

Interfaculty Council Meeting Minutes – FY 2025

December 18, 2024 | 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, Andrea N. Taylor, Barbara Orlando, Carrie A. Bakunas, Erin Fox, Gurur Biliciler-Denktaş, Harnoor Singh, Julie Gutierrez, Linh P. Bui, Matthew (Matt) L. Baker, Zi Yang Jiang, Yejin Kim, Esther O. Kuyinu, Thomas Harrison, Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan, Eric C. Jones, Paul J. Rowan, Tiffany Champagne-Langabeer

Absent: Zheng (Jake) Chen, Gazala Siddiqui, Rehal A. Bhojani, Luca Giancardo, Sahiti Myneni, Ryan Vahdani, Yun Hang, Yun-Xin Fu

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

Administrative Personnel: Vanesa Gouldburn

Guests: Kevin A. Morano

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Ross Shegog, IFC Chair FY 2025

- Ross Shegog welcomed everyone and noted the Christmas edition of the meeting.
- The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

II. Announcements

Dr. Lisa Cain, Associate VP for Faculty Affairs and Development

- Dr. Cain announced that applications have been received in all three categories, teaching, research, and clinical, for the President's Scholars Awards, and the applications are in the process of being reviewed
- Dr. Cain has met with the UTHHealth Office of Faculty Affairs and Development Wellness Committee and plans to add representatives from all schools to that committee to ensure that all schools are fully represented
- Dr. Cain attended the UT System Healthcare Professional Wellbeing Task Force, and there are still plans to implement the PWA survey at all UT system schools. We are waiting to receive that contract.
- Dr. Cain has met with human resources to discuss new employee orientation and how we could have a specific component for faculty members new to UTHHealth Houston.
- Dr. Cain announced the continuation of the distinguished speaker series. Deputy Surgeon General Rear Admiral Denise Hinton has been secured to speak pending the transition of the new administration team.
- Dr. Cain mentioned the completion of the Department Chair's program and announced that we are looking at a new Grants 201 PI training program, which will involve not only leadership skills like negotiation and effective communication but more so it would involve higher-level operational skills that are very specific to UTHHealth Houston. This would include getting information about visas, postdocs, hiring faculty and staff, and collaborative opportunities on a translational level on just a bioinformatics level, so a significantly higher level of operation
- Dr. Cain had discussions about mechanisms to approach education more collaboratively. She has talked with the interprofessional team at UTHHealth Houston, and we are still encouraging all schools to use the collaboration site and the faculty expertise database. In the new year, you will receive information about utilizing that site and some marketing tools that we are going to put in place to get all faculty to sign up
- Dr. Cain thanked Ross for doing an outstanding job representing the IFC at the SOD
- Dr. Cain thanked Bethany for her continued presence at the UT Systems level. Bethany was at the last UT Systems professional burnout task force meeting and represented us well
- Dr. Ross asked Dr. Cain what the inclusion criteria would be for the training program for the PIs.
- Dr. Cain responded that we're looking for anyone new to establish their research program within the first three years of research. This would involve laboratory and nonlaboratory research and anyone conducting a research program and new to the area within the first three years.
- Eric Jones asked Dr. Cain about the Chair training. He wondered if she had an idea of roughly how many chairs were trained and if it was just the new chairs, if it was just the new chairs, if there are plans for extending it to others in the future, or what the plans are.
- Dr. Cain responded that we had a combination of department chairs and some administrators within the school of nursing, and it was a small program. We started with approximately eight individuals, and they

were new chairs. And as the need arises, we will figure out when to implement this program next. If the deans indicate that we have new chairs that need to be trained, we will implement the program again, but it will depend on how many individuals need the training.

