<div align="center">

Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes – FY 2025
May 21, 2025 | Via Zoom

</div>

Present: Ross Shegog, Bethany R. Williams, F. Kurt Kasper, Deborah (Debbie) Cline, Vuong Trung-Tran Prieto, Robert Coghlan, Francine K. Snow, Shane R. Cunha, Zheng (Jake) Chen, Yejin Kim, Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan, Thomas Harrison, Ryan Vahdani, Esther O. Kuyinu, Matthew (Matt) L. Baker, Barbara Orlando, , Linh P. Bui, Erin Fox, Andrea N. Taylor, Harnoor Singh, Eric C. Jones, Paul J. Rowan, Laura Rademacher
Absent: Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Sahiti Myneni, Deevakar Rogith, Gurur Biliciler-Denktas, Carrie A. Bakunas, Zi Yang Jiang, Rehal A. Bhojani, Gazala Siddiqui, Yun-Xin Fu,
Ex Officio Members: Dr. Lisa D. Cain, Associate Vice President of Faculty Affairs and Development.
Administrative Personnel: Vanesa Gouldburn

I. **Welcome and Approval of Minutes**   *Dr. Ross Shegog, IFC Chair FY 2025*
   • Debbie motioned to approve the minutes; Francine seconded the motion
II. **Announcements**   *Dr. Lisa Cain, Associate VP for Faculty Affairs and Development*
   • **Professional Wellbeing Survey**:

     • Presented the Professional Wellbeing Academic Consortium (PWAC) survey to the University Executive Council on **May 7, 2025**.
     • Plans to collaborate with the Interfaculty Council's committee on their wellness and burnout survey.
   • **Faculty Art Exhibition**:

     • Scheduled for **June 24, 2025**, from **11:30 AM to 1:00 PM** at **TM3 Helix**.
     • Open to all faculty to showcase artistic talents (e.g., music, dance, photography, sculpture).
     • Currently includes 36 submitted art pieces and one musical performance.
     • Organized in collaboration with the **McGovern Institute of Medical Humanities**.
     • Aimed at fostering community and showcasing the creative side of faculty.
     • Faculty may sign up via the provided link or by contacting Dr. Cain or Vanesa.
   • **Grants 201 PI Training Program**:

     • Recently concluded with a closing ceremony.
     • Included approximately 25 participants.
   • **AI PI Training Program**:

     • Curriculum design committee formed with representatives from all schools.
     • Draft curriculum in development.
     • Program will offer customizable tracks, including:
       • AI in Clinical Practice
       • AI in Research
       • AI in Education and Teaching
       • AI in the Humanities (tentative)
     • Will include a foundational AI component for beginners.
     • Joint initiative between the **Office of Faculty Affairs and Development** and the **School of Bioinformatics**.
   • **UTHealth Wellness Committee**:

     • Actively collecting input on wellness challenges, activities, and successes from all schools.
     • Aims to enhance faculty support and well-being across the institution.
   • **ROTA Applicants**:

     • Applications have been reviewed.
     • Finalists to be submitted to the UT System by **May 30, 2025**.
     • Notifications to applicants will be sent shortly.
   • **President's Scholars Award Luncheon**:

     • Scheduled for the following day to honor and celebrate award recipients.

- **Cross-Campus Collaboration**:
    - Encouraged faculty to utilize the **collaboration site** and **faculty expertise database**.
    - Emphasized the importance of breaking down silos and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

III.   New Business

Call for Chair Elect Nomination   **Dr. Ross Shegog**
- The meeting proceeded with a call for nominations for the incoming Interfaculty Council Chair.
- Nomination Process Overview:
    - Open invitation for nominations.
    - Nominees are asked to submit a one-page statement expressing their interest.
    - An election follows the nomination period.
- Leadership Rotation Context:
    - The chair position rotates among schools to ensure equitable leadership opportunities.
    - The School of Nursing is next in line for the chair position.
    - Francine Snow has been identified as an initial nominee.
- Past Chairs:
    - 2021: Elda Ramirez (School of Nursing)
    - 2021–2022: Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer (School of Biomedical Informatics)
    - 2022–2023: Dan Harrington (School of Dentistry)
    - 2023–2024: Bethany Williams (McGovern Medical School)
    - 2024–2025: Ross Shegog (School of Public Health)
    - 2025–2026: Kurt Kasper (School of Dentistry, incoming)
- Additional nominations are welcome beyond the meeting date.
- If no further nominations are received, a vote by acclamation may be held.
Leadership Reflections and Encouragement
- Members were encouraged to consider leadership roles as valuable learning experiences.
- Serving in the Interfaculty Council provides insight into:
    - Institutional governance
    - Faculty-administration relations
    - System-wide collaboration across UT campuses
- Dr. Cain emphasized that such roles are honorable and educational, offering a foundation for future leadership positions such as dean, vice president, or president.

