

Faculty Speaks...

about Money

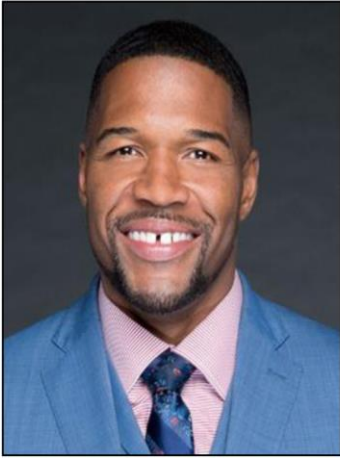
TSU FACULTY NEWSLETTER



James Benham
Search Committee Chair
Vice-Chair, TSU Board
of Regents



Dr. Edieth Wu^{^^}
Search Committee
Co-Chair
Professor, Thurgood
Marshall School of Law
TSU



Michael Strahan^{*}
Search Committee
Co-Chair
Host, *Good Morning America*
NFL Hall of Famer

TSU Presidential Search Committee Chair James Benham, Co-Chairs Professor Edieth Wu, Esq., and Michael Strahan (Photo: TSU Office of Marketing and Communications, January 18, 2024).

What's Happening at TSU Presidential Search Website Goes Live

-- N. L. GLENN GRIESINGER, PH.D.

Texas Southern University has launched a website that is completely dedicated to providing information about the ongoing search for the University's fourteenth president. The website is accessible through the University's home page and offers a nomination submission link, a detailed position description, a presidential search timeline, and biographies of search committee members.

James Benham, Vice Chair of the Board of Regents, chairs the Presidential Search Committee. The committee is co-chaired by Professor Edith Wu of the TSU Thurgood Marshall School of Law and TSU alumni Michael Strahan of Good Morning America.

Additional search committee members include Brandon L. Simmons, Dr. Richard Johnson, Dr. Marilyn A. Rose, student regent Dylan Getwood, and alternate member Stephanie D. Nellons-Paige of the TSU Board of Regents. They are joined by Dr. Frazier Wilson and Dr. Antoinette Jackson of the TSU Board of Trustees. Community search committee members include Vicki Hollub, President & CEO of Occidental Petroleum, Mathew Knowles, Music World Entertainment

Founder, and Andrew Card, White House Chief of Staff for former President George W. Bush. The search committee also includes Corrie Williams, President of the TSU National Alumni Association. French Professor Marylise Caussinus is a search committee member from the TSU faculty. She is an elected 2023 – 2025 Faculty Senator who represents the College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences.

As per the statutes of TSU, the process of selecting the President of the University is governed by the TSU Board of Regents. The Board has the authority to carry out the selection process either directly or through a Presidential Search Committee.

The WittKieffer Executive Search Firm works closely with the search committee to recruit candidates. WittKieffer currently accepts nominations from the TSU community and the general public through the Presidential Search website. Nominations may also be emailed to TSUPresident@wittkieffer.com.

Letter From the Editor



N. L. GLENN GRIESINGER, PH.D.
Editor, Faculty Speaks
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- TSU Department of Mathematical Sciences, College of Science, Engineering and Technology, Professor.
- USC School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Undergraduate Alumni.
- Rice University, Department of Statistics, Graduate Alumni.

Greetings on behalf of the Texas Southern University Faculty Senate. *Faculty Speaks* is a publication of the Faculty Senate that addresses the concerns of the TSU faculty. As the Faculty Speaks editor, I will be reaching out to Professors, Administrators, and Staff for op-eds, as well as in-person interviews that will appear in the current month's edition of *Faculty Speaks*.

You may also make your voices heard by uploading your contribution directly to the *Faculty Speaks* website. Your contribution then will be automatically emailed to me. You will then be contacted for an interview or editing of your op-ed to be placed in an upcoming *Faculty Speaks*.

The focus of the February 2024 *Faculty Speaks* is Money. The March and April editions will focus on Safety & Security, and Policies & Procedures, respectively. Faculty Speaks is composed of four rotating features and sub-features:

- ✚ Feature Articles
 - ❖ What's Happening at TSU
 - ❖ What's Happening Nationally
- ✚ Insights and Opinions
 - ❖ Letter from the Editor
 - ❖ Faculty Senate Chair Speaks
 - ❖ Faculty Surveys
- ✚ Up Close and Personal
 - ❖ Faculty You Thought You Knew
 - ❖ Minority Faculty Speaks
- ✚ University Updates
 - ❖ Administrators Speak
 - ❖ What's Happening in Hannah Hall

Special thanks to James Opara of OIT for weekly maintenance of the Faculty Speaks website and newsletter.

