<p style="text-align:center">Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes – FY 2025
February 19, 2025 | Via Zoom</p>

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, Carrie A. Bakunas, Erin Fox, Gazala Siddiqui, Gurur Biliciler-Denktas, Linh P. Bui, Matthew (Matt) L. Baker, Zi Yang Jiang, Deevakar Rogith, Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Yejin Kim, Esther O. Kuyinu, Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan, Paul J. Rowan, Yun-Xin Fu, Michele D. Bright

Absent: Vuong Trung-Tran Prieto, Harnoor Singh, Julie Gutierrez, Rehal A. Bhojani, Sahiti Myneni, Ryan Vahdani, Thomas Harrison, Eric C. Jones

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: Vanesa Gouldburn

Guests: Yasmin Chebaro, Kevin A. Morano, Katie Prentice, Bassel Choucair

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes — *Dr. Ross Shegog, IFC Chair FY 2025*

- Ross Shegog welcomed everyone and noted that this is season 44, episode 396 of the IFC Series which started in 1981
- The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
- Ross introduced Vanesa Gouldburn as the new IFC Secretary

II. Announcements — *Dr. Lisa Cain, Associate VP for Faculty Affairs and Development*

- Welcome Vanesa: Vanesa has joined the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development and is expected to provide great service to the council.
- Recognition of Past Leaders: Faculty governance is highly valued at UTHealth Houston. Dr. Daniel Harrington and Dr. Bethany Williams were recognized for their exemplary service as chairs of the Inter Faculty Council, with plaques presented to them for their dedication and leadership.
- Launch of PI Grants 201 Leadership and Training Program: A new training program for principal investigators in their first three years is launching on March 18th. The program will combine leadership and operational skills, offering valuable resources and in-person interactions with researchers and administrators.

III. TMC Library — *Katie Prentice, MSIS, AHIP Executive Director, TMC Library*

- She is available to meet with faculty, staff, and students to support the enterprise.
- There is a shift in publishing from traditional paywall models to open access.
- Open access has led to increased article processing charges (APCs), especially in health sciences.
- The library does not have funds to cover everyone's APCs.
- The library is seeking transformative agreements to include publishing in their subscriptions.
- These agreements are dynamic and constantly changing.
- Costs for publishing are rising, with new platforms charging for submissions and editing services.
- The library spends $3-4 million annually on subscriptions.
- Current agreements include discounts or waivers with publishers like Wiley and Elsevier.
- The library participates in the UT system digital library for better deals.
- They review subscriptions annually and adjust based on cost and popularity.
- Negotiations with publishers like Elsevier are ongoing to secure better terms.
- Faculty input is encouraged for new subscriptions and resources.
- The library recently added the NEJM AI journal based on faculty suggestion.
- The library promotes resources like the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Q&A Summary
- Lobbying for Journals: Lobbying for specific journals is generally not possible as publishers do not allow a la carte options. Decisions are made at the platform level.
- Wiley's Hybrid Journals: Wiley includes only hybrid journals in their agreements. Although effective from January, they were not ready to activate it immediately. Waivers will be retroactively applied for submissions after January.
- Federal Funding Impact: The library's budget is primarily funded by member institutions (95%), with UT Health Houston and Baylor College of Medicine being the largest contributors.
- Budget Process: The library is currently in its budget process, working with finance representatives from member institutions.
- Federal Changes: Changes at the federal level regarding indirect costs are being monitored, especially those from the National Library of Medicine and NIH.
- Impact on Indexing: Executive orders are affecting the backend of library science, including how articles are indexed.
- Financial Impact: No direct financial impact from federal changes yet, but potential indirect impacts are being watched.
- Advocacy: Advocacy for maintaining traditional processes for subject headings is encouraged to avoid politically motivated change

