

## Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes – FY 2025

June 18, 2025 | Via Zoom

**Present:** Ross Shegog, Bethany R. Williams, F. Kurt Kasper, Deborah (Debbie) Cline, Francine K. Snow, Robert Coghlan, Vuong Trung-Tran Prieto, Shane R. Cunha, Zheng (Jake) Chen, Andrea N. Taylor, Barbara Orlando, Erin Fox, Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş, Harnoor Singh, Matthew (Matt) L. Baker, Deevakar Rogith, Yejin Kim, Esther O. Kuyinu, Ryan Vahdani, Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan, Eric C. Jones, Paul J. Rowan, Laura Rademacher, Yasmin Chebaro

**Absent:** Carrie A. Bakunas, Gazala Siddiqui, Linh P. Bui, Rehal A. Bhojani, Zi Yang Jiang, Sahiti Myneni, Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Thomas Harrison, Yun-Xin Fu,

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

**Guest Speakers:** Rose Mary Valencia, Scott Forbes, Kara Crawford, Liam McElhiney, Meredith Mills

**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*
  - **Uniting Through Creativity Art Exhibit:** Scheduled for June 24, featuring 23 artists and 40–45 pieces; event from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM with food provided.
  - **Shine Academy Nominations:** Due July 15; information sent to school deans.
  - **Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award:** Two nominees submitted (School of Public Health and School of Dentistry); awaiting UT System results.
  - **AI Training Program:** Curriculum in development with input from all seven schools; planned launch in fall; includes multiple components (fundamentals, clinical, research, teaching, admin, arts/humanities).
  - **Faculty Wellness Survey:** Conducted across schools; results will inform a strategic wellness plan; update to be shared with IFC.
- III. **Office of International Affairs Updates** *Rose Mary Valencia, Executive Director*
  - **Travel Guidance:** Students advised on risks of international travel; reminded to carry proper documentation and notify the office of delays.
  - **Visa Issues:** Temporary halt on visa appointments due to federal security review; students encouraged to keep checking for openings.
  - **Travel Bans:** Full or partial bans affect several countries; students from these regions advised to avoid travel abroad.
  - **Admissions & Entry:** No reported student withdrawals due to fear or family pressure; international admissions remain strong across schools.
  - **Visa Denials:** Low denial rate; some denials linked to family immigration history; deferments offered when possible.
  - **UT System Subcommittee:** Addressing unclear definitions of “unlawful presence”; UT System to issue official communication—institutions asked not to send independent messages.
  - **Support & Communication:** UT Health and MD Anderson leadership praised for strong support of international students; communications are carefully vetted to avoid misinformation.
  - **In-State Tuition Lawsuit:** Ongoing legal issue in Texas may affect undocumented students' tuition status; updates pending.
  - **Student Impact:** No increase in students leaving our programs; strong institutional support cited as a key factor.

- **Admissions Trends:** Continued growth in international student admissions; office issues immigration documents promptly.
- **Faculty Guidance:** Faculty should refer students with visa concerns directly to the International Office or Rosemary Valencia.

#### IV. Legislative Session Outcomes

*Scott Forbes, Senior VP, Government Relations*

*Kara Crawford, VP, Government Relations*

##### Overall Funding Outcome

- UT Health successfully secured nearly \$67 million in new funding from the legislative session, reflecting strong advocacy and alignment with state priorities in healthcare and education.

##### Formula Funding

- There was a net decrease of approximately \$4.3 million in general formula funding, primarily due to declining or stagnant enrollment figures. However, this was partially offset by targeted increases in other funding streams:
- **Mission-Specific Formula:** An increase of \$19 million, likely reflecting recognition of UT Health's unique contributions to state health priorities.
- **New Dental Clinical Education Formula:** A new funding stream added \$4.8 million, supporting the expansion and enhancement of dental education and clinical training infrastructure.

##### Texas Epidemic Public Health Institute (TEPHI)

- No state funding was allocated due to its association with COVID-19, which has become politically sensitive. However, federal funding opportunities are being pursued to sustain TEPHI's operations and research.