1. Opara, J., February 14, 2024. *Presidential Search*.
<https://www.tsu.edu/presidential-search>



Photo: N. L. Glenn Griesinger, Ph.D.

Breaking News

TSU Faculty 3% Raise -- N. L. GLENN GRIESINGER, PH.D.

Interim TSU President, Mary E. Silas, Ph.D., announced that the University has received approval from the TSU Board of Regents for a 3% salary increase for faculty members during the 2024 fiscal year.⁴ This increase was reflected on the February 2024 payroll for professors and other monthly-paid employees, effective from January 1, 2024. Dr. Silas has also begun a new compensation study.

A few faculty members received raises as a result of former President Lane's 2019 compensation study, but the Faculty Senate's repeated requests for a full report were not granted.⁵ The TSU Faculty Senate has been raising the issue of a lack of faculty raises for over 15 years. In response to their concerns, the past three TSU Presidents typically cited factors that were independent of a faculty member's job description of teaching, research, and service.



TSU Spring Faculty Institute, January 10, 2024.
(Photo: N. L. Glenn Griesinger, Ph.D.)

What's Happening Nationally

Cal State Professors' Strike Lasts One Day -- N. L. GLENN GRIESINGER, PH.D.

California State University (CSU) faculty in conjunction with the California Faculty Association (CFA) union members initiated a strike on the first day of classes of the Spring 2024 quarter citing a demand for higher compensation. The strike was planned to last for five days but was resolved in one day, as the administration acceded to the faculty's demands for higher compensation.²

The union has released a statement regarding the faculty's agreement. According to the statement, all faculty members will receive a 5% raise, effective from July 1, 2023, and another 5% increase, effective from July 1, 2024. The

agreement must first be ratified by the CFA.³

The CFA comprising professors, lecturers, librarians, counselors, and coaches, executed the largest strike by university professors in the United States to date. The strike involved approximately 29,000 CFA members and marked a historical event in the academic community.

The CSU system consists of 23 campuses throughout the state of California. It is the largest public university system in the country with a student body enrollment of over 450,000.

2. Alonzo, M. "Cal State Faculty Members End Strike After One Day." *CNN Business*. January 23, 2024.
<https://www.cnn.com/business>.

3. Karlamangla, S. "Cal State Begins Largest U. S. Strike of University Professors." *The New York Times*. January 22, 2024.
<https://www.nytimes.com/>.

4. Silas, M. E., email, TSU Community December 15, 2023.
5. Lane, A. A, email. Campus-wide, April 2, 2019.

TSU Faculty Senate Chair Speaks Spring 2024 Faculty Institute --- N. L. GLENN GRIESINGER, PH.D.



Rasoul Saneifard, Ph. D., P.E.

TSU Spring Faculty Institute, January 10, 2024.
(Photo: N. L. Glenn Griesinger, Ph.D.)

During the Spring 2024 Faculty Institute, Rasoul Saneifard, Ph.D. addressed the Faculty Assembly with the following speech.

"Greetings Colleagues! It is an honor to serve as your Chair of the Faculty Senate and Assembly. I pledge to continue to perform my duties with dignity and integrity, and to support each of you by presenting your concerns to the Administration to the best of my ability. I need your continual support in this effort.

In the past several months, we have faced many challenges. Among them a drop in our enrollment, budgetary constraints imposed upon us; change in administration; change in leadership of the Board of Regents; and mistreatment of

faculty in some academic units, among other things.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those faculty members who actively participate on university committees, spending many hours of their time to help our institution achieve its goals.

Furthermore, during the last semester, many of our faculty accepted extra teaching assignments in order to help some of our units with their budgetary shortfalls. They should be recognized and appreciated by our academic administrators for their effort..."

This speech is currently available in its entirety on the Faculty Speaks website. It is under the Insights and Opinions section.

What’s Happening in Hannah Hall

Financial Wellness Throughout Retirement

-- CYNTHIA F. BUCKLEY, ED.D., SR. ASSOC. VP, HR & PAYROLL
-- STACIE Y. HAWKINS, DIRECTOR, HR & PAYROLL



Mack H. Hannah Hall is a significant administrative building at TSU, housing several offices including the Department of Human Resources. Employees at all stages of their careers reach out to the Human Resources Department for answers to frequently asked retirement-related questions as seen below.