Academic Dishonesty in Our Age of Online Sharing Sites   **Dr. Francine Snow**
- Introduction:
    - Francine Snow raised concerns about academic integrity, particularly regarding students gaining unfair advantage through online platforms.
    - The issue was brought to the Interfaculty Council (IFC) for awareness and discussion, though it may not fall strictly within IFC's domain.
- Key Concerns Raised:
    - Students are accessing and uploading exams, papers, and assignments to sites like Course Hero.
    - A faculty member discovered UTHealth materials (e.g., School of Nursing physics exams) on Course Hero after purchasing a basic membership to investigate.
    - Course Hero incentivizes users to upload academic content in exchange for access to other materials, potentially encouraging plagiarism.
- Institutional Response:
    - CSON and other schools implement measures such as:
        - Secure exam protocols
        - Use of plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin
        - Enforcement of academic integrity policies
    - Despite these efforts, faculty often must rely on policy enforcement after violations occur.

- Legal and Ethical Questions:
  - Discussion included whether this issue is purely ethical or if there are legal implications.
  - Suggestion to consult legal counsel to determine if any action can be taken against platforms like Course Hero.

  Q&A and Additional Comments
- Debbie Cline:
  - Acknowledged that while schools have plagiarism policies, the issue is broader and growing.
  - Noted national discussions and webinars on the topic.
  - Raised the question of whether UTHealth has policies addressing student-uploaded content to third-party sites.
  - Emphasized the need for a proactive institutional approach.
- Ross (Chair):
  - Noted this was his first exposure to Course Hero.
  - Emphasized that the source of plagiarism (AI, Course Hero, peer sharing) is secondary to ensuring authenticity of student work.
  - Asked if any legal actions or escalated inquiries had been observed in other institutions.
- Debbie Cline (continued):
  - Warned about limitations of AI detection tools, including false positives from platforms like Grammarly or even Microsoft Word.
  - Stated that while AI detection is useful, it must be applied cautiously.
  - Confirmed that no legal actions against Course Hero had been discussed in the forums she attended.
  - Highlighted the need for a broader, proactive strategy to address these evolving challenges.
- Barbara:
  - Shared a conversation with a high school teacher who emphasized evaluating student work based on the evidence used to support arguments, as AI tools currently struggle to generate credible sources.
  - Suggested that faculty consider placing more grading emphasis on the quality and presence of evidence rather than just writing style or content.
- Faculty Reflections:
  - Acknowledged the long-standing challenge of academic dishonesty, including:
    - Use of offsite proctored exams
    - Peer sharing of past assignments
    - Use of tools like Turnitin with adjusted settings (e.g., excluding references)
  - Expressed appreciation for Barbara's idea and openness to new strategies.
- Concerns About Online Platforms:
  - Discussion continued around Course Hero and similar platforms that may encourage unethical behavior by requiring users to upload academic content to gain access to others.
  - Raised the question of whether this behavior crosses into legal or ethical violations and whether institutions can or should take action against such platforms.
- Bethany:
  - Mentioned that AI in the classroom is likely to be a focus area for the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) in the upcoming year.
  - Suggested that UT System could potentially develop guidance or policy to help institutions address these challenges.
  - Agreed that the issue of companies encouraging students to misuse faculty-created materials should be escalated to the system level, where there may be more leverage to address it.
  - Committed to bringing this issue to the FAC liaison and exploring whether it can be raised with the UT System Chancellor's Office.
- **Faculty Perspectives on AI and Original Work**:
  - Emphasis remains on students producing **original, individual work** that demonstrates synthesis and critical thinking.
  - Some faculty explicitly **prohibit the use of generative AI** in assignments, even for editing, while others allow limited use with oversight.

