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Academic Senate
Meeting of February 20, 2013
University Club, Scriptorium Room
University Park Campus

MINUTES

Present: D. Blaine, P. Cannon, G. Clark, S. Curran, P. Ethington, R. Flick, R. Girandola, C. Gomer, H. Greenwald, S. Gupta, L. Hunt, J. Kagan, R. Lin, V. Marmarelis, O. Mayer, J. Platt, P. Riley, M. Parks, M. Schroeder, J. Silvester, J. Steele, A. Trope, K. Venegas, M. Weinstein

Absent: R. Ben-Ari, D. Brooks, L. Carver, P. Conti, R. Davila, Y. DeClerck, C. Dieterle, G. Ehresmann, A. Lakoff, D. Larsen, M. Marx, E. McCaffery, E. McCann, J. Moffett, K. Murphy, J. Orr, C. Wang

Guests: M. Levine, S. Loh, D. MacInnis, M. Yoshimura, C. Zachary

President Patti Riley called the meeting to order at 2:08pm:

Lucinda Carver is on tour and therefore we will be receiving January minutes at a later time.

Provost Garrett is ill and sends her regrets. Presentation on Strategic Transformation by Debbie MacInnis who will represent Provost Garrett. Save questions for the provost for next month.

Meeting on Faculty Evaluations report: Sandeep Gupta's task force met Tuesday to discuss faculty evaluation process. A 4-point memo by committee of 6 chaired by Jeremy Kagan was discussed: 1) Colleagues are dissatisfied with the numerical evaluation system. 2) Many units do not have one on one meetings (example of confidential information left on chair in envelope). 3) Teaching evaluations are weak since they rely solely on student evaluation questionnaire which is not a reliable metric. 4) The process lacks transparency. In many units it is unclear who is on the merit evaluation committee? In other units the question is whether or not there really is a committee? The task force decided to address teaching evaluations first as the other issues are handled differently in different schools. Four members of the Academic Senate's subcommittee on NTT Affairs joined on the premise that evaluations matter the most to NTT teaching faculty. The task force brainstormed and took inventory yesterday. Emerging ideas include classroom evaluation for feedback purposes, not evaluation. This would require a great deal of effort, so the question would be how often to do it. A pilot program is suggested as conversations with faculty indicates that active buy-in needed. So a pilot program would alleviate fears of having their autonomy infringed upon etc. Also the course packet and what students produce are not typically included in teaching evaluations for most schools. Teaching innovation, pedagogy, etc. are only indirectly taken into account. The task force would like to incorporate that information more rigorously. Proposals are forthcoming and feedback from committee members will be collected. Then the task force will deal with the other 3 questions. For example, the 5

49 point rating scale needs to be examined on every level. For what period is that rating
50 assigned? Is overall career trajectory considered, or is it relative to rank? In some
51 schools it could be pegged to rank, so in one school assistant professors would only be
52 rated in lower categories to show that there is room for growth but in other schools the
53 assessment is more along the lines of, “for where you are, you are outstanding.” These
54 produce very different numerical outcomes for two similarly fine assistant professors.
55 These vary dept to dept as well as school to school.

56

57 There is also the issue of assistant professors who can be ranked at the top of ranking for
58 3 years yet denied tenure. Promotion is based on what senior researchers in the field
59 think of you. This merit evaluation system is about counting numbers of papers etc.

60

61 Jeremy: We have amassed material across campus—there are federal and state issues.
62 State issue: qualitative vs quantitative data; one on one meetings; transparency; student
63 evaluations. You should have first 3 if you don’t have them and want them you may put
64 them into practice right now. The 4th issue, student evaluations—we have not yet figured
65 out how to improve them. So the idea is that the faculty can at least have the first three if
66 they don’t like numbers.

67

68 The purpose of a numerical evaluation is that it is easier to transcribe on a spreadsheet.
69 Without having to talk to people, the numbers indicate: You are doing better, or not as
70 much, or you are doing what you should do. There are outliers, so there’s 5 levels. We
71 think words are the best way to communicate this, not numbers.

