

AGENDA

Paul Adler, Academic Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm, and introduced the guests of the Senate.

Approval of June Urgent Senate Meeting Draft Minutes

Tracy Tambascia, Academic Vice President, presented the June 2020 Urgent Senate Meeting draft minutes for discussion and approval.

Motion to approve the June minutes was moved and seconded; 23 in favor; 0 opposed; 2 abstentions.

Approval of May Senate Meeting Draft Minutes

Tracy Tambascia, Academic Vice President, presented the May 2020 Senate Meeting draft minutes for discussion and approval.

Motion to approve the May minutes was moved and seconded; 19 in favor; 0 opposed; 7 abstentions.

President Folt and Provost Zukoski

President Folt expressed her appreciation for how hard everyone is working. Folt then shared a PowerPoint presentation about some of the issues being addressed by administration, including those pertaining to health and safety, fiscal sustainability, culture, and governance. She reminded senators of the three principles that shape her decision-making: (1) health and safety, (2)
advancing our academic mission, and (3) emerging stronger.

Folt discussed her strong commitment to not laying people off and explained that USC has been able to keep most everyone working. This is part of USC’s commitment to helping the community, as is the University’s efforts to provide food, pre-packaged meals, and groceries, and the ‘Care for the Caregiver’ initiative.

Next, Folt described efforts to prepare the campus for the fall, including retrofitting buildings, classrooms, dormitories, and other spaces throughout the university. She suggested that we are ahead of other universities in our Restart planning and that we are ready for students to return whenever the County allows. USC has a robust testing and surveillance strategy in place. Folt praised the efforts of Dr. Sarah Van Orman (Chief Health Officer, USC Student Health) and her team for their hard work. Folt explained that although we have low density now, we have capacity to do more testing as needed.

As concerns athletics, Folt continues to believe that we did the right thing in stopping all contact sports because the risk was too great. She pointed out that students could choose whether to return to campus and that no student athletes were forced to play or train. If student athletes chose not to play or train, they nevertheless received their full scholarships and were allowed to stay on campus if they wanted. The university plans to subsidize athletics as it does other units in order to get through this difficult time. The highest paid coaches have already taken cuts voluntarily.

Folt noted with pleasure that USC reached agreement with SEIU Local 11. Under the new agreement, employees represented by the union will get a 3% average wage increase, with a greater increase for employees in the eight lowest paid positions.

Folt closed by mentioning that we continue to hire great people, such as Dr. Pedro Noguera (Dean Rossier School of Education), Dr. Geoffrey Garrett (Dean, Marshall School of Business), Dr. Sarah Gehlert (Dean, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work), Beong-Soo Kim (Senior Vice President and General Counsel), Dr. Kedra Ishop (Vice President for Enrollment Management), Catherine Spear (Vice President for Equity, Equal Opportunity & Title IX), and Effie Turnbull (Vice President for Civic Engagement & Economic Partnerships).

Provost Zukoski provided an update on enrollment numbers and Project Restart. He indicated that we are on track to have a full freshman year and we are ahead of where we were last year with undergraduate enrollment. We are down at the master’s level, however. If our enrollment situation overall seems strong, it is because of the value students place on higher education and the excellent quality of education offered at USC.

Zukoski then discussed the Fall semester. He began by acknowledging the resilience of the faculty. At three days into Week 1 of the semester, he has received mostly positive feedback from schools and units. He described the various forms of supports available for students (e.g., 24/7 IT support, free laptop loaners, and free hotspots). There are nearly 1,000 students residing on campus, but 8,000 – 10,000 staying in student apartments off campus. This is problematic, he suggested, when students have parties. He emphasized that the University is serious about enforcing safety policies and protocols, and that we will hold individuals and organizations accountable. He concluded by noting that the University is doing a lot with regards to financial aid and affordability initiatives, and then turned the floor back over to President Folt to comment on where we are with financial aid.
Folt reminded senators that her top priority when she came to USC was affordability and accessibility. She receives many requests for funding, which she understands and sympathizes with. Our aid packages remain strong and Folt described several affordability initiatives, most notably Affordable SC. She expressed concern about the circulation of inaccurate information about financial aid and support. For example, although some have said that we are giving out less money to students and that we have cut financial aid packages, we actually are giving out more money to students than before. Folt explained that if a student’s housing costs change, their financial aid package is adjusted to reflect the change. She further explained that when students moved home, we gave a COVID cost of living of $4,000 rather than the federally required amount of $1400 (our allotment is one of the top 5 allotments in the country). We also found a way to provide support to DACA students (using USC funding since CARES Act funding cannot be used), and to international and graduate students. Folt emphasized that USC is going as far as it can. She then discussed why the University cannot cut tuition by 35%, as some have recommended. Doing this, she suggests, would require the University to give back nearly one billion dollars. She also suggested that cutting tuition would have required laying people off or imposing massive furloughs. President Folt then asked Provost Zukoski to discuss the budget.

Zukoski reported that revenue loss due to COVID is estimated at about $400 million for FY21. USC expects revenue losses in different areas including auxiliaries and athletics ($185 million), philanthropy ($60 million), graduate tuition ($25 million), and “other” ($25 million). Increased costs are due to “student centric actions” such as increased financial aid and PhD support/programming ($70 million) and Project Restart ($40 million). For now, Zukoski stated, our financial position is stable. Zukoski then handed the floor back to President Folt. Rather than discussing in detail the numerous Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives being put into place, Folt described a few and expressed her hope of coming back to discuss the initiatives in more detail. She then welcomed Beong-Soo Kim, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Office of General Council (OGC).