IV. Governmental Relations Updates   *Dr. Kevin A. Morano, Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs*

- Lack of Clarity: There is a general lack of clarity about the current political situation and its impact.
- Updates Sent: UT Health has sent out updates to keep everyone informed.
- Research Enterprise Reduction: There is a move to reduce the size, scale, and scope of the research enterprise.
- Layoffs: Significant layoffs at NIH and NSF, including both new and longstanding employees.
- Voluntary Resignations: Many senior staff are voluntarily resigning.
- Grant Submission Challenges: The reduction in staff will slow down the grant review process.
- NIH Indirect Costs: A surprise announcement to reduce NIH indirect costs to 15% was temporarily halted by a court injunction.
- Current Indirect Rate: UT Health continues to submit grants with the currently negotiated indirect rate of 56%.
- Financial Impact: If the IDC rates were reduced to 15%, it would have a significant financial impact, estimated at $50 million annually.
- Negotiations: The current situation is seen as the beginning of negotiations for the federal budget cycle.
- Advocacy: UT system and other universities are advocating for the importance of research funding.
- No Panic: The core message is not to panic; research activities will continue.
- Hiring Hold: A hold on new hiring has been implemented, with exceptions for grant-funded positions.
- Recruitment and Funding: Recruitment and funding for startup packages may be slowed down.
- Grant Awards: No new grant awards have been received since the end of January, but continuations are being approved.

Q&A Summary
- Expected Notices of Award: Normally, 5-10 notices of award would be expected in the past three weeks.
- Significant Reduction: Going from 5-10 to zero is significant and concerning.
- Lack of Communication: There is a lack of communication about the status of awards, making the situation more frightening.
- Diversity-Related Grants: Diversity-linked grant opportunities have disappeared from federal websites and some slated for award were canceled.
- DEI Components: No news about T32 grant awards with DEI components; speculation that DEI components may need to be eliminated.
- Communication Freeze: A communication freeze has been put in place, limiting information flow.
- Research Funding Risks: Researchers studying areas like climate change and border health may be at risk of losing funding.

- Workforce Reductions: No current plans for workforce reductions; hiring hold is in place to avoid layoffs.
- Preparedness for DEI Funding Loss: UT Health is better prepared for the loss of DEI funding due to previous state proclamations.
- Contact Information: Constituents are encouraged to contact Dr. Morano or sponsored projects for questions.
- Commitment to Research: UT Health is committed to protecting research activities despite the changing landscape.

V.   IT User Experience and Support   Bassel Choucair, Deputy Chief Information Officer,
                                                                              Associate Vice President, IT User Experience and Support

- Introduction: Bassel Choucair has extensive experience at UT Health, having worked there for 33 years. He is now the Deputy CIO and is visiting various inter-institutional councils to provide updates on IT security and other initiatives.
- Prohibited Software: The Texas governor has issued a list of prohibited software, including TikTok and certain Chinese applications. TikTok is blocked on university networks. Deepsea, a Chinese AI tool, has two versions: a hosted version (blocked) and an open-source version (allowed after discussions with the UT system).
- AI Tools: UT Health offers two AI tools for faculty and staff:
- Microsoft Copilot: This tool integrates with Office 365 and Teams. It can provide detailed meeting minutes from recorded Teams meetings, summarize emails, and assist with various tasks. The basic chat version is free, but the full version costs $30 per month per department.
- OpenAI ChatGPT: Similar to Copilot, this tool offers different functionalities and is also available for $30 per month per department.
- Data Governance and Records Management: Basil is focusing on improving data governance and records management at UT Health. This includes:
- Spring Cleaning: Encouraging staff to discard unnecessary documents to reduce storage costs.
- Record Retention: Educating staff on what documents need to be kept and for how long, based on legal requirements.
- Data Classification: Initiating a project to classify data (e.g., clinical, research, academic) to better manage and retain records.
- Research Storage Options: UT Health provides storage solutions for researchers:
- On-Site Storage: The first 2 terabytes are free, and additional storage costs $8 per terabyte per month.
- Cloud Storage: Different pricing applies for cloud storage options.
- Enterprise Tools: UT Health offers licenses for several popular research tools:
- BioRender: A tool for creating scientific illustrations, widely used by researchers.
- GraphPad Prism: Software for statistical analysis and graphing.
- SnapGene: A tool for molecular biology research, particularly for DNA sequence analysis.

Q&A Summary
- Orientation Workshops: UT Health offers training workshops for Microsoft Copilot. These sessions are recorded, and more can be scheduled if there is interest.
- Spring Cleaning Initiative: The initiative to encourage staff to discard unnecessary files will start soon. However, there is no immediate plan to delete data based on classification.
- Free vs. Paid AI Tools: The free versions of ChatGPT and Copilot are suitable for general use, while the paid versions offer more data security and are recommended for handling PHI data.
- Contact for AI Tools: To access the free versions, staff should contact their local area network manager

VI.   Presidential Search Committee Update   _Dr. Ross Shegog_
- Vote of Confidence: Appreciation for the vote of confidence in the search committee representatives.
- Updates on Process: The committee will keep everyone updated on the search process and provide opportunities for input on important issues.
- Representation: There are three representatives on the search committee, but they are not from every school.
- Search Firm: Uncertainty about whether a search firm is on board yet.