72 There is a myth that departments are commanded to use a bell shaped curve or that you
73 can only have a certain number of people at the same level.

74

75 If you believe that conversations with faculty can be formative and developmental, then
76 helpful mentoring needs to be a separate conversation from judgmental reviews that
77 affects salary, etc. In other words you are going to have to have two important systems.
78 Depts. are going to have to figure out a way to do both. Have one developmental
79 conversation so that people can be better teachers and then in some other process
80 administrators will take into account teaching effectiveness for high stake evaluations.

81

82 Question: In some schools these myths are considered mandates though, so central
83 administration may not think so but doesn’t it end up being so?

84

85 Gupta: The college and depts. need to know how to do this and chairs need to be trained
86 as to how to have these conversations.

87

88 Question: At federal level, whether numbered or not, aren’t those rankings supposed to
89 mean the same thing across the university, not bell curve in one unit, seniority in another,
90 per point in career in another?

91

92 Answer: These practices are written down; the senate had a committee on evaluation,
93 their recommendations became university policy. Lloyd Armstrong spent a whole senate
94 meeting discussing it. The numerical ranking system went from 3 levels to 5, adding 2

95 above the highest. There are definitions for these. We are a decentralized place. There
96 can be another discussion with the deans of faculty about this.

97
98 The school of engineering has an 8 point policy document so these documents could be
99 collected to see what has been done in the past. We can ask the Vice Provost for Faculty
100 Affairs to talk with the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs, but also the councils and senate
101 should share documents and practices. We are looking at creating a repository of
102 pointers, maybe there should be a faculty group that carries this forward on a long-term
103 basis to get word out—the task force will make a recommendation.

104
105 Chuck: The nominating committee met Feb 4. Openings this year are for Academic VP,
106 4 at large members, also Administrative VP. We have begun to contact individuals who
107 would be good in these positions. Timeline: deadline for submission including write-ins
108 is April 6. We will present the slate at the April Senate meeting on April 17 where the
109 candidates will present themselves. Ballots will be distributed on April 18; voting ends
110 May 3. We will announce the results on May 6.

111
112 Debbie MacInness: Heads the Committee on Strategic Transformation for Provost
113 Garrett. The document is a call to action. The Strategic Vision is meant as call to make
114 USC one of the premier institutions in world. This is being done to address significant
115 challenges in our world. Our core values connect with solutions to these challenges. We
116 are looking at the paths going forward that can activate our values to achieve outcomes
117 centered on transforming, creating, and connecting. The committee is charged with how
118 to move the university forward in concert with administrative and academic units. We
119 have had to look at what to do and not to do as a committee. Provost does not want the
120 committee to decide how the university should be “fixed” or tell academic units or the
121 administration what to do. Instead we are to initiate collaboration on a massive scale.
122 The committee interfaces between the Provost, administration, and academics. The
123 committee first looked at documents from the strategic planning subcommittees as there
124 were several years of good work that generated excellent ideas. We wanted to make sure
125 we did not lose those excellent ideas. So we identified those pertinent to this part of the
126 Strategic Vision and created a category system. Next we looked next to see how the
127 vision is being implemented in various schools, for example, what Marshall is doing and
128 how does it align with what the university wants to do and what progress have we made.
129 Marshall’s Strategic Plan is pretty well aligned with University’s Strategic Plan. There
130 are elements in Marshall’s plan that are not in the university’s Strategic Vision. There’s a
131 school perspective, but every school is different and not necessarily active in every
132 category at once. Not every unit has a Strategic Plan. A strategic plan means different
133 things to different folks; the name can be intimidating. So schools without a plan are
134 asked to focus on articulating their high level initiatives--what they see themselves
135 focusing on. This way we can see overlaps for collaborative purposes.

