



Committee on Academic Senate History

Annual Report to the Senate, 2015/2016

Committee Membership: Dr. Robert V. Labaree, chair, USC Libraries; Dr. Radha J. Sarma, Keck School of Medicine [retired]; Claude Zachary, University Archivist, USC Libraries

Robert met with the Senate Executive Board on September 16, 2015 to discuss creating a small committee around the work of the Senate Historian and to review a new charge to govern the work of the committee. Robert offered several suggested editorial changes but otherwise agreed with the charge. The meeting also offered an opportunity to inform Board members of the work that has been done in the past, including locating and obtaining contact information for President Leslie Wilbur [1975/76]. Robert "interviewed" him over email regarding his tenure on the Academic Senate. After Claude Zachary and Dr. Radha Sarma agreed to be on the Committee, we met on three separate occasions during the academic year. The action items discussed during each meeting are described below.

The first meeting of the Committee on Academic Senate History was held on Monday, December 7th from 1:30pm - 3:00pm in the Von KleinSmid Center Library, Multimedia Room.

The following topics were discussed:

- Claude provided an overview of the on-going project coordinated with Connie Roque to scan meeting minutes, resolutions, and presidential binder contents currently housed in the University Archives starting with files in 1947. Issues discussed included the types of materials scanned and the timetable for completion. The materials will be available through the USC Digital Library website [<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/>]. Claude noted that the student assistant from the Senate has completed scanning document files up to the early 1990s and has also begun scanning items from the presidential binders.
- Robert had created and maintained a directory of faculty senate websites approximately twelve years ago [<http://isd.usc.edu/~labaree/Senates.html>]. The directory was created as a central resource to assist the Senate in identifying information about how other faculty governance groups were addressing specific issues. As Robert noted, because this page rests on an old server, he was hoping its contents could be integrated into the new Senate website because he has been unable to update it for about eight months.
- Robert briefed Claude and Radha on a blog he plans to draft that explains the need for faculty councils to have their own formal records retention plan and to encourage councils to take the lead in ensuring the history of their units are preserved beyond the requirements articulated in the University's current Records Management Policy [<https://policy.usc.edu/record-management/>]. Robert asked Claude and Radha to think

about additional topics for future blog postings on the new Senate website, such as the types of print and digital items to be considered for preservation and the need to deliberately preserve documents produced by elected standing committees and appointed task force groups within each unit that report to the council.

- The committee discussed the Academic President Oral History Project initiated by Dr. Francis Feldman to document the impressions and opinions of past presidents of the USC faculty. Leslie Wilbur, formerly from the School of Education, has already been interviewed [by email], but we all agreed that there was a general urgency to identify elderly individuals from the list of past presidents and request interviews with them before they pass away. There was also a discussion of ways to record respondents and to manage interviews with individuals who are no longer on campus or reside in the region. The oral history interviews are transcribed and located in the University Archives.

The second meeting of the Committee on Academic Senate History was held on Tuesday, March 8th from 1:00pm - 2:00pm in the Von KleinSmid Center Library, Multimedia Room.

The following topics were discussed:

- There has been no update about when the new website will be made available, but Robert will inquire about the website's status at the next Senate meeting on March 23rd. Robert spoke with Paula Cannon at the Senate Retreat about the status of the site and she said the Executive Board is trying to get it done but there have been some frustrating technical delays and other priorities for the Executive Board to address.
- Claude stated that the project to scan Senate documents from the University Archives is progressing well. There had been a delay in scanning items because the student assistant had resigned but that a new student assistant had been hired last week. As a result, the project remains on track to be completed by the end of the academic year. Claude noted that there are approximately 450 files dating back to 1947 that will be a part of the digital archive. The archive will reside on the USC Libraries' Digital Library website under the heading, "University of Southern California History Collection" [<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/collections>]. It will have a separate link to browse materials under "Academic Senate History" [or something similar]. The collection will include all monthly meeting minutes and resolutions that are currently archived in binders in the University Archives. Other items, such as handouts distributed at meetings and various reports, white papers, and other similar materials, will not be digitized unless funds can be secured to do so at a later date. It is assumed there will be a link to the collection on the new Senate website.
- The Directory of Faculty Senate Websites that Robert created many years ago [<http://isd.usc.edu/~labaree/Senates.html>] remains inaccessible because the Contribute web editing program he had been using is no longer available to update links and ITS has been unresponsive in figuring out a workaround. It is still hoped that the contents from the directory can be integrated into the Senate's new website but where on the new site and how it will look remains unknown until the new site is completed.

