

Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes
FY 2020 – June 17, 2020 – Webex

Present: Dr. Elda Ramirez, Dr. Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer, Dr. Syed Hashmi, Dr. Nicholas R. De Lay, Dr. Daniel Harrington, Dr. Joseph Alcorn, Dr. Catherine Ambrose, Dr. Elaheh Ashtari, Dr. Meena Bhattacharjee, Dr. Nathan Carlin, Dr. Carmen Dessauer, Dr. Donald Molony, Dr. Kenya Parks, Dr. Bethany Williams, Dr. Licong Cui, Dr. Luca Giancardo, Dr. Kirk Roberts, Dr. Debora Simmons, Dr. Cameron Jeter, Dr. Ariadne Letra, Dr. Hugh Pierpont, Dr. Michele White, Dr. Sandra Branson, Dr. Francine Snow, Dr. Rebecca Tsusaki, Dr. Cecilia Ganduglia-Cazaban, Dr. Ross Shegog, Dr. Michael Swartz, and Dr. Pauline Monsegue-Bailey

Absent: Dr. Nachum Dafny, Dr. Patrick Laird, Dr. Craig Hanis, and Mr. Jeffrey Ackroyd

Ex-Officio Attendees: Dr. Kevin Morano and Dr. Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş

Administrative Personnel: Ms. Terrie Schade-Lugo

I. CALL TO ORDER *Dr. Elda Ramirez, IFC Chair FY 2020*
Dr. Elda Ramirez, IFC Chair FY 2020, called the meeting to order at 11:32 AM.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES *Dr. Ramirez*

- Dr. Ramirez polled the members for any objections or corrections to the minutes for January 15, 2020. Upon motion made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- Dr. Ramirez polled the members for any objections or corrections to the minutes for February 19, 2020. Upon motion made and seconded, the minutes were unanimously approved.

III. NEW BUSINESS

UTFAC REPORT *Dr. Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş*

- Dr. Biliciler-Denktaş stated that the UTFAC had a few meetings and had multiple discussions. The following are areas discussed or expected to continue for FY 2021:
 - The charges for next year will be continued in FY 2021; however, anything that requires financial backing will probably not be done this upcoming year (e.g., parental leave.)
 - Sick leave and vacations were discussed with human resources and the office of general counsel. Future meetings and discussions will be set on these topics.
 - One-year contracts for non-tenure-track faculty is a big discussion on the Health Affairs side of UTFAC. This topic will be discussed with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors in the future.
 - A survey was distributed to the UTFAC reps regarding COVID and what the campuses were doing that included numerous questions concerning COVID. The survey results will be shared with the IFC membership.
 - The UTFAC did meet with Chancellor James B. Milliken, Executive Vice Chancellor John M. Zerwas, M.D., and Executive Vice Chancellor Steven Leslie, Ph.D., and discussed:
 - Efforts of UT System regarding COVID;
 - Survey Results;
 - ROTA Awards;
 - Academic Institutions returning to campus -online, how long, face-to-face, etc.; and
 - UT will follow the CDC Guidelines on campus
- **Black Lives Statement**
Dr. Biliciler-Denktaş shared the UTFAC Black Lives Matter statement affirming their stand with the recent statements from Governor Abbott, Chancellor Milliken, and others condemning acts of violence and racism towards countless unarmed Black citizens. The above-mentioned statement is made a part of these Minutes.

After a lengthy discussion amongst the IFC membership, Dr. Donald Molony requested that the IFC prepare a Resolution supporting the UTFAC's Statement, and further asked that the topic be a standing item on the IFC Meeting Agendas.

MOTION: Dr. Donald Molony made a motion to prepare a Resolution stating that the UTHealth InterFaculty Council endorses the UT System Faculty Advisory Council's Black Lives Statement. The motion was seconded and was unanimously passed.