##### Additional Appropriations Highlights

- **All-Payer Claims Database (APCD):** Received \$9 million to support the development of a comprehensive database aimed at improving transparency in healthcare costs, enabling better policy decisions, and improving the quality of healthcare.
- **School of Behavioral Health Sciences:** Awarded \$10.5 million to establish a new school focused on addressing the growing mental health workforce shortage and expanding behavioral health education.
- **Bed Rate Increases:** Daily reimbursement rates for inpatient psychiatric care at the Dunn Center and HCPC were increased to \$770/day, resulting in \$9 million in additional funding to support operations and patient care.
- **HCPC Renovations:** \$13 million allocated for infrastructure upgrades at the Harris County Psychiatric Center, enhancing safety, capacity, and quality of care.
- **Firefighter Cancer Research:** \$5 million funded for research into air quality and carcinogen exposure, supporting occupational health initiatives for first responders.

##### Major Bills Discussed

- **Dementia Research and Prevention Institute (DPRIT):** A proposed \$3 billion investment over 10 years, pending a public vote in November, to establish a statewide institute focused on dementia research and prevention.
- **AI Governance (SB 1964):** Establishes a framework for inventorying, testing, and regulating AI technologies in state agencies, including a "sandbox" for innovation and guardrails to ensure ethical use. UT System secured: Real AI: \$15 million in research funds

- **Foreign Property Ownership (SB 17):** Restricts property purchases and rentals by visa holders from countries deemed adversarial (North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia) raising concerns about academic and research collaboration impacts.
- **Accreditation Reform (SB 530):** Permits institutions to use non-SACS accreditors approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), potentially increasing flexibility but raising accreditation consistency concerns.

#### Other Notable Bills

- **SB 2308:** Authorizes clinical trials of ibogaine, a psychedelic compound, for potential use in treating substance use disorders.
- **HB 138:** Launches the Health Impact Cost and Coverage Analysis Program (HICCAP) to evaluate the economic and coverage implications of proposed health policies.
- **SB 25:** Establishes the Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee, which may influence curriculum changes in medical and nursing schools to emphasize nutrition education.
- **SB 31:** Clarifies the definition of “medical emergency” under Texas abortion law (SB 8), aiming to provide legal clarity for healthcare providers.

#### *SB37 Deep Dive*

*Dr. Kevin Morano, Senior VP of Academic and Faculty Affairs*

*Liam McElhiney, Senior Legal Officer*

*Meredith Mills, Managing Legal Officer*

#### Governance Shift

- Transfers **greater authority to Boards of Regents and THECB**, reducing institutional autonomy in faculty governance.

#### Faculty Governance Changes

- **All existing faculty councils must be dissolved by August 31, 2025.**
- Institutions may have **only one faculty governance body**, centralizing decision-making.
- **Presidents will appoint presiding officers**, removing faculty-elected leadership.
- Meetings must be **open to the public and livestreamed** if a quorum is present.
- **No compensation** for council members unless explicitly approved by the board.
- **Interim Period:** From **Sept 1 to Jan 1**, no governance body will exist unless UT System issues interim guidance.
- **Accreditation Concerns:** These changes may **jeopardize accreditation**, as shared governance is a key criterion; **waivers may be necessary**.

#### *Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) Update*

*Drs. Bethany Williams/Kurt Kasper*

- **Current Status:** Campuses continuing operations as usual until Sept 1.
- **FAC Membership:** Continuing with current representatives.
- **Advocacy:** FAC is actively communicating faculty concerns to UT System and Regents.
- **Regents Rule Timeline:**
  - **Draft expected by July 1**
  - **Vote anticipated in August**
  - **Goal:** Reconstitute faculty senates under new rules.

## V. New Business

### *Chair-Elect Vote*

- **Nominee:** Francine (uncontested)
- **Motion:** Approved unanimously
- **Acknowledgment:** Gratitude expressed for stepping into the role during a pivotal time.

### *Open Discussion & Concerns*

- **Faculty Concerns:**
  - Impact on school-level senates and curriculum committees.
  - Need for clear communication and guidance.
  - Accreditation and policy continuity.
- **Suggestions:**
  - Continue business as usual until further guidance.
  - Invite legal or leadership to school-level meetings for clarity.
  - Prepare policies for legal review before Sept 1.

## VI. Updates/Closing Remarks/Adjournment

***Dr. Ross Shegog***

- **Memo to Dr. Love:** Draft included in meeting packet; follow-up confirmation to be sent.
- **Presidential Search Update:** Names submitted to Board of Regents; decision expected by fall.