136
137 The committee’s charge was discussed: Resources, conduits, need to coordinate, advise,
138 keeping abreast of what is happening across the university, and ongoing adjustments as
139 needed. The committee will also be an ongoing process; members will come and go as
140 needed. The idea is to concentrate on strengths. Help form vision into ideas. The

141 committee has met once, next meeting members will be a dialogue about what
142 professional challenges, schools, etc. are having and what they are doing to move forward.
143 Then subteams will focus on the vertical categories from matrix and serve as resources to
144 the academic units. Phase 2 will be about synthesis. The website is a repository for
145 information and ideas. Committee member Eduardo Molina is thinking thru metrics.
146

147 Question/Comment. The influence map is a good idea. Faculty energy can get wasted if
148 not recorded. There was a pre-strategic plan process under Provost Nikias. Did those
149 reports get into the new vision?
150

151 Mark: Besides lofty ideas, what is the actual strategic plan? Need to discuss
152 environment and competitive environment in which USC finds itself. There needs to be
153 an organized analysis of threats. If our goal is to be one of the universities that survives
154 as a residential university, then we need to be cognizant of the threats. The SV lacks the
155 fact that other schools with which we compete are not sitting still.
156

157 Answer. As a member of one of the subcommittees of the SV, I know the discussion of
158 competitive threats was done. The issue of a plan vs. a vision was discussed; the choice
159 after vigorous debate was to create a Vision.
160

161 Patti: This committee will hear presentations on competitive threats. These concerns
162 have been heard.
163

164 Comment: I support these goals. I am being constructive when saying this commendable
165 effort is not the SV that I heard presented today. This seems more like a managerial
166 document to establish proper ways to achieve certain goals. A SV is a much broader
167 approach to key issues that may face USC in next few decades--3 or so, no more, that
168 affect our placement in the world. This seems too detailed and does not serve the
169 purpose of a SV. We are busy professors. Unlikely the document will be read through.
170 How can it be absorbed?
171

172 Debbie: The SV is only 7 pages, quite short. There was a reason not to do a Strategic
173 Plan. Our role was not to come up with the SV. Robin Romans and Michael Quick did
174 most of this writing. Our role is to follow up on the SV, which has been declared. How
175 do we activate it, with focus on facilitating collaboration? Is our role to work on the SV?
176 No. Our committee is about helping coordinate the implementation. Activities coming
177 out of this committee need to be prioritized in terms of what is happening in world. We
178 need to be cognizant of threats and transformational opportunities each threat brings.
179 And a focus on dissemination: there are many potential avenues forward. A factor in our
180 favor, if the Provost is working through the deans that information will flow thru deans
181 and deans will have to develop activities that flow through their depts. There will be
182 other avenues for diffusion as well. Suggestions are welcome as to how to make the
183 process more well known.
184

185 Jeremy: You mentioned sustainability. Where does that stand in this effort?
186

187 Debbie: That's a challenge in our world. Where can we add value to that challenge? Do
188 we have the capability in place to add significance to that challenge? Perhaps. We want
189 to identify activities right now but also people who might be relevant?
190

191 Jeremy: So we would approach you?
192

193 Debbie: if there's opportunities to leverage expertise we can approach the provost and
194 seek to build on their expertise.
195

196 Student presentation on Winter Break: Sarah Loh and Michael Yoshimura. The student
197 government is requesting a break during Fall in order for students to de-stress. Presented
198 results of student survey showing that a majority favors such a break.
199

200 Howard: We already added a day to Thanksgiving. That's going to creep—means a lot
201 of students will already take that whole week off. This will let you study harder? And yet
202 you say it lets you go home and see your family? These seem contradictory.
203

204 Answer: This is to give a break in October.
205

206 Howard: How did you conduct the survey? Is it representative? Please go over the
207 methodology.
208

209 Answer: Ee send them out in the newsletter, have representatives take surveys to
210 organizations, going to campus centers, have tables, etc. We also have numerical data
211 from an earlier survey on GE course evaluations. About 40% did not support this. But it
212 did not have the depth of information we wanted so UGS did this additional survey.
213

214 Question: Increasingly we have students from beyond LA, nationally and internationally.
215 To have breaks both in middle and at Thanksgiving would be difficult. Why have two
216 breaks rather than consolidate them into one? Also you mention the stress peaking in the
217 middle of the semester. They seem more stressed at the end. Is there data to support that
218 stress peaks in middle?
219