MOTION: Dr. Donald Molony made a motion to include on all future IFC meeting agendas, in perpetuum, content related to diversity and inclusion at each school, to sustain the discussion so that the IFC would be able to keep this topic from being forgotten. The motion was seconded and was unanimously passed.

Campus Reports:

Cizik School of Nursing

Dr. Rebecca Tsusaki

- Dr. Brian Ahn received a \$2.4 million grant for continued research into non-pharmacological treatments for knee pain with the focus on altering how the brain perceives pain.
- Dr. Blackburn updated us on the search for a dean at the faculty assembly meeting last week. One applicant will be coming for a second visit/interview.
- The CSON is launching a new Jane and Robert Cizik Scholarship program that will enable one outstanding researcher to devote three years to innovative healthcare research while earning a PhD. The scholarship provides full-tuition and a \$50,000 annual stipend for three years.
- CSON is still trying to find enough agencies to put our students into, but we keep working to support our students.

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Dr. Nicholas De Lay

Coronavirus update: Expansion of Research Operations (June 2nd)

- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, UTHealth labs were operating under shift schedules.
- As of June 2nd, all labs can operate in the absence of shifts if adequate social distancing can be achieved. Otherwise, labs will continue to operate under shifts.
- Graduate students still need to request approval from GSBS to begin lab work.

Six students received a GSBS Deans' Scholarship Award

- 1st place: Ryan Durham (Lab of Vasanthi Jayaraman, Biochem. and Cell Biology)
- 2nd place: Natasha Kharas (Lab of Valentin Dragoi, Neuroscience)
- 3rd place: Alexandra Berroyer (Lab of Nayun Kim, Microbiol. and Infect. Disease)
- 4th Place: Junsuk Ko (Lab of Michael Blackburn, Biochem. and Cell Biology)
- 5th Place: Pedram Honarphisheh (Lab of Louise McCullough, Neuroscience) and Alexis Mobey (Labs of Jarek Aronowski and Louise McCullough, Neuroscience)

Presidents Research Scholarship Deadline is June 19th at 5 PM:

- \$5,000 scholarship to senior students at GSBS to recognize outstanding research accomplishments.
- More information at:
 - <https://gsbs.uth.edu/current-students/awards-and-funding-opportunities/scholarships-and-fellowships.htm>

Multiple events at GSBS to support renewed conversations on Diversity:

- GSA Town Hall on June 4th
- Walking Vigil on June 9th

- UTHHealth Town Hall on diversity and inclusion June 10: GSBS Student InterCouncil (SIC) representatives participated, and also announced open positions in their Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which was formed in 2019.

Movie:

Dr. Daniel Harrington advised that there is a movie that was supposed to be showing that was canceled during the pandemic entitled "Picture a Scientist" (www.pictureascientist.com) that follows three women scientists' lives. It tracks the struggles that they faced through harassment, gender and racial bias, and difficulties in climbing the ranks. It is available for online rental to support a theatre, and then you have 48-hours to watch. It is very timely that this movie is out now and relates to all scientists.

McGovern Medical School

Dr. Kenya Parks

Annual Diversity Committee Presentation Wade McAlister, MD, Diversity Committee Chair, Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, McGovern Medical School

- The purpose of the committee is to align McGovern Medical School faculty recruitment and retention efforts with the UTHHealth Strategic Goal of developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive academic and administrative workforce. The goal is to foster a community of faculty and staff that mirrors, culturally, the local Texas community that we serve.
- The 21 committee members and three ex officio members advise the Dean on diversity-related topics, particularly on how to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment, intention in recruitment of top talent, and improve access and enhance the success of a diverse faculty.
- The 2019 -2020 initiatives are to conduct a Diversity Engagement survey, prepare for the LCME site visit, to create Departmental Vice Chair of Diversity and Inclusion positions (currently in existence in the departments of Anesthesiology, Pediatrics, and Family Medicine) and to provide oversight of McGovern's Strategic Plan on Diversity.

