



**Faculty Senate Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday, October 18, 2023
12:00 p.m.**

Faculty Senate President Susie Gronseth called the October 18, 2023, Faculty Senate meeting to order at 12:21 p.m. She thanked President Renu Khator for generously providing lunch and acknowledged Tonja Jones and her team for their hard work in coordinating the logistics of the meeting. To ensure that the meeting would run smoothly, FS Pres. Gronseth gave a brief explanation on the logistics of fielding questions during the discussion.

MEMBERS PRESENT: (119)

ARCH: J. Feng, D. Froehlich, M. Kyropoulou, P. Peters
ARTS: J. Derges, R. Koontz, S. Matijcio, D. Robinson
BUS: B. Li, H. Lin, A. Lish, M. Murray
EDU: C. Arbona, S. Brower, B. Davis, S. Gronseth, K. Hassett, A. Peters-Hawkins
ENGR: W. Conklin, A. Gulin, D. Burleson, M. Burns, C. Chang, M. El Nahas, J. Evans, S. Joshi, A. Lendasse, T. Liao, D. Liu, S. Long, H. Love, F. Merchant, M. Moges, S. Pei, H. Rifai, Y. Yao, X. Yuan
GHL: P. Guchait, Y. Koh, T. Legendre, J. Madera
HON: D. Gish, D. Price
CLASS: W. Breslin, F. Bunta, L. Camaj, A. Castilla-Earls, P. Chakrabarti, P. Cirino, M. Cottingham, M. Cuesta, C. Ferrell, H. Glass, E. Goodin-Mayeda, S. Grigorian, K. Haubrick, A. Hernandez, K. Hopkins, M. Ivey, J. Kleinheider, V. Maheshri, V. Ng, A. Pegoda, B. Rottinghaus, A. Thrasher, D. Womble, L. Zhu
LIB: T. Davis-Van Atta, V. Douglas, L. Martin, A. Santiago, S. Thompson, M. Warren
COM: Adepoju, O., D. Curtis, G. Gomez, B. King, K. Pilkinton
NSM: M. Almus, K. Bassler, T. Bawa-Khalfe, B. Bodmann, J. Brgoch, A. Caglar, R. Capuano, A. Czader, B. Dauwalder, L. Farmer, S. Gilbertson, T. Gill, R. Lee, A. Medrano, R. Meisel, G. Morrison, E. Papadakis, D. Pattison, A. Vershynina, B. Xhabli, J. Yang
CON: C. Brohard, L. McWilliams, P. Schrader
OPT: T. Ferreira, R. Manny, J. O'Brien, J. Porter
PHA: D. Chow, J. Hao, A. Marwaha, B. McConnell, M. Trivedi, G. Udugamasooriya
RES CTRS: S. Chung
RES FAC: O. Bannova
HSPA: C. Bronk
GCSW: S. Ali, S. Narendorf

MEMBERS ABSENT: (21)

ARCH: E. Morshedzadeh
ARTS: R. Bush, T. Van Kekerix
BUS: S. Basu, A. Lish, J. Porra, Y. Tan
EDU: V. Rangel
ENGR: B. Detillier, D. Litvinov, D. Shattuck

GHL: M. Lee
LAW: K. Brem, D. Fagundes
CLASS: J. Babcock, A. Christensen, P. Gutierrez
LIB: K. Creelman
NSM: J. Subhlok
OPT: C. Ribelayga

GUESTS: Raymond Bartlett (SVC/SVP, Administration & Finance), Jim Briggs (Associate Provost, Faculty Development and Faculty Affairs), Charlotte Carp (ELPS/EDU), Kate Carter (LIB), Diane Z. Chase (SVP & Provost, Academic Affairs), Dona Cornell (Gen. Counsel, Legal Affairs), Jeronimo Cortina (POLSCI/CLASS), Stephen Craig (ECON/CLASS), Vallabh Das (Optometry), Mike Emery (Univ. Communication), Shilpa Ghurye (ENGR), Alexey Golubev (HIST/CLASS), Eva Harth (CHEM/NSM), Sabrina Hassumani (Associate Provost, Administration & Finance), Lisa Holdeman (VP, Marketing & Communication), Michael Johnson, (Chief of Staff, UH President's Office), Renu Khator (President, UH), Sarah Larsen (Vice Provost & Dean, Graduate School), Teri Longacre (Sr. Vice Provost, Undergrad Student Success), Jeremy May (CHEM/NSM), Ognjen Miljanic (CHEM/NSM), Monique Mills (COMD/CLASS), Claudia Neuhauser (Interim VC/VP for Research), Onyebuchi Ononogbu (PPTR/PHA), Donald Rabin (MUS/COTA), Benjamin Rizk (President, SGA), Wajiha Shireen (ET/ENGR), Maria Elena Soliño (Hispanic Studies/CLASS), Cody Szell (SGA)

Approval of Minutes: September 13, 2023 Meeting

The minutes of the September 13, 2023 meeting were approved as distributed.

Discussion with UHS BOR Chairman [Tilman Fertitta](#) and UHS Chancellor [Renu Khator](#)

FS President Susie Gronseth prefaced the introduction of Board of Regents Chair Tilman Fertitta with an abridged bio and highlight of achievements. She welcomed BOR Chair Tilman Fertitta on behalf of the faculty.

President Renu Khator began the conversation with the following questions.

- What does it mean for Tilman Fertitta to serve as chair on the Board of Regents?

Tilman Fertitta had watched UH as a youngster to adulthood from the 1960's to the 2000's. He joined the Board of Regents (BoR) around 2011 and saw UH was growing and moving in a different direction in the last twenty years. He respected Pres. Renu Khator's vision and felt the BoR could help bring forth the vision and in turn forward it to the Texas legislature. Tilman felt that UH has something special and looks forward to UH's centennial anniversary.

