

**COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION SERVICES (CIS)
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR 2019-2020**

Specific Charge for 2019-2020 Academic Year

The charge of the Committee on Information Services (CIS) is to identify the IT needs of USC faculty and students. Outcomes of the committee's work have included providing feedback on planned upgrades of USC network infrastructure, technology-related policies, and information resources and services, as well as recommending the use of new technology to support teaching and research. The committee advises the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Academic Senate and coordinates with USC Libraries on matters of joint concern.

Discussion Topics for 2019-2020 Academic Year

Our discussions targeted the efforts of three subcommittees, each posing a key question:

1. **Disaster Preparedness and Recovery:** How can the university help faculty to prepare to teach following a disaster?
2. **Virtual Faculty Integration:** With over 90 online programs at USC and nationwide, how can we help our institution to better integrate geographically dispersed faculty (GDF) who teach and attend University meetings fully online?
3. **Educational Technologies:** What are the minimum technology requirements for 21st century teaching/learning?

Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

In order to address the issue of helping faculty to prepare to teach following a disaster, the Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Subcommittee designed and conducted a university-wide pilot study. This study simulated a disaster response scenario in which faculty teach online and students join class online and surveyed the perspectives of faculty and students who participated in the pilot to determine preparedness, technology needs, and opportunities to improve online disaster-recovery teaching and learning experiences. 36 faculty from Dornsife, Dramatic Arts, Rossier, Marshall, Keck, Pharmacy, and Iovine Young Academy took part in the study and survey. The results of this survey were passed on to USC Information and Technology Services and the Provost's Office prior to the university-wide mandatory online teaching trial that occurred March 11-13, 2020.

Study Findings

1. Faculty with little online teaching experience were not adequately prepared to continue classes online following a disruption of the physical classroom.
2. 97.3% of 807 students surveyed felt adequately prepared by the professor ahead of the pilot class and attendance was similar to on campus classes.
3. 33.5% of students and 44.4% of faculty surveyed rated students' level of engagement in the virtual class at 3 on a scale of 1 to 5.

4. 44.4% of faculty surveyed ranked their effectiveness of teaching in the virtual class at 3 on a scale of 1 to 5.
5. 37.9% of students surveyed ranked their effectiveness in learning in the virtual classroom at 3 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Recommendations

1. All classes should conduct at least one session entirely online each Fall semester, during ShakeOut week. Conduct a similar exercise each Spring semester, on a common week to be determined.
2. In all academic units, at least one faculty meeting should be conducted entirely online each semester.
3. As part of the onboarding process, all new faculty should be trained in university-contracted video conference software (presently, Zoom). Annual refresher training should be available to those wanting it to ensure continued familiarity and facility with such software.
4. All course syllabi should contain boilerplate language to direct students to Blackboard for course continuity, should in-person classes become impractical. Early in each course, faculty should address safety in the physical classroom and protocols of moving to virtual teaching.

Virtual Faculty Integration

In order to address the question “how can we help our institution to better integrate geographically dispersed faculty (GDF) who teach and attend university meetings fully online?” the Virtual Faculty Integration Subcommittee designed and conducted a university-wide survey to learn the experiences of existing off-site or GDF who teach all classes online and participate in campus-based meetings online. 165 off-campus faculty participated in the survey from 13 schools. The deans’ offices from 5 schools reported having no geographically dispersed faculty. 4 schools were unresponsive. The full report of each subcommittee is available upon request. For the purposes of this summary report to the Academic Senate, we offer our major findings and recommendations below.

University Response to COVID-19 Consideration: During the analysis of our survey results, emergency “shelter in place” orders were implemented and all classes shifted online. As a consequence, all faculty and staff became “virtual faculty” or “geographically dispersed.” In light of the findings shared from this survey, USC has a timely opportunity to ameliorate concerns and introduce new quality standards that better address the needs of all faculty working and teaching from home.

