ACADEMIC SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Meeting of March 11, 2020
Doheny Memorial Library, Room 121
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.


Absent: L. Helding, J. McLaughlin Gray, S. Rich


AGENDA

Rebecca Lonergan, Academic Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

Approval of January Senate Meeting Draft Minutes

Ashley Uyeshiro Simon, Secretary General, presented the February 2020 draft minutes for discussion and approval.

Jessica Parr moved to approve the minutes; Paul Adler seconded. Motion passed with 28 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention.

First read of Handbook Amendments: Prohibition of Romantic Relationships with Student Supervisees

Sandeep Gupta, Chair of the Handbook Committee, presented the first read of the proposed changes to Sections 3-G (Conflict of Interest) and 6-I (Romantic Relationships). These changes were drafted to implement Resolution 18/19-05, which prohibits romantic relationships between faculty and the students they supervise.

A suggestion was made to more prominently emphasize the second paragraph in 6-I(b) about inherent power differentials between any faculty member and student, not just power differentials between faculty supervisors and student supervisees. A recommendation was made to describe this power differential in-full in section 6-I(a), then explicitly state the continued differential existing even between faculty and students they are not supervising in section 6-I(b).

A question was asked about how this relates to hiring practices of couples. Lonergan clarified this does not preclude the hiring of two people already in a relationship; it is more intended to address conflict of interest, particularly romantic relationships, that develop at USC. She also stated section 3-G(c) refers to a management plan for exceptions conflict of interest relationships and equal opportunity.
A suggestion was made to remove the word “unusual” from the first sentence in 3-G(c), as there have been many cases of successful relationships between faculty and students. It was discussed that 3-G(c) does not only cover romantic relationships but other conflict of interest situations as well, and that the “unusual” term refers to the fact that one person is directly supervising the other, not the type of relationship itself (e.g., parent-child, spouses). Yaniv Bar-Cohen, Immediate Past President, stated that the purpose of these Handbook changes is to send a message that any exceptions to the prohibition on relationships between students and faculty when there is a supervisory relationship should be viewed as requiring extraordinary circumstances. Most Senators indicated preference to keep the sentence as written in the proposed language.

**Dialogue with Provost Chip Zukoski**

Provost Chip Zukoski updated the Senate on COVID-19 business continuity plans. He stated that things are evolving quickly, and the memo last night extending online classes until March 29th was due to the first instance of community transmission in Los Angeles occurring yesterday. Other universities including Harvard have closed the dorms, but we have not as there are students who do not have other housing options. The dorms are open, but they are encouraging students not to come back until the recommended date, which is constantly being updated. The University continues to function, but they are restricting all non-essential travel, reducing University-sponsored events, and encouraging social distancing and good hand-washing hygiene. Performance-based activities (e.g., athletics, dramatic arts) can go on with high-quality hygiene, but performance attendance is restricted to family members only, and others can view the performances online.

Regarding research labs, Zukoski stated research scholarship should continue, and PhD students who need to work in labs are able to do so with proper precautions. For students on the Health Sciences Campus, we will follow the professional guidelines for interacting with the public and patients. In classes with labs, community-based classes, physical education classes, and performance classes, faculty should consult with their deans to prepare for how to transition online over Spring Break. Zukoski stated he is asking everyone to be flexible at this time.

Zukoski announced a memo will go out shortly that extends online classes until April 14, 2020. They are encouraging students to take their belongings home, but classes will continue online with as little disruption as possible. He also stated they are working out how to continue supporting work/study students during this time.

A statement was made that all students living in sorority and fraternity houses are being told to leave. Zukoski recommended contacting Winston Crisp, VP for Student Affairs; Lonergan stated she would contact him. A question was asked about whether any supplies are being given to those still living in the dorms. Zukoski stated there is a team working with Felicia Washington and David Wright to think about students still living on campus.

A question was asked about whether facilities will remain open. Zukoski stated that the campuses, labs, dining halls, and facilities remain open with social distancing. If students do not attend class due to feeling sick or not wanting to attend in-person, he is encouraging all faculty to be flexible, and to encourage sick students to call Engemann. This is a very special circumstance, and the purpose is to prevent the spread of the virus while continuing to educate.

Zukoski stated that there will be a survey emailed to all faculty asking for feedback about their online instruction experiences. A statement was made that the Joint Committee on Information Services conducted a pilot of online teaching. They were able to share the questions and results of this survey with administration to aid this larger survey of faculty. A suggestion was made to ask faculty who already teach online to act as a resource for others who may need help moving their classes online.
A suggestion was made to allow students to switch their grades to Pass/No Pass for the semester, and to not take this semester’s student feedback into consideration for merit reviews. Another suggestion was made to give Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grades.