Update on the Faculty Holiday Schedules by Nahid J. Rianon, MBBS, DrPH, Associate Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Geriatric and Palliative Medicine Division

- The discussion clarified issues specific departments have had regarding procedures for approving vacation, appropriate holiday compensation, conflict between University and hospital holidays regarding skeleton crew policies and associated vacation documentation requirements, and how to determine and document coverage needs during approved holidays fairly.

Transition to EPIC-EMR monthly update Babatope (Top) Fatuyi, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Information Officer

- We are on track to go live with EPIC in 2021. Providers will have the security and functionality to schedule patients. This will be included in provider training.
- The new Epic system is similar Epic in other hospital systems if they are using the same module (e.g., inpatient module). We will be going live with the newest model of Epic. Please should still take the training courses, even if you have used Epic before.

Office of Educational Program Resources

- Peggy Hsieh, M.Ed., Ph.D., Assistant Dean, Faculty and Educational Development
There are monthly Educational Development Workshops that occur on the 2nd Fridays of each month from 12-1 PM. These workshops have been transitioned to WebEx during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, there are educational modules that can be accessed online:
<http://go.uth.edu/EduDev> | <https://med.uth.edu/oep/educational-technology/>
- There are Quarterly Educational Development Workshops at LBJ. The next one will occur on July 14, 2020. The topic will be Fostering a Positive Learning Environment. The following workshop will focus on Providing Constructive Feedback and Narrative Evaluations and will be held on October 6, 2020.
- A new Faculty Educational Development Workshop Series is focusing on curriculum design, feedback and evaluations, learning environment, and effective teaching tips. A certificate of completion will be

awarded through OEP; it is an 18-month Health Educators Fellowship Program. The application period will begin in October of 2021. The duration of the program is January 2022 – June 2023.

COVID-19 Updates Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner, MD, Vice-Chair, Healthcare Quality, Professor, Department of Infectious Diseases

- There are close to 5 million cases worldwide, with the U.S. having 1/3 of the total cases. There has been an increase in positive cases after the stay at home orders have been lifted. Memorial Hermann has evaluated over 3,000 cases.
- COVID-19 is not airborne, there is a 3-day environmental survival, it is susceptible to common disinfectants, it is prone to person-to-person spread, and mortality is associated with age and underlying comorbidities.
- Universal masking has significantly decreased viral transmission on campus. Memorial Hermann has begun PCR testing. Thus, far 4% of employees have tested positive. UT sees 5% positivity.
- UT and Memorial Hermann are working together to combat the pandemic jointly, appropriately screen visitors, reprocess masks and provide viral testing. There is a PCR test that detects active infection and shedding, and there is antibody testing for our healthcare providers. Turnaround time is 2 hours for the rapid test and 8-24 hours for regular testing.

School of Biomedical Informatics

Dr. Lukas Simon

- Professor Dean Sittig authored an [article](#) in JAMA arguing for the U.S. to have a national health IT infrastructure, and in particular, how this could help with pandemics such as COVID-19.
- The HEROES project, led by Professor Jim Langabeer, has launched a free mental health hotline for first responders dealing with the additional stress incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Assistant Professor Kirk Roberts is helping lead a group of information retrieval researchers evaluating search engines specifically designed for COVID-19 scientific literature, as announced in a [joint press release](#) by the National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST), and the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy (OSTP). Currently, over 100 teams have participated in the search engine competition.

School of Dentistry

Dr. Hugh Pierpont

- The BIG UTSD News is that our own Ryan Quock (past IFC Chair) was installed as Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Dental Education Association. The 2021 Annual Session is now projected to be a virtual one.
- The School of Dentistry is returning to the "New Normal" slowly and carefully. The Summer has been Catch up time for preclinical labs missed during the spring and keeping our fourth-year students "honed" for their clinical licensure Exam to be held July 16-19. Dentistry holds on to Live patient clinical exams for certification of license qualification. Thankfully the western Regional Examining Board developed a combined OSCE/Mannikin Based Exam, which the TSBDE has agreed to accept for licensure purposes for our 2020 graduates.
- Important dates:
 - June 27 end of Summer Session
 - July 16-19 WREB
 - July 19 Graduation
 - August 17 Start of Fall Semester

