

Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes – FY 2025

January 15, 2025 | Via Zoom

Present: Ross Shegog, Bethany R. Williams, F. Kurt Kasper, Deborah (Debbie) Cline, Francine K. Snow, Robert Coghlan, Shane R. Cunha, Zheng (Jake) Chen, Andrea N. Taylor, Barbara Orlando, Erin Fox, Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş, Harnoor Singh, Julie Gutierrez, Linh P. Bui, Matthew (Matt) L. Baker, Rehal A. Bhojani, Zi Yang Jiang, Luca Giancardo, Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Esther O. Kuyinu, Ryan Vahdani, June Sadowsky (proxy for Tommy), Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan, Eric C. Jones

Absent: Vuong Trung-Tran Prieto, Carrie A. Bakunas, Gazala Siddiqui, Sahiti Myneni, Yejin Kim, Thomas Harrison, Paul J. Rowan, Yun Hang, Yun-Xin Fu

Ex Officio Members: Kevin A. Morano, Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs, and Dr. Lisa D. Cain, Associate Vice President of Faculty Affairs and Development

Administrative Personnel: Yasmin Chebaro, Vanesa Gouldburn

Guests: Guiseppe Colasurdo

I. Introduction and Welcome

Dr. Ross Shegog, IFC Chair FY 2025

- Ross Shegog thanked everyone for attending the meeting, which was not planned initially but was arranged to take advantage of the President's availability.
- Ross Shegog mentioned the announcement of Giuseppe Colasurdo deciding to leave his position and invited him to give the state of UTHealth Houston.

II. UTHealth Houston Updates

President Colasurdo

- President's Announcement:
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo shared his decision to step down on April 1, 2025, after 14 years in the office.
 - He reflected on his journey, starting from his accidental arrival at UTHealth in 1995 and his various roles leading up to the presidency.
- State of UTHealth Houston
 - Growth in Research Expenditure:
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo mentioned that the university has now reached and exceeded the \$400 million mark for research expenditure per year. This is a significant achievement, especially considering that the university does not have its own hospital. He emphasized the creativity and efforts of the Deans and leaders in achieving this milestone.
 - Graduate School of Biomedical Science
 - The university has a substantial number of graduates in biomedical sciences.
 - He mentioned that the graduate school had its name changed to The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. This change took five years to be reflected correctly in the US News and World Report rankings. Once the correct name was used, the school's ranking jumped from 57 to 26 in just one year. This highlights the significant impact that accurate naming and branding can have on a school's reputation and ranking.
 - McWilliams School of Biomedical Informatics:
 - The school was on the verge of disappearing in 2010 but has since thrived and integrated well with the clinical group practice.
 - The School of Biomedical Informatics has seen significant growth and is currently at a record-high enrollment of 430 students. This could be attributed to the growing interest in data

sciences and artificial intelligence. He noted that these fields have become very attractive to many students.

- School of Dentistry:
 - The dental school, which is over a hundred years old, is highly ranked and in the top 10 for Blue Ridge for NIH funding.
 - Dean John Valenza is very committed to the school.
- School of Public Health:
 - The School of Public Health is experiencing a decline in enrollment due to the proliferation of new public health schools following the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being one of the top-ranked schools in the nation and the fourth largest in the country, the increased competition for students has impacted its enrollment numbers. However, Giuseppe Colasurdo expressed confidence in the quality of the program and the faculty, and he mentioned ongoing strategies to address these challenges.
- Cizik School of Nursing:
 - The School of Nursing is also facing a decline in enrollment, which is attributed to two main factors:
 - The burnout of nurses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected national enrollment numbers.
 - The lack of access to scholarships for students with incomes below \$80,000 to \$100,000 per year has made it difficult for the school to compete with other nursing programs that offer full scholarships. Additionally, the rise of online nursing education has created more competition.
 - Dean Diane Santa Maria has been working hard to address these challenges and has received funding for additional 10 recruitments for a research institute
 - The School of Nursing is highly ranked, being in the top 10-15 in the nation according to the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research for NIH funding
- School of Behavioral Health Sciences:
 - The new School of Behavioral Health Sciences is the only special item for the legislative session, seeking \$21 million for the biennium.
 - The school will address the significant gap in mental health services and education
- McGovern Medical School
 - McGovern Medical School has been in the top 10 in the nation for teaching hospitals when it comes to quality metrics such as adjusted mortality and length of stay
 - The school has maintained this ranking for 9 of the last 11 years
- Overall University Status:
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo highlighted the university's comprehensive nature, with nearly 23,000 people on the payroll, including students. He also mentioned the importance of maintaining strong relationships with affiliated hospitals, particularly Memorial Hermann, and the need for continued investment in research and education
- Future Challenges and Opportunities
 - Space Infrastructure:
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo emphasized the importance of maintaining and building new facilities as the needs arise. He mentioned that with the new building for the School of Public Health, the university is well-positioned for the next 40 years in terms of infrastructure. However, he highlighted the need for additional research space, as the current facilities are very tight. He mentioned several possibilities for new research space, including the South Campus library land.