- Why does Tilman give his personal goodwill to the University of Houston System?

In order for UH to increase its momentum and bring its vision to fruition, influence is needed at the state level. Tilman Fertitta explained that one needs to be political to play in Texas and go to where the power is. Having political power gives one the ability to get things done (no matter what political party is in power). Even though it takes everyone (students, faculty) to help UH grow, people look to leadership. If leadership isn't interested in UH, then no one will take an interest. Tilman felt his political prowess and Dr. Renu Khator's vision helped create a good team to take UH to the next level. He expressed he was proud to be a small part of UH's growth.

- What does Tilman see in the role of the faculty and why does he have so much respect for them?

Every year Pres. Khator hosts a faculty holiday party at Wortham House and Tilman commented that he enjoys meeting faculty members. UH administration has done a tremendous job in hiring excellent

faculty. He felt UH reached tier one status because of quality faculty and their contributions. He thanked the faculty for choosing to come to UH.

- Please talk about UH students.

Tilman Fertitta felt it is very important to give attention to young people. He didn't forget what it was like to be young and how older people could give significant impressions to younger generations. He expressed that he truly likes visiting with students (especially doing Q&A sessions) and that they are the University.

- Did Tilman know that he is the largest single donor to UH (i.e., Fertitta Center, Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine)? Why does he give to UH?

BOR Chair Tilman admitted that he didn't realize he was the largest single donor to UH. Attending basketball games at Hofheinz Pavilion as a child reminded him that UH had the potential to grow, but needed better facilities. Tilman said that athletics brings visibility to universities (namely football and basketball) and gives schools the ability to raise money and grow. People want to be a part of a winner. Tilman Fertitta wanted to help Pres. Renu Khator bring the vision of joining the Big 12 and building a college of medicine to fruition. Again, he expressed that he was glad to help UH reach its potential.

Senator Q&A session followed.

- FS Pres. Susie Gronseth asked what would Tilman find most helpful when the FS President gives his/her remarks to the Board of Regents and how to maximize the time when the Senate President gives those remarks. Tilman Fertitta recommended that the Faculty Senate president start remarks broadly and drill down to specifics. He said likes to know details on what faculty are doing and he finds that interesting.
- Sen. Michael Cottingham asked what are Tilman's recommendations for building relationships with industry to raise money. Tilman Fertitta recommended using the college's alumni as a base to start. Many alumni have networks that can be tapped.
- Past FS Pres. Steven Craig commented that UH had received many large donor gifts (i.e., Bauer facilities, etc.). He felt academic units need a strategic planning structure for facilities and asked Tilman how he plans all his building projects. Using his own property, The Post Oak Hotel as an example, Tilman replied that hiring great leadership and staff is key to building and running quality facilities. Pres. Khator commented on the strategic planning of the core renovation and its impact on the UH community.
- Sen. Chris Bronk asked how can he have a diversity of opinion without divisiveness in the classroom. He also asked for advice on keeping the temperature cool while running an organization, without being stifling. Tilman commented that there are topics (i.e., Middle East conflict) that are difficult to change people's hearts and minds: you can only respect each other's opinions. Pres. Khator encouraged Dr. Bronk to continue his classroom discussions even on controversial topics. UH will continue to move forward to provide knowledge and have students experience diverse opinions.
- Sen. Patrick Peters asked if Tilman sees a tangible or intangible link between UH being a pedestrian-oriented campus environment and student success and promoting faculty research/creative collaborations. Tilman felt that UH is already operating as a pedestrian-oriented campus. UH just needs a main university boulevard within a few yards from the campus. He stressed that quality facilities are important to any business. UH administration has committees to oversee facilities strategic planning. Pres. Khator commented that as density increases on campus, more amenities such as grocery stores, pharmacies, etc. will come to the surrounding

neighborhood. UH also needs to have more campus experiences and energy for all students as to entice them to stay on campus longer.

- Sen. Arturo Hernandez prefaced his question with a brief story of a recent Nobel Prize recipient whose research didn't receive grant funding despite her dedication and incredible talent. He asked how Tilman recognizes an employee with a special talent that no one else recognizes. Tilman responded that the hospitality business is very different from the scientific research field. It's hard to make that comparison. However, he felt that research is very important and stated the U.S. is the greatest capitalist country in the world due to research. Discussion about AI and how its future impact followed.
- Sen. Lisa Farmer commented that student performance has been in an overall general decline in the past few years (in light of UH's goal of becoming a Top 50 public institution). She said that Tilman Fertitta has grit in spades and determination to go through the long haul needed to build a successful business empire. Dr. Farmer believes that it's not how smart and prepared the student is, it's about the "grit" (doing the hard work). Dr. Farmer asked Tilman how one increases grit in a student to help them challenge themselves (you don't have to be smart to be successful). Tilman replied he didn't have an answer to this question. However, he agreed with Lisa Farmer's opinion on hard work. He gave examples of his own employees who worked hard (who didn't earn a degree) but were very successful in the company.
- Sen. Michelle Ivey asked if there was a moment/time that solidified Tilman's love for UH. In addition, she asked what can faculty do to bring the excitement to students and enhance the student experience. Tilman Fertitta felt that now is the time that his love for the UH is truly solidified. He said that even though UH is a high-profile institution, we need to make student life/campus experience even better. Campus life experience attracts students and will keep them on campus.

BOR Tilman Fertitta thanked the Faculty Senate for inviting him to the meeting.

New Business

None.

Announcements

FS Pres. Susie Gronseth reminded senators and guests of the upcoming faculty conference on Friday, January 12, 2024.

Meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.