A question was asked if mental health services are still being offered to all students. Zukoski stated that all services at Engemann continue to be open. Another question was asked about how we are helping students who do not have access to the technology needed for online learning. Zukoski stated that this is a major challenge; the libraries and computer labs remain open, but faculty are encouraged to contact department chairs and Student Affairs about this. The libraries do have laptops that can be checked out, but they are unsure of the number of students who need this support. A question was asked if there are plans to do a bulk purchase of laptops. Zukoski stated there are not, but this will be looked into over Spring Break.

Regarding resources for faculty, Zukoski stated the Center for Excellence in Teaching has a good website for course continuity online, and they are also holding classes. He acknowledged this is a scramble, and that some people will struggle.

A question was asked about expenses incurred for future travel. Zukoski recommended everyone, including students, save their receipts for previously approved travel, but stated the financial impact to individuals and the University will be major. He stated a broader conversation about reimbursable expenses is needed.

Regarding work and family life, questions were asked about what happens when schools close, and if our childcare centers will remain open. Zukoski stated when schools close, our entire society will see a dramatic change, and there must be flexibility to deal with this. Our own childcare centers will follow the Bright Horizons practices.

First read of Handbook Amendments re: Faculty Councils

Sandeep Gupta, Chair of the Handbook Committee, presented the first read of the proposed Handbook amendments to section 3-B(3) related to Faculty Councils. Lonergan stated the deans objected to the original proposed language due to three main points:

1. Concern that this language will require faculty consultation for even small daily decisions
2. Concern that faculty will be raising concerns that affect staff and students as well as faculty
3. Concern that all other faculty committees will have to be formed with consultation from the Faculty Councils.

Lonergan stated the deans have agreed to meet with the Senate Executive Board, given the Senate is open to changes to the proposed language. Most Senators were in favor of this meeting, and the Executive Board stated they will not agree to any changes without first consulting the full Senate. Zukoski stated that the hope is that we can still come to a consensus, but more direction from his office may be needed. He said he understands how opacity and consultation are considerable concerns, and that more information exchange (both outgoing and incoming) is essential. A suggestion was made that this discussion be framed as operationalizing our culture conversations in a productive and meaningful way.

A concern was voiced that these modifications to the Handbook may weaken Faculty Councils that are currently strong, and it was suggested these modifications clearly be stated as minimal requirements for shared governance. Gupta stated the Handbook Committee has already made a lot of adjustments to accommodate this point.

Presentation re UCAR review of Master’s Programs

Ruth Wood, Chair of the University Committee on Academic Review (UCAR), gave a presentation about
why and how all Master’s programs are being evaluated at this time. They are performing these
evaluations because the number of Master’s programs has grown rapidly in the last decade, some of these
programs are not accredited, and the quality of some programs is unknown.

As of Fall 2019, there were 295 Master’s post-codes. The Committee’s plan is to aggregate related post-
codes (e.g., Computer Science), and evaluate only the largest program in each aggregate in order to reduce
the sheer number of programs evaluated to a more reasonable number. The goal is to evaluate 22
programs per year, and reevaluate every five years. The program or graduate school will supply the
necessary materials for evaluation, and all members of UCAR will have access to these materials through a
software system. This system also tracks where students are after graduation to give Committee members
a sense of how students are faring.

The Committee has reviewed 17 programs thus far, and they have deliberately compared on-campus
programs with online programs. Of the 17 reviewed, nine programs have received approval, and eight
programs were referred for further evaluation to Elizabeth Graddy’s (Executive Vice Provost) office.

A question was asked about whether UCAR also reviews doctoral programs. Wood affirmed the committee
does review doctoral programs as well, but the objectives of reviewing the Master’s programs is relatively
different. They are not asking the Master’s programs to explain their relationship (if any) with doctoral
education.

Wood stated if anyone would like to provide feedback or has questions, they can reach out to her.

New Business
No new business was raised.

Announcements
a) Next Senate meeting April 15
b) Direct election of Executive Board members will take place in late April and early May. (c) Last 2019
   – 2020 Senate meeting and Senate’s end-of-year party will be on May 13

Adjournment
Meeting was adjourned at 4:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Uyéšhiro Simon
Secretary General of the Academic Senate