- **Grammarly** is generally permitted, though it also uses AI.
- **Instructional Strategies to Mitigate Dishonesty**:

  - Assignments are often structured as **multi-stage projects** (e.g., drafts, revisions) to encourage authentic student engagement and reduce opportunities for plagiarism.
  - Faculty assess **incremental improvement** and **responsiveness to feedback** rather than just final output.
  - Assignments are designed to be **context-specific and integrative**, making it harder to rely on generic or AI-generated content.
- **Challenges and Reflections**:

  - Faculty noted the **time-intensive nature** of grading iterative assignments but emphasized the value in student learning and development.
  - Some students submit strong initial drafts, while others struggle with complex writing tasks and require significant guidance.
  - Faculty expressed **frustration mid-semester**, but often see meaningful progress by the end, validating the process.
- **Policy Considerations and Next Steps**:

  - **Kurt Kasper** suggested reviewing **HOOP 186, Appendix A**, which defines academic dishonesty at UTHealth.
  - Recommended evaluating whether current policy language sufficiently addresses AI-related misconduct or if **revisions are needed**.
  - Emphasized that this review could serve as a **starting point for institutional action** on AI and academic integrity.

IV.   **Updates**   *Drs. Ross Shegog / Kurt Kasper / Bethany Williams*

Presidential Search Advisory Committee
- Due to non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) signed by committee members, specific details cannot be shared.
- Inquiries are referred to the Chancellor's Office for guidance on what can be disclosed.
- Key milestones in the process:
  - March 17: Initial meeting and review of candidate bios.
  - May 5: Second meeting held.
  - June 2–3: Upcoming candidate interviews scheduled.
- The search has attracted many qualified applicants.
- The process is described as well-structured and progressing smoothly.
- Reassurance was given that there are no concerns or issues with the search process at this time.

Faculty Advisory Council (FAC)
- Chancellor's Remarks:
  - Described the current period as a challenging and unique time.
  - Shared positive developments, including:
    - A decrease in the anticipated revocation of visas.
    - Strong performance of UT institutions in access and earnings ratings, indicating success in serving underserved communities.
  - Expressed concerns about federal-level uncertainty and curriculum oversight.
  - Warned that accreditation may be used as a tool for coercion.
- SB 37 Task Force Update (Bethany):
  - FAC formed an ad hoc committee to review SB 37 and provide recommendations to UT System.
  - The bill has passed both the Senate and House, with minimal changes expected before final approval.
  - The bill is tied to other legislation and funding, making its passage highly likely.
  - The committee is working to:
    - Draft recommended language for a Regents Rule establishing faculty advisory councils.

- Analyze structural differences in faculty governance across campuses (e.g., UTHealth's Interfaculty Council vs. single senates).
- Assess faculty roles in curriculum development under the new law.
- Evaluate changes to faculty grievance processes, such as the impact on faculty tribunals.
  - Kurt Kasper is co-chairing the committee.
  - The goal is to provide recommendations before the expected September 1 implementation date.
- Legislative Influence and Policy Impact:
  - Bethany confirmed there is no further opportunity to influence the bill.
  - Despite efforts by UT System and other institutions to educate legislators, the bill is expected to pass largely as-is.
  - The bill will change how IFC members are selected and may affect governance structures within individual schools.
  - A more favorable version of the bill emerged from the House, though it still reduces faculty authority in key areas.
  - The most recent version of the bill will be shared with IFC members.
- Additional Observations:
  - The new bill increases administrative control over faculty governance, shifting from elected to nominated positions.
  - Introduces an oversight body to monitor compliance and review curricula.
  - Chancellor Milliken noted that UT institutions may avoid federal scrutiny (e.g., like Harvard) due to alignment with state legislation.
- Closing Remarks:
  - Appreciation was expressed to Bethany and Kurt for their leadership and advocacy.
  - The council will continue monitoring developments and share updates as UT System provides further guidance.

HOOP subcommittee
- No formal meeting was held since the last report; therefore, no significant activity to report at this time.
- Amy Dixon was asked to review a UT System-level policy currently in development that closely resembles HOOP 186, which addresses student conduct.
- The system-level policy appears to be modeled on HOOP 186, making it particularly relevant in light of recent discussions on academic integrity and AI.
- The subcommittee was notified as a courtesy and given the option to review the draft policy.
- It was suggested that this review be added to the subcommittee's upcoming agenda for further discussion.