- Communication: Vanesa will act as a communication conduit to keep everyone informed between meetings.
- Nominations and Website: Information on whether nominations will be accepted and if there will be a website for potential candidates will be provided.
- Search Committee List: A list of search committee members is available and can be included in the minutes.

VII.   Faculty Tribunal Panel   *Dr. Ross Shegog*
- Tribunal Service: Thanks to Jake Chen, Eric Jones, Carolyn Pickering, and Licong Cui for stepping up to be on the tribunal. This role may not require immediate action but is important if issues arise.

VIII.   Burks Committee Call   *Dr. Ross Shegog*
- Volunteers are needed for the scholarship committee to review applications for outstanding meritorious scholars. The scholarship is funded by Thomas Burke and is an annual event.
- Committee Representation: Representatives are needed from the School of Dentistry, McGovern, the Cizik School of Nursing, and GSBS. Serving on the committee is a valuable service and a good addition to a CV.
- Application Review: The committee will review applications, select finalists, and propose them to the IFC for voting.
- Timeline: Applications are due by March 3rd, and the review process needs to be completed quickly to award scholarships before student graduation.
- Follow-Up: Vanesa or Yasmin will follow up with potential volunteers and ensure current committee members are still engaged.

IX.   School Reports Template Proposal   *Dr. Ross Shegog*
- Standardized Approach: The goal is to standardize school reports to ensure consistency.
- Two Pages: The report includes two pages; the second page is a slide format used for reporting to the Faculty Advisory Council in Austin.
- Proposed Format: The proposed format includes sections for administration, recent events and initiatives, media exposure and awards, and enrollments or graduations or dissertation presentations.
- Feedback Requested: Feedback is requested to ensure everyone is on board with the new template.
- Implementation: The new template will be tested and adjusted based on feedback to improve the reporting process.

X.   FAC Meeting Updates   *Dr. Kurt Kasper*
- Meeting Overview: The meeting took place at the end of January, with Chancellor Milliken and senior UT system executive leadership addressing the group.
- Executive Orders: There is confusion nationally about how to respond to recent executive orders. UT system is waiting for official communications to determine their response.
- Local Campus Guidance: Constituent campuses are encouraged to look to their local leadership for guidance on specific issues, such as immigration enforcement.
- Texas Legislative Session: The session is ongoing, with early stages in January. The governor's legislative agenda did not initially include higher education, but concerns about faculty participation in hiring decisions were later expressed.
- Potential Legislative Actions: Faculty governance, participation in hiring decisions, curriculum in higher education, and tenure may be targeted for legislative action.
- Bill Passage: The Texas governmental structure makes it difficult to pass bills, with many filed but few becoming law.
- New Liaison: Dr. Serenity King is the new liaison between the Faculty Advisory Council and UT system executive leadership.
- Presidential Searches: Three presidential searches are ongoing: UT Health, UT San Antonio, and UT Austin.

XI.   Additional Announcements   *Dr. Ross Shegog*
- Meeting with Classified Staff Council: A meeting was held with the university classified staff council, chaired by Nina Fairbanks and incoming chair Laura Rma. The council focuses on the quality of life for classified staff. There are common interests and missions between the IFC and the classified staff council, and future meetings are planned to explore potential joint activities, especially in areas like wellness.
- HOOP Update: No recent meeting, but an upcoming meeting will discuss HOOP 26 Achievement Awards and related edits.
- Holistic Wellness: The UT Health Wellness committee will focus on wellness for staff, faculty, and students.

- Inspirational Message: A story from Dr. Cain's father about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. seeing the brightest star during a dark time, encouraging everyone to look for their own bright star in challenging times.

- **Subcommittee Assignments and Discussions**
- The last 15 minutes of the meeting were used for subcommittees to get together to discuss their charges.

XII.   **Adjournment**   *Dr. Ross Shegog*

The next scheduled meeting will be via Zoom on May 21, 2025.