ACADEMIC SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Meeting of April 15, 2020
Virtual Zoom Meeting (due to COVID-19)
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.


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 March 2020 draft minutes for discussion and approval.

Rebecca Lonergan moved to approve the minutes; Chimene Tucker seconded. Motion passed with 39 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Dialogue with President Folt and Provost Zukoski
President Carol Folt offered warm wishes to everyone in attendance during this COVID-19 pandemic. She stated she has been grateful for the honest conversations she has been able to have with people, and for the connection, collaboration, and cooperation that is happening across our university in ways that she has never seen. For example, she has been talking with Neeraj Sood (Price School) about his work in understanding how we might reopen doors to society. She stated she will need help soon to identify faculty experts who can assist with different initiatives for recovery.

Currently, Folt stated senior leadership is focused on not laying anyone off for as long as possible, but we are the largest private employer in the city with most of our revenue coming from tuition. She also plans to get involved with the city to see how USC, along with others, can use our capacity to help our communities and work to close gaps of inequities. On a national scale, University Trustees Rick Caruso and Oscar Munoz were asked by President Trump to be on his Presidential Economic Advisory Panel to think about the economic future of the country. We are also working with partners to help the State of New York.

Provost Chip Zukoski outlined the processes in place to help keep our university operational. He stated decisions are being made very quickly to ensure we can continue our operations:

- The President’s COVID program management committee oversees the management of the university to ensure we are still operating. They meet at least once daily.
• A Provost emergency operations committee (EOC) is looking at issues related to the Registrar, teaching, online classes, surveying constituencies, and how to continue in our mission during this pandemic. Lonergan sits on this committee.

• Zukoski meets with the deans daily to receive updates from their schools and push out information to them personally. He also meets with the Senate Executive Board each week.

• We have hit a point now where we are able to pull away from day-to-day decisions. There are still many issues, but the vast majority of faculty and students are working online. We will begin looking at a “Project Restart” which examines whether summer session 2 courses should be online, how to have students return to campus, how to reopen buildings, what management structures will need to be in place, and more.

Zukoski reported we are taking an enormous hit to our finances due to revenue loss, clinical care, reimbursing students for housing, supporting employees for as long as possible, and more. The loss for the university will be hundreds of millions of dollars. We will need to make decisions to get to stability while continuing our mission. He also acknowledged each school will be affected differently. To keep enrollment steady, Zukoski stated 2000 more students were admitted without diminishing the quality of students at all, and that the rate of acceptances and intentions to enroll is higher than last year at this time.

Regarding online classes, the university conducted a recent survey that found large portions of faculty and students are having issues with connectivity (environment, internet capabilities, hardware). This will need to be thought through over the summer and into the Fall. CET continues to offer online pedagogy classes to help faculty learn best practices for online teaching. Doug Shook, Chief Information Officer, is launching a task force to explore issues with “Zoombombing” which has faculty representation. They realize that some faculty may need better support for working from home, such as improved IT equipment. Folt stated this is a scaling issue, so deans may need to identify those who need immediate help first, then we will need to have a long-term plan for IT support so we are prepared for future emergencies.

Zukosi stated he also reached out to the new deans of Dworak-Peck and Rossier to welcome them, as well as to this year’s valedictorian and two salutatorians to congratulate them on their achievements. He is continuing to work on filling the positions of VP of Research and VP for Enrollment Management as well.

A question was asked about whether the university would still honor the new “affordability” plan promised this year, and if we will also be able to disperse awards to students as usual. Folt stated they are not planning on cutting back financial aid right now, and that in fact they are expecting to spend more on aid due to the impact of COVID-19 on families. Zukoski stated he expects that any student awards that have already been earned would likely be fulfilled, but he would need to check, and he is unsure about next year.

A senator asked when more details about the hiring pause would be announced. Zukoski stated the memo about the hiring pause specified that this would be in place at least until December of this year, and would be reevaluated at that time. There is an exception process in place that goes through the deans and Provost, but they are trying to limit these exceptions, and the Provost is looking at each request. Another faculty member stated that protecting merit raises for assistant professors will be key for ensuring these faculty stay with our university. Folt stated she is unaware of any university that is not taking the same steps we are, but that she agrees equity differences will need to be accounted for in our recovery plan.

Zukoski and Folt answered questions about the Fall semester. Regarding when plans for on-ground versus online instruction will be announced, Zukoski stated there has been a lot of planning and discussion around this, and while they have been working on plans as much as possible, there is still a lot of uncertainty so they have not yet decided. The final decision for Fall must be made at least 6-8 weeks prior to the start of the semester. Folt stated they are thinking about all options, for example pushing the start of classes back
or holding classes on weekends. They stated faculty should assume that some classes in the Fall will still need to be held online, but classes which require in-person attendance may be phased back first as the quality of our programs is vital. Maja Mataric is working with research deans in each school to create plans for resuming research operations with social distancing, as this is a very high priority. They are still working out how to deal with costs associated with shutting down and restarting labs that were not included in grant budgets.