University Classified Staff Council
- Tri-Group Collaboration Initiative:
  - Ongoing efforts to foster collaboration between faculty, classified staff, and students.
  - Proposal to include student representation in UCSC discussions was positively received.
  - Students had already expressed interest in engaging with other campus groups, reinforcing the value of this initiative.
  - The goal is to incrementally build a shared governance body that includes all three constituencies.
- Memo on Political and Immigration-Related Concerns:
  - A memo is being drafted to address growing concerns among faculty, staff, and students regarding:
    - Immigration enforcement on campus (e.g., what to do if officers appear).
    - Visa revocations and their implications.
    - Loss of funding and institutional response.
    - Media inquiries and how to handle requests for statements or reactions.
    - Advocacy roles for faculty, staff, and students—what is permissible and appropriate.
  - The memo aims to provide clear guidance and communication protocols for these scenarios.
- Student Concerns and Lack of Guidance:

- - Students report receiving no institutional guidance on what to do if their visa is revoked or if they face related challenges.
    - A student regent recently raised this issue during a campus visit, highlighting the urgency and visibility of the concern.
  - Next Steps:
    - The draft memo will be circulated to IFC members for review and feedback.
    - Stakeholders suggested the memo be shared with legal counsel and key administrators (e.g., Dr. Morano, Dr. Kane) before finalization.
    - Strong support was expressed for prompt action, given the widespread anxiety and lack of clarity across campus groups.

V.   Round-Up on Progress of Subcommittees

1. Administrative Affairs Subcommittee
- Focus: Development of a **Faculty Thrival Guide** to support onboarding and orientation for new faculty, in collaboration with Dr. Kane.
- **Progress**:
  - Small group meetings have occurred.
  - Tiffany is gathering data from individual schools regarding their onboarding processes.
  - Once data collection is complete, the group will reconvene to compile a report.
- **Next Steps**:
  - Consider creating a **reporting template** to standardize how findings are presented to the IFC.

2. Faculty Status, Rights, and Responsibilities Subcommittee
- Focus: **Wellness Survey Redesign** and coordination with the Professional Wellbeing Academic Consortium (PWAC).
- **Progress**:
  - Survey feedback has been received from most schools.
  - Planning to meet with Dr. Cain to align efforts with the PWAC initiative.
- **Next Steps**:
  - Finalize survey design and launch the updated wellness survey.

3. Governance and Academic Affairs Subcommittee
- Focus: **IFC Identity Redux** and increasing visibility and communication about IFC's role and activities.
- **Progress**:
  - No progress reported due to the **lack of a designated chair**.
- **Next Steps**:
  - Appoint a chair to lead the subcommittee.
  - Explore collaboration with UTHealth communications staff to develop a **communications plan** and **regular reporting strategy** to raise IFC's profile.

VI.   School Reports

McGovern Medical School

- Total enrollment: **1,086 students**.
- Recent graduation: Approximately **239 graduates**.
- Active calendar of **events, awards**, and **faculty senate speakers**.
- Comment made on the usefulness of a reporting template, though some data is difficult to gather monthly.

School of Public Health

- Successfully held a **graduation ceremony**.

- Recently conducted a **faculty-wide meeting** with **breakout sessions excluding administration** to allow open discussion of challenges and suggestions.
- The new meeting format was considered **productive and well-received**.

McWilliams School of Biomedical Informatics (MSBMI)

- No representative present to provide a verbal update.

Cizik School of Nursing (CSON)

- Celebrated **National Nurses Week** with events focused on **community building and recognition**.
- Completed the **implementation of a new faculty onboarding process**, including a **faculty mentorship program**.
- Ongoing development of an **educator's portfolio** using FOLIO to highlight teaching contributions.
- Finalizing a **new peer observation process** for evaluating teaching effectiveness, to be presented at the July faculty assembly.

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS)

- Held a successful **2025 commencement ceremony**, with strong **media coverage** and student engagement.
- Hosted a **pre-commencement celebration** at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.
- Received a **record number of applications** for admissions; had to **pause new offers** due to capacity limits.

School of Dentistry

- No representative present to provide a verbal update.

VII.   Adjournment   **Dr. Ross Shegog**

The next scheduled meeting will be via Zoom on July 16, 2025.