committee make-up, term limits, etc.).
- Matt asked if the FAC was agreeable to keep the former standing committees (from the previous Faculty Senate). They are: *UG Curriculum Committee; Core Curriculum Committee; Graduate Council, Faculty Policies, Procedures, and Advocacy; Elections Committee; and the Executive Committee* (FAC current officers, but could be expanded in the future to include more individuals and more representation).
 - There was a suggestion to add *Academic Freedom and Shared Governance* as a new committee. This body would serve to make suggestions and recommendations to the administration on behalf of the faculty. They would serve in an advisory capacity for issues pertaining to the faculty. This suggestion was supported by the FAC membership. It was stated that this committee would be very important to demonstrating true shared governance.
 - There was an additional comment expressing the limited power and role of the newly constituted FAC. Other members stated that the power hasn't really changed much (compared to the former Faculty Senate also being an advisory body) but the constitution and make-up has changed. There was also a comment about not creating multiple committees (over and above the standing committees, for example many ad-hoc committees) and spreading ourselves too thin with more responsibilities – that the standing committees should be able to do the work of this body.
- Action Item – Vote on Standing Committees
 - Karen Burgard moved to accept the 6 standing committees identified by Matt (UG Curriculum Committee; Core Curriculum Committee; Graduate Council, Faculty Policies, Procedures, and Advocacy; Elections Committee; and the Executive Committee).
 - David seconded
 - Mike O'Brien called the question
 - Vote – 20 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions
- Action Item – Vote on New Proposed Standing Committee
 - Karen Burgard moved to accept the new proposed *Academic Freedom and Shared Governance Committee*
 - Alan seconded
 - Mike O'Brien called the question
 - Vote – 20 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions
- Matt asked if there were individuals interested in reviewing the current FAC by-laws (available online) and make resolutions for the March meeting. The following members were interested and agreed to serve in this capacity:

- Scott Gage
- Eve Lee
- Emily Naasz
- Danny Malone
- Maria Acevedo-Aquino
- Kun Gou

F. Discussion and Action Item—April FAC meeting date/time (10 minutes)

- Action Item – Vote on New Standing Committee
 - Danny moved to change April 3rd's FAC meeting time to 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM (noon)
 - Karen seconded
 - Vote – 20 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

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