ACADEMIC SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Meeting of February 17, 2021

Virtual Meeting

2:00 - 4:00 pm PST


Absent: T. Wattenbarger


AGENDA

Call to Order

Academic Senate President Adler called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

Approval of Minutes of December Senate Meeting

Academic Senate Secretary General Brooks presented the January 2021 minutes for discussion and approval.

Motion to approve the January minutes. Seconded and passed: 42 in favor, 0 opposed, and 4 abstentions.

President Folt and Provost Zukoski

President Folt began her remarks by commenting on the challenges she and others face trying to stay connected via Zoom. She expressed feeling hopeful about soon being able to see faculty and students on campus and immense gratitude for all that faculty, staff, and students have done and how they have responded to the challenges of the pandemic. Folt noted that some people at the university feel that they have gotten closer with their colleagues by working with them online and that they have been able to make decisions quickly and thoughtfully online. She then discussed the university’s strong sense of service to the community and shared examples of what we are
doing to support communities. She discussed the establishment of the USC health system as a functioning subsidiary of the university and provided other important updates:

- There is strong interest in coming to USC and applications are high. We do have areas where our numbers are low, particularly with our international students and in some master’s programs.

- We plan to return to full operations in the fall. It is possible that the second half of summer could have online instruction but we do not have enough information about that right now.

- We have hired our first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO), Christopher Manning, who will start March 1. Manning will report directly to Folt and serve as a member of the Provost’s senior leadership team and Felicia Washington’s senior leadership team in HR. He will also work with Winston Crisp’s team and through that team, with students.

- The Investment Committee of the USC Board of Trustees voted to freeze and liquidate direct and indirect investments in companies whose primary business is production or extraction of oil, natural gas, or thermal coal, including all investments that are pooled within other investments. Last year, 5% of our investments were in fossil fuels, this year, it is 3%. The divestment could take up to 10 years, although Folt expects the bulk of it to happen more quickly. She will also be creating an advisory committee on investment responsibility. It will include faculty, staff, and student representatives.

Folt then answered questions from senators and agreed to update the faculty on the agreement that USC entered into with the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights and on the Clery report.

Provost Zukoski began his remarks with an update on the vaccination situation and then discussed the budget situation. We were estimating a deficit of $300-400 million, but it now appears that the FY21 deficit will be in the $100-200 million range thanks to the mitigation strategies that were put into place. Zukoski expects there to be a merit salary increase pool in the fall and is now considering what the merit pool will be. He reminded faculty that the first “wellness day” is on March 12 and encouraged faculty to be supportive of students who live in parts of the country that are experiencing power disruptions due to inclement weather. Zukoski then took questions from the floor.

**Resolution to Change Senate Constitution’s References to Part-time Faculty (1st Reading)**

Senate President Adler introduced the first reading of a resolution to give part-time faculty full participation rights in our governance structure. He explained that this resolution builds on a [2015-16 Senate resolution](#) and aims to bring the Senate Constitution into alignment with the Faculty Handbook (Section 4-C(2)c). He further explained that the goal for the day was to identify issues senators might need to consider before the next senate meeting when the resolution would be voted on, and potential amendments. Adler then opened the floor for discussion and questions.

**SVP Human Resources, Equity, and Compliance Felicia Washington on OCAP reform and OPE; VP and Title IX Coordinator Catherine Spear on EEO-TIX**

Adler introduced Felicia Washington, Senior Vice President (SVP) for Human Resources, Equity and Compliance and provided some context for Washington’s visit. Alongside the strengthening of the functions responsible for handling EEO and Title IX concerns, our various scandals made it clear
that we also needed a better way for people to raise concerns and file complaints that do not fall under the legal provisions of protected categories. In response, the Office of Conduct, Accountability, and Professionalism (OCAP) was created in 2018. OCAP conducts workplace investigations and makes findings of fact to determine if university policies have been violated; it does not sanction or impose disciplinary measures. Any faculty sanctions or disciplinary measures that flow from OCAP investigations are decided by faculty through the Committee on Professional Responsibility and can be appealed through the grievance process. The OCAP process and the sanctioning mechanisms were put into place quickly and there clearly are weaknesses that need fixing. In June 2020, a university committee offered nine recommendations for improving OCAP procedures and mechanisms.

Washington provided an overview of the reorganization of the HR function at USC, and updates on the progress of the redesign of the Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) and on the ongoing reform of the OCAP functions. She explained how these reforms responded to the recommendations made in the 2020 report. Washington introduced the leadership team who will continue the process of reimagining EEO-TIX and OCAP, including Louis Gutierrez, Vice President HR Services and Employee Relations; Michael Blanton, Vice President of the Office of Professionalism and Ethics; and Catherine Spear, Vice President for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX, and Title IX Coordinator. Members of the team greeted the Senate and offered remarks about their roles and responsibilities, and about next steps for their respective offices. Washington provided a link that faculty can use to share their comments, questions, and suggestions. Adler fielded questions from the floor and closed the discussion by expressing the Senate’s eagerness to see and discuss further the OCAP reforms as their specifics emerge.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Devon Brooks

Secretary General of the Academic Senate