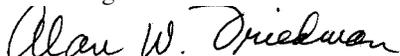


## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GENERAL FACULTY FOR 2019-2020**

Following are the minutes of the General Faculty meeting of Monday, October 14, 2019.



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary of the General Faculty and Faculty Council

The University of Texas at Austin

Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English and Comparative Literature

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GENERAL FACULTY FOR 2019-2020**

The regular meeting of the General Faculty for the academic year 2019-20 was held on Monday, October 14, 2019, at 2:15 PM in the Main Building, Room 212. President Gregory L. Fenves presided over the meeting. After calling the meeting to order, the President invited Secretary Pro Tempore Charlotte Canning (Professor, Theatre and Dance) to present the minutes of the previous meeting, held October 8, 2018.

**I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

Secretary Canning asked if there were any corrections to the posted minutes. Since there were none, she called for a vote to approve the minutes as posted. The minutes of the 2018-19 regular meeting of the General Faculty (D 16807-16808) were unanimously approved by voice vote.

**II. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FACULTY COUNCIL, 2018-2019.**

Secretary Canning presented an overview of the annual report, which was published as D 17162-17184 and posted on the Faculty Council website. The report includes records of attendance, information about completed and outstanding Memorial Resolutions, and a summary of the activities of the Faculty Council. In addition to routine actions such as delegating conferral of degrees to Deans and approving catalog changes, the Faculty Council also endorsed resolutions:

- concerning fields of study requirements promulgated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- in response to the Trump administration's initiative to redefine gender
- to redesign student course exit surveys and reinvent the evaluation of an instructor's impact on academic learning and engagement
- of appreciation for UT Austin's administrative professionals
- to gather best practices information for tackling difficult dialogues and trauma-informed pedagogy in classrooms
- improving financial aid to students at UT Austin
- to improve graduate student funding

**III. DISCUSSION OF ANNUAL REPORT—None.****IV. COMMENTS BY AND QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT.**

President Fenves deferred making comments until the Faculty Council meeting, which was to immediately follow the annual meeting of the General Faculty. A formal question had been submitted by Nuri Vallbona (Lecturer, School of Journalism):

I have been a lecturer at UT for the last six years. I'm concerned about the growing number of students who have mental health issues. Would it be possible to get some faculty training so that we would be better equipped to help such students? I've seen stressed out students, disappearing students and had one who was suicidal. Years later that person is doing very well, thanks to the help they received from Bcal [Behavior Concerns Advice Line]. I commend all the UT staff members who guided me so that I could give my students the information they needed. However, many times students want more than a referral to the mental health center or to Bcal. They want someone to talk to them. I'm always worried that I

might say the wrong thing or I might not refer them to the appropriate place. Would you consider offering some sort of training or workshop regarding this issue, please?

President Fenves said that in response to the “growing issue of mental health among our students,” UT Austin has placed mental health counselors in multiple schools and colleges, in Student Emergency Services, and in the Office of the Dean of Students. Additionally, the Provost’s office has been examining ways of training faculty to deal with mental health issues including through modules. President Fenves then asked the faculty and the Faculty Council representatives in the audience “how...faculty should be involved in this?”

Marc Bizer (Professor, French and Italian) said that there have been “some rather severe cutbacks at the counseling center” and that students are “lucky if they can get one [appointment with a UT Austin therapist], and they’re immediately referred out.” He said UT Austin needs “increases in staff” to match demand. President Fenves responded that counselors have been added in the Counseling and Mental Health Center. The CARE program [Counselors in Academic Residence] has also put counselors in schools and colleges. He confirmed that there are “limitations on the number of visits that we can accommodate for students because of the pretty significant increase in demand.” Soncia Reagins-Lilly (Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students) said that more counselors and more BART [Brief Assessment and Referral] team members are being added. Additionally, the administration is exploring different methods of “service delivery” and “new resources that will address our growing demand.”

Lorenzo Sadun (Professor, Mathematics) noted that, while training modules can “teach certain facts,” faculty need “face-to-face training” to learn how to “lend a sympathetic ear to a student,” or provide “person-to-person contact.” Jonathan Sessler (Professor, Chemistry) added that faculty “don’t want to be trained as practitioners, but we want to be able to identify, tourniquet, or band-aid” student mental health issues. He also asked what training is going towards faculty mental health issues?

Elissa Steglich (Clinical Professor, Law) said that students of color are among those “hit hardest” by mental health issues and that conversations amongst faculty should “weave in issues of microaggression” and examine “how we can...unintentionally exclude folks in the classroom.” Professor Steglich asked for “feedback” from the administration about “what the root causes are,” since “some campus climate issues...feed into the high levels of anxiety, and stress, and mental health issues that we’re seeing.” Mark Smith (Dean, Graduate School) noted that the graduate task force discussed mental health issues. The graduate school will be recommending that departments talk about “addressing the causes of stress” when they discuss curriculum revisions.

Nuri Vallbona asked what faculty members can do and say to help students who come to them directly with mental health issues. She also asked whether faculty were “expecting too much” and “putting too much of a load” on students, ultimately adding to student stress? President Fenves responded that departments and programs should be conscious of those questions since the curriculum originates with them.

Andrea Gore (Professor, Pharmacy) asked whether the University has any programs geared towards the prevention of campus mental health crises? Soncia Reagins-Lilly replied that orientation provides students with resources and information about the “behaviors that might warrant them seeking out support.” Other initiatives in place for preventing and ameliorating mental health issues include: the CARE program, the informative letter to faculty about campus mental health resources, the behavior concerns advice line, student peer ambassadors, and a faculty-staff symposium in November featuring a “national leader” coming to speak from a “generational perspective” about mental health signs. The administration is also considering the use of software to provide to faculty as a resource and is open to further suggestions. Lesley Dean-Jones (Associate Professor, Classics) said the Texas Well-Being Project and the SHIFT initiative were also helpful resources for considering mental health issue prevention. Amanda Hager (Associate Professor of Instruction, Mathematics) suggested that faculty can form learning communities to think about student mental health issues through the Faculty Innovation Center. She also recommended faculty take advantage of the staff members willing to come to academic units and offer mental health workshops. Jaime Davis (Deputy Compliance Officer and Training Program Manager) suggested that faculty refer to the online module “Safety in the Classroom” in UT Learn, which teaches how to recognize signs of mental health issues and introduces campus mental health resources.

Brent Iverson (Dean, School of Undergraduate Studies) applauded faculty involvement in conversations about mental health and offered a “collective call to action” to “be more engaged in

making sure we prevent anything that we're accidentally doing in our classrooms [to cause or exacerbate mental health issues].”

Brian Evans said that he and Jim Cox (Professor, English) authored a mental health guide for graduate students and that he, as Faculty Council Chair, would follow up with various organizations and units about the student mental health conversation.

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS—None.**

**VI. REPORTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY, COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS, AND COMMITTEES.**

A. Committee to Nominate a Candidate for Secretary of the General Faculty.

Brian Evans (Committee Chair and Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering) announced that Professor Alan W. Friedman (English) was the Committee's sole choice for the Secretary position.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS.**

A. Election of the Secretary of the General Faculty.

President Fenves asked if there were any nominations for Secretary from the floor. Since there were none, he called for the vote. Professor Friedman was unanimously re-elected to serve through August 31, 2021. President Fenves extended his congratulations and thanked Professor Friedman for his dedication and service to the University.

**VIII. REMAINING QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT—None.**

**IX. ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 PM.