

Faculty Advisory Council Meeting

August 28, 2026

2:00 -4:00 p.m., ECDC 210

Meeting was called to order @ 2:26 pm

Attendance: see table

FAC Rep	Aug 28									
Mohammad Alhamad (Library)										
Kelly Bezio (CLA)	X									
Luis Espinoza (CONHS)	X									
Dimitrios Koutmos (COB)										
Timothy Scott Johnson (CLA)	X									
Scott King (COE)	X									
Denise Lara (COEHD)	X									
Melissa Leal (CONHS)	X									
Seth McKnight (SAMC)	X									
Judy Metcalf (COS)	X									
Oliver Cruz-Milan (COB)	X									
Joseph Mollick (COB)	X									
Miguel Moreno (CLA)	X	X								
Thomas Oldham (SAMC)	X									
Ingo Pecher (COS)	X									
Bethanie Pletcher (COEHD)	X									
Lori Podolsky (Library)	X									
Habib Senol (COS)	X									

Lisa Comparini (CLA)	X	X								
Jose Guardiola (COS)	X									
Caleb Pickering (SAMC)	X									
Hongzhi Song (COE)	X									
Deandra Travis (COB)	X									
Ashley Voggt (COEHD)	X									
Dino Mulic (SAMC)	X									
Jose Baca (ECS)	X									

Others: Cate Rudowsky, ~~Kevin Houlihan~~, Susan Wolff Murphy, ~~John LaRue~~, Chris Hemstead (Staff Council), ~~Ariel Kelly~~ (AAUP), Ben Soto, Deborah Sibilia (ombuds), Leslie Mills, Isla Schuchs Carr (past speaker), Shay Lee (admin support)

12.

Responsibilities of Faculty Members

1. Guest speaker: Lisa Perez, Dean of Students and Associate Vice President for Student Support and Success
Dean Perez oversees four offices dedicated to student support, behavioral management, and academic success. Physical resource guide folders with QR codes and direct links for conduct and care referrals will be shared electronically with Shay Lee for distribution to faculty.

Care and Assistance Team. The team addresses students' basic needs, food insecurity, and high-distress situations. The CARE team meets weekly with the Counseling Center, University Police Department (UPD), Housing, and Academic Affairs to coordinate structured intervention plans for students in severe distress, including suicidal ideation. High rates of student distress, including suicidal ideation and housing transition struggles, were reported in the first week of the semester.

Pregnant and parenting students. State law requires campuses to designate parent liaisons; the university's liaisons are Dr. Claudia Ayala and Karen Salazar Vega. Pregnant and parenting student resources are provided through THECB requirements. Childcare remains a major deterrent to persistence. A CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School) grant was submitted in partnership with Dr. Watson (College of Education) to provide childcare vouchers; results are expected by September 30. A data project supported by Dr. Leslie Mills (Office of Student Success) uses the Navigate360 platform to ask students about parenting or pregnancy status at the start of the semester and trigger automated resource emails.

Community of Belonging. The unit focuses on student connection, academic persistence, and retention. The Student Voice Initiative uses focus groups, following a protocol from Motivate Lab and AASCU, to measure academic and social belonging and to target interventions. Family Weekend is scheduled for October 2 through October 4.

Conduct and Advocacy. The office manages student due process for behavioral Student Code of Conduct violations and academic misconduct referrals. The A&M System Chancellor formed a working group, on which

Dean Perez served, to examine the fairness of academic and behavioral misconduct processes; system requirements based on its recommendations are being handed down. Dr. Susan Wolff Murphy and Kristeen Baum are working through implementation. Faculty must document all academic misconduct resolutions, including informal ones, and the office will provide documentation to faculty on request. The Maxient database, currently used for behavioral conduct cases, is being expanded to track academic misconduct cases, funded in part by Dr. Cate Rudowsky and Dr. Susan Wolff Murphy.

Disability Services. The office provides academic accommodations to students qualifying under the ADA; approved students receive official faculty notification letters. Dean Perez clarified that Exam Services is exclusively for students with documented disabilities and is not a proctoring service for faculty who will be out of class.

Campus safety. In immediate safety or threat situations, contact UPD first rather than the Dean of Students office. Calling 911 from campus routes through city communications and causes a delay; calling UPD directly at 4444 ensures an immediate response from on-campus officers.

Student trends. Roughly 49 to 50 percent of the student body are first-generation students. Canvas navigation issues are producing high anxiety among first-time-in-college students; Dean Perez hosts a non-term Canvas course, Striving for a Caring Community, to help them navigate the system.