Findings

1. *Inconsistent Quality Standards for Home-Based IT Equipment:* Geographically Dispersed Full-Time Faculty conduct all meetings and classes online, but great disparities exist in the standards for IT equipment provisions and reimbursements between academic units throughout the university. The majority of off-campus faculty (55%) reported paying for all of their home-based equipment used for the purpose of teaching and attending meetings online, whereas other

faculty have ample or lucrative technology funding to spend on equipment and home office furniture and supplies. More than half of off-site faculty (52%) reported being unaware of IT equipment replacement plans offered by their academic unit/school. 27% said their school did not offer any plan. Only 20% said their school did offer an equipment renewal plan.

2. *Inconsistent Quality Standards for Home-Based IT Services:* Geographically Dispersed Full-Time Faculty conduct all meetings and classes online, but great disparities exist in the standards for IT service provisions and reimbursements between academic units throughout the university. Nearly half of faculty do not receive any reimbursement for IT services such as home-based internet plans, landline planes, or mobile service data plans.
3. *Inconsistent Quality of Participation in USC Meetings:* Off-site faculty in this survey were more likely (29%) to join a meeting held in an on-campus conference room by using a video-conference technology. Some campus-based meetings (22%) are held entirely online. Some can join by teleconference line only (12%), and others (12.5%) are not provided any options to join meetings held on campus. 39% of faculty never come to campus meetings in person, whereas 39% report attending on campus meetings 5 or more times annually. For those faculty attending on campus meetings, the majority (69%) paid for their travel costs out of pocket without reimbursement.

Recommendations

1. *Improve Quality of Home-Based IT Equipment Standards:* Immediately introduce higher and consistent University-Wide Quality Standards for providing home-based ITS Equipment Provisions, Equipment Renewal/Replacement, and Equipment Servicing in all academic units with faculty teaching online from home. Standards might include: New and appropriate equipment every three years. All equipment provided for on campus faculty should be provided to off-site faculty. Everyone should be provided funding, reimbursement, or direct provision of a computer, a second monitor for teaching with Zoom, a scanner/printer, and related technology devices used to improve conditions for university teaching and service.
2. *Improve Quality Standards for Home-Based IT Services:* Immediately introduce higher and consistent University-Wide Quality Standards for reimbursing home-based ITS Services in all academic units with faculty teaching online from home. Fund highest available broadband quality access for faculty teaching online from home.
3. *Improve Quality Standards for Participation in USC Meetings:* All schools, programs, and departments should hold a minimum of one faculty meeting fully online per semester. Introduce higher and consistent University-Wide Quality Standards for reimbursing travel to major school level and university level events, such as school and program faculty retreats, school and university commencement events.

Educational Technologies

In order to address the question “what are the minimum technology requirements for 21st century teaching/learning?,” the Educational Technologies subcommittee focused on three activities. First, the subcommittee created an eight-page guide titled “Now that I know how to use Zoom, how can I use it to

teach” that contained tips and observations from our hands-on experience teaching with Zoom. This guide was distributed to the campus by ITS prior to the March campus closure and remains available at https://itservices.usc.edu/files/2020/03/teaching_with_zoom.pdf. Second, the subcommittee, in conjunction with USC ITS Learning Spaces, surveyed the IT leaders from each of the schools and academic units to gather data on classroom and auditorium audio visual equipment, functionality, features, age, and support models. The information collected will provide the basis for a future report identifying both the current state of USC’s classroom and auditorium audio visual equipment and any gaps or opportunities for investment or improvement. Finally, to get a better idea of what educational technologies (besides Blackboard and Zoom) are being used today across USC, the committee created an interview protocol that will be used later this year.

Further questions that should be considered:

- What do we know about the quality standards that other universities have successfully instituted to ensure the quality of home-based online teaching and learning? How are we working to exceed those standards?
- What innovative approaches/measures in the provision of technology and information services could we take to ensure USC is offering the greatest possible online learning experience for our students?
- How do we provide historically marginalized and economically at-risk students adequate and appropriate technology devices, services, and reimbursement costs? What is our long-term plan?
- How will the university ensure all faculty and staff have access to adequate and appropriate technology devices, services, and reimbursement costs that meet and exceed:
 - California’s minimum standards for providing ITS equipment and services to home-based employees?
 - Competing universities’ standards for ITS equipment and services?
- How can we redesign and re-equip our classrooms and learning spaces to support a hybrid teaching model where some students are in the room while others are self-quarantining at home?

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