Q: What are retirement plan options?
A: There are two retirement plan options, TRS (Texas Retirement System) and ORP (Optional Retirement Plan). All TRS-eligible employees at Texas public institutions of higher education and Texas public educational institutions are automatically enrolled in the TRS on their first day of employment. ORP-eligible employees at Texas public institutions of higher education may elect to participate in the Optional Retirement Program as an alternative to TRS.

Q: What is the ORP election period?
A: There is a one-time opportunity during employment in Texas public higher education institutions to choose between TRS and ORP. Employees are eligible to elect ORP on their first day of employment in an ORP-eligible position, which is referred to as the *Initial ORP Eligibility Date*. Employees have 90 additional calendar days to make their election, which is the ORP Election Period.

Q: Is TRS or ORP the default retirement plan?
A: The default retirement plan is TRS. An employee will be an active member of TRS until an election of ORP is made by submitting a completed *TRS 28 Election Form* to the TSU Human Resources Department.

If an employee submits their completed *TRS 28 Election Form* on or before their *Initial ORP Eligibility Date*, they will become an active ORP participant on their *Initial ORP Eligibility Date*, and their active TRS membership is waived as of that date. Alternatively, if an employee submits their completed *TRS 28 Election Form* after their *Initial ORP Eligibility Date*, they will remain in TRS until their ORP participation start date. This is generally the first of the month following the date they submit their completed *TRS 28 Election Form*.

Q: Does the acronym TRS refer to both the retirement system as well as the retirement plan option?
A: Yes, the acronym TRS refers to refers to both. The Texas Retirement System (TRS) is one of the largest retirement systems in the nation.⁶ One of the two retirement plan options in the system is TRS, which also stands for Texas Retirement System. The other retirement plan option is the ORP.

Q: What is the difference between TRS and ORP?
A: TRS is a traditional benefit pension plan that provides formula-based retirement annuities. ORP is a contribution plan that is similar to a 401(k) plan with matching contributions from the employer.

Q: Can an employee control how their retirement account is invested?
A: An employee who has selected the TRS option cannot control how their account is invested. TRS instead makes investment decisions on the employee’s behalf. Alternatively, an employee who has selected the ORP can control how their retirement account is invested. In fact, the employee is responsible for selecting an ORP company, which is referred to as a vendor. Additionally, the employee is responsible for monitoring both their ORP vendor as well as investments.

Q: Are ORP vendors also available to an employee who has selected the TRS option?
A: No, ORP vendors are not available to employees who have selected the TRS option because TRS manages investments as a large institutional investor.

Q: How many ORP vendors are there at TSU?
A: There are currently seven vendors at TSU. The Human Resources Department actively engages with all seven vendors. Vendor-sponsored sessions related to financial wellness topics are frequently emailed to employees from HR Communications.

Q: Which factors determine retirement benefits and eligibility?
A: Eligibility to retire and the annuity formulas are based on age, years of service, salary, date of retirement, and the applicable membership tier.

Membership tiers are determined by several factors including the first date of membership. The latest TRS Benefits Handbook and TRS website detail membership tiers that apply to retirement eligibility requirements along with annuity formulas.⁷

Q: Are ORP contributions subject to federal income tax?
A: ORP contributions and any net earnings are not subject to federal income tax until the funds are withdrawn or paid as a retirement annuity. A post-tax Roth option is not available.

An employee who is younger than 70.5 years old cannot take contributions or any net earnings out of the plan, including amounts from prior periods of employment with the same or another ORP employer, until termination of all employment with all Texas public institutions of higher education.

Q: Are TRS contributions subject to federal income tax?
A: TRS contributions and interest earnings are not subject to federal income tax until the funds are withdrawn or paid as a retirement annuity. A post-tax Roth option is not available.

Active TRS members are not permitted to withdraw or take a loan from their member contributions. Employer contributions made on behalf of the member are not available for withdrawal at any time.

Q: Are retirement plan decisions irrevocable?
A: Retirement plan decisions are irrevocable. Once an employee chooses one of the two retirement plan options, TRS or ORP, the decision cannot be changed.

6. TRS Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 2024. <https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/Homepage.aspx>
7. Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 2022. *TRS Benefits Handbook, A Member’s Right to Know*. https://www.trs.texas.gov/TRS%20Documents/benefits_handbook.pdf