Policy and handbook review. Dean Perez is working with the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, the College of Education and Human Development, and the College of Science on high-level situations arising from communication failures and deviation from documented processes. Her guidance: the process does not have to be a great process, but deviating from what is documented is where the university gets into trouble. Reviews are targeting outdated language (for example, references to the Division of Student Affairs) and proper academic due process for academic dismissal, suspension, and program removal. She meets monthly with Dr. Rudowsky on ongoing situations.

Program removal and withdrawal. A student cannot be told they are no longer part of a program or the university without a formal process, such as suspension or expulsion, which must be communicated to the Registrar. Even after grades post, students retain the right to submit a retroactive withdrawal within the allowed timeline. When working with external partners (clinical sites, school districts, the Del Mar architecture program), departments must involve university administration to address conduct agreements, service expectations, and payment.

Welfare concerns. In response to a question from a College of Education and Human Development representative about reporting students in distress over mixed-immigration-status family stressors without creating problematic documentation, Dean Perez advised submitting a report indicating general welfare concerns. The team is trained not to include highly sensitive details in official documentation. Her guidance: it is better to report than to under-report. Questions or concerns may be directed to the Dean of Students Office.

2. Call to Order – 2:26
3. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve Agenda with guest speaker amendment by Rep McKnight, second by Rep Mulic
All in favor
4. Approval of May minutes
 - a. Motion to approve minutes as amended by Rep Metcalf, second by Rep McKnight
Amendment: Rep Podolsky's last name was added to correct an entry that originally read "Rep. Podolsky."
All in favor who voted; 2 abstentions

5. Speakers Report: Speaker Johnson (posted in Teams folder)

FAC personnel changes. Secretary Kathy Harrell stepped down to become a department chair; President Miller appointed Luis Espinoza as Secretary. Amy McClure was appointed to fill the vacant CONHS position. Deputy Speaker Alihan Hadumdiolu stepped down; President Miller appointed Lori Podolsky as Deputy Speaker. Lisa Comparini was chosen as chair of the Faculty Affairs subcommittee. Jose Baca was appointed by President Miller to fill a vacant COECS position. Open elections remain in COS, COEHD, and CONHS.

Summer activities. The Speaker met regularly with the leadership of the Texas Council of Faculty Senates, the A&M Assembly of Faculty Councils, President Miller, Provost Rai, and other campus administrators, and began work on the search committee for the Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

Academic Operating Procedure 1 (AOP 1). The Provost shared a draft in mid-July. Faculty feedback was gathered and submitted, and some changes were incorporated into the published version. The Speaker noted that similar policies at A&M Victoria were followed by significant faculty departures and terminations, and expressed concern about the emergence of a new form of campus procedure that could lead to determinations about colleagues without formal review mechanisms involving faculty. The item was moved to New Business (10d) and subsequently tabled.

6. Committee Reports

a. Academic Affairs – Rep Metcalf and Podolsky

The committee has not yet met. A September meeting will be scheduled for orientation on CourseLeaf, course leave, and related matters; an availability poll will be sent to members shortly.

b. Awards, Bylaws, & Elections – Rep Oldham

Due to personnel changes over the Summer, Faculty Advisory Council needs to hold elections before October 1 (as per our bylaws) to fill vacancies in COEHD (2-year term), CONHS (2-year term), and COSCI (1-year term). The election will run from 9 am on Monday, August 31 to 1 pm on Friday, September 4.

Reps Voggt, McClure, and Metcalf will serve as Election Commissioners. They will meet virtually on Friday, September 4 at 2:00 pm to tally votes and determine the outcome. All faculty members are welcome to attend this public meeting:

<https://tamucc.zoom.us/j/4740170001?pwd=MW5jb2ZZOFBRVdRYS94M2JSYVZadz09>

Overall election results will be shared as soon as possible.

