

2025–2026 Faculty Council Minutes from Meeting 06

0 Meeting Information

0.1 Date

- March 4, 2026
- Meeting 06

0.2 Time

- Started, 2:00 PM
- Ended, 3:39 PM

0.3 Location

- B2311, Bayou Building, University of Houston-Clear Lake

0.4 Presiding

- Dr. Cotten

0.5 Attendees

- College of Business
 - Ken Black
 - Silvana Chambers
 - Stephen Cotten
 - Farzaneh Noghani
 - Jeff Whitworth
 - Faiza Zalila
- College of Education
 - Sheila Baker
 - Michelle Giles
 - Rebecca Huss-Keeler
 - Lisa Jones
 - Jana Willis
- College of Science and Engineering
 - Krishani Abeysekera
 - Nelson Carter
 - Jeff Mountain
 - Ross Niswanger
 - Yi Su
 - Paul Withey
- College of Human Sciences and Humanities
 - Karen Alexander
 - Michael Brims
 - Neal Dugre
 - Jason Makepeace
 - Steven Sutherland

1 Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Cotten called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. The February 2026 Faculty Council meeting minutes were approved by unanimous consent without correction.

2 Information Item – Provost Office Updates

Provost Waller gave the following updates:

- Faculty Development Leave will be on board agenda in March.
- Provost candidate presentations were mentioned. Encourage folks to review recordings or live presentations and complete surveys.
- Brief update about where things stand with the curriculum review.
 - The General Counsel office, the Provost's Office, and each Dean's Office (along with others) completed a general education curriculum review per SB37.
 - Only a few courses came up as potential concerns. The process of addressing those concerns is in progress.
 - Generally, the courses are being aligned with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) document called the Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) for lower division courses. This was rather straightforward.
 - At times, procedures seemed to be changing quickly during the process.
 - Moving forward, we are trying to determine what role the faculty council has in this process.
 - More curriculum review will come.
 - No faculty will be asked to sign pledges.
- Provost search surveys are due by noon on Friday.
- Housekeeping question on the emeritus committee. All applications have been reviewed. Letters have been written. They are all being reviewed.

3 Information Item – Bookstore – Debra Carpenter and Timothy Jackson

A change was made and Debra Carpenter and Timothy Jackson did not come to the March meeting. They will come to the April meeting.

4 Information Item – Curriculum Committee Report – Dr. Becky Huss-Keeler

There were two items: The Textbook Material's Policy (1st read), and the Grading Policy and Procedures (1st read).

4.1 Textbook Materials

Becky Huss-Keeler discussed the Textbook policy:

- The policy is old and many things have changed.
- Debbie Carpenter is from the purchasing department and Tim Jackson is a senior administrator with Follett for the UH-System. Both of those individuals helped.
- Open Educational Resources (OER) were discussed (see subsection below).
- Someone commented that the adoption due dates for the summer and fall terms are the same.
 - Another person noted that the dates change from term to term, and so no static date should be written in the policy itself. Instead, it should point to the Academic Affairs Calendar.

4.1.1 Additional Questions – Concern that CTAP Discourages OER Adoptions

- A faculty member said they use free OER textbooks in their courses. A book representative told them that the students pay the same price through CTAP, whether that instructor is using OER textbooks or not, so they recommended the instructor start using textbooks with more robust features. The faculty member said they felt that the CTAP program was discouraging faculty from keeping costs low and picking cheap/free textbooks.
- Another colleague said that, when we found out CTAP was scaling to all courses last year, the old Faculty Senate’s Teaching and Research Committee asked those questions. The speaker could not remember the exact formula that was used, but remembered the conclusion was that ultimately choosing an OER textbook for a class was supposed to ultimately decrease costs overall, so there was a benefit to students overall.
- The original speaker acknowledged that but said the benefits may have only reduced their student’s costs by a few dollars instead of giving them a free option.
- Another speaker acknowledged that and said that this is generally a “cost sharing” situation, and that it will benefit everyone if everyone tries to keep textbook costs as low as possible. Furthermore, they said students could use the bookstore system to identify which textbooks are free and, if 3 of a student’s 4 classes for a semester were using free textbooks, then that student could “opt-out” of CTAP and just pay for 1 textbook, as that would be cheaper.
- Another colleague asked if students can opt-in and opt-out every semester.
 - Colleagues answered, “yes.”
- Another colleague offered a hypothetical. Suppose several programs all chose to try to have OER books in their classes, and so all the students in those programs opted out. Then wouldn’t that increase the costs for all the other students? The faculty member went on to suggest that it did not sound like costs were shared.
- Becky Huss-Keeler suggested that some of these questions would be good for next month’s meeting, when our representative from Follett comes.
- Another colleague agreed with the cost-sharing concerns.
 - They suggested it’s typically more work for a faculty member to go to the trouble of adopting an OER book. Therefore, we should have a way to encourage faculty members to choose OER textbooks.
 - Furthermore, they said that sometimes it may make mathematical sense for a student to opt-out of CTAP. But that’s a tricky thing to advise students to do,