- Robert is drafting a blog posting for the new website that reviews the general work of the committee and discusses the importance of faculty council's to commit to a formal records retention plan. Claude will write a blog entry that discusses the types of documents to be considered for retention, disposal, and transfer to the University Archives. It was thought that Radha could write a blog entry drawing from her tenure in the Keck School to discuss the importance of department-level records retention plans and what should be retained beyond what is stated in the university's records management policy [<https://policy.usc.edu/record-management/>]. In addition to ensuring that the history of USC is preserved, Robert noted that one of the significant issues that came out of the Senate Retreat was the challenge of transparency of data and information from the university in support of equity, diversity, and inclusion; it was noted during the retreat that it is often difficult to obtain data on faculty demographics and student diversity because senior administrators are either reluctant to share information or the information is not gathered or retained in a consistent way, so data could not be aggregated. It was agreed that if every academic unit committed consistently to a robust records retention plan, there would at least be an opportunity to retain data for future inquiries that would not be dependent on administrative discretion or the whims of General Counsel.
- Claude and Robert agreed that any future oral history transcripts can be included in the Academic Senate History Collection of the USC Digital Library. Oral history transcripts already exist for the Andrew J. and Erna Viterbi Family Archives collection. It was also agreed that any interviews would have to take place during the summer because of our work schedules. Claude and Robert reviewed the list of past Senate Presidents and noted individuals who still work on campus and perhaps could be scheduled to be interviewed relatively easily and identified those who need to be contacted who are no longer affiliated with USC or have retired. A priority would be placed on contacting older faculty.

The third meeting of the Committee on Academic Senate History was held on Monday, May 2nd from 1:00pm - 2:00pm in the Von KleinSmid Center Library, Multimedia Room.

The following topics were discussed:

- Claude reported that the project to scan Academic Senate documents in the University Archives and to be posted on the USC Libraries' Digital Library website is almost finished. The task now is to identify gaps in the collection so any missing documents can be sought.
- The Committee discussed blog topics to be posted on the new Senate website. A purpose of the blog posts is to help make the new Senate website a more engaging destination for the university community. Robert has finished drafting the first blog that reviews the university's current records management policy, describes the role of the Senate Historian in preserving the history of shared governance at USC, and advises Faculty Councils to include in their bylaws a commitment to archiving documents related to academic governance. Claude agreed to discuss what types of documents should be preserved and to describe digital records retention and preservation. Radha will use the Keck School of Medicine as an example of the challenges associated with preserving academic governance documents in large, complex academic units.

- The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the Senate Presidents Oral History Project. Although a general urgency to seek interviews was already noted, it was difficult to find the time to pursue any interviews during the academic year because of our work schedules. However, with the passing of Richard Perry and the most recent passing of Sol Golomb, there was a renewed appreciation of the fact that older past Presidents of the Faculty need to be contacted to request interviews. It was noted that the list of past presidents on the Senate website is out-of-date. Robert will try contacting Dr. Robert Mannes [1967] again to ask if he is willing [and able] to be interviewed. Robert emailed him after Claude obtained his contact information but he never responded. Other past presidents who will likely be asked this summer to participate in the oral history project will be Dr. Robert Coffey [1975/76], Dr. Ken Servis [1981/82], Dr. Don Lewis [1882/83], and, if he can be tracked down, Dr. Richard Savich [1984/85], who is listed as having left USC. Claude noted some faculty have already been interviewed by the Emeriti Center and it may be helpful to listen to those interviews beforehand. However, we all agreed that we still need to interview them specifically about academic governance at USC and their tenure as President of the Faculty. There are also several faculty who are still at USC, such as Dr. Ed McCann and Dr. Marty Levine, who could be available to be interviewed because they are still on campus during the summer. Robert will use Claude's digital recorder for the interviews. A decision about whether or not to transcribe the interviews will be determined at a later date.

Radha pointed out that among the important roles of the Committee on Academic Senate History is to help promote the work of the Academic Senate throughout campus by bringing attention to the history of decision-making and shared governance at USC. Efforts beyond doing our part to ensure the new Senate website is an engaging destination for the campus community is a topic that we all agreed should be discussed further in collaboration with the Executive Board. As an afterthought, the history of academic governance at USC could be a potential exhibit in the Doheny Library at some point in the future. The committee will investigate this possibility next year.

Respectfully submitted,
May 12, 2016