Professor Carmen Tejeda-Delgado (COEHD) was nominated for Regents Professor and her name was forwarded to the System for the announcement.

c. Budget Analysis – Rep King

The committee has not yet met. It will review the newly published budget.

d. Committee on Committees – Rep Mollick

No business to report; the committee has not met. Two faculty representatives are needed to fill vacancies on the university Parking Appeals Committee.

e. Faculty Affairs – Rep Comparini

The committee has not yet met. Procedures introduced for future review and discussion:

> 61.99.99.C0.06, Non-Emergency Communication with Student by Text/SMS Messages (establishes requirements for automated text and SMS messages to students in compliance with federal law)

> 34.07.02.C0.01, Academic Continuity Planning (outlines continuity planning to resume teaching and research when facilities are unavailable; a suggestion was made to address Canvas shutdowns or outages within this procedure)

> 33.99.08.C0.01, Student Employment (details requirements and benefits for student employees)

7. Liaison Reports

a. CPIRA - Rep Cruz-Milan

Activity since the May 8 meeting: May 21, a guest speaker updated and clarified export control requirements and compliance with federal and state law; June 18, President Miller briefed the council on the university meeting the Texas University Fund (TUF) eligibility requirements; August 20, guest speaker Dean Hyatt (University Library). Dr. Debra Plowman is the new chair. Members requested continued updates on the status of TUF funding.

Graduate Council representatives asked whether CPIRA would meet with Naftali to explore ways to provide summer leave for graduate TAs and graduate students. Concern was raised that graduate student parking fees have increased while assistantship stipends have not.

Next meeting: Thursday, September 17 (the council meets the third Thursday of each month).

b. Undergrad Council – Rep Metcalf

Has not met

c. Graduate Council – Rep Podolsky

Have not met yet

d. AAUP (Ariel Kelly) – Kelly Bezio

The campus chapter is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and advocates on academic freedom, fair governance, and due process for faculty, librarians, and graduate students. Chapter leadership: President Ariel Kelly (not present); Vice President Kelly Bezio; Secretary Scott Johnson; contributor Pepper Larkin Scott.

An annual survey on workplace conditions has been distributed by AAUP chapters in the South for faculty input. AAUP has filed a lawsuit against the A&M System censorship policy and a separate lawsuit against the Texas Tech University System over restrictive course content policies. Texas AAUP membership includes professional liability insurance for employment-related claims. Chapter meetings, open to all faculty including contingent faculty, will be scheduled later this semester.

e. Expressive Activities Committee (Kelly Bezio)

The committee met on August 27. The Expressive Activities website is being moved to Compliance; John LaRue's office agreed to the transition and Mary Mahan is building and migrating the site. The committee is updating communication materials (pamphlet, FAQ, flowcharts, and decision trees) to clarify what the expressive activities policy and related laws mean for campus activities.

Questions about expressive activities, including whether an event can be held at a given time and place, may be directed to the liaison, who will connect faculty with Lisa Paras or the Compliance department.

f. Transportation Advisory Council – needs to meet; currently seeking to fill a vacant position

8. Ex Officio Reports

a. Provost – List of minors in your class.

Minors in classes. Academic Affairs is working with IT to flag minors directly in SAIL. Because the flag was not ready for this semester, lists of minors were run manually and distributed as Excel spreadsheets to college deans. The goal is a permanent SAIL flag that eliminates manual data sharing.

Administrative restructuring and centralization. Restructuring centralizes administrative tasks (course scheduling, procurement, reimbursements, faculty hiring) into a team-based model rather than reducing headcount: no one is losing their job, and resigned positions are being approved for replacement with no hiring freeze. Admins will develop specific areas of expertise (for example, Immerse and travel) and serve as backups for one another rather than mastering all 20-plus systems (Workday, Immerse, Argos, Banner). Faculty hiring, which currently routes department admins through five HR Talent Acquisitionists and multiple people in the Provost's office, is being centralized. Teams will be placed in the buildings where students are located rather than in a single central office, and each dean is developing a model tailored to the college.

Rationale. The administration described the previous system as not working: a high volume of errors from over-reliance on individual effort; more than 30 admins across 24-plus departments performing the same work; payroll errors (an adjunct paid for a full year after leaving; a September overpayment corrected in November, producing a December paycheck about one third of normal); and chairs who do not always know what administrative tasks are being missed, so that admins who are not completing tasks still receive "exceeding expectations" evaluations. Success will be measured by fewer administrative mistakes, higher service quality, and meeting turnaround benchmarks such as timely reconciliation of reports. Academic Affairs committed to consistent process documentation and training over the next year.

Faculty concerns. College of Science faculty raised concern about moving from three administrative staff to one for approximately 35 faculty with heavy research, travel, and procurement demands; the remaining admin reports feeling set up for failure, and it is unclear whether vacant positions will be refilled. Academic Affairs responded that the College of Science currently has 10 to 11 staff, more than any other college, that the college is suffering a net loss because staff have migrated to other colleges, that the dean is meeting with remaining staff next week, and that the college is exploring an additional position funded through an alternative mechanism for research support. Faculty with concerns were encouraged to speak directly with the College of Science dean.