School of Public Health:

Dr. Ross Shegog

Faculty Council is continuing to review the following items:

- AAR and Peer Review processes: Possible revisions in the future include: Instructions for Faculty Associates and Specialists; Instructions about scoring and commenting on AAR and Peer Review for NTT

faculty with no teaching responsibilities; Instructions for educational track faculty with no research responsibilities; More information on mentoring junior faculty; Number of projects and funding for service activities in the community; Faculty Service Survey.

- Workload dashboard for assessing and adjusting effort
- Faculty Mentoring Programs Workgroup exploring improved standardized mentoring throughout the UTSPH departments. Propose to adopt an enhanced mentoring plan, informed by focus groups and interviews used in the epidemiology dept.

COVID Activity' Shout Outs' (selection)

- Dr. Alexandra van den Berg is a PI on a project titled FRESH-Austin that has been modified due to the pandemic to survey participants on the coronavirus.
- Drs. Aubree Shay (San Antonio) and Marlyn Allicock (Dallas) are recruiting participants for focus groups with adolescent and young adult survivors of cancer to understand their experiences with COVID-19, including increased isolation, disruption to treatment and follow-up care, coping strategies, etc.
- A new course is being offered in Summer 2020 entitled 'Narratives, Oral History, and COVID-19' designed to learn about pandemics of the past and to develop the skills to practice oral history during this pandemic.
- Dr. Barry Davis and the Coordinating Center for Clinical Trials is working on two stem cell trials to treat 1) COVID-19 patients with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome and 2) (with our Cardiovascular Cell Therapy Research Network - CCTRN) to treat COVID-19 patients with signs of heart damage

Recent events (selected):

- An enhanced UTSPH Website recently launched with a new look highlighting achievements and orientation to prospective students.
- Carol Huber, a doctoral student in community health practice in San Antonio, has been appointed to the Value-Based Payment and Quality Improvement Advisory Committee for Texas. Established by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the committee provides a forum to promote public-private, multi-stakeholder collaboration in support of quality improvement and value-based payment initiatives for Medicaid, other publicly funded health services, and the wider health care system. She will serve as a member representing regional healthcare partnerships.
- The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living has posted part one of a new webinar series, "Our Food System and Food Insecurity During COVID-19: Stories from Across the State." This webinar provides a brief look at a definition of a "food system," a discussion of how the CV-19 situation has affected it and some ideas as to what webinar attendees can do to improve the inequities and insecurities embedded in the current system. Available at:
 - <https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/webinars/webinar.htm?id=2d9c6e5c-371f-4241-a930-7e3dfced1e25>
- The 21st Annual NIOSH ERC Pilot Project Research Symposium is being held on June 19. The goal is to enhance Southwest Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (SWCOEH) regional outreach efforts in research training and to foster stronger inter-institutional ties in occupational health research within Public Health Region 6 (PHR 6) (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas).

Media exposure (selected):

- Catherine Troisi, Ph.D., talked to [Houston Public Media's KUHF Radio](#) listeners about the latest COVID-19 news, and to [KHOU-TV Channel 11](#), about the importance of staying vigilant about hand hygiene and physical distancing and s about a nationwide tracking tool that has flawed data for COVID-19 infections and deaths in nursing homes.
- Scott Patlovich, DrPH, spoke to

- Joseph McCormick, MD, was interviewed by [KRGV-TV Rio Grande Valley](#) about a dashboard project he is leading that captures COVID-19 infection rates from a wide range of sources to identify hot spots in the area.