III. UTHealth Houston Updates *Dr. Kevin A. Morano, Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs*

• Budgetary 'health' of UTHealth Houston

- Budget - The State of the University is strong
- \$2.7 billion total operating budget, probably looking at cracking the 3 billion mark for the next fiscal year
- As always, we are in the black. We have been in the black as the university for over 20 years.
- Highlighted UTH Houston's excellent credit score and credit rating that helps with borrowing money for construction projects, for instance.
- Cost of goods and services has gone up, cost of construction has gone up, and salaries have gone up
- There are institutions in the TMC that are offering more than we are in some instances, and so that's a challenge, and there are certain areas where we've got a bit of understaffing
- Each dean has the power to do whatever they can, whatever they need to do to keep and attract great people, and then come to us with the bill to make it happen. A big chunk of that, of course, is our partnership clinically with Memorial Hermann (a 5-year partnership that started in 2022)
- We built escalators each year to increase the money that we receive from Herman. Unfortunately, the cost of inflation has exceeded those escalators, so we're experiencing a bit of a net negative in some of the funds flowing there. The hospital is working with us, but it's always us saying we need more money and them saying we don't have as much as we thought we had either, but we'll do our best.

• Current and Ongoing Initiatives –

- Overall growth in research - This year, fiscal year 24, we closed with \$448 million in external research awards. Next year, we expect that number hopefully to crack 500 million
- That's a combination of all the great work you all are doing, bringing grants, extramural funding, new junior recruits, getting their programs started, and then a lot of investment from the president's office from the schools into bringing in established multi-level investigators. And that's at all the schools. We're doing this in nursing and medical school, and we're getting very close to completing a primary recruitment for the School of Public Health. All that money is the margin that the university makes every year. So, unlike some businesses or universities, they put that margin in a piggy bank that gets locked away. We're trying to reinvest that, and it's going back into education and research, and I think we're seeing the benefits of that, those IDCs, the indirect costs that come from that help to support those research activities and everything else that we're doing
- Clinical Research - This is not just at the medical school; this includes non-bench patient-centered clinical trials and other patient-centered clinical research. In contrast to our high number in total research, the clinical dollars are embarrassing. It's about 19 million a year. That number should be well over a hundred million.
- The reason is that we have not prioritized clinical research training trialists over the years to get out there at the TMC and in the community to engage in funded research trials. We are interested in doing this with the faculty.
- We lack infrastructure; we've got some but don't have enough. And so that's a significant push this year, putting more money, more staff into the IRB program, putting more into all the other areas for research infrastructure that would support that major recruit
- Dan Sessler and Alparslan Turan from the Cleveland Clinic – both anesthesiologists – joined UTHealth Houston. Dan Sessler is one of the most cited clinical trialists in the country and is Vice President for

- Clinical Outcomes Research. Alparslan Turan is starting up a center for clinical research, and the goal for both is to support not just the medical school but clinical research at all the schools
- We have completed the purchase and are now finalizing the planning for the Bel Air Station multi-specialty hub for UT Physicians. It's a five-story, state-of-the-art, free parking, easy access, multi-specialty clinic off 610 West. The 5th floor will be one of the largest ambulatory surgery centers in the country, with 20 ORs that UT physicians will operate. The basement floor will be imaged. The remaining floors will be multi-specialty medical and a 10-11 chair dental clinic, with a surgery suite and full x-ray. We also have plans for another multi-specialty clinic on the I10 corridor. We'll start closing some of the 100 smaller clinics for UTP across the city, which will mean more cost savings on leases.
 - Our Public Health Education and Research building is going up on Old Spanish Trail just south of Helix Park. This gorgeous building will be the new home for our School of Public Health. The topping-out ceremony is in January, with completion in late summer of 2026 and moving in that fall. This will clear out the RAS building, which we'll clean up, give it a new paint job, and decide what to do with it.
 - We are still discussing with Memorial Hermann about a joint venture with the women and children's hospital. We are the only UT health-related institution without our hospital, and that has not escaped our notice or the chancellor's. Right now, we are eyeing the south campus, the parking lot where the SOD is, and maybe even some of the old university housing that probably needs to come down soon.
- Update on Plans for the Presidential Transition
 - The search for the president hasn't started yet. We anticipate getting a search committee paneled sometime in January/February. I hope we will have a new president by the end of the calendar year.
 - Perceptions of the impact of the general election on UTHealth Houston.
 - Impact on the General Election - state-level politics dictate our fate much more than federal politics. Our state, by most people's accounting, is at least as conservative as the new administration coming into the federal government. So if the federal government is going to change things like DEI or any other social programs, odds are we're already at least where that will go, if not farther. I would not anticipate significant policy changes.
 - Updates on the legislative session and any expectations.
 - Increase in Formula Funding The decreasing amount of money we get from the state to run our university partly relies on the number of students we have, which turns into dollars based on some complicated formulas and multipliers. Our CFO, Mike Tramonti, is the chair of the formula funding committee for the entire state, and we, as always, are pushing to increase those multipliers and the base rate for student funding. The state will have another whopping budget surplus, not as whopping as last year, which was around 30, 32 billion. This year will be in the mid-twenties, but that's nothing to sneeze at. There should still be plenty of money to be utilized. We think we might be able to get a little bit more in formula funding. We're able to preserve, we believe, our mission-specific formula. This is a remarkable thing that was put in a couple of years ago that says if the institutions keep growing their research programs by a certain percentage, then we get a bonus check from the state and have maxed that out every year since it was started. That's just extra money into our research pocket based on the research growth. And we take that money and put it right back into research support. Here, we are asking for 21 million to help launch our school of behavioral health sciences. We have a dean; we have a handful of associate deans. We've got six programs being reviewed for approval to start recruiting students. We don't have a building, and we don't have what you would want for a friendly piggy bank to launch that school. In the meantime, the university has been floating those operating costs, but we will need some help.