College of Liberal Arts constituents asked what central problem the restructuring is meant to solve and how the plan solves it. Two CLA departments without admins served as pilot cases, with chairs and faculty absorbing significant administrative work. Equity concerns were raised (an Associate Dean with a 1:1 load has a dedicated admin while a chair with a 1:1 load and two programs has one or none), along with concern that removing a place-based administrative presence harms students who rely on admins as the face of the department. Faculty also reported a trickle-down of administrative duties, such as handling their own travel and reimbursements, and noted that some admins are not in their offices or do not communicate their schedules.

Communication. Restructuring details were shared with deans and at Chairs Council; chairs knew of the reorganization conceptually from spring discussions but not the specifics, because the analysis occurred over the summer when Chairs Council was not meeting. Staff input was not directly included in the decision. The administration stated that sharing plan iterations that later change can be harder to recover from than delayed transparency, committed to working with deans on a better communication plan for departments, and requested a concrete list of administrative, business coordinator, or college-level work that has shifted to faculty for future discussion. There is no blanket timeline because each college's structure is different. Next Chairs Council: September 11.

Interim budget and adjunct funding. The interim budget, which covers adjuncts, overloads, TAs, and teaching specialists for the College of Business, has been overspent by \$2 to \$3 million annually for the past five years, with the gap covered by university reserves. Under the previous model, departments and colleges requested funding for a given number of adjuncts and overloads from the Provost's office and it was automatically funded; the administration described this as a very broken model. Under the new model the

university distributes a set allocation and colleges must operate within it. Some colleges have already spent their entire normal allocation for the current semester. The university expects to overspend and draw on reserves again in FY27 while transitioning, with a sustainable plan targeted for FY28. To operate within budget without cutting student credit hours, the university will apply stricter guidelines on low-enrolled courses, course caps, and reassigned time. Personnel and operations budgets are managed separately; personnel overspending draws from reserves, not operations.

Texas University Fund (TUF). The university has met all required measures. The allocation still must be voted on during the legislative session, with funds expected to begin arriving next fiscal year. TUF funds are restricted to the research mission; anticipated uses include more competitive funding for graduate students and TAs, faculty support, and broader research initiatives. Using TUF for research may free existing non-research funds now supporting research to shift back to general academics. The University Budget Committee has new leadership, will convene in September, and was suggested as a venue for faculty input on future budget issues.

On-Campus Presence Policy. The policy was not created in response to student complaints about faculty availability. It is intended to demonstrate that state employees are actively working on campus. During the last legislative session a proposal to ban remote work for all state employees exempted higher education; the policy serves as evidence of campus presence to forestall future legislative action (the A&M Victoria route). The policy also aims to level the playing field so service does not fall on the same few faculty. It does not mandate a rigid schedule (8 to 5, Monday through Friday, or 30 to 40 hours per week) and includes flexibility for dean-approved exceptions, such as leave to care for an aging parent in another state. Kevin Houlihan reviewed the policy and found it consistent with existing policies and procedures.

Everyone needs to be invested in doing the work.

b. Ombuds - Deborah Sibilia (ombuds)

A high volume of faculty visits began in the first week of the semester. Faculty feedback indicated a belief that shared governance has been rejected and has become a standing joke, and frustration that dean and chair 360 evaluations do not result in administrative action. Department chair training was raised.

The administration responded that three leadership positions were recently changed in one college, and that action on 360 evaluations cannot happen overnight because investigations and due process are required.

c. Staff Council – Chris Hemstead (CLA Business Manager, Staff Council Vice President)

Staff Council is working with HR to run special elections to fill three or four open positions across multiple divisions. There is currently no ombudsman for staff, though there is one for students; the idea was raised four or five years ago but not implemented.

d. Chief Information Officer Ben Soto

Duo authentication. The planned Duo security changes did not successfully apply to most users. IT is analyzing the issue; once resolved, users will see a prompt to enter a code on their computers.

Academic Affairs IT governance. IT is restructuring governance for the University Technology Council and Academic Affairs. A proposal was sent to Kate, Susan, and Denise to move Academic Affairs IT governance inside the Academic Affairs division under the Provost's area, with IT representatives (including Susan Murphy) serving as advisors. Membership will include faculty and representatives from each college to give Academic Affairs and faculty direct control over software implementations and technology funding.

