ACADEMIC SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Urgent Meeting of June 23, 2020
Virtual Zoom Meeting (due to COVID-19)
4:00 – 5:00 p.m.


Absent: G. Ulkumen


AGENDA

Rebecca Lonergan, Academic Senate President, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of May 26, 2020 Urgent Senate Meeting Draft Minutes
Ashley Uyeshiro Simon, Secretary General, presented the May 26, 2020 draft minutes for discussion and approval.

Paul Adler moved to approve the minutes; Brent Blair seconded. Motion passed with 32 in favor, 0 opposed, and 3 abstentions.

First read of Handbook Amendment re: Emergency changes to the Academic year of service
Sandeep Gupta, Chair of the Handbook Committee, presented the first read of Resolution 19/20-09 which adds on to the existing language about faculty contracts and the academic calendar in Section 3-B(5). He stated these changes would allow the Provost, in the case of an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and after consultation with the Senate and academic units, to temporarily move the dates of the period of service for academic-year faculty and faculty on one-semester contracts as long as these modifications will not adversely affect students’ academic experience or faculty compensation (including part-time faculty) for that semester.

Lonergan clarified that these changes may not apply to some graduate school programs, as they have different start dates than the undergraduates. She also clarified that the Provost’s announcement to move the first day of classes up to August 17th was within the existing period of service range as stated in the Handbook (August 16 through May 15), but that allowing the Provost to start faculty contracts earlier on
August 1st (only in emergency situations like the current pandemic) would allow them to be paid sooner for course preparation. Gupta and Lonergan stated the period of service is an operational decision, so the committee felt Senate “consultation” was appropriate as opposed to “approval.”

A question was raised about whether starting the period of service earlier would also mean faculty contracts end earlier, possibly causing misalignment with the actual end of classes, or if this change also means the Provost can decide to lengthen or shorten the length of the period of service during emergencies. Gupta stated he would work on clarifying this language with the Handbook Committee for the second reading tomorrow.

**Discussion re: report from the Joint Task Force to Review OCAP Processes and Practices**

Lonergan gave a brief overview of the report created by the Joint Task Force to Review OCAP Processes and Practices, which formed this past Spring due to many concerns around the Office of Conduct, Accountability, and Professionalism (OCAP). Lonergan stated the task force basically recommended OCAP not continue to exist in its current form, but that there continue to be a formal investigative unit in its place to investigate the types of cases OCAP covered, but with certain key changes. She then reviewed the report, including four guiding principles for all investigations and nine specific recommendations (read full report for details). Lonergan stated Felicia Washington, Senior Vice President for Human Resources, has said she understands the import of these recommendations, and that we are asking for more consistency, transparency, and fair process across all units and all types of investigations.

Some questions were posed about specific language used in certain areas of the report. Paul Adler, Academic Vice President, stated the Senate will deliberate further after hearing back from Felicia Washington. Lonergan added that there will be opportunities to discuss this further as the recommendations are translated into policy.

**Discussion re: Black Lives Matter and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at USC**

Paul Adler, Senate Academic Vice President, stated that in response to President Folt’s letter to the USC community about actions she plans to take to confront anti-Blackness and systemic racism, the Executive Board of the Senate aimed to quickly respond, and sent a letter back to President Folt about further actions they recommend the university pursue. He invited questions, concerns, thoughts, and guidance for the Executive Board as it continues its work on these issues and actions.

A Senator from Dornsife stated their department of American Studies and Ethnicity had a task force on anti-racist education, which communicated a report to the Senate leadership that included recommendations to establish an interdepartmental Black studies center, restore and expand the general education (GE) diversity requirement, and establish a university-wide anti-racist recruitment and retention platform that would include lifting the hiring freeze for faculty of color.

Other suggestions included ensuring a systematic approach to assessing and changing nomenclature or other things that honor or showcase people who were overtly racist, dedicating more resources – funding in particular – to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, and infusing all curricula and syllabi with DEI themes.

A request was made of the Executive Board to reiterate to Senior Administration that DEI initiatives are essential at the university level (e.g., modifying the GE requirements, changing of hiring policies), not just the school level. A recommendation was made that the Administration should ensure DEI support and training for hiring committees, including committees that may currently be in progress, and to embed diversity components into promotion and curriculum review.
More suggestions were made to clarify what “real oversight” of DPS means in the Executive Board’s recommendations, to be more specific about “student spaces” (e.g., state how many counselors would need to be hired), to be sure to include HSC in these discussions, and to recommend that the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer be a nationally recognized scholar who specializes in anti-racism.

**Announcements**

(a) Next Senate meeting: Weds June 24, 2:00 – 4:00pm

(b) Weds June 24, 4:00-4:30 pm: Distinguished Faculty Service Awards ceremony for 2019-20 recipients Yaniv Bar-Cohen, Tracy Tambascia, Gerald C. Davison; and Academic Senate’s Walter Wolf Award for the Defense of Academic Freedom and Faculty Rights recipient Charles Gomer

**Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 5:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Uyeširo Simon

Secretary General of the Academic Senate