Academic Senate Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2014

University Club, Scriptorium Room


Guests: S. Bullock, A. Carry, L. Fetters, E. Garrett, M. Levine, B. Meyerowitz, C. L. M. Nikias

1. Provost Beth Garrett and Beth Meyerowitz, Vice Provost for Faculty Development

Provost Garrett said farewell – this is her last Senate meeting prior to going on academic sabbatical on December 1 as part of her transition to the presidency of Cornell University. The Academic Senate presented Provost Garrett with a farewell gift of a Brazilian vase.

Provost Garrett introduced Beth Meyerowitz, who presented two elements of the Vice Provost for Faculty Development’s portfolio, including a review of a recent empirical study conducted regarding the university’s recently tenured faculty. She also announced the new Provost’s Assistant Professor Fellowship – available to faculty available who are newly hired – they apply so that they can have a year of fellowship to substantially improve their research (learning new instrumentation, getting to an archive they couldn’t normally get to, etc.).

These results have been presented to deans, vice deans, and to the Academic Senate. Beth Meyerowitz is happy to present this information to department chairs or senior faculty as requested. A written report will likely not be forthcoming since the sample sizes are too small to be statistically valid.

2. Approval of Senate Meeting Minutes from October 15

Paul Rosenbloom proposed three changes: Correction of the Meeting Location to HSC; Correction to the Engineering Faculty Council Report to Viterbi’s entering class is 38% female. Clarification: the Viterbi Faculty Council created three standing committees (as opposed to self-organizing into three committees). Minutes were approved as amended with 1 abstention.

3. Update on Sustainability Meeting

The Academic Senate held a two-hour meeting on November 7, 2014 to explore this topic. Approximately 23 people attended – very good engagement, some members of the Senate were also present; many attendees indicated that they would like to participate in any future events. Included on the agenda were members of the university’s sustainability committee. The committee members who came to the meeting have been collecting data around courses in the
interest of developing some additional academic integrity to the topic. They are preparing a report for President Nikias. They also discussed USC’s current STARS report – a self-reporting assessment by which one earns points that translate into a rating for the campus as being sustainable (with classifications of bronze, silver, and gold). It appears that USC would not currently score very well on this assessment and the Sustainability Committee’s report will make recommendations on how the university could increase its sustainability activities (and raise its rating). The idea would thus be to get the Sustainability Committee’s report to raise the rating. It is working on the report and it’s not yet public – they will probably finalize the report by the end of the academic year.

Follow-up post-meeting: Andre Ouellette reported on the meeting to the Keck Faculty Council and they will be inviting the Sustainability Committee to Keck to think about how to bring sustainability to the medical campus. Dennis Riddell reported that the Dornsife Faculty Council also discussed it and would be interested in additional collaboration and information as well. John Silvester proposed a small Task Force – 3 faculty from Senate, 3 faculty from the Sustainability Committee to move this report forward upon its completion. James Steele would like to volunteer for the Task Force – and Jeremy Kagan as well. Jeremy also announced that David Orr, one of the leaders of the sustainability movement, will speak on November 20th at 10:30 am in RRI. He helped transform Oberlin College into a national leader on sustainability.

4. Dialogue with the President regarding the Provost’s Search

President Nikias gave an update about the search, including taking questions and advice from the Senate as the search continues to select the next Provost of the university. Ainsley Carry, Vice-Provost for Student Affairs, also attended this portion of the meeting as a member of the Search Advisory Committee, as did Sarah Bullock, who is the staff liaison for the committee.

The responsibilities of the provost have changed tremendously over the past 20 years, even as recently as 15 years ago. Budgetary responsibility that was originally transferred when President Nikias became provost remained with Provost Garrett and the next provost will also have final say regarding the overall budget of the university.

Searching for a new provost is also an opportunity for restructuring if necessary – President Nikias won’t hesitate to do it if it is necessary – such as when he created a new senior vice president position for the hospitals which is an office of the corporation position (USC Health CEO Tom Jackiewicz reports to President Nikias directly). The Keck dean, however, reports to the provost and the provost has final oversight of the university budget. Another example is the recent suggestion to take some or all of IT out of the provost’s portfolio and put it under the senior vice-president for administration’s portfolio.

The provost is the guardian of academic values and the final say on all tenure and promotion cases. For these reasons the new provost must have outstanding academic integrity. The provost is the shock absorber of the university and must be both a positive and high energy personality who is comfortable with uncertainty and making decisions in that context. The provost helps the deans succeed – which is a different kind of leadership than the president.
The difference between the dean’s and president’s job at USC is a matter of scale, rather than the provost, who although they will have many opportunities to shine personally, it is primarily a matter of making others shine. Previous budgetary experience and understanding of the research university and its complexities are essential; knowledge of student affairs and residential life are also critical. We are looking for candidates who have qualifications in most if not all of these areas.

No matter who the person is, the idea is that the president will spend a lot of time over the first year training and mentoring that person. President Nikias did it with Provost Garrett even though she was an internal hire and is committed to doing it again.

5. Update on the Provost Senate Retreat – Oliver Mayer could not be here today. He is co-chairing the Strategic Transformations committee. The agenda is being developed with the notion of seeing where we’ve been over the past 5 years. It will be on a single day – one approach is to look at broad themes contained in the most recent plan. Another is to look at particular aspects of especial interest to faculty – e.g. Residential Life. Are there faculty who should be invited to the retreat because they have either a particular expertise or interest in strategic planning? Please let us know. Other suggestions for the retreat are welcome as well.

6. Announcements
   Save the Dates: Provost Senate Retreat January 31 at the Ritz-Carlton, LA Live
   Senate Holiday Dinner will be here at the University Club on January 21, later after the full Academic Senate meeting that day – spouses are welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Ange-Marie Hancock, Ph.D.
Secretary General of the Academic Senate