Mentimeter. The university purchased Mentimeter because 108 individuals on campus were paying for individual accounts. A user reported that the PowerPoint integration plugin is not working well; IT was unaware of the issue and will investigate. Workaround: download the PowerPoint and upload it into Mentimeter.

9. Old Business

- a. Shirts – Handing out. Attendees should pick up one shirt before leaving; sizing is an estimate, but extra shirts were ordered.

10. New Business

- a. FAC photos. Faculty photos will be taken at the beginning of next month's meeting, which will be held in UC Legacy. Attendees must bring or wear their shirts.

- b. Doctoral Chair releases

The number of chaired doctoral dissertations required to receive a course reassignment has increased from three to five. The change is believed to be university-wide, though colleges handle it differently; the College of Education and Human Development previously offered more releases than other colleges.

Faculty may have to decline chairing dissertations given heavy service, research, and teaching loads; one member stated that chairing four dissertations without release is work for free. Concern was also raised that undergraduate faculty who do not teach doctoral courses are chairing dissertations. Questions about unqualified committee chairs should be submitted to the Graduate Council.

- c. CircleIn – Leslie Mills

Transition from BrainFuse. CircleIn is replacing BrainFuse as the primary tutoring tool and is paid from the Office of Student Success budget using testing revenue; funds were shifted by sunseting one or two BrainFuse products. BrainFuse has 160 hours remaining, expected to last until mid-semester or through the fall depending on CircleIn adoption. BrainFuse depends on individual tutors, so subjects such as accounting were often unavailable late at night; CircleIn provides automated 24/7 support. The transition will be managed by updating the iLearn link in Canvas to route to CircleIn. CircleIn was piloted in Math and Physics.

Canvas AI chatbot. A CircleIn AI chatbot tailored to individual Canvas shells appeared unannounced in early August. Faculty received email assurances that chatbot content stays within Canvas and instructions to limit access or turn it off. The Speaker noted that faculty need advance notice to make informed course-design decisions and should retain pedagogical authority to restrict AI technologies in their courses. Faculty objected that the tool was added to all courses without an opt-in phase; the administration explained it was added automatically because it is classified as a student support tool and will look into an opt-in model.

Files, exams, and quizzes. Concern was raised that CircleIn reads all Canvas files, including unpublished, outdated, and course-design resources, and can read online exams and generate highly specific exam reviews. Workarounds: use the Train Your CircleIn AI Tutor tool to exclude specific text or files, or disable auto-sync and manually select training materials; uncheck the tool's access to exams and quizzes in settings. CircleIn consultants are investigating why the tool pulled from exams, which they reported should not be happening. CircleIn only pulls from the individual course.

Intellectual property. The university signed a five-year contract. Materials uploaded to the tool train the AI tutor only for that course instance during that semester and are gone after that iteration; they do not train the tutor beyond the course. Students can upload documents for peer study groups, but those uploads do not train the tutor.

Incentives and pedagogy. The tool awards points toward gift cards for uploading documents, creating flashcards, and sharing notes, and pays students \$5 per classmate recruited; concern was raised that this

distracts from course focus. Faculty in English and Psychology noted that automated scaffolding conflicts with pedagogies designed to teach students to structure and write papers and to read and synthesize independently, particularly in capstone courses. A counterpoint noted that first-year students entering with lower reading and math skills may benefit from scaffolding and AI tools.

Questions. Faculty asked which LLM CircleIn uses, noting that models differ, and whether CircleIn has addressed AI psychosis and the psychological effects of LLM interaction on young people. It was clarified that the study cited as evidence of the tool's success was conducted and compiled by the university, and CircleIn is now sharing those results with other universities. CircleIn is in discussions with the A&M System about a system-wide MOU.

Training. A training session is scheduled for September 2, 12 to 1 pm. CircleIn also hosts weekly training for U.S. faculty on Wednesdays from 12 to 1 pm. Training videos and resources are available on the university's CircleIn website.

Rep Johnson motioned to extend meeting to 4:15 and Rep Metcalf second; All faculty in favor.

d. Academic Operating Procedure 1

Johnson motioned to Table for next meeting. Rep Pickering second.

All in favor. The item will be taken up under Old Business at the next meeting.

11. Motion to adjourn by Rep McKnight, Second by Rep Moreno
all approve

12.

a. Meeting adjourned 4:15 pm

Submitted by Luis Espinoza

Secretary, Faculty Advisory Council