The September 8, 2020 Faculty Assembly brought together more than 150 of our colleagues from across the HSC to hear from President Williams, Provost Taylor, and VP for Governmental Affairs Danny Jensen. The event was led by incoming Senate President Dr. April Wiechmann, who welcomed attendees, introduced speakers, and spoke briefly about her vision for a collaborative, active, and vibrant Faculty Senate.

President Williams focused many of his comments on his vision for the HSC’s future, but also took the time to recognize the substantial and impactful efforts of HSC faculty and students during these unsettling early months of our pandemic era. From manning call centers and leading contact tracing to advising the Governor’s office, the HSC has been an increasingly prominent resource for our community, region, state, and nation. Dr. Williams expects this will continue and spoke of his goals for the HSC to take a leading role in both training and delivery of “whole health,” an integrated model for wellness that brings clinical care together with spiritual, emotional, self-care, and other elements.

Mr. Jensen briefed attendees on the legislative process and how it can and has affected the HSC and noted the challenging fiscal climate Texas currently faces. How this will play out on our campus continues to unfold, but Mr. Jensen echoed President Williams’ prediction of a “very lean Texas budget” in the upcoming legislative session, with the HSC to face at least an additional $1.5 million reduction. He recommended that all HSC personnel and students make themselves prominently visible to campaigning legislators, noting that the substantial number of HSC affiliated individuals across the region can command significant attention by public officials, but that we must make ourselves seen to do so.

Provost Taylor addressed the substantial work taking place to ensure the HSC continues to grow as a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school and workplace. He noted the work of the newly formed RISE (Redefining Inclusive Solutions for Equity) group, which includes a focus on key anchoring elements such as campus culture and values, as well as equitable access to those things that drive success. Dr. Taylor pointed out special efforts to build these elements into the HSC’s systems and policies in an intentional ingraining of them in the bedrock of our institution. The Senate speaks for all faculty in saying we applaud this work and hope it will continue with all necessary support.