- New Initiatives from the Board of Regents
 - Announced in November that Tuition will be free of charge for all four years for families making less than a hundred thousand dollars a year. This is fantastic for the students in the state of Texas. Unfortunately, they explicitly did not include the health-related institutions. Our nursing school has the top BSN program in the state, and those students cannot take advantage of that program. That same student could then go to UT Arlington and go to their nursing school for free for four years. So that's a problem for us that we continue to push, and we're trying to do this with the regents.
 - Regent's Strategic Research Fund - it's an undisclosed pot of money. We don't know how much they're willing to do. Still, I am pretty sure it's in the tens of millions, if not the hundreds of millions, where institutions can apply either for brand new ideas to try to launch some new initiative or funding to take something that's already existing but needs to help to go to the next level. This could be something like new institutes or significant research endeavors they have pointed out; they would love to see more cross-institutional partnerships. We want to think about ways to work with UT San Antonio Health Science Center with Galveston or one of the campuses to write proposals for some of that money.
- Future Initiatives on the Horizon or Strategic Plans
 - We need to build another building. So that's on the short to medium-range plan. Ideally, that would go on the grass in front of the library next to the medical school, and then eventually, we would replace that four-story Jesse Jones library building with at least one, if not two, towers. And I've already told the president and our design people that we don't want to see another five-story tower; we need a 15-story tower.
 - Ross asked - do you envision when towers would be created at McGovern? Is that a five-year or 10-year aspiration?
 - Dr. Morano replied – We plan to have broken ground within 5 years, but it takes about five years to go from the decision, yes, we're going to do it, to getting plans, to getting the money, to doing the construction.
 - Question: Are we looking at the geography of some smaller clinics that might be eliminated? We don't want to leave some of our resource-poor patients without access. Some of those smaller hubs are underserved populations.
 - Dr. Morano replied -I am sure we won't leave communities in need. We have over a hundred front doors. We're not looking to close 95 of them. We're looking to close maybe 30 of them to get a reduction, so we're not wasting space. We must ensure that we're serving all the populations we need to serve.

IV. Vote on Updated IFC Bylaws

The committee voted, and there was 100% agreement on the bylaws.

V. Subcommittee Breakouts

Governance and Academic Affairs - <i>IFC Identity Reboot</i>	Faculty Status, Rights, and Responsibilities - <i>Wellness Redux</i>	Administrative Affairs - <i>Faculty "Thrival" Guide</i>
Paul Rowan	Andrea Taylor	Debbie Cline
Esther Kuyinu	Eric Jones	Francine Snow
Erin Fox	Linh Bui	Shane Cunha
Harnoor Singh	Luca Giancardo	Tiffany Langabeer
Thomas Harrison	Robert Coghlan	
Yejin Kim	Yonca Korkmaz-Ceyhan	

VI. Adjournment

Dr. Ross Shegog

The next scheduled meeting will be via Zoom on February 19, 2025.