A senator asked how the administration is ensuring faculty can give meaningful input before decisions are made. Zukoski stated his office is providing resources, support, centralized trainings, and the like, but it is incumbent on the deans to hold conversations with their faculty and Faculty Councils to advise them. He can change some structures, but the curriculum is owned by the faculty and the sequencing of classes is usually decided by the departments.

**Second Read & Vote: Handbook Amendments regarding Prohibition of Romantic Relationships**

Sandeep Gupta, Chair of the Handbook Committee, presented the second read of the proposed Handbook amendments. They incorporated the feedback from the first read at last month’s meeting, but did not make any further changes.

*Todd Brun moved to approve the Handbook Amendments; Paul Adler seconded. Motion passed unanimously with 44 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.*

**First Read of Miscellaneous Handbook Amendments**

Gupta presented the first read of miscellaneous changes to the Handbook, suggested by the Handbook Committee. These amendments reflect updated titles, policies that were in place but were not noted in the Handbook, references for section and clause numbers, and other related items. He briefly outlined some of the modifications, but stated senators should read through them thoroughly before they are presented for a vote at the next meeting. He asked senators to please contact him and Lonergan should any questions come up. He clarified that senators should pay special attention to the modifications in yellow highlight, as these require a closer look.

**Upcoming Direct Election of Executive Board Members**

Paul Adler, Academic Vice President, gave an update on the upcoming Senate Executive Board elections and introduced all of the candidates. He stated all faculty (full-time, part-time, and retired) will be getting an invitation to vote tomorrow, and faculty can vote until April 27th. He expressed his gratitude for those willing to serve, and for the diversity of the slate. He noted the Executive Board added two voluntary questions at the end of the ballot (about school and track) to get a measure of engagement in these direct elections.

**Discussion regarding New Scientific Misconduct Policy and Lab Safety Policy**

Travis Williams, Chair of the Research Committee, and Kristen Grace, Research Integrity Officer in the Office of Research, gave a presentation concerning two new policies that the Research Committee is recommending USC adopt.

The first is a laboratory personnel protection policy which seeks to institute safety measures to adhere to safety policy. Williams stated a UC Regents settlement defined stringent lab procedures for safety, and USC will be held to these standards if sued. Should a student be injured in a professor’s lab or class, that professor bears personal, civil, and other liabilities which are exacerbated if that professor is running multiple labs and/or lectures at the same time. There are also situations in which some graduate students are teaching at night, without immediate access to staff or the professor should something go wrong. This policy charges the administration, and especially Facilities Management Services, to provide spaces that are compliant with these standards, ensures proper oversight of all classes and labs, and considers PI safety
records for promotion, tenure, and merit review as recommended by the National Academies. The Research Committee is currently seeking approval for the policy at the administrative level.

The second policy would control research and scholarly misconduct investigations. Williams stated USC’s current policy only meets minimum standards, and that we have fallen behind our peers. Kristen Grace was hired last summer to help us become leaders in this area. Significant policy changes that are being recommended include

- Having a standing committee on research integrity (with members appointed by the Provost to serve for 3 years) instead of an ad-hoc three-person committee, which will oversee panels of at least three people needed to review the documents and make recommendations and send them to the Provost.
- Inquiry panels will be appointed by the Vice President of Research. Previously deans appointed panels, which introduced potential conflict of interest.
- Timelines are well delineated, as are processes for what to do if timelines are not met.
- The overall process is more carefully detailed (see the presentation for an overview).
- Only the Research Integrity Officer, in consultation with the Vice President of Research, can dismiss an allegation or start an inquiry after a preliminary analysis. Inquiries involve preliminary fact-finding, and the ultimate decision of whether to launch a full investigation goes to the Provost for approval.

It was clarified that the purpose of this presentation was to get recommendations from the Senate. The Senate Executive Board recommended the policies be approved, and the approval process is awaiting the Provost and President.

A question was asked about how to get someone to review high-hazard materials. The presenters advised people email labsafety@usc.edu to bring someone from Environmental Health and Safety and Shop Safety to the space and do an interview. They will work with the course directors to come up with recommendations. Williams recommended faculty write to their deans if they believe there should be faculty or staff oversight mandated for certain courses or labs.

Faculty were asked to contact Williams if they have questions.

New Business
No new business presented.

Announcements
(a) Next and final Senate meeting of the year will be on May 13, 2020
(b) Direct election of Executive Board members will begin April 16 and close April 27
(c) Senate’s end-of-year party will be delayed this year due to the “stay home” directive

Adjournment
Meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Uyeshiro Simon
Secretary General of the Academic Senate