- Clinical Revenue:
 - The university has two major affiliation agreements that are crucial for its clinical revenue. The agreement with Harris Health System, which fully staffs LBJ Hospital, is a 15-year agreement providing stability for the next 13 years. The other agreement with Memorial Hermann, which dates back to 1969, was recently extended until 2039 with a 10-year auto-extension. Giuseppe Colasurdo stressed the importance of nurturing the relationship with Memorial Hermann, as it is a high-maintenance but critical partnership.
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo mentioned that the university's clinical group practice has grown significantly. He highlighted that the group practice, which initially had gross charges of less than \$400 million per year, is now approaching \$3 billion in gross charges. He also mentioned that the university receives approximately \$700 million annually from Memorial Hermann, with a return on investment of about \$4 billion. This growth and the substantial revenue generated from clinical activities are crucial for the university's financial stability and its ability to support its academic mission.
- State Funding:
 - State funding now constitutes only about 10% of the university's budget, down from 100% state funding 55-60 years ago.
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo expressed optimism about the university's relationship with state officials and the ability to secure funding. He highlighted the importance of personal relationships and the efforts of the Government Relations Office to maintain strong ties with elected officials.
 - He also mentioned that the university had to deal with a significant financial challenge related to state funding, experiencing a \$10 million cut in state funding, which was part of a broader reduction in the 1115 waiver funding that supports supplemental payment programs.
- Federal Grants:
 - The university has been performing well in securing federal grants, which are a significant funding source. Giuseppe Colasurdo mentioned that the university's research expenditure is competitive, with about 50-60% of research expenditure coming from extramural grants. He expressed a desire for more funding to further boost research growth.
- Philanthropy:
 - Philanthropy has become increasingly important for the university, with annual philanthropic support growing from \$20 million to about \$70-80 million. Giuseppe Colasurdo emphasized the need to continue telling compelling stories and maintaining strong relationships with donors to sustain this level of support.
- Leadership and Retention of Talented Faculty and Staff:
 - Giuseppe Colasurdo stressed the critical importance of strong leadership and retaining talented faculty and staff. He mentioned that the university has lost some talented individuals recently and emphasized the need for leaders to spend time with their teams and show appreciation for their work. He shared a recent example of a faculty member who turned down a higher-paying offer from another institution because they believed in the vision and leadership at UTHealth.
- Questions and Comments
 - Ross Shegog asked Giuseppe Colasurdo about the profile of the new president and whether it would be advantageous for the new president to have clinical expertise, such as being an MD. Colasurdo responded by emphasizing the importance of human qualities and the ability to leverage the competitive advantage of the university's faculty and leaders. He mentioned that the new president

should not necessarily be a "king or queen" but rather someone who can support and enrich the university by working closely with its existing leaders.

- Debbie Cline expressed her appreciation for the in-depth information provided and shared her background of joining UTHealth from MD Anderson.
- Lisa Cain thanked Giuseppe Colasurdo for his support and leadership
- Bethany Williams inquired about the risks of uncontrolled growth and the future direction under new leadership. Giuseppe Colasurdo responded by emphasizing the importance of strategic alignment with Memorial Hermann and the need for careful management of growth.

- Remarks

- Ross Shegog thanked Giuseppe Colasurdo for his insightful presentation and wished him well in his future endeavors.
- The meeting concluded with Giuseppe Colasurdo expressing his gratitude to the faculty and staff for their support and dedication

III. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Ross Shegog, IFC Chair FY 2025

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

IV. Adjournment

Dr. Ross Shegog

The next scheduled meeting will be in person on April 16, 2025.