220 Answer: I believe we have a survey for stress. We could get you the data. Re the
221 students from outside LA, we wanted a break in the middle, if students choose to leave
222 earlier during Thanksgiving week that's their choice. Ours is a different break, as de-
223 stressor.
224

225 Question/Comment: Congratulations on the point about arriving at beginning of year with
226 early orientation. That's cogent. Friday or Saturday a good idea. Invest in this deeper.
227 During orientation we do micro-seminars for Trojan Values, acclimation, so this question
228 might be your fulcrum to make it happen.
229

230 Question: We have Spring Break. Is there evidence of less stress and improved
231 academic performance following that week?
232

233 Comment: I think it is a good idea to move “move-in day” up. Research on the break
234 shows that it’s a bad idea. The stress is when they need to be around faculty and on
235 campus not be encouraged to leave.
236

237 Comment: With respect to the validity of their survey methods, have you ever tried to
238 survey your colleagues? It’s hard to get responses.
239

240 Comment: I want to reinforce idea that students will add days. Big absenteeism
241 problems around holidays. So if you want to ask for 3 days, ask for a whole week.
242

243 Comment: stress is not necessarily bad. And why not argue for a whole week of
244 Thanksgiving instead? There’s more support for that.
245

246 Comment: Move-in day needs to be earlier. That’s a great idea.
247

248 Patti: I hear an emerging consensus that the faculty body feels Thanksgiving might work
249 better. Think about how to get students behind it rather than October. Explain that
250 starting earlier means that staff would have to be back by about August 10 in order to
251 make that happen. That’s probably a non-starter. We are all interested in having you
252 come back to see us after student government discusses this further.
253

254 Update on the Technology and Learning retreat: We are waiting on summaries of break-
255 out groups from Joan Getman. We will go over those when they arrive. Of note are 2
256 outcomes: We have had a lot of conversations about new technologies in the classroom.
257 John Silvester is chairing a task force committee to look at these issues. Also we are
258 continuing to update the retreat website with information about business models, new
259 technology, etc. Resource inequities emerged from the retreat discussion. Classrooms
260 are not all set up, and not all buildings are Smart Rooms. Dornsife seems particularly
261 affected. Others, e.g. Viterbi, Marshall and Annenberg seem more updated. But ideas
262 that were shown at the retreat cannot be done by all units. Also there are pockets of
263 people working on issues they are interested in. Susan Metros and Joan Getman have
264 volunteered to meet with Tom Lee from CHLA and Patti to keep this interests in online
265 teaching up and moving. What other committees or concerns should be discussed?
266

267 Comment: Human support is needed as well as tech support. Some colleagues can do it
268 themselves, others need people to help them transform their content and execute it for
269 them.
270

271 Comment: I have used IML and there used to be a program called MacMultimedia
272 across the college and the resources were there, need trained IML people to be in the
273 classroom helping to facilitate the technology.
274

275 Comment: I would like us to be keeping up with software and apps that are coming out.
276

277 Question: Has anyone ever asked the Center For Scholarly Technology for help?
278

279 Question: Isn't there a difference between creating courses for Distance Learning
280 degrees and creating supplemental technology for extant courses on campus? The vendor
281 should create support for the Online courses.

282

283 Question: As technology has changed, the staff has not necessarily been updated at the
284 same time.

285

286 Question: training for TAs should include technology, tools being used in the department.

287

288 Question: Joan Getman and Phil E. chaired a task force on technology and did a survey.
289 People are trying to do video technology.

290

291 Question: Who does the committee report to?

292

293 Answer: Ilee Rhimes.

294

295 Update on electronic student evaluations. The evaluations will be done in the classroom
296 at the same time as paper in the upcoming pilot program. There will perhaps be one
297 question to do after the class is totally over but not the overall evaluation.

298

299 Reminder to read the announcements.

300

301 President Riley closed the meeting at 4:00pm.

302

303 Respectfully submitted,

304

305

306 Diane Blaine

307 Member-at-Large of the Academic Senate