because once a student opts-out, they cannot opt back in during a given semester. And if a student does opt-out, that student may need to follow a different set of instructions to activate everything (depending on what products the textbook and class are using). Those instructions may not be included in your syllabus, so the instructor would need to be ready to walk that student through those steps themselves.

- A faculty member said three things:
 - Students tend to prefer hardcopy textbooks, and those are rarely available to students.
 - They believed Open Educational Resources were biased and they all agreed in their programs not to use them.
 - Many of the books they use in their programs are through the same publisher, and those publishers give coupons to students, which offered a cheaper bottom line than the CTAP situation.
- Becky Huss-Keeler reminded everyone to bring these comments up next time when our guests come.
- A faculty member showed on the UHCL website (course search), if a student searches for courses that are using OER books, no courses come up. So how are students supposed to identify courses that are using OER books? Because a student may want to try and be strategic and identify courses that use OER and take all those the same semester and opt-out.

4.2 Grading Policy and Procedures

Becky Huss-Keeler discussed the Grading Policy:

- The registrar worked with the group to update things.
- Please seek feedback from faculty colleagues and administrators (e.g., Associate Deans) about the revised policy to make sure it will work for everyone.
- Discussion included the need for timely grading before drop deadlines and questions about feasibility across course types.
 - Faculty expressed concerns about Canvas grade forecasting inaccuracies and variability in grading structures.
 - Since it would be hard to develop a single policy that would fit all possibilities, could the policy give some suggested guidelines, that say faculty should make every effort to have assignments graded in a timely manner by the drop date?

5 Information Item – Research and Scholarship Committee Report – Dr. Sutherland

Dr. Sutherland provided updates about the new permanent Faculty Engagement Policy:

- Draft started from existing policy and incorporated other existing policies.
 - Points to existing SAMs and MAPPs where possible.
- Instead of the form, the faculty member should email the chair when they must miss office hours or class.

- The revision makes it clear that faculty do not need to have face-to-face office hours during student holidays (like spring break).
- It was recommended that we remove references to suite secretaries, because they don't exist in many areas anymore, and a policy can't rely on support staff where some areas have none.

6 Information Item – Faculty Affairs Report – Dr. Lisa Jones for Dr. Lorie Jacobs

- A policy does exist, but it is not good.
- The purpose of the new policy is to provide due process and a procedure for faculty when there is an accusation of concern.
- Worked with a Dean and the head of HR to include stakeholders.
- There are a few things that need to be ironed out before the policy is ready for the first read.
- Dr. Cotten mentioned that there was a productive meeting with Dean Sanford and Cynthia Springer (HR Director) to go through important details. Multiple stakeholders were included.
 - The policy protects individual faculty members with strong due process, and it protects the university as well.
 - Dr. Cotten said that, in the past, it was unclear if HR dealt with faculty at all, or if that was all academic affairs only. Now it is very clear HR wants to be involved.

7 Information Item – Center for Faculty Development – Dr. Conley

Dr. Kay Colley discussed the Center for Faculty Development (CFD):

- Early career award deadlines are soon.
- Accessibility Training Online soon.
- EAB Navigate Training Online.
- Walk with me is a new event, where faculty can walk with Dr. Colley, and they share information. Dr. Colley has expressed appreciation.
- Learning Innovators is returning.
- Please complete the survey to give feedback about services, there are only 19 responses so far.
- Dates for the Fix-a-thons to help with document Accessibility are as follows:
 - March 9 (10am-11:30am)
 - March 17 from 1pm-2:30pm
 - March 25 from 10am-11:30am
 - April 2 from 1pm-2:30pm.
- There were questions about help sessions for adjuncts.
- Restival: A Festival of Rest.
 - March 26, 2026, 11am-7pm.
- Faculty game night will be coming soon.

8 New Business

8.1 Form the “Improving the Academy Award” Committee

Further discussion noted about formation of the Improving the Academy Award Committee and nomination considerations.

The committee includes the following individuals:

- Dr. Omah M. Williams-Duncan
- Dr. Lisa Gossett
- Dr. Zokhrab Mustafaev
- Dr. Christine Walther (last year’s winner)

9 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 PM.