Dissertation presentations

Two dissertation proposal defenses and three dissertation defenses are scheduled in the next three weeks.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Subcommittees Updates:

Administrative Affairs:

Dr. Cameron Jeter

The charge was to look at the gender representation in faculty leadership, specifically, at Associate Dean, and faculty at the various levels of Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor. We expanded our intent to look at gender representation in other areas of faculty life. Examples include looking at the gender representation of the recipients of the system-wide STARS Awards (this is a recruitment and retention award package for faculty), the Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award (ROTA), and the Shine Academy. In addition to specific UTHealth awards such as the individuals put forward during the limited research applications, we added the review of the different faculty holding endowed positions, and various awards such as the President's Scholar Awards, and leadership awards. Next, we identified for how many years in the past did we want to collect such data, and Dr. Morano helped us identify who at UTHealth tracks this data. Our data collection methodology is not a faculty-wide survey or contacting individual schools but rather is managed by staff in administrative offices. To date, we created a protocol on how to collect this data and from whom but stopped in early March when we began social distancing we felt it would be an added burden for these specific staff to collect this data. We have been in a holding pattern, and one option is to pass on the protocol to the subcommittee to continue with the collection next year.

Faculty Status, Rights, and Responsibilities:

Dr. Debra Simmons

The charge was to discover the mentorship activities across our schools. Before everything paused in March, we were able to do a brief survey across most of the schools and have discussions with the subcommittee about what our recommendations would be going forward. We were fortunate to see that there are some structured collaborative mentoring programs at the schools already, so we have a place to start if we would like to make some recommendations. The next step for this subcommittee is to reconvene and put together a formal recommendation document.

Governance and Academic Affairs

Dr. Ramirez for Dr. Patrick Laird

The charge for this subcommittee was to assess and report on the status of non-tenure-track faculty in the six schools. Reports have been received from four schools, and additional responses are expected in the areas of retention, contract longevity, and promotion, which are very different in the schools. The synopsis is that on retention, there are no policies in place specifically for schools. Regarding contract longevity, at the UTFAC system-wide, some schools have extended contracts for non-tenured faculty, for two or more years -at the Associate Professor/Professor levels. This was the reason for looking into this at UTHealth because other schools do have models for non-tenured faculty to have concrete retention and potential safety. Per HOOP 44, currently, we have one-year contracts at all schools, and each school has its own non-tenure retention model. The pandemic distracted the subcommittee's work, and we did not complete everything. We will let the membership know if this charge will continue in the next fiscal year.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Associate Vice President, UTHealth Faculty Affairs & Development

Dr. Kevin A. Morano

- We are in a holding pattern, waiting to see what the virus does over the next month or two to see how we are going to advise non-research and non-clinically active employees to come back to campus. Many may still split their time between working from home and on campus. The Deans have been permitted to work with their people to decide what works best for their schools.

- Waiting on financial news from the state (budget for next fiscal year), and what is going to happen for this fiscal year. We are looking for various ways to help the financial situation that the university has found itself in at this time.
- Questions:
 - University's plan with second-wave? No appetite for shutting down again; however, what is the university's thoughts?
 - There is no appetite for shutting down clinical activities -and not much of a desire for precluding research activities. We have done a great job handling this situation with very few cases. Right now, we get messages that we are nowhere near closing down the university. Masking has been strongly encouraged -and in many departments, it is 'required.' The biggest request is, please do not come to work if you are sick.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

- June is Pride Month, and last year, we participated in the parade in Houston. This year, we registered for both the parade and festival, which were canceled. We are still trying to highlight things that we hope to be doing in the future to celebrate Pride to represent the LGBTQ+. Dr. Elaheh Ashtari is working with Dr. Latanya Love's Office and Ms. Deana Moylan's Office to be able to highlight the scientific work that we do at UTHealth. The hope is to have some Pride activities to be involved in during the fall.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:56 PM. Dr. Ramirez reminded the membership that there is no meeting in July, and the next IFC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19, 2020, which will most likely be via Webex.

Respectfully submitted by Terrie Schade-Lugo, CAP, on August 14, 2020.

Approved by Interfaculty Council on August 19, 2020.