Kim thanked Paul Adler for inviting him to meet with the Senate and proceeded to introduce himself. After sharing why he came to USC, he explained that he is new to USC and right now focused on trying to understand the various legal issues that he is responsible for. He expressed his commitment to addressing and preventing legal issues from occurring in the future.

Kim also gave an update on the Varsity Blues matter, announcing that the student reviews have been completed and that all those involved in the matter are either no longer at USC or have been disciplined. He stated that USC was a victim, not complicit.

Kim also disclosed that the University is responding to an anonymous lawsuit filed in July involving the Office of Conduct, Accountability, and Professionalism (OCAP). He pointed out that he is not at liberty to discuss personnel matters or matters that are currently pending litigation. Instead, he shared what he has learned since arriving at USC about OCAP and the investigation process. Kim closed by offering to return to discuss the OCAP matter once it is resolved and by taking questions from senators.

A senator thanked Kim and asked how closely Kim’s office vets proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook before they go to the Faculty Handbook Committee. Kim indicated that he was not sure when the OGC gets involved but that the OGC works very closely on proposed changes with Marty Levine, Vice Provost and Senior Advisor to the Provost and advisor to the Faculty Handbook Committee.
After thanking Kim for meeting with the Senate and providing an overview, another senator asked a follow-up question about the Varsity Blues matter: Has the “side door of athletics” (i.e., students getting onto athletic teams as a result of a lack of academic rigor and standards) been closed? President Folt responded and indicated that a committee was convened to carry out a “20-step process” to review student athletes and athletics, including whether or not student athletes are meeting academic standards. Provost Zukoski also responded and pointed out that student athletes have unusual talents (like dancers, artists, and musicians) and that the definition of appropriate rigor and standards is complicated and needs to be looked at holistically. Senate President Adler then suggested that the Provost Zukoski come back at a later date to discuss the matter given the importance of athletics and the arts to USC.

A senator expressed being pleased that the General Counsel met with the Senate. He went on to point out that there is frustration with the lack of specificity in the Administration’s accounts of the university’s misadventures. Senators were expecting to hear President’s Folt response to the November 2019 Resolution. President Folt responded by asking the Senate to understand that “there is a lot going on” and that the administration needs the help of the Senate in understanding the “true tsunami of issues that are coming toward us.” She also offered to hold webinars and meetings outside Senate meetings. Adler closed this part of the meeting and thanked the guests for their time and attendance.

**Orientation of New Senate Members**

Adler informed senators that an orientation document is available to senators. He requested that senators review materials prepared for Senate meetings prior to attending the meetings. He also explained that the Executive Board (EB) sets the agenda for Academic Senate meetings but welcomes input about agenda items.

Adler further explained that an important aspect of the Academic Senates involves addressing issues stemming from Faculty Councils of schools and academic units. He encouraged senators to contact the EB about issues raised by their Faculty Councils and he described ways to communicate with the EB and to stay informed about the work of the Academic Senate, including email, Slack, and the Academic Senate Newsletter. He reminded members about the forthcoming Planning Retreat and then took questions from the floor.

A senator asked if other Faculty Council members can be invited to attend the Planning Retreat. Rebecca Lonergan, Past President of the Academic Senate and current President Adler suggested that this would be fine. On behalf of another senator, Tracy Tambascia, Academic Senate Vice President, asked when committee assignments would be finalized. Adler explained that the committee co-chairs were nearly finalized, at which point committee membership would be finalized in turn. Daniel Pecchenino, Administrative Vice President of the Academic Senate, indicated that most committee assignments should be finalized in the next two weeks.

**Resolution 20/21-01 on Support for Caregivers Under COVID Conditions**

Academic Senate Vice President Tambascia presented and led a conversation about Resolution 20/21 on Support for Caregivers Under COVID Conditions. Tambascia explained that although some schools have adequately addressed dependent care needs, the EB has received numerous emails expressing concerns about available support. The EB developed the Resolution in response to these concerns. After reading the Resolution, Tambascia opened the floor for discussion and amendments. Adler mentioned that administration has agreed to convene a task force to urgently...
explore options for caregivers.

A senator asked if the Resolution is aimed specifically at faculty. Tambascia said that although our primary responsibility was to faculty, the Resolution explicitly calls for more support for staff and students too. Another senator posed questions related to scheduling of classes and plans in the event of class cancellation. Adler suggested that the EB inform the task force being convened of the issues raised by the senator.

A senator offered comments and questions about pods and daycare services. In response, another member of the Senate suggested that we cannot rely on daycare as an option at this time. A senator inquired about whether Bright Horizons will be available to provide crisis care. Adler explained that the EB has encouraged administration to consider this option but that there is little likelihood that the University will offer this option due to its high cost.

A suggestion was then made by a senator to amend the resolution related to provision of subsidies. Finally, another senator made several recommendations including that the task force being convened review merit review guidelines and performance standards, and that the task force survey faculty (as well as staff and students) about their needs. Finishing off discussion about the resolution, Adler suggested that senators engage in conversations about care with their Faculty Councils and turn to the Senate for support as needed. Adler then called for a vote on the amended resolution. The resolution was approved with a vote of 39 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Announcements

Before announcements were made, a senator requested that the Committee on Finance and Enrollment (COFE) make a report at the next Academic Senate meeting. Adler responded that he hoped the Provost would agree to providing an update at the next meeting. Adler then made a few announcements: he welcomed Devon Brooks as the new Secretary General of the Academic Senate and he reminded senators of the Fall Planning Retreat and dates for upcoming Senate meetings for the year.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Devon Brooks

Secretary General of the Academic Senate